

**SOCIAL COMPETENCE AND MODERATE
LEARNING DIFFICULTIES: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY OF PASTORAL CARE IN MAINSTREAM
AND SPECIAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the pastoral care of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in special and mainstream secondary schools. It explores the relationship between pastoral care and social outcomes. Since the agenda to include pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools was introduced, research has focused on academic results, leaving a gap in the educational knowledge base regarding the personal and social development of these learners.

The study was undertaken in two phases, in one Further Education College, in the first term of the academic year. Phase one comprised semi-structured interviews with learners, all of whom had Moderate Learning Difficulties and had recently left secondary school. Interviews were undertaken with 26 students. Half of the participants had previously attended mainstream and half special schools. The second phase incorporated the whole cohort of students with Moderate Learning Difficulties who had embarked on their college career that term; 68 participants, again from special and mainstream schools. The results of the initial assessments conducted by a team of specialist professional staff were analysed. Particular consideration was given to the skills relating to social confidence and self-esteem.

What emerged from the study was that the students who had attended special schools had received a high standard of individual pastoral care as opposed to their mainstream counterparts who had received little or none. There were marked differences between the two groups, with the learners who had previously attended special schools demonstrating significantly higher levels of social confidence and self-esteem. The research indicated that there is an association between the quality of pastoral care and that of social outcomes for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties.

The study concludes with recommendations to all levels of education, from policy makers to practitioners. These are intended to enable all secondary schools pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties to benefit from robust and effective pastoral care which will produce positive social outcomes.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other educational institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed 

Date ..01.10,2014

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Glossary

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AP	Advanced Practitioner
BLP	Baseline Learning Profile
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DES	Department of Education and Science
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
EdD	Doctorate in Education
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSA	Learning Support Worker
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
PGCE	Post-graduate Certificate in Education
TA	Teaching Assistant

Note on Nomenclature

The participants in this research were young people with learning difficulties in their first year of further education. As such they are described as *students*. This term has, in recent times, been replaced by *learners* and, in this thesis the two terms are used interchangeably. The research focuses on the time they spent at secondary school, during which time they were *pupils*.

Reference has been made to literature and research relevant to the study and, in these publications, young people of school age are identified as *pupils*, *young people* and *children*, as appropriate to those described at the time of writing.

Chapter 1 : Introduction, context and rationale: “I can swing my arms when I walk down the corridor”

In the little world in which children have their existence, there is nothing so finely perceived and finely felt as injustice.

(Dickens, 1860)

Why should I believe you when you tell me anything?

Robbie, who had attended at mainstream school

If you feel OK in a place you can swing your arms when you walk down the corridor. I know I am good at some stuff – I can swing my arms. Can you?

Carol Anne, who had attended a special school

1.1 The origins of this enquiry

What are the factors which mean that Carol Anne, a pupil diagnosed with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), can swing her arms as she walks down the corridor? This is the question which underpins my research; the right of all MLD pupils to be able to swing their arms in the corridor and the reasons why some arms remain fixed to the pupils' sides.

“All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”. Since 1945, George Orwell’s words have been much quoted, and still serve to point out that there is nothing straightforward about equality. Indeed, in the field of education, “Some voices are more equal than others in the school curriculum” (Paechter, 1998).

Through study and interest, I have been able, while formulating my own thoughts and ideas, to investigate, read and consider the work of academics

and researchers in the education sphere and, in particular, those with expertise and interest in the field of special education. I am currently working towards a Doctorate in Education (EdD), and Lunt's (2002) approach to the Professional Doctorate is both relevant to my work and encouraging in its emphasis on the Practitioner Researcher, as opposed to the Researching Professional. In my area of work it is particularly germane given her specialist areas of research, special educational needs and inclusion.

Countless items of legislation have sought to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief and, in 2010, the Equality Act brought together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. Equality is synonymous with fairness but does not, I believe, imply that everyone should be treated in the same way. Rather, it signifies that each individual should be treated with respect and, in the case of disability for instance, in the way which meets their individual needs. The Act explains in detail what must not be done, i.e. discriminate on the basis of many classifications, including disability. When referring to what must be done, terms such as "reasonable adjustments" introduce a more subjective element to the frame.

Any research study forms part of a larger picture and, as such, seeks to contribute to a particular aspect of the bigger issue. So it is here, I have become in turn concerned, then angry, with regard to what I believe to be an integral part of education. My examination of a specific, and crucial,

component of education is intended to enrich and inform the far wider sphere of the education of children, in particular those with learning difficulties. This broader field encompasses questions concerning the purpose of education, how it should be organised and implemented. Further, the bigger picture involves the principles valued by the leading figures in education and, importantly, how their policies are interpreted and implemented in the prevailing climate of competition and accountability.

My research concerns a particular aspect of education, the pastoral education of pupils in secondary schools, the element which is not covered by the taught curriculum. Integral to this element of school life is the opportunity to discuss, in a secure environment, any individual issues and concerns. While this is, of course, an important aspect of schooling for all young people, it is pupils diagnosed with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) who are the focus of my enquiry. I pay particular attention to the "*little world in which children have their existence*" (Dickens, 1860) as it is this, and their perceptions of it, which reveal more than policies about the reality of their lives. If they perceive something in a certain way, for them that is exactly how it is (Haddon, 2004). The voices of the young people themselves, therefore, offer a far greater insight of their feelings and views than documents or statements of intent ever can.

Changes to government policy are familiar to all of us who operate in the adversarial party political climate of the UK, and, as described by Gordon, Aldrich and Dean (1991), incoming governments habitually alter or reverse

decisions and systems put in place by their predecessors. For the purpose of my study, I must start with a return to the last century when, arguably, the greatest change in policy regarding the education of pupils with learning difficulties took place.

It is over 30 years since a revolution took place in the education of young people who were of school age and who had been diagnosed with learning difficulties. In 1974, the Secretary of State for Education had commissioned an Enquiry, to be chaired by Mary Warnock (now Baroness Warnock) into "*Education of Handicapped Young People*". The Report of the Enquiry, published in 1978, has become widely known as the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978). Among the Report's recommendations was the introduction of an agenda to place, where possible, pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools where they would be educated with their more typically developing peers and be included in the activities of this wider community. Previously the majority of these young people would have attended special schools, designed to accommodate their particular needs with staff trained to address their individual difficulties.

Change is often challenging and, while many embrace it, many others resist it. This may be a natural wariness or, perhaps, a suspicion based on past experiences of "change for change's sake". The fact that the outcomes of the Warnock Report, commonly referred to as the Inclusion Debate, continue to be the focus of ongoing discussion, is surely significant (Lewis and Norwich, 2005; Ryan, 2009; Murrar, 2013), and many educational

practitioners, while supporting the ethos of inclusion, continue to question the manner in which it is implemented and the resources and expertise available for this. I do not suggest that, prior to Warnock, the education of pupils with particular needs was without fault, and the ongoing examination of systems should, I believe, be regarded as a mechanism for improvement. Nevertheless, questions have been raised regarding the quality, robustness, fitness for purpose and viability of the post-Warnock systems in place nationally, locally and at school level to implement the policy to include.

Where questions have been posed, there has been a tendency to focus upon the academic impact of inclusion, on pupils with and without particular needs, leaving the social aspect of the inclusion agenda under-researched, despite the concerns of professional educators. I believe that it is the latter, social, element of school life which has a strong impact on the arm-swinging ability of the young people concerned. The success of this major policy change in the education of young people should, surely, be manifest in their attendance at mainstream schools where they thrive, not only academically, but socially, due to a feeling of belonging or inclusion in the mainstream community. My conjecture that this is not necessarily the case will be tested in this, my Doctor of Education (EdD) research study.

I take as the focus of my research, secondary school pupils (aged 11 – 16 years) who are diagnosed with a Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD) and the reasons for my concerns for these pupils will become clear in the following paragraphs and chapters. The term MLD indicates that, while not suffering

from a severe learning impairment, it is considered that they are not able to develop academically or, in many cases socially, at the same rate as other young people with the “*same date of manufacture*” (Robinson, 2010). It will always be problematic to define the key benchmarks for development, especially in young children as, in one academic year, pupils with or without learning difficulties may have birth dates which are 364 days apart and will, quite naturally, develop at different rates.

The scope of the term, MLD, is vast and covers some clinically defined conditions such as Down’s Syndrome, Turner’s Syndrome, Autism, Asperger Syndrome (Asperger’s) and others, some of which can be described as general cognitive delay (Chazan, Moore, Williams and Wright, 1974; Beveridge and Conti-Ramsden, 1987; Cline, 1991; Cline, 1992). Many of these have an impact on not only the ability to progress academically but also on the skills required to successfully operate socially with others. These latter skills are, I propose, as, if not more, important for a positive and productive transition into adult life.

This opening chapter not only puts my research into the context of my professional experience, expertise and interest in young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), but also sets the research within the wider context of what education should be designed to do. Is education simply a process whereby pupils, at the end of their school career, are equipped to progress, possibly after further study, to make an economic contribution to society? Or is there something else, something less tangible,

which is an even more important outcome? I propose to demonstrate that the latter is the case and that there is a crucial aspect of education which falls outside the academic curriculum. This other side of education develops skills and attributes which make a different type of contribution to society and which enrich the life of the young person. Confidence and feelings of self-worth must be developed, together with the social skills which enable the learner to operate successfully in the wider world. These are fostered via the personal and social aspects of education. This pastoral aspect of care for pupils, and its potential for improving social outcomes are, I propose, especially important for learners with MLD who, as I will describe, often struggle with this aspect of development. The debate regarding practical concerns related to the inclusion of these pupils in mainstream schools is central to this discussion and my experience, of almost twenty years, has led me to a conjecture concerning their pastoral care in some schools. While the student and school vignettes given in this research may be read as anecdotal, they serve to underpin my increasing unease regarding the secondary school experiences of the learners in question. It should also be noted that, where examples of students' contributions are included or referred to, the names have been changed to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.

1.2 Context: The school system as it is currently organised, based on children's "*year of manufacture*"

International education advisor, Sir Ken Robinson (2010), argues that to group children together in educational classes based on their "year of

manufacture”, i.e. their date of birth, is an arbitrary system which does not account for their individual rates of development or their personal needs. In practice it is essential that a school community is divided up in some way in order to make the class sizes manageable and the learning pitched at the level appropriate for the pupils (Department of Education, 1994; Department for Education and Skills, 2008). On a local geographical basis, Local Authorities (LAs) need to distribute the school age population by allocating them to schools according to a system which appears to the local electorate to be equitable (Chitty, 2004; Wood, 1976). In many parts of the United Kingdom, state-funded secondary education takes place in comprehensive schools where pupils are not required to achieve particular academic standards to gain entry (Pring and Walford, 1997). In areas of the country, including Gloucestershire, where my study took place, a grammar school system is also maintained. This arrangement means that some pupils are admitted to certain secondary schools having achieved the required grades in a test taken at the age of 11. This does not mean, however, that in such areas state funded education is a two-tiered system as that would not take account of a third strand of education for pupils who are educated in special schools (Furlong and Phillips, 2001; Rayner 2007). This third category of schools is designed for pupils who are deemed to have physical or intellectual requirements which are best accommodated in a specialist provision.

The Academies Act (2010) and the Education Act (2011) heralded the creation of two further categories of school, Academies and Free Schools.

Both new styles of schools are distanced from Local Authorities (LAs) and hold greater freedom in terms of finance, staff appointments and curriculum. In April 2013, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, issued a policy statement stating that the coalition government was firmly committed to extending the academy and free school status as widely as possible (DfE, 2013). I find it interesting that, less than a year later, in February 2014, ten academy schools were removed, by the government, from the control of their sponsors, E-Act, one of the biggest chains of Academies in the UK, due to educational standards being deemed by Ofsted to be unsatisfactory. Does this mean that the new status of these schools was founded on weak governance? Does it imply that, with greater freedom in the recruitment of staff, poor choices were made? Does it indicate that new initiatives, implemented too quickly and without due consideration for outcomes, inevitably lead to further change and disruption? These concerns are relevant to the context of my research and could, in themselves, form the basis of a further academic study. While these questions fall outside the scope of my study, I ask them here to illustrate the changing climate in which education is currently delivered.

In this climate of major change, it is understandable that schools might feel confused and conflicted by different agendas. Local arrangements have moved from a recognised system to a changing one where schools may choose to be removed from LA control and be managed by sponsors as Academies. Alternatively, interested parties can choose to set up Free Schools, also outside LA control. While there is greater freedom for these

schools in a number of areas, including the curriculum, they remain under the remit of Ofsted inspections and, as described, a number of these schools have fallen short of the accepted academic standards. Those schools must, I believe, feel that they have jumped from the frying pan in to the fire, all under the interested gaze of members of the wider school world, concerned about the options open to them.

The “Inclusion Debate” will be a recurring theme throughout this research, with particular emphasis on its implementation, rather than the ethos behind it. Beyond the discussions concerning the placement of pupils with learning difficulties, there are wider conversations required regarding the inequity of opportunity caused, nationally, by the range of school admittance arrangements available, dependent on geographical location. Again, while this may have relevance and be of considerable interest, in my study there is not sufficient scope to examine all aspects of the national school admission debate.

1.3 Moderate Learning Difficulties: Governmental definition and requirements

The appropriate current nomenclature for groups is a social and political minefield and is subject to change over time. The acceptable terms for, for example, people of different ethnic origins or sexual orientation have changed numerous times and will, I am sure, continue to do so. Similarly, the terminology surrounding those with particular needs or difficulties, whether in Education or otherwise, is fraught with sensitivities.

Legally, children are considered to have Special Educational Needs if they

“require special educational provision because they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of their age or because they suffer from a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational facilities generally provided for children of their age.”

Department for Education and Science, 1981

Once again the concept of children “*of their age*” presents a situation where pupils of the same age, i.e. in the same year group in school may, in fact, differ in age by 11 months and 29 days. Education must, however, operate in the prevailing system, and schools and local authorities are constrained by this governmental classification. We should, nevertheless, be wary of definitions which serve not to clarify but obscure meaning.

In the UK, the approach, since the latter part of the twentieth century, to the education of pupils requiring special provision has generally been welcomed as a step forward from the preceding “*categories of handicap*” approach, yet there remains a vast spectrum of difficulties which are embraced by the new thinking (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Frederickson and Cline, both eminent researchers and educators in the field of special education, have been highly instrumental in the demystification of different types of learning difficulty and potential approaches to the education of pupils with these diagnoses, via books such as their “*Inclusion and Diversity*” (2002). The fact that both professors have a background in teaching prior to their work as educational psychologists gives additional weight to the illumination they offer to the field via their writing, research and training. The learners taking

part in my research have been “categorised” as having moderate rather than profound difficulties to overcome.

Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) is, perhaps, a term which attempts to encompass the “un-encompassable”. It is easier to see the adaptations which are required to make a situation accessible to, for instance a wheelchair user, a visually impaired learner or a young person with limited auditory capacity. Modern technology and the development of systems and aids designed to assist those with visible and physical barriers to access educational success are now available to include pupils with these challenges into the mainstream educational system. The learner with a profound need, physical or other, is often identified with relative ease and appropriate adaptations or arrangements can be made.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DTI,1995) required organisations, including educational provision, to ensure that “reasonable adjustments” were made to accommodate pupils with disabilities. In some cases, for example, this could mean significant alteration to physical environments to facilitate access for a wheelchair user, or the adaptation of resources for pupils with visual or auditory impairments. As pointed out by Holloway (2004), other adjustments could be relatively minor, such as the reorganisation of seating arrangements in class to support visual or auditory access to the activities. I suggest that the use of terms such as “reasonable” introduces an element of subjectivity to the situation and result in the adjustments made being inequitable, depending on their implementers, the financial resources available and the

other constraints and pressures on the schools in question. Beyond the physical, the range of difficulties is, in my professional experience, as vast as the number of young people diagnosed with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). As a consequence, so are the adjustments required to support them. In the examples given, all the learners have been diagnosed with MLD.

1.3.i Accommodating pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties

The Disability Discrimination Act (DfES, 1995), now subsumed into the Equality Act (2010), required that adjustments should be made to accommodate learners with a degree of particular need. It is less clear-cut, however, what adaptations are needed to accommodate and include some learners. The previous paragraph identifies a few of the conditions which may fall under the descriptive umbrella of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and I feel that it would be useful, at this point, to outline the features and potential educational implications of some of these. Down's Syndrome is a congenital condition which varies in severity of impact. In the past, children with Down's were, due to medical conditions associated with their diagnosis, considered unlikely to live beyond early adulthood. However, due to the advances of medical science, the prognosis for young people with Down's has improved in recent years (Carr, 1995). Typically, Down's children have a distinctive appearance and some degree of cognitive impairment, depending on the severity of their condition. While Down's Syndrome affects both boys and girls, Turner Syndrome is found only in females. Again there is a distinctive appearance and cognitive delay is common. Additionally these young people do not follow a typical pattern of

puberty and are normally infertile (Parker, 2007) and this can, I have observed, increase the feelings of “difference” from their peers. A student with Turner Syndrome with whom I worked was keen to receive a medical intervention which would cause her to experience a (false) menstrual cycle so that she “would be like all the other girls”.

Learners with the same diagnosis, e.g. Autism, may require very different teaching and support strategies in order to facilitate their learning. This may also apply to other to other conditions, the important point being that each learner is unique with their individual strengths and needs. Education professionals working with them, therefore, require a wide range of different strategies in order to give them the help they each need.

Mikey and Stuart

Mikey, who has Autism and a limited short-term memory, needs to be given one-step instructions, repeated as necessary, when embarking on any particular task. His classmate, Stuart, has a good memory and well-developed reading skills. For the same task, Stuart needs to be kept active, as he loses focus if not fully occupied. He receives a brief explanation of the overall task and a set of written instructions which he can then follow independently at his own, faster pace. One task, two learners, very different strategies.

In 1.3 ii, I will discuss further the advantages and potential dangers of assigning labels to pupils' learning conditions. Here, it is relevant to point out, however, that, although both Mikey and Stuart have been assigned the same "label", Autism, this does not indicate the same "solution" to their learning. Each is an individual learner with Autism and requires skilled, specialised, strategies to facilitate his learning.

Learners with Autism have a lifelong disability affecting how they communicate with others and how they make sense of the world around them (Baron-Cohen, 2008). This leads to social ineptitude and an inability to interpret the communication strategies of others; making sense of communication and interacting with others are, surely, key elements of typical educational progress. Autism is considered to be a continuum and the extent to which it affects individuals varies enormously.

I have worked with countless students with Autism and no two of them have presented the same challenges in terms of needs. Of course, all learners are individuals whether or not they have a specific difficulty. However, I suggest that the requirements of a group of pupils with learning difficulties necessitate that the professional has a wide range of specialised skills at their disposal at all times to meet the needs of their disadvantaged learners.

Jonny and Harry

In one class I worked with two autistic young people who were at very different points on the continuum: Jonny was able, over time, to acquire strategies, such as eye contact and some degree of empathetic behaviour, to assist him to interpret the signals of others and respond to them more appropriately, thus becoming more socially accepted by them.

The second student, Harry, who remained unable to interpret any communication other than literally or to recognise roles and boundaries, continued to be more likely to make a citizen's arrest if he spotted a peer behaving badly than inform a member of staff. This inevitably did not lead to his social acceptance by his peers, but quite the reverse.

Clearly, the two learners, both with Autism, required different teaching and support strategies to enable them to develop their personal and social skills.

Many people with Autism find it difficult, in varying degrees, to interpret body language and spoken communication and may become puzzled or confused by the use of the idioms used in everyday conversation. To describe a person as *"having his heart in the right place"* or *"having their head screwed on"* can lead to lengthy explanations about their meaning while *"stand on your own two feet"* or *"put your best foot forward"* will, in my experience result in avoidable physical disruption to a situation.

Asperger's is a form of Autism (Atwood, 2008). As Atwood describes, some pupils with Asperger's have above average intelligence or perform exceptionally well in one particular area, while in others a cognitive delay is also present. Most pupils with this condition have few problems with speech but experience difficulty understanding and processing language (Holloway, 2004). Many other conditions such as Dyslexia and Dyspraxia have been widely publicised in recent years (Holloway, 2004) and, while they have significant impact on pupils' access to learning, are too numerous to be described here in greater detail. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is diagnosed, as its name suggests, in adults and young people who find it difficult to maintain concentration and focus and exhibit unnaturally high levels of activity. ADHD is frequently treated with drugs and remains controversial in terms of both diagnosis and treatment. Typical behaviour exhibited by those diagnosed with ADHD includes poor-concentration, restlessness, poor social skills and defiant behaviour (Selikowitz, 2009). These behavioural characteristics are deemed by some, however, to be the result of other conditions (Saul, 2014) or external factors, such as poor parenting or an over-stimulating lifestyle.

I have, in my professional career, developed a wide repertoire of strategies with which to engage learners who display the symptoms described, some of whom have been prescribed medication, others not. I believe that the skills required to support pupils with such symptoms are varied, challenging and exhausting and cannot easily be developed without training and, that lack of

these skills presents a considerable obstacle to the smooth operation of any large mainstream classroom.

Over many years, I have worked with pupils with all of the diagnoses mentioned, and many more, and am conscious of the challenges presented to these young people on their educational journeys. The students have entered their post-school phase from a wide range of different backgrounds and school settings. I have welcomed young people who are confident and self-assured, others who appear to lack self-esteem and those with a variety of social and behavioural traits. In my research, I focus on the support and assistance available in schools for pupils with different challenges to overcome, many of which concern not only academic but social progress.

Clearly, pupils with the conditions I have described, and others, need to be taught and supported with strategies which may differ from their peers both academically and socially. Asking pupils with Autism to *“imagine you are budgeting for a holiday”* or *“think about what you would say if you met*” would be unlikely to result in a productive numeracy or literacy exercise but rather a lengthy and fruitless discussion, as conceptualisation is outside the scope of many of these young people. The skills required to facilitate learning for such pupils may be learned via specialist training and experience. Whether or not practitioners in mainstream schools have the capacity, in a packed and goal-driven curriculum, to acquire and deliver these is a question which has huge impact on the success, or otherwise, of the inclusion agenda. For mainstream school staff there is, understandably,

appropriate training available to enable them to deliver their curriculum specialist subject effectively. Behaviour management training is also available and this is an important aspect of life in all schools. In 2014, the government issued guidance for schools regarding sanctions to be applied for poor behaviour and this will be discussed in detail in later chapters. The highly specialised training required to successfully support pupils with the range of difficulties described here, does not appear to feature in the training programmes for mainstream teaching staff. There is no suggestion that, at school level, the willingness to include is absent, but, with the wider agenda to report successful academic results, the scope to accommodate such development may be impeded.

1.3.ii Labels should be used with caution

I have described the term Moderate Learning Difficulties as encompassing the “un-encompassable” and am conscious of the pitfalls of assigning “labels” to children or, in fact, any group of people. In some instances giving pupils a label with the intention of identifying their differences and providing for them appropriately may, in fact, separate them from, rather than include them with, their peers (Terzi, 2005). In other cases a label may have been considered to be an excuse for certain behaviours or traits, or access to a source of funding. It may be reprehensible to use labels simply to release funds, but the situation is arguably increasing difficult, with funding available for children who have special needs stretched to, and beyond, its limits, whichever labels we deploy (Murray, 2013).

Phil

Phil, a school leaver with whom I worked, came to Further Education with an information profile stating that he had, some time previously, been tested for Prader-Willi Syndrome, a compulsive eating disorder. The test had come back “inconclusive” and no further action appeared to have been taken. In this case no label was attached to the young person but his compulsive eating behaviour remained the same, causing significant problems for him, his family, College staff and his peers.

In Phil’s situation, a diagnosis would have triggered the treatment and support he needed to manage his condition. Here, a label could have been instrumental in Phil’s care and development in a positive way.

Phil’s case served to reinforce my belief that each learner must be assessed, taught and treated as an individual, each with their own particular needs, regardless of labels which may or may not have been assigned. As Terzi (2005) points out, to define a person with a label, associated with an eating or any other disorder, is often considered to be discriminatory and likely to engender separateness rather than inclusion. The recognition of a particular need however, and associating it with a category of similar needs may, in fact, initiate the mechanisms and resources required to support the individual pupil. Phil’s compulsive behaviour with its “inconclusive” Prader-Willi test result was not explored further. Had it been, there is every likelihood that, despite the receipt of a label, Phil would have benefited from treatment and support to overcome his difficulties.

In recent times, considerable media attention has been given to conditions which affect a child's ability to concentrate and behave appropriately. As mentioned previously, a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is often addressed by the prescription of medication although, as described by O'Reagan (2002) and Selikowitz (2009), many educational practitioners prefer to support the young people with strategies designed to help them improve their focus and response. The media relates an increase in the number of children diagnosed with ADHD and some sources suggest that modern lifestyles, with instant access to entertainment and information, are responsible for this increase, while others propose that the condition is used, in many cases, as a label to excuse poor parenting and its resulting lack of behavioural standards.

Saul (2014), an experienced medical practitioner, maintains that ADHD does not exist but that it demonstrates the symptoms of other disorders and conditions. Saul has prescribed the drug Ritalin for some of his patients. In this way, he appears to have treated the symptoms while not acknowledging the condition itself. Other experienced practitioners, however, prefer to improve the symptoms of ADHD via therapy and treatment, rejecting drug therapies (Newmark, 2010). International education advisor, Robinson (2010) proposes that ADHD, while a legitimate condition, is vastly over diagnosed as a result of the plethora of stimuli imposed on children which, in turn, leaves them unable to relax or focus on one activity for any length of time. The debate regarding the validity of the diagnosis of ADHD will, I feel sure, continue, especially as there is evidence to suggest that the syndrome

was created retrospectively after the drug, Ritalin, was developed and discovered to have certain effects, e.g. calming. In the meantime, education professionals must acquire skills and abilities to support the young people with little or no concentration span and limited ability to decrease their level of activity, in order that they may progress academically and, equally importantly, socially. Labels, then, should indeed be used with caution. They may, as in Phil's case, have triggered appropriate treatment and support or may, in some cases, be used as excuses and/or result in stigmatisation.

1.4 Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in Schools

1.4.i Inclusion and pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties

Many of the conditions I have outlined above are described by Holloway (2004) as hidden disabilities as they are not immediately identifiable in the same way as a physical or sensory impairment might be, and some learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) have needs which may be less easily addressed within the prevailing school system. As I have previously suggested, the term MLD covers a very broad spectrum and affects both academic and social progress for pupils. Should they all be educated by specialists in schools designed for just this purpose or by educators who are tasked with the education of a wider range of pupils and who have not received specialist training? This discussion is a key theme of my study, with no argument against the drive to include MLD pupils in mainstream schools, but raising questions regarding the manner in which inclusion is implemented. My main concern is the extent to which learners with MLD are

successfully accommodated and supported in an academically competitive mainstream system without specialist support and appropriate funding. This is not to suggest an opposition on the part of schools to include pupils with learning difficulties. However, I suggest that they are cautious in light of the ongoing requirement to publish good academic results. It is also clear that to successfully include and develop MLD pupils, specialist staff training, resources and teaching strategies are required, posing additional pressures on constrained finances and availability of time. Overcoming these obstacles may, in turn, require some radical decisions to be made concerning the demands made on schools and their staff.

The definition of “inclusion” is *“the act of including – confining within”* (Collins (1968), implying that physical location is the predominant feature of inclusion. One could infer from this that inclusion in terms of education requires only that learners are physically located in the same place. This is, of course, as proposed by Davis and Hopwood (2002) far too simplistic a definition. Wedell (1995) pointed out that all pupils have different needs and the concept of including all pupils in similar settings was based on a false homogeneity of children’s individual needs. Certainly, in my experience, no two learners are alike and, although they may share some similarities and needs, each should be supported in accordance with their individual requirements, academically and socially. Only then can they participate fully in the educational experience (Terzi, 2005). This attention to individual needs has implications, however, in terms of time, finance and expertise if

the education system is to be successful in meeting the needs of each diverse and deserving pupil.

1.4.ii The origin of my conjecture: being an Advanced Practitioner

It is almost 20 years since I started teaching learners who might be described as disadvantaged in some way. In the first instance these were both Year 11 pupils (15 year olds) who had been excluded by one, or more than one, school, and learners aged 16 and over who were considered to have some sort of particular need or impairment to their learning. In more recent years I have worked exclusively with the latter group as they embark on their first steps into Further Education after leaving school at the age of 16.

Since 2004, I have also held the position of Advanced Practitioner (AP) in the College in which I work. This is a role which permits a slight reduction in teaching commitment in order to support colleagues, deliver training and undertake graded and supportive lesson observations. Teachers who have received the highest grades in observations may apply for this position, which last for two years. At the end of this period, Advanced Practitioners may reapply for the role in the hope of continuing with this challenging but rewarding work. The AP role has, among other rewarding aspects, enabled me to design and deliver training packages on a wide range of topics, not least of which is working with learners with learning difficulties in the special and mainstream classroom. I believe this equips me well to further

disseminate my specialist knowledge, in light of the outcomes of my research study, to inform practice on a wider scale.

Working with the often challenging, often inspiring and always rewarding young people I have described has kindled in me a passion for the support of this vulnerable group and a deep, and troubled, interest in the experiences they have had before leaving school, particularly in the different school settings they have attended. The examples given earlier in this chapter indicate the unique nature of the students with whom I have been privileged to work and give a glimpse of the different challenges they present when they transfer to College. For almost twenty years I have worked with students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) as they leave secondary education and progress into Further Education at the age of 16. I have had the opportunity to develop specialist knowledge and expertise in the education of MLD students via training, professional development opportunities, Post-Graduate study and varied and extensive experience. The Advanced Practitioner role has, additionally, furnished me with the knowledge and skills to share my expertise with colleagues both in training sessions and on a one-to-one basis. Designing and delivering training sessions is both challenging and rewarding. The challenges may manifest themselves, in particular, when training is delivered to “pressed men” who are required, rather than willing, participants in a session. I consider it to be an essential skill when training to be able to transform the attitude of the reluctant attendee and to widen their perspective and views to appreciate the value of the topic about which I am passionate.

My interest in, and experience with, young people with learning difficulties, drove my wish to investigate the school experiences of these learners through this doctoral study, and to read and consider the work of researchers and academics in this aspect of education. Many of the academics who become experts in the field of special education and inclusion have a background in Educational Psychology, for instance, Ainscow, whose work is particularly directed toward links between inclusion, teacher training and school improvement. Feiler's background in teaching and psychology is ideally placed to offer expertise in the teacher training programmes, with emphasis on teaching pupils with special educational needs (SEN), with which he is involved; the outcomes of my research will include recommendations regarding Initial Teacher Training (ITT). Similarly, Farrell and Norwich, who have written extensively on issues relating to special education and inclusion, pursued these interests via an Educational Psychology route. One of the many key features of the work and publications of those mentioned, together with that of Furlong, is that they all started their professional careers in teaching as did Frederickson and Cline. While this is no longer an essential requirement for the work undertaken, to a reader, student or researcher, roots in the practicalities of teaching lend weight and informed authority.

1.4.iii The students

The context for my research is as follows. The students with whom I work embark on their further education experience from, in roughly equal numbers, either special or mainstream school settings. In their first weeks in

the College's specialist Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) provision, the learners are assessed in order that they may receive the appropriate individual support they require. They then follow one of two pathways, the Work Skills pathway for learners who are considered likely to become employed at some stage after studying a vocational curriculum, or to move onto further vocational training. The second pathway is designed for learners who, as they enter the setting, are assessed as unlikely to be able to undertake employment and require, rather than vocational skills, the Life Skills which give this pathway its name. In both strands, learning takes place in small groups with Teaching Assistant (TA) and Learner Support Assistant (LSA) support available as required. Great emphasis is placed on the pastoral care given to the learners, each of whom has a Personal Tutor with whom they work and meet regularly. Each learner has a Personal Profile (Appendix i, p1-5), detailing their strengths, needs, circumstances, levels of difficulty and guidance for staff. The Profile gives details of learning needs but also domestic circumstances. These are, of course important and enable the College staff to work collaboratively with families and carers. Some learners may be in foster care or residential accommodation. Not all families engage willingly with the education system and some are what Feiler (2010) describes as "hard to reach". This may be due to their own experiences and work is ongoing to enlist the support of families and carers in order to build a rounded and consistent approach to the wellbeing of the young people.

Having been assessed against the Essential Skills (MENCAP, 2001) (Appendix ii), an Individual Learning Profile (ILP) (Appendix i, p 10) is

designed for each learner to assist them to work towards non-academic targets which will support their progress. These might include goals to:

- Initiate greetings with familiar peers – to say hello to other group members at the start of the day, after breaks
- or
- Ask for help if unsure what to do next – rather than wait for staff to spot they are struggling
- or
- Work with different group members as requested by staff – rather than always work with the same peers
- or
- Use appropriate language and register when in the minibus – rather than shouting and swearing when off site

Over the years, many associations and charities have grown out of the need felt by families, and other interested parties, to support disadvantaged groups and MENCAP is one of the UK's foremost charities for people with learning disabilities. The organisation was founded in the 1940s by a mother of a child with a learning difficulty and born of her anger and frustration, and that of the many other parents who rapidly joined her, at the lack of services to support their children. During the last century MENCAP, whose name has changed on several occasions to reflect the prevailing contemporary climate (1946: The National Association of Parents of Backward Children, 1955: The Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults; 1969 initials MENCAP used; 2002: the Royal MENCAP Society), has grown and has become widely respected as a provider of training, housing and educational guidance, attracting the patronage of many high-profile individuals including members of the royal family. Should we question the fact that admirable charitable organisations such as MENCAP continue to offer the services we might expect to be provided by the state? Perhaps we should, but that

interesting dilemma, while food for much thought and debate, lies outside the scope of my study and could be the forum for post-doctoral research. One of MENCAPs primary roles has always been to campaign for the rights of people of all ages with learning disabilities. The Essential Skills (MENCAP, 2001) (Appendix ii) is a set of graded benchmarks to assist professionals working with children and young people with such difficulties. They set out 10 personal and social skills, each at 3 levels which, when achieved, will, it is believed, facilitate learners' ability to operate successfully in society.

1.4.iv School leavers with Moderate Learning Difficulties

During my professional career, my experience has led me to form a conjecture that some students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) embark on this new stage with confidence and high self-esteem while others arrive with little or none and that this may be related to the type of educational experience they have recently received. Some young people arrive with head held high, the confidence to initiate and respond to communication and, as described by Carol Anne *“to swing my arms when I walk down the corridor”*. These are surely learners who feel valuable and valued. Other newcomers are more reticent and some even defensive in their dealing with staff and peers. Robbie, below, is a good example of the latter scenario. Family support and circumstances certainly have a significant influence on the confidence of these youngsters but, as secondary school pupils spend the greater proportion of their time each day at school with their teenage peers (Best, 2007), the school experience must surely

have considerable bearing and influence on the development of their self-esteem.

In my experience, as demonstrated by Robbie and Malcolm, Caroline and William, students bring a wide variety of attitudes with them when they start at College.

Robbie, a 16-year old arrival at College, asked me “Why should I believe you when you tell me anything?”, a sign of his inability to trust. It was pleasing, therefore, when after several weeks the same young man told me “When I ask you, you tell me how to do it properly – then you get really pleased when I get it right”, suggesting that this had not been a pattern of his school experience

Robbie, 16, who had attended a mainstream school

Malcolm

Another new arrival at College could read extremely fluently at a very high level. When asked about the text he had read, however, he had no concept of its meaning and might answer the question, “What time did Jane set off?” with “She only took one suitcase”.

This young man had also little concept of personal space and was inclined to stand too close to people and to touch them. He was able to learn strategies to help him with the second issue by hearing and repeating a short phrase if he was getting too near to staff or peers; this would remind him to retreat.

Malcolm, 16, who had attended a mainstream school

Caroline

One young lady always informed me that her balance was not very good and that this was because she had had binoculars dropped on her feet when she was younger. I asked her if this caused her any problems and she told me it did not and that “anyway, I am good at lots of other things”.

Caroline, 16, who had attended a special school

William

In discussions about leaving school and coming to College, one student’s response was “I didn’t get no help – they were only interested in you if you were going into the 6th Form and I wasn’t going to be able to do nothing like that so I didn’t count”.

William, 16, who had attended a mainstream school

I am intent on exploring whether the type of school attended has any bearing on these different outlooks. Why should some students feel that, despite their challenges, they are valuable and able to contribute, while others feel the reverse? The students mentioned in these examples all came from a variety of different school settings which were either mainstream or special, and added to my curiosity as to whether these differences in school experience had any impact on the degree of openness and confidence they each exhibited.

1.4.v The focus of this research study

The debate regarding the education of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in mainstream settings is longstanding and is often referred to as the Inclusion Debate. The background to this debate and its ongoing potential to arouse strong feelings will feature throughout my study. My research focuses on the apparent disparity in social confidence displayed by some pupils as they move from one setting to the next. If some circumstances can be shown to result in successful social outcomes for the pupils, these must be shared with the wider educational community in order to benefit all pupils with and without learning difficulties. The vast majority of pupils with MLD, due to their difficulties, will not have attended grammar schools, which require academic achievement of a certain standard at age 11, the exception to this being some learners who, while being autistic, perform to a high standard in some subjects. The majority will have, in the state sector, attended special or comprehensive schools. In both settings their difficulties will have potentially curtailed their academic progress, and in the comprehensive setting, they are likely to have been in the lower groups or “sets” for most subjects.

However, there is far more to the school experience than the purely academic. There is also the pastoral aspect of the schools’ ethos; the care of the whole child and the support of social development and the opportunity to discuss and overcome concerns and issues. It is this aspect of the pupils’ educational experience which is the focus of my study. My conjecture is that some pupils with MLD have access to robust pastoral care which nurtures

their personal and social development and that, in other settings, this is lacking. Furthermore, I believe that there may be a direct link between the standard, or indeed existence, of this care and the social outcomes and levels of confidence displayed by the school leavers in question.

1.5 Pastoral care and Social Outcomes

1.5.i Pastoral Care

“Pastoral: adj. Relating to the care and advice given by teachers to pupils beyond the basic teaching of their subject.”

(Chambers, 2003)

There are numerous definitions of the term, all of which stem from “pastor”, a shepherd or guide. In educational terms, it has become synonymous with the care of the whole child beyond the academic (Best, 2007). The Children Act (2004) resulted in the government publishing guidelines for educators and others working with young people, Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2004). This surely leads to confirmation that, in the wider scope of the term, education comprises a great deal more than the teaching and acquisition of curricular subject elements. With its emphasis on the child as a whole, rather than only curriculum or academic issues, schools are charged with ensuring the wellbeing of each pupil over a range of aspects, health, safety, economic wellbeing, contribution and enjoyment, in addition to achievement. These areas must, then, be covered by pastoral support systems over and above the academic work undertaken and it is on this support I wish to focus in my research. Of particular interest is the question as to whether some schools offer pastoral systems which are more effective in supporting pupils with learning difficulties with their socialisation and ultimate onward journey.

Over almost two decades, my experience, and that of my colleagues, is that learners who arrive in Further Education from particular local secondary schools are likely to report less favourably about their secondary school experiences than others. This led to a conjecture on my part that the pastoral care available to the MLD pupils in some schools is more robust than that in others. With an intake from some 12 mainstream comprehensive schools and 7 special schools, a pattern has emerged and, while localised, is by no means limited to one or two schools. My intention is that the characteristics of the apparently successful systems, and what these could invite us to recommend to all schools as good practice, are disseminated in order to benefit all pupils in all secondary schools.

1.5.ii Desired social outcomes

As a result of the drive to place pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools, promoted by governments and adopted by Local Authorities (LAs), young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) transfer into Further Education, in the establishment in which I work, from different educational backgrounds, from mainstream schools and special schools. There is an aspiration on the part of many parents and carers that, for their MLD charges, regular association with their mainstream peers will result in the development of social ability and local friends, and it is natural that they should desire social inclusion for their children (Scheepstra, Nakken and Pijl, 1999; Sloper and Tyler, 1992). The findings of my research will challenge the assumption that the placement of MLD pupils in mainstream schools necessarily results in this social incorporation and that this discrepancy does

not result from the inclusion ethos itself but from the manner of its implementation. The status quo, if the assumption is found to be misplaced, must not, however be allowed to continue. Solutions must be found and implemented so that no pupil feels isolated in their school community.

1.5.iii Pastoral relationships

Before Piaget's work, it was common to assume that children were simply less competent at thinking than adults (McLeod, 2009). Piaget was convinced that, in fact, there were different stages and content of development. Vygotsky differed, in his belief that more emphasis should be placed on the social factors which affect development (Daniels, Cole and Wertsch, 2007). I suggest that both theories may be accommodated in the development of children and young people. There are phases of skills learning and thinking but these are also strongly influenced by the circumstances in which the development takes place. In relation to my study, the learners have progressed through stages of development according to their age or level of cognitive ability but have also been influenced by the situation, or school setting, in which they had their experience.

No two young people are alike, each bringing a unique blend of personal and social characteristics influenced by their background and past experiences. Some, as previously described, finish secondary school with an apparent sense of self-worth and the ability to trust others but this is not universally the case. When embarking on the next phase of their development, aspects

other than the purely academic are major contributors to the feelings of self-assurance, or otherwise, with which these young people approach the next stage of their education.

1.5.iv The current pastoral context of the participants in the study

In the Further Education setting experienced by the young participants in this research project, learners with learning difficulties are taught in groups smaller than the national average. Depending on their level of difficulty, they undertake Life Skills or Vocational courses to increase their independence and/or support the development of skills which will be required in employment or further study in vocational areas. In addition to academic classes, groups have regular Group Tutorial sessions to focus on social and community issues and regularly scheduled individual tutorials with their Personal Tutor. These meetings cover a wide range of issues from academic progress, domestic circumstances which may affect learning or social development, social issues within and outside College, and any other matters relevant to the individual learner. When learners feel the need to discuss any matters, and they are not due to have an individual tutorial, an open-door policy allows them access to their Tutor at any time. If a learner's Personal Tutor is unavailable, other familiar departmental staff are accessible, the intention being that well-being is consistently maintained and any concerns are addressed as they arise.

It is, perhaps, easy to see how, in a college department designed to support students with Moderate Learning Difficulties, the curriculum and timetable

may be formulated to accommodate opportunities for pastoral care to form an integral part, formally and informally, of daily life. It is likely to present, in the mainstream secondary sector, a far greater challenge, with the packed timetable, changes of staff for different subjects and the pressures on those staff to deliver academic outcomes of a high standard. However, if an outcome is valuable, and valued, the challenge must be met, addressed and overcome.

1.5.v Guidance for Schools on Pastoral Care

Schools in the UK are expected to include pastoral care into ethos and practices and it is now widely accepted this is an important aspect of school life, supporting academic and social progress (Asher and Cole, 1990; Best, 2007). The agenda to ensure the well-being and progress of the whole child sits comfortably with the prevailing climate of acceptance, non-discrimination and respect. However, it is with the implementation of aspects of this care that some schools appear to struggle. This is surely not due to the lack of guidance available to them. There must be other reasons for the inability of some schools to provide a robust pastoral care system for all pupils and these will recur throughout later chapters.

When considering the pastoral, as opposed to the academic, care of pupils it must be expected that the care of the whole child will pervade all the time the pupil is in school, regardless of which subject they are studying at any given time, and that this will include unstructured times such as breaks. To support schools in their delivery of the social or non-academic aspects of

development an initiative, Every Child Matters (ECM) was introduced. In its guidance to ECM, the Department for Education and Skills pointed out that, in terms of support, *“too often children experience difficulties at home or at school but receive too little too late.”* (DfES 2004). Since then, the Department has published a number of articles, advice papers and planning aids on related issues including Drug Advice (2012), Schools and Health Reform (2012), e-safety (2012) and Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use – 2009 Survey (2012). While it is encouraging to see that the Department wishes to see these aspects of social life embedded into the school curriculum, this approach could lead to the topics being merely absorbed into the curriculum which, as previously described, is less accessible to some learners than others. By making issues part of the taught curriculum there is a danger of them becoming “just another lesson” rather than an integral feature of the wider experience, including that outside the classroom, which makes up the whole school life.

As Best (2007) reminds us, children spend the greater part of their waking hours in school each day, 5 days a week, for the majority of the year, so school staff are in a prime position to observe and monitor and get to know them. It is advocated that the areas proposed by Every Child Matters (ECM) are woven through the school’s curriculum in order to promote a whole school approach to pastoral care (de Jong and Kerr-Roubicek, 2007) and this is an effective method for ensuring that all pupils have access to these importance messages. However, unless this is coupled with access to staff members who have had the opportunity to get to know the pupil and form a

positive and non-judgemental relationship (Carey, 1996), the personal impact of any of these issues cannot be explored on an individual basis. It is crucial that young people are able to discuss the issues which affect them in a climate of security, support and trust. My research will focus on the opportunities offered to pupils to establish, and benefit from, such relationships in a variety of schools together with the impact this may have on their resulting social confidence and feelings of social integration.

Jones (2005) advocates the value of listening to children and this is certainly a valid way of eliciting their views and concerns. It does, however, presuppose that the children in question have a voice, an opportunity to be heard. When pupils, in most secondary schools, move from room to room, teacher to teacher, subject to subject during each day, the opportunity to have access to a staff member with whom they have established the relationship recommended by Carey (1996) may be limited. At primary school, pupils spend their time with a limited number of staff; their class teacher(s), teaching assistants, class support workers. The climate at secondary school is, necessarily, very different, with each lesson being taught by the specialist staff for that subject. While the pupils will have a Form or Class Tutor, the time spent with them is very limited as they move from lesson to lesson according to their timetable.

1.5.vi Guidance for schools on inviting pupils' voices

“Pupil Voice” (Cheminais, 2008) became, in the wake of Every Child Matters (ECM), a “buzz word” or new concept in the field of school improvement, at

the start of the twenty-first century. The aim of Pupil Voice is to consult pupils in a variety of ways about a range of topics related to their school experience. While this purports to be a starting point for the discussions and conversations associated with robust pastoral care this is not necessarily the case. According to Ruddock and McIntyre (2007), the emphasis in the guidance given for Pupil Voice focuses on gaining pupils' views on teaching, lessons and the school environment. These are of course immensely important aspects of school life. They do not, however, accommodate the need pupils may have to voice and discuss extra-curricular or personal issues, in or outside school, which may be affecting them and which may be of a sensitive or confidential nature.

Additionally, and I consider importantly, the process of eliciting the views of pupils must be considered. Fielding (2004) reminds readers that some pupils may be more reluctant to speak out than others, leading to views which do not truly represent those of the wider school population. If Fielding's point relates to the practical aspects of school life, it is even more relevant to those personal and social concerns about which learners may be reticent to discuss in an open forum. For this type of "voice", I propose that the pupils require the support of a staff member with whom they have had the opportunity to establish Carey's (1996) positive, individual relationship. As described already, many learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) have limited communication and social skills or may have been used to being in the lower sets for lessons. This being the case, there is an

ncreased likelihood that they would be reluctant to put themselves and their views forward in a group situation.

In my experience, young people who lack the confidence or the communication skills to speak out in a large group of people, find it decidedly easier in a situation in which they feel relaxed and comfortable. This may be with familiar peers or staff members with whom they feel relaxed and valued. If some pupils are, for these reasons, reluctant or unable to present their views in a school forum, there may be a way forward for them via small group tutorials. McCourt and Carr (2010) recommend these as a mechanism for engaging students and offering them a voice. Once again, however, the learner who has limited communication, social or confidence levels would be less likely to voice their contributions, even in the less public arena where the dynamics may be unstructured or changeable.

1.5.vii Giving pupils an individual voice

Individual tutorial time, as outlined by Robinson (2008), provides an effective forum to create dialogue at an individual level between a learner and an appropriate, skilled, member of staff and the opportunity for individual academic support and pastoral care. In this situation, the otherwise unheard learner, supported by someone with whom the relationship described by Carey (1996) has been established, is infinitely more likely to find the voice required to discuss issues impairing academic and social progress. These can be arranged tutorial meetings or, as required, informal conversations which arise out of a climate of trust and confidence. Giving pupils an

individual voice is a vital element of pastoral care at all school levels and, will be a key feature of my research in order to explore any association between this and the social development of the young person.

A feeling of belonging to the school community is considered to be a crucial element contributing to social wellbeing in each phase of education (Pijl, Frostad and Flem 2008) together with the ability to form and maintain relationships. When considering pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), it should be borne in mind that this ability will be easier for learners with outgoing dispositions than for those with behavioural problems or for pupils with autism (Koster, Pijl, Houten and Nakken, 2007; Mand, 2007). It is, as described by Asher and Cole (1990), widely recognised that rejection by peers and feelings of isolation preclude a sense of belonging to the school community and it could be expected that any rejection might occur, not in the classroom under the watchful eyes of the staff, but outside the taught session. The time spent outside the classroom is an opportunity for social wellbeing to be established, or otherwise (Booth and Ainscow, 2002), and, as identified by Flem and Keller (2000), the relationship between students can be seen as a key issue in their social outcomes.

1.5.viii Education is more than academic learning

Education is not solely concerned with academic achievement (DfES, 2004) and it is important to consider what social outcomes are desired for pupils as they transfer from one setting to another and, indeed, proceed onward from education into the wider world. The wider remit of education is not a

universally accepted concept and many countries continue to focus on the purely academic aspect of schooling. Considerable work has been undertaken in Scandinavia and The Netherlands, (Frostad and Pijl, 2007; Pijl, Frostad and Flem, 2008) with regard to the social development of school pupils with particular emphasis on those with learning difficulties. Frostad and Pijl point out the differences in the abilities of these pupils in the development of relationships which can leave them feeling isolated. Feelings of rejection by peers remove a sense of belonging and are damaging to self image (Asher and Cole, 1990); important reasons, surely, for the social aspect of education to be considered a crucial element in the development of the whole child. With this emphasis on the development of the social skills of pupils with learning difficulties, it could be suggested that they are, in fact, being socialised rather than educated. I contend that socialisation and education are not mutually exclusive but that they are, on the contrary, equally important elements of the whole development of the individual. They should, therefore, be given equal status in education agenda even if this requires some alterations in approach to the demands of the curriculum.

Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2004) describes the outcomes children should achieve in addition to their academic attainments. Schools are charged with ensuring that pupils are encouraged to be healthy and not only kept safe in school, but also know how to keep themselves safe. They should be able to make a positive contribution, achieve economic wellbeing and, importantly, they should enjoy and achieve. All of these elements

should be covered in the taught sessions but should also pervade every aspect of pupils' time at school.

Positive social development for a pupil might be detailed, then, as the awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and, in older pupils, to follow it independently (ECM¹). The pupils should also be kept safe in school and know how they can extend this outside the school boundaries (ECM²). In school, therefore, they should not feel threatened, bullied or isolated (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). They should not be economically disadvantaged and, for the secondary and further education learners, should feel that they are progressing towards economic independence (ECM⁵). Young people with some conditions which limit their social awareness may struggle more with aspects of ECM such as the ability to make a positive contribution (ECM⁴) as their awareness of others' and society's needs is impaired (Atwood, 2008: Baron-Cohen, 2008). All schools, especially in this competitive educational climate, aim for their pupils to achieve but ECM requires that they should also enjoy (ECM³). The two are closely linked:

“It is well documented that isolation and rejection by peers takes away a sense of belonging at school, hinders access to social experiences and is devastating for motivation and school performance.”

(Asher and Cole, 1990)

The mechanism for pupils to alert staff and discuss such issues should, surely, be a pastoral system which offers the opportunity to voice their concerns and feelings, not in a group or open forum but within a structured, supportive relationship with appropriate staff members. In my research, access to such opportunities in secondary schools is examined together with

the impact that this had on the participants' levels of confidence and self-esteem.

1.6 The Research Project

Creswell (2007) suggests that the success of research design starts with the philosophical assumptions made by the researcher(s) including their own views and beliefs which then inform the construct and interpretation of the study. Each researcher brings experience, professional and personal, which in turn foster questions, values and principles. It is therefore important that these are made explicit from the outset. It may be evident from my years of experience working with disadvantaged learners that my commitment to their progress is paramount and that I have had numerous opportunities to consider their previous experiences in schools of many different types. Through study, research and professional development, I have also had the opportunity to frame my experience within the wider sphere of work, underpinned by the publications, research and work of numerous experts in the field of special education and inclusion, and am privileged to use some of these here in my own research work.

1.6.i A conjecture born from growing unease

Some questions present themselves in an instant, based on a single event or circumstance, others evolve over time in the light of multiple conversations, encounters, experiences and observations. This is how it was for me. The questions underpinning my research did not appear as a result of an incident or single occurrence but from year after year of assessing incoming students

and the realisation that the trends I observed could surely not be attributed to coincidence or chance. The questions have emerged through the work I have done with pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in their first educational experience immediately after leaving secondary school and the opportunities I have had to observe, assess, discuss, record and teach them. They have emerged through the conversations I have had with families and carers, not only on formal Parents' Evenings but during the ongoing relationships established with them in order to support the young people. They have emerged through the conversations and meetings with schools' transition staff and, importantly, with my colleagues. All these opportunities have enabled me to observe that intake after intake of young school leavers have commenced their Further Education stage having had very different social experiences at school. This, perhaps, is not surprising in itself, given that they have transferred from some 19 schools, yet a pattern observed over almost 20 years has emerged, leading to my hypothesis that many of the learners with lower levels of confidence and self-esteem were those who had been included in mainstream schools. Most, however, of the learners who had attended special schools were able to "swing their arms" and exhibited overall greater evidence of having been socially successful at school.

It is my hypothesis that, in some schools, the development of confidence and self esteem is more successfully fostered in pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) than in others and that this may depend on the type of school attended. My study was designed to test this hypothesis. Therefore I

needed to give careful consideration to the mechanism for undertaking this examination.

1.6.ii Development of the Research Study

Creswell (2007) reminds us that, historically, researchers have held entrenched views, opting for wholly quantitative or wholly qualitative research methods and purists have emerged on both sides of the argument. Increasingly, however, researchers are choosing to employ mixed methods (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), and this concept can be liberating when embarking on a research project such as this one. When considering how to approach my research, a first step might have been to request and consider the pastoral care policies of secondary schools whose pupils generally progress into the Further Education College which features in this study. However, as philosopher, Foucault (1980) and educationalist, Paechter (1998) point out, the greatest importance concerns not the creation of policy but how it is implemented. If stated intention is ineffectively put into practice, the original purpose will be lost and may fall victim to the resulting unintended consequences. It is likely, as pointed out by Colebatch (2002), that those who formulate policy are not those charged with its implementation. This being the case, I considered that a policy audit would produce an overview of intent rather than a clear picture of how pastoral systems feature and are experienced by pupils in practice. Policy is clearly at the root of the inclusion agenda but its implementation and impact which sowed the seeds of the concern underpinning this project rather than the motives, commendable or otherwise, for its formulation.

If, then, a review of the policies would not reveal personal experience of pastoral care in schools, those in the best position to describe this care must surely be the pupils themselves. Although, as described by Fielding (2004), some learners may be reluctant to offer their views in a group situation, giving the pupils a voice is a very valuable and valid method of eliciting their views (Jones, 2005) and the design of a mechanism to do this was an important consideration. The voices of the pupils were to form the first stage of my research. In 1.3, I outlined the methods of assessment of social and personal skills used when the participants in my study embark on their first experience of education after leaving school. These assessments are undertaken by specialist staff over a period of time, giving as robust a result as possible. This provided an opportunity for the judgements of the professionals working with the new learners with MLD to be considered. A second phase of my study had emerged. This two-phase research project was designed to examine my conjecture, listening to different voices. Phase one focused on the learners and their views and the second phase comprised a statistical analysis of the initial assessments of a whole cohort in year one of their College experience.

1.6.iii The Research Project: Phase 1 – The Voices of the Pupils

Full details of the methodology and methods used are given in Chapter 3 but an outline of the approach taken may be useful to set the project into context here. Phase one of my research required careful consideration of ethical issues as the students invited to take part, while over 16 years of age, are, rightly, considered to be very vulnerable young people. Any research

involving participants with learning difficulties presents practical considerations in addition to the ethical. Limited literacy and communication skills require careful reflection when methods are selected, as do the contributors' abilities to process information and levels of short and long-term memory. If interviews were to be successfully and productively undertaken, it was crucial that the facilitator was highly skilled in the methods of communication accessible to those with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD).

In my research, students from the first year cohort, in a given year, were invited to participate, an equal number of pupils who had previously attended mainstream and special schools. My experience of teaching students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) for many years was invaluable when making decisions with regard to the format their participation should take. The young people, due to their learning difficulties, were likely to have limited literacy skills making the use of questionnaires inappropriate. All students were required to complete a standard College questionnaire each half term on paper or using a computer. Both options were problematic for the MLD learners who were insufficiently fluent readers and/or were unable to access the terminology used. This resulted in staff having to "guide" the students as to the meaning of the questions, with the associated danger of "guidance" to the answers to be given. The resulting statistics were, therefore, at best, highly questionable.

Similarly, very structured and formal interview techniques could be stressful and intimidating and, not only ethically questionable, also result in inaccurate data. For these reasons, semi-structured interviews (Thomas, 2009) were chosen as the research tool for this phase, each participant being asked the same questions and being encouraged to expand their responses as appropriate.

In advance of the main project, a small Pilot Study was undertaken. The purpose of this was to test the accessibility of the questions and questioning method used. Should it be necessary, alterations would be made to either element and the results of the Pilot Study discarded. If, however, the Pilot Study proved successful in method and content, the findings would be analysed and included with those of the Main Study when reporting back. The latter proved to be the case; the questioning was accessible to the participants and productive in terms of responses. The interviews produced useful and informative data which could be used to address the research questions and the findings were, therefore, combined, as detailed in Chapter 4. The project and its purpose was made clear to the participants and, in light of my experience, training and expertise, the questions were phrased in terms and in a manner accessible to young people with learning difficulties. Open questions such as *“describe how you felt when*” were avoided. Instead, a closed question, *“Did you come to Link Week?”* might be followed by, *“What did you do on Link Week?”*, *“Which activity did you like best?”*, leading eventually to a more open discussion about how this made the participant feel. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed and

details of the methods used to ensure informed consent, confidentiality, security and validity, and the adherence to ethical guidelines are expanded on in Chapter 3.

Undertaking the task of analysing and reporting findings in this qualitative element of the research required that they should be considered equally robust as quantitative survey (Richards, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) describe a “constant comparative” approach, whereby related themes are identified. This, they suggest, in turn, leads to a grounded theory, as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory implies that theory will emerge from the raw data produced by a situation rather than the researcher approaching the project with fixed ideas from the start. Given that I had formulated a conjecture in advance of the research, I needed to ensure that I try to be aware of, but take measures to overcome, any bias of my own when presenting the findings in order that the participants’ views were accurate and their reporting valid.

1.6.iv The Research Project: Phase 2 – Feedback from the Professionals via Assessment Results

In 1.3, I outlined the social and personal assessments undertaken by College professionals with learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) during their first weeks at College. These “Essential Skills” (MENCAP, 2001) focus on skills other than academic which enable young people to function successfully, not only in College but in everyday life.

The skills involved are:

- To follow more complex instructions
- To maintain routines and extend the range
- To make more complex choices
- To initiate actions and activities
- To identify problems and inform a responsible adult
- To relate to a wider range of people
- To conform to rules of behaviour
- To follow safety instructions
- To look after personal belongings
- To initiate communication and respond to others

MENCAP (2001)

(Appendix ii)

The learners are assessed on these skills which form the middle “strand” of the benchmarks. They may, if able to perform a skill consistently, move onto the higher “strand” of that skill. Similarly, if unable to demonstrate a particular skill at all, they may move to the lower “strand” for that skill. The results of the assessments are compiled to produce a Baseline Learning Profile (Appendix i, p 8-9) upon which individual plans and goals are based. While further detail of this system will be given in Chapter 3, it is important to note here that the assessments are carried out by the entire team of professionals working with each individual student. Academic staff, Teaching Assistants and Learning Support Assistants all contribute to the assessment, observing and recording of outcomes in order that the results should not be subjective but comprehensive and robust. It is also significant that a skill must be demonstrated consistently and repeatedly, not on one

occasion or in one situation alone, before it may be considered to have been achieved.

The skills assessed at the commencement of the Further Education experience for students with MLD, while including the academic, hold a wider remit to evaluate the social and interactive competencies of each learner. For instance, the ability to follow detailed instructions may indicate a level of confidence but is also highly dependent on the ability to understand the instructions given. Initiating communication and responding to others, however, could be a more accurate indication of confidence.

Phase 2 of the research focused on the analysis of the Essential Skills assessments of the students who had transferred immediately from secondary school and who were embarking on their further education in the College's provision for learners with MLD in the academic year 2011-2012. As further detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, particular analysis was made of those skills which might be an indication of levels of self-esteem and confidence rather than cognitive ability. In this Phase an exact match of numbers from mainstream and special schools was not possible and the analysed findings are shown in terms of the percentage from each particular setting.

1.7 Research Questions

My overall aim in this research was to examine the relationship between the secondary school experiences of young people with Moderate Learning

Difficulties and the social outcomes for them. In particular the school setting, mainstream or special, was of interest. I sought to identify similarities and/or differences in the learners' experiences in the different types of schools with the aim of enquiring:

To what extent do pastoral care systems affect social outcome for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties?

and to answer the questions

- To what extent does pastoral care for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in special and mainstream secondary schools differ?
- To what extent do social outcomes for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in special and mainstream secondary schools differ?
- Can an association be found between the pastoral care strategies implemented and the social outcomes that follow?

The detailed methodology and methods through which these questions were addressed are given in Chapter 3. Before embarking, however, on the theory and practicalities which underpin this enquiry, it is appropriate to examine the history of the debate on inclusion and consider the reasons behind its longevity. As I proposed in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, there is a discrepancy between the stated intended outcome of an inclusive education system and the manner of its implementation. The proposals of many, on either side of the discussion must be considered together with the findings of others which inform it. In Chapter 2, the literature surrounding this will be presented, to offer context and breadth to the discussion. When considering the answers to the research questions, I

intend to offer recommendations to address any findings which indicate that this disadvantage may persist through their schooling.

Chapter 2 : Inclusion: The Debate: “We had our lessons in the bungalow”

Inclusion means that the organisation of education systems has to start by recognising the diversity of *all* pupils' learning needs.

(Wedell, 1995)

In the Special Unit we had our lessons in the bungalow. Except for sport and things like that – we could do that with the others.

Luke (16) who had attended a mainstream school

2.1 The background to the Inclusion Debate

2.1.i The start of the debate

Luke, who is quoted above and who has Moderate Learning Difficulties, had been included in a mainstream secondary school. Or had he? Certainly he was on the register there and had attended regularly. Does this mean, however, that he was included? I suggest that it does not. This chapter will examine the background to Luke's, at that of countless others, situation and, I hope, stimulate discussion as to the true meaning of inclusion.

In my research, I aim to examine a particular aspect of the education system with particular reference to pupils diagnosed with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) so it is appropriate at this stage to consider the background to the current situation. I have, in the previous chapter, outlined my experience of many years teaching pupils with MLD in their first years of Further Education. This has been both deeply challenging and highly rewarding and has given me an overriding commitment to the development of these potentially disadvantaged young people. While it is important that I explore the hypothesis I have formed in light of my experience, it is equally

important that I give consideration to the contributions made by others to the discussion regarding the education of pupils with a range of particular educational requirements. I need to set my research within the wider context of many philosophers and educationalists who have written extensively on matters germane to my study.

The context mentioned above is vast and it could be daunting to embark on the study of a field so widely covered by so many experts in so many disciplines. It was necessary to apply some discipline of my own in order to contextualise my study within appropriate and relevant areas; failure to do this would result in shallow and disparate reading, leading to a loss of focus on the work of others which could inform my own. Philosophy, and particularly those philosophies which could be linked to the study of difference, equality and education, was an underpinning thread of study. This was pertinent, not only in the examination of the fundamental thinking of past philosophers, but, crucially, in its relevance with regard to the thinking of current, and recent, policy makers.

If philosophy was a key theme of my reading, equally pertinent was the area of policy, policy makers and the motives behind their proposals. I do not consider it cynical to examine the factors which drive those in positions of power to impose policies on the implementers. Without knowledge of the reasoning behind decisions, not only is democratic challenge impossible but implementation is fraught with resentment. Having examined work in the philosophical and policy fields, it was important to, in light of work undertaken

by experts in research to consider the various options available for different types of research and to form an opinion on their relevance and/or suitability for use in my own study. Reflecting on the research of others was invaluable when considering bias, reliability, presentation of findings and methods most appropriate for an individual research study.

The background to the inclusion agenda was, naturally a key feature of the literature studied to underpin my own enquiry, and it enabled me to encompass the plethora of views and opinions, past and more recent, which have relevance to the context of my research, to evaluate them and to relate them to the current educational climate in which the participants in my study base their experience.

Eighteenth century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, introduced his categorical imperative (Paton, 1948) and his emphasis on the ethics of motives should be considered in relation to the inclusion question. Kant's philosophy that the desire to do good should be paramount when organising society raises questions as to whether this good can necessarily result for each individual, as well as for the majority. This conflict is mirrored when applied to members of society who are different in some way from others and the extent to which their integration benefits, or otherwise, both them and the larger group. French philosopher, Michel Foucault and British educationalist, Carrie Paechter have both, more recently, expressed views which consider that matters concerning the implementation of theories and agendas are more significant than the motives underpinning them. Paechter's (1998)

work uses the example of gender differences in education which, she maintains, disadvantages a particular group, females. In light of the work undertaken in recent years regarding the educational underachievement of some male pupils in secondary schools, there is clearly further examination to be done to ensure the accessibility of the curriculum for pupils from all “groups”. Foucault (1972), on the other hand, wished to escape from being assigned an identity or being categorised. The twenty-first century’s education system continues to attribute identities, distinguished by their differences and, surely, each of Paechter’s groups is made up of Foucault’s individuals. My research will focus on an aspect of inclusion which, in its implementation, fails to address the needs of the very group it is intended to support. Another strand of Kant’s philosophy argued that we do not have direct experience of things but that our experiences are shaped by our senses. For pupils, with or without learning difficulties, their perception of their school days is their reality, their experience, even if not objectively accurate.

The term “inclusion” is often used interchangeably with “integration”. The terms have similar, though not identical, definitions regarding individual items or people being absorbed into a greater whole. Generally, inclusion is understood to describe full participation in a group, event or society, whereas integration indicates an amalgamation to form part of the whole. Inclusion, then, recognises differences and makes adjustments to ensure that individual components are not impeded from taking part. Integration, however, implies that one element (here, pupil) becomes a necessary

(integral) part of the whole. I question whether the experience of Luke, quoted at the start of this chapter, falls into either definition. In this study, the term used will be inclusion and there will be opportunities to discuss what constitutes true inclusion in the following chapters. The same discussion could usefully be applied to the term “integration” but this, while an interesting and important question, this falls outside the scope of this study.

The drive to admit children and young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) to mainstream schools has, since its inception in the middle of the last century, aroused strong feelings on the part of its supporters and those who are concerned for the manner of its implementation. The latter group concern themselves not with the ethos of inclusion itself but whether the mainstream schools and their staff are prepared, resourced and equipped with the required skills to accommodate pupils with MLD and empower them to thrive. This question will reoccur throughout my research.

The concept of an inclusive society is, in any context, a relatively recent one. In the middle of the last century the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa forced the developed world to consider whether it was right to segregate by law one group of people from another on the basis of certain superficial differences. Prior to these movements it had been largely believed that it was acceptable, in fact necessary, to separate people for the purposes of education, transport and housing should they originate from different groups, and that some

groups were inherently superior to others. The changes brought about by the success of these movements have heralded a general agreement in many countries, including the UK, that to separate people merely because they appear different is in fact unacceptable. This change in attitude in relation to race is mirrored in matters relating to the education of children with learning difficulties. At the beginning of the last century the tendency was to segregate those children with particular needs and to educate them separately from their typically developing peers, this being considered to be a more appropriate approach to their schooling (Burt, 1917). Rather than the educational establishment, the health services undertook responsibility for the care and development of children with learning difficulties, the implication being that such difficulties were illnesses or diseases rather than differences to be accommodated. The Norwood Report (1943) further underpinned different types of education for different types of learners. Having always been educated separately, however, a drive for these children to receive schooling alongside their peers without such needs developed during the twentieth century. It is not possible to examine here the quality or otherwise, of the different types of schooling which preceded the movement to educate, where possible, all pupils together, and there is no reason to suggest that it was of a uniformly acceptable standard. The term widely used for the proposed type of schooling has become known as “inclusive” education and, by the time UNESCO undertook a survey in 1988 with the aim of ascertaining attitudes to the placement of pupils with learning difficulties, this approach to education was a declared policy in the majority of countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

2.1.ii How inclusion is defined

Before embarking on any discussion regarding the issue of inclusive education, it is important to clarify what is meant by the term “inclusion” when referring to educational settings. Inclusion is often defined in dictionaries as the act of confining or containing. From these definitions it could be inferred that education for pupils with particular needs necessitates simply their location in the same setting as their peers who are developing within the normal parameters for their age. I believe that this is too simplistic a definition to be directly applied to education. The needs of **every** child are special. For many educators, the term “inclusion” is used synonymously with “integration”, the implication being that once the child is in the school then inclusion has taken place (Davis and Hopwood, 2002). This premise is strongly challenged by Meijer (2003) who points out that being taught in a mainstream school does not necessarily mean being included and underpinning my research is the conjecture that this is, indeed, far from being the case. Research undertaken by Davis and Hopwood (2002) revealed definitions of inclusion ranging from “full participation in” to “not withdrawn”; there appears to be scope for considerable difference of opinion.

Ainscow (1999) seeks to clarify these definitions, suggesting that integration is a system whereby a limited number of additional arrangements are made for pupils with special educational needs. Inclusion, however, implies the introduction of more radical changes so as to embrace and address the needs of all children. The latter concept would require considerable restructuring, training and adaptations to schools and inevitably substantial

additional funding to accommodate these. If this were a simple matter to address, it is likely that the debate would have been resolved long ago. Because something is difficult, however, is no reason for it to be neglected or avoided and the process by which the learning and participation of some students may be facilitated is complex and remains a poorly comprehended aspect of education (Barnard, Prior and Potter, 2000; Batten, Rosenblatt, Withers and Yuille, 2006; Davis and Florian, 2004; Humphrey and Parkinson, 2006). As discussed in Chapter 1, the arrangements made for the accommodation of learners with particular needs vary in parallel with the range of difficulties, and specialist expertise and experience is required in order to meet individual requirements.

Jerry, Sally, Mo and Ciaran

Within one of my teaching groups was Jerry. Jerry is a wheelchair-using learner with cerebral palsy who clearly requires the access arrangements made a legal requirement by the Disability Discrimination Act (DfES, 1995) including rise and fall desks and specifically designed computer hardware. These physical adaptations are arguably easily identified (Frederickson and Cline, 2005). In Jerry's group, however, are learners with other particular needs; Sally with a significant language processing impairment, Mo with severe Asperger's and highly autistic Ciaran.

While the adjustments made to facilitate Jerry's access to the curriculum are physical and practical, those required by Sally, Harry and Ciaran relate to specialist teaching strategies, communication skills and extensive knowledge of specific learning difficulties.

Sally, Harry and Ciaran may require no special adaptations to physical facilities but as Davis and Florian (2004) and Holloway (2004) identify, they should be taught, if they are to successfully access the educational and life opportunities available to them, by specialist staff trained to address their individual needs. The specialist training required has financial implications and the opportunities for mainstream school staff to acquire and employ the necessary skills is questionable. In the current educational climate where schools are under pressure to produce good academic outcomes and to appear favourably in the published schools league tables, the different demands on financial resources will inevitably result in a degree of tension when decisions are made regarding their allocation.

2.1.iii Trends and patterns in the education of pupils with special educational needs

The publication of the Warnock Report (1978) can be seen as a watershed in the approach to the education of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN), heralding the transition from the “medical model” towards a “social model” (Scott and McNeish, 2013). This shift in emphasis inevitably led to changes in the structure of the education system and in the types of educational establishment attended by pupils with special needs. The policies on inclusion implemented in the 1980s and early 1990s saw significant changes in the educational landscape in England and, between 1986 and 1991, the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs placed in mainstream schools doubled, from 35,000 to 70,900 (Male and Rayner, 2007).

The increased emphasis on inclusion over the last thirty years has resulted in more children with SEN being educated in mainstream schools, resulting in a decline in the number of special schools in the 1980s and 1990s. The number of special schools in England fell in each year between 1979 to 1991 (DfES, 2006). Male and Rayner (2007) describe, however, that by 2002 there has been a gradual “levelling out” in both the number of special schools and the pupils placed in them.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2006) published figures indicating that in 2005, 18% of pupils in England were categorised as having some sort of SEN. This rose to 19% in 2006 and to 19.8% in 2012 (Robertson, 2012). While it would be interesting to examine the analysis of the types of need covered by these statistics and consider, if evident, any increased incidence of particular diagnoses, it is appropriate here to offer an overview of trends, particularly with regard to the placement of pupils with special educational needs rather than a detailed analysis of diagnoses.

Many pupils are considered to have a learning difficulty but do not receive a statement of SEN and, according to the DfES (2006) statistics, this applied to 15% of all pupils in England in 2005. By 2010 this had increased to 17% (Robertson, 2012). DfES analysis indicated some regional variations in the prevalence of special educational needs and statements. While there are some differences throughout the country, London and the South East of England have a significantly higher incidence of both. The government’s

statistical records indicate that Gloucestershire, where my study took place, falls slightly below the average for England in terms of the percentage of pupils, with and without statements of SEN, who are considered to have special educational needs (Office for National Statistics, 2010).

My research will consider the experiences of pupils with learning difficulties who had attended either a mainstream or special school. It is relevant here, then, to establish the recent pattern of placement of pupils with SEN in either setting, nationally and locally.

The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs placed in mainstream schools in England at the beginning of 2005 was 60% (DfES, 2006). Figures from the Department for Education (2013) indicate that by 2010, this had fallen to 54.9%, and the School Census states that this had, by January 2014, decreased to 52.9%. This steady decline could be considered to indicate that for some pupils with very particular needs, mainstream school was not deemed to be the most appropriate setting. The same census indicates that, of the pupils considered to have special educational needs but who do not have a statement, 93% were placed in mainstream schools.

As described, statistical information from the Department for Education (2013) shows that Gloucestershire in 2010 had a similar, or very slightly lower, incidence of pupils with special educational needs than the overall picture in England. In 2010, 18.9% of pupils with SEN attended mainstream

primary schools; 1.4% had statements and 17.6% did not. According to the Office for National Statistics (2010), the placement of all pupils with SEN, with and without statements was, in 2010, greater in state-funded mainstream secondary schools (2% and 19.7%) than in their primary schools counterparts (1.4% and 18.5% respectively) suggesting, perhaps, a greater desire for inclusion in mainstream education at secondary level.

In Gloucestershire, census information collated by the Country Council, (Gloucestershire County Council, 2014) indicates a degree of stability in recent years. In mainstream schools, the percentage of pupils with a statement of special needs has risen from 1.56% in 2012 to 1.61% in 2013 and 1.64% in 2014. For the same time period, in special schools, the percentages were similarly steady; 89.07% in 2012, 89.90% in 2013 and 90.96% in 2014. This picture, for the percentages of pupils deemed to have special needs but without a statement, in mainstream schools, shows a slight decrease. In Gloucestershire mainstream schools in 2012, 14.92% were so described, dipping slightly to 14.12% in 2013 and to 13.85% in 2014.

This overview illustrates that the publication of the Warnock Report (1978) resulted in major changes in the education of pupils with special educational needs and this, in turn, led to the closure of much specialised provision and the re-allocation of pupils with particular needs. Some twenty years later, the level of change had decreased and some constancy had been established. This is not to suggest, however, that a degree of stability indicates that any

controversies are resolved and outcomes satisfactory. On the contrary, my research may, indeed, prove otherwise.

2.1.iv Education after Warnock

The move to adjust the approach to the education of children with learning difficulties engendered a debate which is ongoing. This debate centres around the differences of opinion and definition highlighted by Ainscow (1999) regarding where the education of children and young people with learning difficulties should take place, in schools designed for those with such difficulties or in schools where they are educated alongside their peers who do not. Ainscow's experience as a teacher, headteacher, Local Education Authority inspector, university lecturer and Professor of Education bring an extensive and informed view of all aspects of the argument, notably the need for appropriate training for teachers. The discussion is often referred to as the "inclusion debate" (Frederickson and Cline, 2002), taking as its premise that if children or young people are placed in a particular setting they are in fact included in the community and the activities provided by it. Inclusion, however, comprises far more than location and specialised teaching is required for pupils with learning difficulties wherever they are placed. Historically, it was suggested that arrangements which ran in tandem with regular schooling would most benefit these learners, their classes in units or special schools being smaller and the teaching methods being appropriately adapted (Burt, 1917). French psychologists, Binet and Simon (1907) had, at the start of the twentieth century, devised the forerunner of modern intelligence tests, the Binet-Simon scale, with the aim of identifying pupils who required special help to cope with the school

curriculum. Vygotsky (1978) believed that the “slow learner” can still learn within a structured learning environment; an environment, this implies, with appropriately trained staff and adequate specialised resources. It appears, then, that the requirement for specialised support for some pupils is longstanding and that one style of education is, therefore, not appropriate for all learners.

The 1944 Education Act heralded the democratisation of the education system in England. Between 1944 and 1970, a series of measures was introduced by successive Labour and Conservative governments with the aim of raising standards in schools and also of broadening the equality of opportunity for pupils (Tomlinson, 2008). Section 2.2 of this chapter considers the extent to which these two aspects of education policy can sit comfortably together without the need for complete philosophical commitment and substantial financial support. The 1970 Education (Handicapped Pupils) Act opened the mainstream school doors to children who may have previously been educated elsewhere. This resulted in many pupils with learning difficulties being educated in mainstream settings rather than in the special schools, or even hospital settings, which they would previously have attended. The number of education policies created during these twenty-five years (1944 – 1970) pales into insignificance, however, when compared with the raft of new policy initiatives introduced in the subsequent thirty years. Among the most recent changes were the Academies Act 2010 and the Education Act 2011, each of which expanded the categories of schools available and altered the balance of power

between the government, Local Authorities and schools themselves. The number of policies may seem irrelevant but the impact on the education professionals and the demands involved in their implementation are highly pertinent.

2.1.v The Warnock Committee

Probably the most widely known, quoted and discussed document in the field of special education is the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (Warnock, 1978), more usually referred to as the Warnock Report. Mary (now Baroness) Warnock's selection as the chairperson of the Committee of Enquiry which resulted in the publication of the Warnock Report is an interesting one. She has been described as a philosopher and author (Telchman, 1999) and has a prestigious background in education, notably as a teacher of philosophy, a headteacher and as Mistress of Girton College in the University of Cambridge. Clearly such a pedigree indicates a committee member inclined to deep consideration of ethical issues and with knowledge of schools and the education system. The realm in which Warnock's teaching took place was in the privileged echelons to which few have access and which are outside the aspirations or expectations of most learners with specific difficulties. However, the extent to which the other members of the Committee (Warnock, 1978) had expertise in the relevant educational fields could be considered questionable.

I have mentioned some of the many eminent professionals who have written, researched and published in the field of special education and described the extent to which their backgrounds and experience in the field on which they write invite confidence in the validity and worth of their work. The Committee, whose deliberations gave birth to such far reaching changes, comprised 26 members. They were drawn from a range of medical, local government, educational and academic backgrounds (Warnock, 1978). Warnock would have been selected on the basis of her ability to chair the Committee expertly rather than because she had expertise in all aspects to be considered under its remit, with the expectation that the Committee members would provide professional knowledge and experience to support the working of the Enquiry. It initially appears that the members were drawn from a wide and appropriate professional sphere. While such diversity seems, on the face of it, to provide a comprehensive scope of skills and expertise, closer scrutiny of the Committee's membership calls into question its representative basis. Of the 26 members, 16 were drawn from academic, medical and local government backgrounds. From the teaching profession, 4 members were appointed from special schools. From the mainstream sector one sole member represented the secondary sector, one the further education sector and there was no representation from the mainstream primary or pre-school phases of education. The most significant impact of the recommendations from the Warnock Report was inevitably, and continues to be, felt by schools, special and mainstream. It is surely noteworthy therefore that they (schools) were so under-represented on the Committee itself.

In her letter, introducing the Report of the Committee of Enquiry, Warnock is at pains to emphasise that, despite the variety of professions behind the Committee members, they were unanimous in their submission of the Report and that, despite some minor difference of opinion, all the conclusions and recommendations were presented in complete agreement. Twenty-seven years after the publication of the Committee's Report, Mary Warnock acknowledged that

“the secretariat* wrote the initial paper that formed the foundation of the committee's work, decided what research needed to be done, the schools that the committee members would visit and provided the questions that should be asked.”

* The secretariat of the Department of Education and Science

(Jackson, 2005)

Here, the secretariat in question was the administrative governmental department with responsibility for educational matters. The Secretary of State for Education, responsible for setting up the Committee and for so closely controlling its remit, was Margaret Thatcher who, Jackson (2005) attests, had given indication of her lack of enthusiasm for research, an activity which she regarded as expensive in terms of money and time and lacking in effect. It appears, therefore, that the remit and workings of the Committee were, to some extent, predetermined by the Secretary of State and this, in turn calls, into question the independence of the Independent Enquiry. The Secretary of State was to propose legislation which appears to have been based on a limited interest in the outcomes of research. This being the case there must be other reasons for the far-reaching changes proposed. If these were not the result of a deontological, duty-based drive to

truly include, as recommended by the Warnock Report, the alternative could be that the motives were that “streamlining” the education system would result in financial advantages to the State. In 1976, the Government had introduced a new clause into the Education Bill currently under consideration (Karagianis and Nesbit, 1981; Jackson, 2005). Clause 10, later to be incorporated into the Education Act 1981, required that

“handicapped pupils in England and Wales are to be educated in ordinary schools in preference to special schools.”

(Warnock, 1978, p100)

While I do not suggest that it was inappropriate to review the education of pupils with particular needs, or that the previous segregated provision was of a universally acceptable standard, it is significant that, for many, the debate rumbles on after so many years. The discussion, however, concerns itself, not so much with the spirit but with the practicalities of the agenda to include. The Warnock Report’s recommendation that pupils with learning difficulties should be educated alongside their typically progressing peers continue to arouse deliberations among academics, educationalists, politicians and parents. Academics continue to pursue the ideal where all pupils are taught as individuals with regard being given to their unique strengths and the areas in which they require support. Educationalists and practitioners in education strive to produce a situation wherein the education of the majority of the pupils may be robust and successful while the needs of a vulnerable minority are also accommodated, this in a climate of pressure to attain high standards and meet objectives. Inevitably, a tension exists if those charged with the production of successful outcomes are not equipped with the specialist

resources and strategies to ensure the support of those whom Binet and Simon (1907) identified as requiring particular assistance to access the curriculum.

Politicians carry the burden of creating a successful education system, for all pupils, while maintaining financial stability and viability. Parents, meanwhile, battered by the abundance of information from all sides of the debate (Runswick-Cole, 2008), seek only the best possible outcomes for their children with, or without, learning difficulties. I believe that the larger question here concerns, not the ethos to include, but the climate in which it is required to be implemented. This is governed by an agenda of financial constraints, standards and competition, and the extent to which mainstream schools are furnished with the skills and capacity to truly include is surely questionable. It may come as no surprise, in the circumstances, that, some mainstream schools employ highly questionable strategies to manage some of the more troublesome pupils with learning difficulties. These include the reduction of timetables and placements in other settings outside the school. Understanding the reasons does not, however, imply that these strategies are acceptable or in any way inclusive.

2.2 Education Policy and the Inclusion Debate

2.2.i The nature of policy and how it is created

Scarcely a day passes without reference in the written and broadcast media to at least one policy, new, existing or proposed, and it is perhaps natural, given their shared Greek derivation, that policy is usually associated with

politics and politicians. Certainly in many cases this is a valid connection and elected members play a leading role in the formulation of policy. The term, however, has a broader definition involving *“the creation of order – that is, shared understandings about how various participants will act in particular circumstances”* (Colebatch, 2002). However, in May 2013, the National Association of Headteachers, at their annual conference, accused the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, of creating a climate of bullying, fear and intimidation, passing a vote of no-confidence in his policies, a vote replicated by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers at their annual conferences – hardly a resounding endorsement of a climate of order.

Policies, we should remember, may also exist without the need for the written documentation so often associated with them. Some such policies evolve out of custom and practice and families, for instance, while not necessarily using the term, may have a policy for certain events in that it is expected that members will undertake certain tasks and roles because this is how it has happened in the past. Whilst acknowledging this, it is the formal, institutional forms of policy that concerns the discussion here.

While policies may be written documents, they can also be considered to be a process created through what Woods (2003) describes as a set of formal stages. This process, involving generation, creation, implementation and review is, at international and national level, formulated by those in positions

of power and influence. For Foucault (1980), power and knowledge are closely bound together, suggesting that those who create policy are in a position of understanding. Paechter (1998), however, proposes that the policy makers are likely to view the issue in questions from a particular perspective. For both of them, rather than the question of who is in the powerful and influential position to create policy, it is the mechanisms for implementation which are the important aspects. The exact opposite could be argued, however, in that the motives of the policy makers will dictate the nature of the policy and its impact on the population. I suggest that both arguments are valid. If policy is formulated with a Kantian ideology to do good out of an ethical sense of duty to do the right thing, but its implementation is hampered by under-resourcing, lack of appropriate training and conflicting priorities, the good intended will not result. If, on the other hand, policy is created from a requirement to consolidate resources or to appeal to the electorate, it may, with the commitment and dedication of those required to implement it, result in positive outcomes. The inclusion agenda, then, may have its roots in Kant's categorical imperative (Paton, 1948) but its implementation in Foucault and Paechter's implementation minefield.

2.2.ii The creators of policy

When creating any policy, politicians need the expertise and advice of professionals who are experts in the topic under scrutiny. For instance, one might hope that policies relating to the health service were informed by medical professionals. Similarly, it could be expected that the formulation of education policy would be based on knowledge and experience of education

experts. Arguably one of the most significant documents relating to young people with learning difficulties and their education was the Warnock Report (1978) Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (Warnock, 1978). The far-reaching recommendations of the Committee included those which would lead to moves to educate most pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream rather than special schools. The impact of this drive was to be extensive, notably on schools, teachers, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and, of course, pupils themselves. It could be expected that the Committee would be made up of education experts equipped to offer advice to policy makers in this crucial area of life for vulnerable young people. However, as identified in earlier paragraphs, the dearth of members of the Committee drawn from schools, described in 2.1 v, is perhaps indicative of the agenda behind the commissioning of the Enquiry. In practical terms the most significant impact resulting from the Committee's Enquiry affected schools, special and mainstream, and is noteworthy therefore that they were so under represented on the Committee. The voices of many professionals were raised after Warnock and continue to be so (Butt, Gunter and Thomas, 2007) but it is disappointing that successive governments, when selecting committee members and designing policies, have not taken the opportunity to elicit the views of those most likely to be affected. The opportunity to share expertise, experience and specialism is, in the long run, cost effective and sound practice but perhaps too much consultation with the experts would interfere with a pre-set agenda.

2.2.iii The influences on policy makers

Foucault (1980), whose interest in both (anti) racism and human rights abuse was central to his philosophy, highlighted the impact of policy implementation, over the significance of the policy creators, as of paramount importance. Similarly, educationalist, Paechter (1998) agreed that the outcomes, rather than the design of policy should be the focus of concern and discussion. Certainly, those charged with carrying out policy are likely to be other than those who formulated it (Colebatch, 2002). I suggest that it matters enormously who has drawn up the agenda for the inception of a given policy. Each policy maker will have beliefs and tenets on which their actions are based. Kant's tenet was, in simple terms, that the motive to do good supersedes the consideration of the outcome of the action so, if the creators are driven by Kant's categorical imperative (Paton, 1948) to follow a deontological path to do good, regardless of the outcomes, their policies may differ greatly from those instigated by policy makers with a more utilitarian pattern of thought. Many would surely debate the philosophical assumptions of the term "*to do good*". To do good to whom? To the majority? To the minority? To everyone? It is unlikely that far-reaching agendas will be able to benefit everyone, so the likelihood is that results of given policies and actions will be more beneficial to some than others. Additionally, when considering the possibility of unintended consequences, there is a danger that damage will occur as a result of policy if draconian decisions are hastily implemented. Implementation of the recommendations of the Warnock Committee led to the closure of many special school places as pupils with learning difficulties were admitted to mainstream schools. The consequence

of this was a loss of specialist expertise, available in the former but, understandably, lacking in the latter.

The outcomes sought by policy makers following a utilitarian philosophy may be to save money, to control or merely to be re-elected rather than purely to act morally yet these may need to be presented to the electorate as though based in deontology. The philosophies of the creators of the inclusion agenda policies, for instance, must surely have an impact not only on their content but as, if not more, importantly, on the way in which they are designed to be implemented. A deep belief in the need to ensure no child is disadvantaged might lead to a very different method of implementation from one resulting from the premise that sound economic stability is the underpinning ethos on which society should be founded. If inclusion is based on the former, every strategy required to ensure adequate staffing levels, resources and specialist staff training would be provided, together with the flexibility in the curriculum to provide robust, individual care for each pupil. If, however, it is the latter, economic, motive which underpins the organisation of education, the reverse would be the case as the strategies, training, resources and time are costly to central and local governmental budgets and to schools themselves.

Woods (2003), an educationalist who has written extensively on his specialism, leadership, indicated that policy comprises stages, generation, creation, implementation and evaluation and surely the last stage is the most important. Certainly, it would appear to be a sensible approach to ascertain

the effects of a given policy and use the results to inform further policy making, and the use of inductive, as opposed to deductive, reasoning presents the most likely source of valid grounds for evaluation. The inductive, bottom-up, approach requires consultation with those involved with implementation and outcomes whereas the deductive, top-down, approach is more hierarchal. The former style does not always sit comfortably with policy makers with a desire to retain power.

Hammersley (1995) proposed that Enlightenment thinking held that truth and power were always intertwined, Foucault, however, would prefer that *“power’s role is not only to repress truth but he (Foucault) does not deny that this can happen”* (Sherratt, 2006). I suggest that, in order to maintain power, it may often be necessary to mask the truth, and that evaluation of a policy may discover outcomes different from those intended by its creators. In the case of elected politicians, this could be an uncomfortable result to encounter. Should evaluation reveal that the implementation of a particular policy proves, at best, unsuccessful or, at worst, to involve unforeseen damaging side-effects, the party which instigated the policy is likely to put the best possible interpretation forward even if this requires being economical with facts. Policy formulated by opponents, however, will receive more adversarial treatment. I suggest that the inclusion debate might not have been so long running had more care been taken in the evaluation of each stage of implementation. The philosophies of the designers of inclusion policy, however, may have resulted in a certain unwillingness to examine too closely the actual impact their policies were having on pupils and schools. If

the motives involved financial considerations, the loss of special school places and the closure of many special schools the policy, proved successful. Closer examination of the experi, could perhaps produce altogether different findings and these will be a recurrent theme throughout later chapters.

When, after the report of the Warnock Committee in 1978, the previous policy of educating pupils with disabilities and/or learning difficulties separately from their mainstream peers was reversed, many felt that this was a progressive and positive initiative (Tomlinson, 2008). One of the main reasons that it was not universally welcomed, however, may have been due to timing. As these pupils were to be assimilated into mainstream schools, parental choice of school and the pressure on schools to raise standards also became topical agenda items. Schools struggling to maintain or increase published scores were unlikely to feel that pupils with learning difficulties would enhance their results (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaug, 2004), and parents of mainstream pupils might not be inclined to choose schools with poor positions in the league tables; this conflict of ethos versus survival instinct has not been alleviated in the intervening years and continues to challenge local authorities and, in particular, schools.

In the eighteenth century, philosopher and social reformer, Jeremy Bentham, may have been considered ahead of his time with his (1789) support for women's rights and the decriminalisation of homosexual acts. Bentham's utilitarian focus on outcomes is at odds with Kant's preoccupation with

motives and, given his commitment to individual freedom and individual legal rights, Bentham would surely have approved of the apparent expansion of choices open to parents. However, parents of pupils with special needs, contrary to the much publicised choice agenda, were to have their options reduced when the number of special school places available diminished and pupils were admitted or transferred to mainstream schools. It is not so surprising, then, that a policy proposing to increase equality has provoked so much debate since its inception and the tensions arising through its implementation will feature throughout and beyond this chapter.

Historically many of a country's policies and practices would be dictated by its religious leaders; in England these would have been Christian leaders. Given that the influence of these leaders has given way to that of others, suggesting that the beliefs upon which policies were based are no longer to be found only in religious tenets but elsewhere. Christianity would argue that it has always been involved in social issues and in today's increasingly multicultural society, a number of faiths would argue the same on their own account. Recently, the complexity of founding of the tenets of law in religious dogma has been highlighted by Sir James Mumby, the President of the Family Division of the Law Society (Mumby 2013). This is, once more, a basis for further investigation and discussion, yet lies outside the scope of this study. Beliefs are now brought to the public by people elected by them to represent them. So, if government policy is designed by elected members, together with their civil servants, it would be reasonable to expect

that the policies would align themselves with the manifesto pledges of election candidates.

We could ask, then, what informs the decision making process of government's policy makers? Australian anthropologist, Michael Taussig, in his "*Mimesis and Alterity – A Particular History of the Senses*" (1993), outlines the beliefs of the proponents of Enlightenment thinking. This school of thought began with clearly stated principles, leading to logical conclusions which, when tested, were revised in light of the evidence. Hammersley (1995) proposed that many enlightenment thinkers believe that sufficient research and study would produce the required knowledge about human social life as well as the physical sciences to inform the ideals which should guide it.

Additionally, we could ask what type of research is most appropriate if research is to be a useful tool in policy making. Hammersley cites Janowitz (1972) who offers two models, the engineering model and applied research; one could say the mechanics versus the purpose. This tension could be said to mirror that mentioned earlier, where a Kantian motivation when creating policy would differ from a utilitarian approach interested only in the outcome. Similarly, when choosing which style of investigative process to adopt to define or solve a problem, the outlook of the policy maker will be a strong influence. If a problem is to be solved it must first be defined and who identifies a problem, if indeed there is one, may lead to its resolution being approached in a number of different ways. Jackson (2005), as described

earlier, pointed out that Margaret Thatcher, who was the Secretary of State for Education involved in the commissioning of the Warnock Report, had no enthusiasm for research. She, according to Jackson, regarded it as expensive, time consuming and lacking useful outcomes. This, surely, leads to questions regarding the quality of information on which decisions were based when preparing the policies affecting some of the most vulnerable school pupils.

When considering the agenda to include pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools, the ethos of minimising segregation would appear to be admirable, and therefore vote-winning. Policies focusing on the learner as an individual (Rayner, 2007) are unlikely to meet with opposition in a society which values equality of opportunity. Sapon-Shevin (2004) argues that, not only is inclusion a popular agenda, it is the right one and should be widely implemented. If, however, inclusion is to be successful and benefit all learners, appropriate measures must be in place to support the education and integration of the less able pupils. This implies additional, appropriately trained staff, training of existing staff and the provision of resources. Economically, then, inclusion is a double edged sword. Transferring pupils from special schools, leading to their closure, saves money which could be used in education or elsewhere. However, additional training, staff and resources, together with the adaptation of mainstream facilities costs money if the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties is to be truly successful. If the resources essential to the success of this policy are not available and put to effective use, the purpose of inclusion cannot be met. At no point do I

suggest that inclusion is not an agenda of aspiration but this must be undertaken with the interests of the vulnerable at its core, underpinned by appropriate training, resources and universal commitment to its success.

2.2.iv Education policy

The changes initiated in education policy since 1970 have altered the power relationships which had underpinned the education system since the end of the Second World War (Furlong and Phillips, 2001). We are, at the time of writing, well used to the intervention of central government in the education system and in many other aspects of daily life, but this was not the case in the early 1970s when much of the responsibility for local service provision was devolved to local administrations. What politicians would describe as involvement, practitioners might regard as interference. When considering who is involved with the creation of policy, this tension becomes more apparent. Furlong and Phillips (2001) ask how education has been “transformed” during this period and to what extent there is continuity regarding education policy. When we consider the sheer volume of change, little sense of continuity has been possible. Tomlinson (2008) offers a chronology of education policy and it is interesting to observe how regularly proposals fail or are abandoned on the election of a different political party. Are policies changed by an incumbent government in order to create tension, and/or demonstrate authority between its own supremacy and that of its predecessor?

I believe that a less adversarial system of government would result in a more measured approach to education, and other aspects of social life, than what could be described as the “tit-for-tat” exchange currently in place. For example, the Conservative party in 2005 inferred that the Labour government had been responsible in 1980 for the policy resulting in the loss of 9,000 special school places (Germain, 2007). The implied blame took no account of the fact that the Warnock Committee, whose recommendations were responsible for the closure of so many special schools, had been set up by a Conservative government before the 1979 election which saw them fall from power.

At the same time as the move to include pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream school, policies were introduced aimed at raising standards and increasing parental choice. However, there are many influences on the success or otherwise of pupils and schools and education policy should not be considered in isolation. As Whitty (2002) points out, we should recognise, but maybe do not, that there are strong correlations between pupil and school failure and social disadvantage; attacking poverty could be more effective than school-focused initiatives and changes in minimising inequality (Robinson, 1997).

It is necessary, therefore, for education, social and economic policy makers to work together at all levels but it is difficult to find evidence that this is the case. The increased involvement of central government in education, amongst other fields, has heralded a decline in the role of Local Authorities

(LAs) (formerly Local Education Authorities) (Gordon, Aldrich and Dean, 1991). This presents a further source of potential tension as local politicians must surely regard themselves as best equipped to address issues relating to their own particular area of jurisdiction. Additionally, the increased involvement and responsibilities given to school governors by successive government policies would lead to further feelings of disempowerment on the part of the Local Authorities. The most recent reduction of the educational involvement of LAs was brought about by the Academies Act (2010) and the Education Act (2011), heralding new categories of schools, directly funded by central government and outside LA control. Yet in November, 2010, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, wrote to all local authorities confirming the central role they (LAs) had to play with an “increased autonomy”. They were encouraged to support the expansion of the academy programme, the very initiative which decreases the power they hold in local education. The potential for tensions between local and central government merits considerable examination but remains beyond the scope of this research project.

We are already able to see potential conflict between a central government creating policies, practitioners who feel bombarded by changes developed by remote entities and Local Authorities who feel that their ability to control what is happening locally had been eroded. Responsibility without power is a stressful situation, one which LAs must keenly feel. On one hand they are encouraged by the Secretary of State to promote the transfer of local schools to Academy status, in the knowledge that this will remove the schools from

their responsibility. At the same time, they are encouraged to support the improvement of school standards within decreased budgets and diminished powers.

2.2.v Education policy and inclusion

If pupils with particular needs are to be included in mainstream classrooms, it could be natural to suppose that additional staff may be required to support them and that special training for teachers would be available, each requiring additional funding to be made available. Myklebust (2006) argues that inclusion is more successful in settings with access to higher levels of financial resources. The closure of the special school places, and schools themselves, must surely have made considerable funding available to be directed elsewhere. However, it is difficult to find evidence that sufficient funding has been redirected to mainstream schools with the specific intention that it be used to support the pupils with learning difficulties they are now required to admit (Murray, 2013). Exhortations by politicians for Local Education Authorities (now Local Authorities) to extend their attentions to the fields of special educational needs were not matched by the provision of the funds required to undertake this (Gordon, Aldrich and Dean, 1991). Moreover, the closure of specialist provision must have released and made available a considerable number of highly trained specialist staff with expertise in the aspects of education which relate to pupils with learning difficulties of all types. The mainstream schools admitting the pupils with particular needs would certainly benefit from the opportunity to work with such staff on a permanent or advisory basis but this would again, of course,

involve financial resources. It would be regrettable if the expertise of the special educators was lost due to budgetary constraints while mainstream schools continued to struggle through lack of specially trained staff. Local Education Authorities (LEAs) did, in the 1980s employ special needs advisors to work with schools, delivering support and training. However, the years have seen, as described by Phillips and Furlong (2001), a reduction in authority of LEAs, now Local Authorities (LAs), and these services have inevitably been decimated. Even had they not been so reduced in quantity, I would question the comparative value of specialist staff being available to schools over specialist staff being employed in schools on a daily, in-house, basis.

Returning to the motives behind policy creation, perhaps one should ask here whether the apparently popular agenda to include less able children with their mainstream peers was made on utilitarian economic grounds rather than a Kantian desire to do good. Schools must be equipped with the appropriately trained staff in order for them to be fit for their expanded purpose. The Local Authorities, charged with the oversight of provision for pupils with special needs have had their powers eroded over time (Gordon et al., 1991). At a local level, as outlined by Phillips and Furlong (2001), substantial shifts in power and responsibility have taken place with resulting unease and struggle for survival. The government sets the agenda, the local politicians are held to account for financial prudence and successful academic outcomes, and schools are similarly charged with producing high standards of academic work within budgetary constraints. Once again, this

big canvas of power and responsibility is relevant to my study and worthy of further examination yet falls outside the scope of my specific area of enquiry.

2.2.vi The impact of inclusion

The plethora of policy initiatives directed at the education system in the last thirty five years have been instigated by four Conservative, three Labour governments and one Coalition government, served by sixteen Secretaries of State (for Education and Science; Education and Employment; Education and Skills; Children, Schools and Families). The rhetoric of politics impels politicians to move in a particular direction, having expounded their intentions for change to the electorate. Today's previously mentioned adversarial political climate compels governments and their leaders to bring something new to the table when seeking to prove their superiority over their predecessors.

“In the 53 speeches given over 2 years given by Tony Blair (1997-99), “new” occurs 609 times, “modern”, 89 times, “modernise / modernisation”, 87 times and “reform”, 143 times”

Fairclough (2000; p18 cited in Gunter and Butt (2007)

It is evident that the option of not introducing significant changes would diminish the credibility of the party. Although policies have been numerous, they can be divided into broad categories focusing on devolution of power, raising of standards of achievement, increased choice and inclusion (Tomlinson, 2008) All of these would appear appealing to the electorate, and governments must feel confident that few would argue against them.

However, not all of them sit comfortably with one another, a situation giving rise to ongoing tensions and debate.

Colebatch (2002), who specialises in policy analysis, outlines two distinct approaches to policy creation, or policy activity as he calls it. The first is a vertical, top-down, approach where those in authority make decisions and the 'activity' is seen as the discussions of options, monitoring implementation and outcomes. Secondly, the horizontal, more democratic, dimension seeks to engage a range of participants in negotiation, coalition-building and the quest for methods to achieve and ratify agreed solutions. Procedures for formulating national policy are in the domain of selected officials, such as the staff of the Cabinet Office, which suggests that the vertical approach is in evidence. Successive governments, however, have sought to portray themselves as seeking to elicit the views of the electorate, even involving "enthusiastic amateurs" (Colebatch, 2002) in education governance. Evidence of this can be seen since 1980 in the increased "lay" involvement with school governance as governing bodies were required to include representatives of the local and, if appropriate, Church, community, parents, teachers and Local Authorities. Most recently, in the market-driven, competitive approach to school leadership, private business has been invited to share in the management of schools (Woods and Broadfoot, 2008) and new categories of school, Academies in 2010 and Free Schools in 2011, have been introduced to the educational domain. This could indicate a lessening of control by central government but organisational studies professor, Clegg (2006), suggested otherwise. While the character of the

education system in England might be changing, he suggested that it is as a result of central government's ability to continue to hold influence via changes in legislation and the allocation of resources that it holds ongoing power over the agenda to be addressed.

What appears to be emerging is a largely vertical approach to policy where cabinet ministers, advised by aides, formulate national policy, including education policy. In order to increase the notion of public involvement, community members are invited to assist in the implementation of these policies while being subject to Woods and Broadfoot's "constrained empowerment" (2008) which appears to involve but also imposes stringent limitations. School governing bodies are comprised of parents, teachers, local politicians and other members of the community which presents an ethos of openness and involvement. They are, nonetheless, bound to adhere to the considerable and numerous regulations imposed on them by central government.

If, as Woods and Broadfoot (2008) suggest, the policy making agenda in the UK is generally a vertical process in the control of elected members and the advisers they have chosen, it is interesting to explore the motives underlying the agenda. Is it an altruistic quest for improvement, a wish to become popular and win votes or an economy driven agenda to save money which lies at the heart of the process? Society's attitude to minority or vulnerable groups has changed since the days when individuals with differences were hidden away or abused, but this is not to suggest that each person,

regardless of their differences, should be treated in exactly the same way. In modern times, citizens do not like to feel that they are in the control of a Big Brother (Orwell, 1949) style of leadership, and successive governments have taken steps which appear to make systems and processes more collaborative and consultative. In education, the involvement of outside agencies, in addition to the increased diversity of governing bodies, implies wider participation in school leadership. Ranson (2008) refers to the shifting control and influence in education but also points out that this outcome is still centrally driven and governed by centrally designed policy. This reflects a mechanism by which the electorate is made to feel powerful while continuing to be tightly controlled by those they have elected. Of course, to those in power it must appear to be a positive position; retaining control while appearing to devolve some of their power to those who decide who to (re)elect.

One outcome of this “constrained empowerment” is described by Woods and Broadfoot (2008) as shifting the bureaucratic burdens from teaching staff so that they need only concentrate on teaching. I think that few teachers would agree that their burden had been lightened by government, given the constraints of the National Curriculum, the requirements to produce statistical information and the raft of initiatives introduced by successive governments. The non-teaching public, on the other hand, might see all the initiatives, for example the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DfEE 1998), Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) and tests at the end of each Key Stage, the annual discussion regarding GCSE and A Level pass rates, leading to further

overhaul and the introduction of the Baccalaureate, as models designed to improve rather than to control. Control, however, is seen by many (Oakley, 2006) as the driving force behind the mechanisms chosen by government to design policies in all spheres of operation and the legislative boundaries imposed on the education system appear to reinforce this view. A significant mechanism for the exercise of control is schools' requirement to meet the expectations of the Ofsted inspection process. This applies to both Academy Schools and Free Schools which, although outside the remit of the Local Authority, remain subject to regular Ofsted inspections. Schools which fail to meet standards in aspects of curriculum, attainment, achievement, teaching and learning, and others, will be deemed and publicised as "inadequate" with resulting impact on local esteem and parental preference. In February, 2014, 10 Academy Schools were removed from management of their sponsor as a result of poor academic standards; perhaps another example of the constraints associated with empowerment.

Since the 1970s central government has, at the highest level, taken a more direct interest in many aspects of life and, of significance here, in education in particular (Furlong and Phillips, 2001). I have described that, when considering, for instance, the makeup of the Warnock Committee, the government controlled it, and that the people making recommendations to the decision and policy makers themselves were not necessarily experts in the field they were asked to consider. However, the impact of the policies resulting from reports such as Warnock is far reaching; the impact, as

indicated by Colebatch (2002), is borne by those other than the policy makers themselves.

In order to implement the inclusion agenda, a new approach to the education of children with learning difficulties was required. In order for this framework to operate successfully, flexibility is essential (Terzi, 2005) but the constraints imposed by the numerous policies affecting education preclude a flexible approach on the part of the local authorities and practitioners (MacKay, 2002). Woods and Broadfoot (2008) refer to the increased autonomy for schools brought about by devolved funding, for example, but surely that autonomy is only truly in place if schools are at liberty to make decisions for themselves. This can hardly be the case in a climate where they are forced to adhere to government driven admissions policies and a curriculum focussing on published test results. The inclusion agenda may sound liberating to the electorate but it also imposes additional constraints on mainstream schools.

The Academies Act (2010) and the Education Act (2011) heralded the introduction of Academies and Free Schools, both designed to liberate schools from many of the constraints of local government control. Both new categories of school are required to follow the School Admissions Code of Practice. They do not have to follow the National Curriculum (apart for Academies for Maths, English and Science) but are subject to the school inspection regime of Ofsted. The devil being in the detail, the requirements imposed by central government on these new categories do not present an

altogether free or liberated future as might have been implied by the advance publicity, as curriculum and financial considerations continue to preoccupy the new schools together with the imperative to produce successful academic results for their pupils.

Carr and Hartnett (1966) blame the feelings of upset and malaise experienced by education professionals on the large number of reforms imposed on education in recent years. The agenda to include pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools does not necessarily sit comfortably with the agenda to improve academic standards in those schools, nor with the agenda to increase parental choice. The move to mainstream education for pupils with special needs was inevitably to have an impact on special school places, leading to the reduction in size at least and, inevitably, the closure of many. While governments have promoted the inclusion agenda, it is by no means agreed by educationalists that, for all pupils with learning difficulties, it is the most appropriate approach to education. Zigmond and Baker (2004), for instance, do not feel that this is always the pupil centred approach.

Few, surely, would argue in favour of the climate of extensive segregation described in the opening paragraph of this chapter. Modern thinking seeks to ensure that groups and individuals should not be marginalised or disadvantaged due to their characteristics, for example ethnicity, gender, belief, ability or orientation, and successive governments have introduced legislation to ensure the equal treatment of all members of society. In 2010,

The Equality Act brought together previous legal requirements under one Act to ensure that no one should suffer discrimination due to difference (Hepple, 2011). While it appears constructive to have one single Act rather than a myriad of smaller laws designed for similar purposes, there is, of course, a danger that the resulting Act will be so huge and all-encompassing that it presents an unfathomable minefield for those outside the legal profession.

If inclusion is to be successfully implemented, however, it is just the characteristics of difference described which must be taken into account when adapting and adjusting educational practices to accommodate learners with learning difficulties, rejecting *“misconceived assumptions about the homogeneity of pupils”* (Wedell, 2005). Zigmond and Baker (2004) attest that the level of support and in-school segregation required to support their access to learning may isolate and stigmatise the pupils with particular needs, hardly the climate in which a feeling of belonging is fostered. Sapon-Shevin (1996) acknowledges that true inclusion will require dramatic changes in both curriculum and in teaching practices but that these are consistent with a child-centred philosophy and in keeping with the governmental agenda to educate pupils with learning difficulties with their mainstream peers. Parents may also feel that their children would flourish better in purpose designed specialist provision but, with the closure of many special school places, their choices have been limited rather than having been widened.

The government policy to increase parental choice appears, in the case of children with learning difficulties, only to apply if the choice is to send them to mainstream schools. At this point, it may be useful to remember that the charitable organisation, MENCAP, was born of parental frustration regarding the provision for children with learning difficulties. It is significant that it continues to play such a major part in the education of these young people, its guidance being used in assessment and teaching today. Parents and carers of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) may intend that inclusion in mainstream schools will enhance opportunities to interact with peers from the same neighbourhood, increasing social confidence and reducing feelings of difference (Scheepstra, Nakken and Pijl, 1999; Sloper and Tyler, 1992). While this is a natural desire on the part of the adults, research has indicated that being located in the same place is not synonymous with feelings of belonging (Pijl, Frostrad and Flem, 2008) and that social attachments are more likely to emerge from association from similar peers in terms of interests and attainment (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001) rather than geography. Inclusion, then, requires far more than physical location (Ryan, 2009) for its successful implementation.

2.3 Pastoral Care in Education

2.3.i Educating the whole child

If, then, there is more to a feeling of belonging than to be located in a particular place, there must be an additional dimension to education, beyond the admission to a given school. Education is the precursor to adult life but must not be considered only as a “pre-adult” life event – it is an experience in

itself and, as such, is a crucial and formative stage. It should, indeed, equip pupils with the tools they need to proceed through life with knowledge and ability, but education should do far more than this. Achievement, while not excluding the academic, refers to a wider and further reaching set of skills leading to improved social, affective and life chances as well as the more traditional academic outcomes (Crowther, Dyson and Millward, 1998). I contend that the acquisition of the latter skills set should be an important element of the education of all pupils, but that for those with the disadvantage of a learning difficulty these skills are more particularly crucial for their future as the academic prowess is unlikely to be the key to their success.

The historic understanding for the term “pastoral” referred to the care of souls (Chambers, 2003) but has in recent years come to represent the care given in schools and elsewhere for the elements of people’s lives outside the strictly business or academic. For schools’ policies, and resulting codes of conduct, guidance has been published, the most pertinent here being Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2003). One of the larger tributaries in the torrent of advice offered to school in the wake of ECM is Pupil Voice, and Cheminais (2008) argues that the skills sets mentioned above are inextricably linked. Pupil Voice, a concept via which children are offered the right to express their ideas, was unthinkable in the “seen and not heard” climate of Victorian Britain. Yet by 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) stated that

“State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child”

UNCRC (1989) Article 12: 1

insisting that

“The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kindseither orally, in writing”

UNCRC (1989) Article 13: 1)

2.3.ii Giving pupils a voice – all, or some, of them?

The mechanisms through which pupils’ voices may be heard are many and various and the term “consultation” is widely used by educationalists in connection with listening to the views of young people (Ruddock and Flutter, 2004; Ruddock and McIntyre, 2007). Cheminais (2008), in her guidance for schools, offers schools councils, pupils as associate governors, working groups, pupils on appointment panels and pupil involvement in reviews as just some of the ways in which the views of young people may be voiced. These, together with the term “consultation” suggest a formal, procedure-led approach to hearing what the learners wish to say. However, there are concerns personal to the individual taking part, for instance relationship issues, bullying in school or personal circumstances outside school, all of which could have a significant effect on academic and social progress. In my experience these are unlikely to be forthcoming in open group meetings or consultations, but rather in a more discreet and confidential situation. This would be the case for many learners and certainly for learners who are already disadvantaged in some way.

According to Fielding (2004), pupil voice can be a misleading concept because of the diversity of pupils. Some pupils may naturally be more willing to speak out than others leading to a “voice” which does not truly represent the entire pupil cohort. The other party in this pastoral conversation may be assumed to be teachers and other school staff and it is encouraging that teachers are empowered to have a voice and engage in this dialogue. Cheminais (2008) warns that it is not clear, however, what mechanism might exist to represent and follow up their input to the conversation. Where secondary school staff are under pressure to support large groups of pupils to secure good academic outcomes and are lacking in time and specialist expertise to support pupils with learning difficulties, there is potential for this representation and development to remain unaddressed.

So we have a situation which, admirably, elicits the views of pupils, but perhaps not all of them and perhaps not in situations where they are likely to seek support on issues affecting them personally, and guidance from the government which addresses pastoral care only as a set of curriculum headings. Where, then, is the opportunity for pupils to receive support on those issues which have an impact on their progress? Many of these may be social, in school or outside, and not appropriate for discussion in an open forum. The voices of the most vulnerable learners must be given the opportunity to be heard in a situation of respect, trust, support and appropriate confidentiality. Only then will they feel that they are truly equal, valued members of their school community. My study was designed to offer these learners that opportunity.

2.4 Methodological issues in researching educational inclusion

2.4.i Methods for conducting educational research

“Educational researchers are constantly confronted by the need to make sense of how educational theory, policy and practice are to be investigated and understood, not least in order to justify their own work”

(Bridges and Smith, 2007,+)

In the past, researchers opted for a method of enquiry appropriate to the field they were to examine. Social scientists, for instance would reject the approach of natural scientists and vice versa (Rowbotton and Aiston, 2007). In more recent times it has become acceptable to employ what Burke Johnson and Onwenuogbusie (2004) describe as mixed methods, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches in one study.

If one argues that the definition of research is “original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledgedirected towards a specific practical aim or objective.” (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Frascati Manual: 2002A p. 78), the original nature of each investigation must be unique. Read and March (2002) encourage the researcher to vary approaches, as dogged adherence to a particular method attracts few rewards due to the limitations attached to each individual method. Once it is acknowledged that each issue to be investigated is different it becomes easier to accept that no one research approach will be appropriate in every case. Seventeenth century philosopher, Francis Bacon, in the Preface to his *Novum Organum*, invites the reader to accept that we would not progress engineering and construction using only our bare hands

and that to use the best available tools would be far more effective (Gaukroger, 2001).

Two concepts of knowledge could be considered, one which seeks and aims to explain the relationships between independent and dependent variables, perhaps a quantitative approach, and a second which seeks to understand human experiences (von Wright, 1981; Snow, 1990; Cronbach, 1975). The latter appears to represent a more qualitative attitude, concerned with perceptions and subjective deductions. Alexander (2007) proposes that the two “orientations” should be facilitated to coexist and I see no reason why they should not. Certainly any research concerning perceptions and experiences will be approached from an interpretivist rather than a positivist starting point (Thomas, 2009). My professional experience has led me to form a hypothesis that not all young people in secondary schools have access to equally effective pastoral care structures and that this may have an impact on their social outcomes and it is on this hypothesis I have based, and designed, my research.

2.4.ii Designing research

Creswell (2007) suggests that the process of research design starts with the philosophical assumptions made by the researcher(s) including their own views and beliefs which then inform the construction and interpretation of the study. It is therefore important that these are made explicit from the outset while acknowledging the contributions of others in the field. To claim that a research project is based on realism could be constraining in that only

observable facts will form the findings and outcomes. In my project, it is not observable or quantifiable results which are of concern and to base the project on these would eliminate the opportunity to examine the impact of a school setting on the individual pupils' perceptions.

With a constructivist base it can be argued that studying people is very different from studying, for example, atoms (Woods, 2008). When considering research such as the study undertaken by Ofsted, in 2006, concerning the provision for pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools, there is scope for presenting findings as quantitative while they are actually more qualitative in origin. The Ofsted study purported to assess the degree to which pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties had been successfully integrated into mainstream school settings. The results of the research were presented in statistical form. Closer examination of the study reveals that the data collected was qualitative and drawn from the personal accounts of pupils rather than statistics reflecting academic outcomes. While it is a positive approach which gave the youngsters a voice to express themselves, the findings should not be regarded as representing actual statistical results. If, as proposed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), there is no single ideal strategy when planning research, it is important to choose the most appropriate design for the prevailing circumstances. Thomas (2009), who has written extensively on study and research, reinforces the fact that the methods chosen must, however, be represented honestly and identify strengths and potential limitations. The design of my research and the basis for the methods chosen, is described in Chapter 3.

It is possible that the authors of the 2006 Ofsted study, concerning the impact of inclusion in mainstream secondary schools, remain fixed in tradition whereby positivist findings carry more weight than those derived from interpretation (Burke Johnson and Onweuegbuzie, 2004). Their data is therefore presented as fact, based on statistical results, while closer scrutiny reveals them to have been elicited from the perceptions of individuals. The resulting report appears to be factual statistics which are not open to interpretation. In the presentation of the figures, no mention is made of the views elicited from individuals and, as will emerge from my study, the perceptions of individuals represent the reality of their lives and are therefore as robust as numerical data. I believe that to describe openly and clearly the methods adopted leads, in turn, to confidence in the findings and their interpretation, and have applied this to my work in Chapter 3.

2.5 Previous studies undertaken

2.5.i Researching perceptions

When examining personal experiences I consider it to be both inadequate and potentially misleading to collect information from the purely statistical data appropriate in the consideration of academic outcomes. The social interactions expressed are necessarily varied and do not lend themselves to the same analysis strategies as raw numerical data (Scheurich, 1995). A study was undertaken by Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans and Soulsby (2007) to examine the experiences of young people with learning difficulties as they transferred from special to mainstream schools. The method

considered most appropriate was interviews, a research method also adopted when seeking to examine the experiences of disabled pupils and their families (Lewis, Davison, Ellins, Niblett, Parsons, Robertson and Sharpe, 2007). It is reasonable to discuss perceptions with the participants in an open discussion rather than in a closed questionnaire format where their opportunity to explain details is limited or non-existent. Additionally, learners with learning difficulties are likely to have more limited literacy skills than their mainstream peers, a circumstance which could call into question the validity of responses to written material. The 2007 study undertaken by Frederickson et al. focussed on pupils of primary school age. Literacy at this stage is not fully developed in all children and this could strengthen the argument against the use of written questions to elicit information. Questionnaires or analysis of existing statistical data are appropriate when examining academic results of pupils, with and without learning difficulties, in different settings (Allan, 2003; Florian, Rouse, Black-Hawkins and Jull, 2004) although response rates for the former could lead to questions regarding the reliability and validity of the resulting data.

2.5.ii Qualitative research

Frederickson et al. (2007) based their research on the DfES (2001) definition with its emphasis on the “sense of community” and “belonging”. With the aim of examining experiences and perceptions it is perhaps not surprising that the methods chosen actively sought the views of the young people concerned, asking them how they felt about the situations they had faced and experienced. Jones (2005) attested that “*it is becoming much more*

accepted that it is, indeed, important to listen to the perspectives of children", a precursor, perhaps, of the Pupil Voice agenda. It is reasonable to propose that methods based in hermeneutic thinking, acknowledging subjective interpretation of personal experience, were highly appropriate for the Frederickson et al. study (2007). The research was undertaken using the Social Inclusion Survey (Frederickson and Graham, 1999) which has versions designed to assess various aspects of social interaction. The questionnaires were tailored towards the comprehension capacity of the pupils taking part. While I have suggested that questionnaires are inappropriate for use with participants with weak literacy and receptive skills, in this case use of images and symbols facilitated their use by the young people concerned. The findings of the study indicated that the social and affective profile for the former special school pupils, now integrated into various mainstream schools, did not differ from that of their typically developing classmates. However, for pupils with SEN who had spent their entire schooling thus far in the mainstream classes, the findings of Frederickson et al.'s study were less positive. While both sets of pupils felt similar levels of belonging to their schools, the perception of acceptance was significantly higher for the former special school pupils.

While Frederickson et al. (2007) sought to illuminate the social and affective aspects of schooling in the face of the considerable amount of research undertaken regarding academic outcomes, it is in itself a small study located in one Local Education Authority (LEA) and using one special school.

Against the argument of limited size, however, I would argue that the findings are sufficiently significant to warrant further attention.

Frederickson et al. found that the pupils transferring from the special school in question had been successfully integrated into the learning communities of their receiving schools. The special school in question is described as having been involved in an outreach programme in which pupils spent varying amounts of time in local mainstream schools. This suggests that the pupils had undertaken some preparation before moving full-time to their new setting. Similarly, the typically developing pupils in those receiving schools may have had the opportunity to become adjusted to the additional needs of their incoming peers. It is premature, therefore, to conclude that any pupils transferring from special to mainstream school would have a similar experience without preparation on both sides. Interesting differences in the preparation for transition from one educational setting to another will emerge via my research with pupils with learning difficulties from both special and mainstream schools.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) who had been in the mainstream schools from the start of their education and who took part in the Frederickson et al. (2007) study had less positive social experiences to relate. Since the publication of the Warnock Report, successive governments have pursued the policy of educating as many pupils with learning difficulties as is possible in mainstream schools. Using the findings of Frederickson et al. (2007) as a starting point, it would be useful to

research the climate of support in special schools which empowers pupils to transfer to, and operate in, a mainstream world so successfully. Equally valuable would be an examination of the prevailing ethos in the mainstream schools which lead pupils with SEN to report less positive social outcomes. This dichotomy is a key feature of my own research.

The research described by Frederickson et. al. (2007) was one of the few studies undertaken in the United Kingdom which sought to investigate the social outcomes of inclusion for pupils with learning difficulties. Ofsted had recommended in 2002 that the outcomes of inclusion should be measured in three areas, academic attainment, self-esteem and relationships between pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and their peers. Studies such as that undertaken by Dyson, Farrell, Hutcheson, Polat and Gallanaugh in 2004 sought to address the first of these requirements and it is pertinent to consider an understanding of the term “achievement” which features in the title of the study. For many young people with learning difficulties achievement, while not excluding the academic, refers to a wider and further reaching set of skills leading to improved social, affective and life chances as well as the more traditional academic outcomes (Crowther, Dyson and Millward, 1998). Given the Dyson et al. study’s focus on national data, however, it can be assumed that the project regarded quantifiable test results as the major measure of pupil achievement. The introduction to the report offers the following definition

“attainment” as measured in national assessments) and wider pupils achievements (such as personal and social skills)

(Dyson et al. 2004, p17)

This identifies the terms, often used interchangeably, and acknowledges that the academic success forms only a part of the achievement of a school pupil.

2.5.iii Quantitative research

The Dyson et al. (2004) study produces wide and comprehensive data addressing questions regarding the achievements of pupils with learning difficulties in inclusive schools, as defined in the study as those that admit high proportions of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) compared with their less inclusive counterparts. The project was large in scale and made use of the data available on the National Pupil Database (NPD). Sixteen case studies followed, focusing on the academic results of schools deemed to be highly inclusive, this judgement being based on the proportional size of the SEN population in the school. The academic outcomes were thoroughly analysed and reported for the schools in question. No evidence was found of a relationship between inclusion and attainment at Local Authority (LA) level but a very small and negative relationship between a school's level of inclusivity and pupils' attainment was identified. Evidence was found that inclusion can have positive effects on a school's pupil achievement at a wider level but, significantly, that *"having Special Educational Needs (SEN) might be a risk factor for isolation and for low self-esteem"*.

In the report of Dyson et al.'s 2004 research, schools identified as highly inclusive had pupils with particular difficulties who were more likely to become socially excluded and have less well developed levels of confidence

and self-worth, suggesting that they had considerable social support needs. While it can be argued that a school is inclusive because it has a high proportion of pupils with SEN, I consider this judgement to be deeply flawed. What comprises true inclusion is a theme which recurs throughout this research. Many agree that inclusion constitutes a far wider remit than the physical location of pupils (Frederickson and Cline, 2002; Lipsky and Gartner, 1996) but few voice this more succinctly than Ryan's (2009) "inclusion is more than a place".

2.5.iv A hiatus in the research

A scenario is developing which reveals that, where research has investigated the impact of the inclusion in mainstream schools of pupils with learning difficulties, the focus has been on the academic outcomes for the pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and any influence on those of their normally developing peers. It is more difficult to find work undertaken in the United Kingdom on the social outcomes for the pupils. With its focus on the less tangible aspects of inclusion, Frederickson et al.'s 2007 research project resonates with my interest in social development and pastoral experiences of pupils with learning difficulties in different types of schools. As cited in their report,

"inclusion is about engineering a sense of community and belonging and encouraging mainstream and special schools to come together to support each other and pupils with special educational needs."

(Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2001, p3)

Academic outcomes are just one element of many to be measured when seeking to evaluate the impact of inclusion. Dyson et al. (2004) indicated

that information about academic results is available for analysis via national statistical databases. If Frederickson et al. (2007) are correct in their assertion that systematic assessment of social and affective outcomes has lagged behind its academic counterpart, it must be assumed that such information is not as readily available for study. Further, such numerical information is unlikely to be available when considering social outcomes, given that schools have little in common with conditions prevailing in well controlled and repeatable laboratory experiments (Checkland and Scholes, 1990).

There is a lack of material available regarding the social outcomes for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) included in mainstream schools. Therefore there is a lacuna in the research undertaken with a focus on those MLD learners at secondary level and it is my intention that my research study will address this deficiency. The study undertaken by Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans and Soulsby (2007) was revealing in its focus on primary school pupils, and Ravet (2007) reiterates the value of listening to the voices of pupils on issues connected to inclusion; once again this work has a primary school age focus. At primary school, children spend the great majority of their time with one staff member, their class teacher, with the potential additional support of a familiar Teaching Assistant or Support Worker. The climate at secondary school is very different, for all pupils, with each subject being taught by a different specialist teacher and the class teacher/form tutor being present with a group on limited occasions. My aim, via my research questions, is to examine the social outcomes, and

influences on them, for secondary school MLD pupils in mainstream and special school settings at a crucial stage of their development.

2.6 The current context

It is, at the time of writing, 35 years since the Warnock Committee, in 1978, produced its Report with its far-reaching recommendations regarding the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. The Report had been commissioned by the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, Margaret (later Baroness) Thatcher. Mrs. Thatcher was succeeded by 8 Secretaries of State before the government charged with the management of the education system was re-named. It has, since 1978, experienced a number of reincarnations and been led by numerous Secretaries of State and Prime Ministers.

In 1992, the department responsible for the education system became known as the Department for Education and remained so called until, in 1995, when it became the Department for Education and Employment. These Departments were led by two and six Secretaries respectively. The subsequent Department for Children, Schools and Families had only one Secretary of State before being returned to its 1992 – 1995 nomenclature of Department for Education in 2010 with Michael Gove as its leader. In the adversarial party political system in the United Kingdom, changes in government and Secretaries of States will inevitably lead to changes imposed on the education system. These will, in turn, be dictated by the prevailing relationship between the state and the education system.

When state education was first conceptualised, control (by the state) was inevitable. Numerous governmental changes and alterations in societal perceptions have tested, recently towards breaking point, the relationship between the state and the education system (Shepherd, 2013) and, with the recent creation of new statuses (Academies and Free Schools), there is no indication of a lessening of tension. Tomlinson (2008) described a chronology of education policy and it is noteworthy that the proposals made by one political party in office regularly fail, or are discarded, on the election to government of a different political party. Woods and Broadfoot (2008) suggest that, where power appears to have been devolved, to some extent, to the professionals charged with implementing policy, this should shift the burden of bureaucracy from teachers, enabling them to focus only on teaching. Yet, as described earlier, unions of headteachers and teachers displayed the strongest opposition to Michael Gove's approach to education and his policies.

The ongoing changes to the National Curriculum, plans to abolish GCSE examination in favour of "O" Level style examinations and less challenging tests for the less able, while remaining under pressure to record progress and secure successful academic outcomes; all this must contribute to the feelings of malaise and stress identified in the teaching profession as early as 1966 by Carr and Hartnett. I believe that professionals under this degree of pressure find it difficult to devote sufficient time, teaching methods and resources to the inclusion of pupils with particular needs requiring the individual and specialised attention described by Sapon-Shevin (1996) and

Wedell (2005). Additionally, in mainstream schools, staff lack the specialist training and expertise required for this.

Many schools, under Secretary of State Gove's Academies and Free Schools programmes are able to operate with apparently more autonomy within their Academy or Free status. Since 2010, schools rated by Ofsted as outstanding were offered the opportunity to convert to Academy status. However in July 2013 this situation was complicated by the fact that more than 100 schools, previously rated as outstanding, have lost their top rating as they had not demonstrated outstanding teaching during their inspections. Then, as described earlier, 10 Academies were, in February 2014, removed from their sponsors due to poor academic performance. It is 35 years since the publication of the Warnock Report (1978). At no point have governments implicitly or explicitly suggested that the inclusion agenda to admit, where possible, pupils with learning difficulties to mainstream schools should be revoked. The agenda was largely welcomed by the electorate and many parent bodies. However, the concern of many, including myself, remains that amidst the pressures on, in particular, secondary schools and their staff, the opportunity to implement inclusion effectively to the benefit of all pupils remains elusive (Wedell, 2005).

Chapter 3 Research Methodology and Methods: “If you look at people’s faces, they can get you”

*The question for the future is not **whether** or **why** educators should listen to the views of children with SEN, but **how**.*

(Frederickson and Cline, 2002),

If you look at people’s faces, they can get you. So I don’t look at them and they leave you alone, they don’t ask you stuff, they just leave you

Chris (16) who had attended a mainstream secondary school

3.1 Introduction

Most of us are aware of the many amusing sketches which mock those who try to communicate with people of a different nationality by shouting at them. Similarly, the title of the BBC Radio 4 programme, “Does he take sugar?” indicates that, when, addressing people with a disability or learning difficulty, it is appropriate to speak to the person, not about them. These examples are reminders that, when investigating, asking or researching, there will always be appropriate and suitable methods through which to communicate, and a number of others which are not.

3.1.i Context

In this chapter I will focus on the questions which arise from consideration of three different paradigms. Firstly, I need to consider the context of the inclusion debate, outlined in Chapter 1, and which methods would be most suitable with which to address the questions arising. Secondly, when considering the literature and work already undertaken, described in Chapter 2, a robust method of investigation must be sought in order to ensure that

sound practice is utilised while methods deemed to be unsuitable or inappropriate are discarded. Lastly, and importantly, my own intrinsic ontological position as an experienced practitioner must be scrutinised; to what extent are my experience and personal perceptions reflected in my approach to the study? What measures have been taken to ensure no resulting bias in the interpretation of the data?

This research project emerged from unease on my part, born of almost twenty years working with school leavers with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), regarding the experiences of many of them at secondary school. My work, in a Further Education context, provided me with the opportunity to observe that a significant proportion of these young people left school and embarked on this next stage of their development with confidence, self-esteem and social aptitude. Others embarked on the next phase of education with little or none of these. The students with whom I have worked are drawn from a wide range of schools, special and mainstream, large and small, rural and urban. Within this context, and over almost twenty years, I formed a conjecture. It seemed to me that the individual social and personal care, i.e. the experience outside the academic, which the learners had received, had been diverse in terms of quality. Additionally, I had formed the view that this was related to the type of secondary school they had attended.

Lunt (2002) introduces a distinction between the “Researching Professional” and the “Practitioner Researcher” with particular reference to the professional doctorate. Lunt’s emphasis on professional expertise and

practice resonates with my extensive experience in the field I intend to examine. I (a Practitioner) proposed to conduct a research study (a Researcher) to establish if the hypothesis I had formed was, in fact, the case. Lessons learned from the findings can then be disseminated to inform future practice.

At this stage, having considered, in Chapter 2, the background to the debate surrounding the inclusion in mainstream schools of pupils with learning difficulties, it is important to examine, in broad terms, methodological issues. This, in light of my conjecture, should take place within the context of research into the education of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). This will facilitate my presentation of the methods selected for use in this project, and also clarify the reasoning behind the rejection of methods considered but not selected. Creswell (2007) proposes that there are five philosophical assumptions leading to a researcher's choice of methods. It is appropriate to examine them here in the context of my own research and to take a position on ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical and methodological assumptions.

3.1.ii The purpose of research

Before exploring the methodological and ethical issues surrounding this study, I need to ask the question, "what is research and what is its purpose?" According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (2002), research is defined as "*original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge ... directed towards a specific practical aim or objective*". While

this definition is very specific and could be said to give little regard to theoretical research, it serves well here to give a broad purpose for enquiry and examination. Educational research, then, could be described as the quest to acquire new knowledge, in the sphere of education, on the route towards a predetermined educational goal. I feel that these definitions give insufficient regard to the body of research which seeks to evaluate the impact of initiatives already implemented and, in many cases, resulting from previous research studies (Furlong and Oancea, 2005). As Furlong and Oancea assert, this latter point as to whether education policies are designed as a result of sound research or for other, perhaps economic and financial reasons, has fuelled many debates. Not least of these is discussion surrounding the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

Yates (2004) identifies the purpose of educational research as the creation and dissemination of knowledge and tools which can be used to improve learning. Surely, few would disagree that, in education, the purpose should be the improvement of learning for all pupils, yet what counts as “learning” is a debated issue. Yates suggests that, in addition to the requirement to acquire academic knowledge and understanding, learning should be understood to also encompass vocational and technical skills. Over many years working with young people with learning difficulties, I have witnessed that, with appropriate, specialised teaching, they are able to access and benefit from a wide and varied curriculum. However, the curriculum is only a part of the school experience and the social and personal aspects should be

addressed with at least as much, if not more, value than academic, technical and vocational skills. Wayne is an example of the value of these aspects.

Wayne

The skills which Wayne needed in order to undertake a successful work experience placement were an example of this point. Wayne is able to follow instructions, relay messages accurately and is polite in his spoken manner. He also has acquired literacy and numeracy skills to a level which is appropriate for his placement. However, his autism manifests itself in an unawareness of the need to respect the personal space of others and to refrain from touching them. These aspects of his development are equally important, if not more so, than his ability to read and write. Without these, employers will find him abrasive, customers will find him rude and invasive and he will, additionally, fail to flourish socially.

Wayne is 17 and had attended a special school

The way in which society regards people with disabilities and learning difficulties has changed over the years and affects the way they are treated in all areas of life, including education. This development is not static but continues to evolve and it is important to evaluate any changes as they are implemented. This may be via research studies which can assess the implications for society and for the young people concerned. Inclusion in mainstream school for pupils with learning difficulties, since it was initially proposed by the Report of the Committee into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (Warnock, 1978) commonly known as the

Warnock Report, has been a contentious issue. While tension has continued, research has focused on various aspects and outcomes of the initiative. Some facets, the academic outcomes, for example, have received extensive scrutiny. Others, social outcomes for instance, have, as described earlier, been afforded significantly less attention.

3.1.iii The purpose of this research study

When embarking on this enquiry my purpose was to consider the social experiences of pupils with learning difficulties at secondary school, special and mainstream. Discussions with fellow doctoral students and course contributors confirmed my belief that some aspects of inclusion had been investigated to some extent but that the area which attracted my particular interest had not.

I intended to examine the pastoral, non-academic, experiences of pupils with learning difficulties in special and mainstream secondary schools. Should good practice, resulting in positive social outcomes be identified, this will then be disseminated to inform future practice. This would, of course, have an impact on all echelons of the education system. Teachers and school managers should find it useful to consider ways in which young people may be best equipped to progress confidently into the next phase and that their success may be connected with the individual, pupil-centred approach described by Zigmund and Barker (2004). This would, inevitably, involve reorganisation of some priorities; challenging in a competitive academic and financial climate. Teacher-trainers should consider strategies in which the

balance of academic and pastoral care is imparted in the training of student teachers, empowering them to focus on individual strengths, areas for development and support, regardless of whether these are purely academic (Terzi, 2005). Education policy makers should feel impelled to give further consideration to the notion that the rapid changes in education described by Schilling (1993), with their resulting changes in systems of accountability. Educational establishments are in a challenging position if they are expected to accomplish the social education of their pupils while they continue to be largely driven by academic outcomes and the need to maintain financial stability. Policy makers must give thought to the “how” as well as the “what” when directing schools. In some cases, the “how” may require considerable change to existing structures. I believe that these are totally justified in light of the importance of the wellbeing of vulnerable pupils.

3.1.iv The position of the researcher

I need to give careful consideration to my own pre-formed conjectures. I cannot allow my beliefs to discredit the work by being subjective. I must ensure that my research brings out the real position. Come back to this when at the design stage.

Extract from Research Journal

It is impossible, of course, to avoid bias, but this may be acknowledged and steps taken to take account of this in the presentation of findings. Having worked with school leavers with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) for

many years, it would be extraordinary if this experience did not engender hypotheses in respect of their previous educational experiences, and these must be acknowledged. The insight I have gained in working with these young people, and which informs my epistemological approach to the study, should be considered invaluable when establishing the framework for the research and the methods designed to answer the research questions. This background also serves as a useful starting point in the dissemination of any good practice identified via the research project for the benefit of pupils with, and without, learning difficulties during their secondary school experiences. If pupils with MLD are appropriately placed and supported in school, social outcomes should be maximised (Wedell, 2005). This applies, I would argue, to all learners in all schools; that they should be in a suitable environment with the appropriate support. My aim is the identification of successful approaches to this aspect of education leading to staff in all settings being enabled to develop and enhance practices to ensure that the student experience is improved. This is not, however, the sole responsibility of school staff and management. In order to achieve this there may be a need for staff training and professional development and, on a wider scale, for policy makers to consider the planning and resourcing of the education service to ensure all learners achieve successful social outcomes.

The opportunity to work, over many years, with countless students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) from mainstream, special, urban and rural schools has enabled me to empathise with, and conduct my research in a manner accessible to, the learners. Communication issues can be a

barrier to eliciting information when in discussion with MLD pupils, and specialist training and extensive experience has enhanced my ability to effectively approach and address this in order to ensure that exchanges are clear on both sides, accessible and respectful. In Chapter 1, I described the communication barriers experienced by, for instance, many learners with Autism, who are unable to interpret language which is idiomatic or not literal. I have worked with student teachers who have, for instance, used expressions such as “what do you see yourself doing in the future?” and “put your heads together and see what you can come up with”, with hilarious, but not constructive, results.

It was vital that my research methods were robust (Thomas, 2009), reflecting not only my own ontology and epistemology, but demonstrating consideration of the wider philosophical persuasions of others. To this end, it was necessary to examine methodological issues surrounding educational, and other, research (Richards, 2009). In section 3.2, the framework for my study is explained, together with the reasoning behind the methods chosen and, importantly, the rationale for not using others. I present the two stages of the research and, additionally, the Pilot Study which was designed to ensure the feasibility and accessibility of the study, together with the steps taken to address the ethical issues which arise when working with these vulnerable young people.

3.2 Methodological reflection

3.2.i The philosophy of research methodology

Historically, researchers have held entrenched views, opting wholly for quantitative or wholly qualitative research methods and researchers have been avid proponents of one method or the other. Increasingly, however, researchers are choosing to employ mixed methods (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Auguste Comte was the first thinker to use “positivism” for a philosophical position which could be applied to social science (Beck, 1979) and it has since been widely used by social scientists. In fact Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) signal that positivism has been used in so many different ways by philosophers and social scientists that it has become difficult to assign a consistent and precise meaning to the term. Comte’s thinking specified an overall principle that true knowledge is founded in experience and can only be extended by means of experiment and observation. Those classed as “logical positivists” would attest that meaning is, or is given, only by the method of verification (Cohen et al., 2000). This philosophy, then, limits what constitutes belief and knowledge to what can definitively be established, rejecting any attempts to gain knowledge through the recognition of perceptions or the varied experiences of those contributing to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding.

Any research that I undertake concerning perceptions and experiences will be approached from an interpretivist rather than a positivist starting point (Thomas, 2009) as it is my aim to capture the more individual and personal

feedback from the participants themselves rather than information from statistical data. My interest in the inclusion debate stems from many years working in the Further Education sector with young people with learning difficulties and my professional experience has led me to form a hypothesis that not all young people in secondary schools have access to equally effective pastoral care structures.

Carrie and Pete

Carrie, for instance, told me that she was not very good at maths but that she could sing really well and was really good at cooking. Carrie had clearly been encouraged to be proud of her strengths as well as being aware of those areas she needed to work on.

Carrie had attended a special school

Pete, on the other hand, seemed amazed when I complimented him on the correct aspects of his work, saying “ I love the way you do that tell me when I have done something right!”. This demonstrated that positive feedback had not been a feature of his previous educational experience.

Pete had attended a mainstream school

The remarks of Carrie and Pete serve to illustrate very different responses in school to individual lack of ability. Carrie knew that she had areas with which she struggled but that she was good at other things. Ongoing positive reinforcement had fostered confidence and sense of self-worth. Pete, on the other hand had, we must assume, had no such positive feedback, as it came as a (welcome) surprise that someone should compliment him on his work. I needed to give careful consideration to the design of a research study which

would shed light on the school experiences which led Carrie and Pete to reveal such different insights into their experiences. Creswell (2007) suggests that the process of research design starts with the philosophical assumptions made by the researcher(s) including their own views and beliefs which then inform the construct and interpretation of the study. For me, these involve a commitment to fair treatment and a belief that each disadvantaged learner must be offered the individual support they need. If this involves inconvenient and costly adaptations to the status quo, then these challenges must be overcome in order to provide an equitable provision for all pupils.

They think the topic has been done to death but they don't get it. It's all been about the academic outcomes – not the social. And I know what I see – I need to look at what has happened to these kids before they get to College. I've made up my mind

Extract from Research Journal – after meeting of EdD cohort

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) propose that, there is no single ideal strategy when planning research. It is, therefore, important to choose the most appropriate design for the “prevailing circumstances” at a given point and a considerable amount has been written and discussed about the methodology and methods best suited for educational research (Bridges and Smith, 2007). Indeed, much of the discussion has centred around the question as to whether “scientific methods” can exist in contemporary

educational research (Rowbottom and Aiston, 2007). Popper argues that they cannot as

There are no subject matters; no branches of learning - or rather, of inquiry - there are only problems and the urge to solve them.

(Popper, 1993, Preface, On the Non-Existence of Scientific Method)

Popper's viewpoint can, I suggest, be applied to any area of enquiry where an issue is perceived or identified and results in a drive to investigate further and thus to resolve. Carrie and Pete present me with just such an issue and a burning desire to find a solution.

3.2.ii Consideration of research strategies

O'Hear (1980) attested that rationality consisted primarily in the elimination of errors and what could be learnt from this process. This school of thought may clearly lend itself to the examination of statistical data, how it is collected and tested. The positivist may, therefore, find it challenging to accept that the research methods required when seeking to elicit personal perceptions and insights are robust and the results valid. The positivist would prefer a quantitative set of data for analysis as opposed to a range of reported views and statements. Popper might argue that there are no definitive answers in social science. For example, observation of 5,000 dogs may result in the finding that all dogs bark but that this may be nullified, however, by the observation of one dog which does not.

Applying Popper's approach to a study of 100 pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) could result in a finding regarding their academic achievement and that it is likely to fall below that of their peers who do not have such difficulties. Again this may be negated by the inclusion in a further study of some high-functioning pupils on the autistic spectrum who may achieve extremely well in certain academic areas. Such research would not satisfy the seekers of statistical results which are difficult to challenge. On the other hand in both examples the research should, if robust methods are used, reveal valid tendencies and trends regarding the likelihood that a dog will bark or a pupil achieve. For social scientists this is a potentially valuable finding on which to base developmental work and further study. In a qualitative study each individual "voice" or data-set is powerful - a non-barking dog or a student with learning difficulties - and in my research these "voices" will be given the opportunity to be heard. Crucially, it is the bark of the one dog or, in this case, the voice of the one pupil which must be heard. For each of them, their circumstances present the reality of life for them and should not be overlooked when considering the global climate of the majority. I believe that here qualitative research presents the prime opportunity for individual voices to be heard, valued and acted upon.

3.2.iii Mixed research methods

As Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) point out there is increased scope in modern social science research for quantitative and qualitative approaches to be combined for exploration. My research centred around

the social outcomes for certain groups resulting from their respective recent previous experiences. This being the case, it seems unlikely that wholly quantitative methods stemming from a positivist persuasion would emerge as potential tools for the project. However, to ensure appropriateness and methodological goodness of fit, I need to take into account the wider philosophies surrounding the methodologies of qualitative social research.

If there are different ways to understand the world, and if there are different forms that make such understanding possible, then it would seem to follow that any comprehensive effort to understand the processes and outcomes of schooling would profit from a pluralistic rather than a monolithic approach to research

(Eisner, 1993, p. 8)

The claim that a research project is based on realism could be argued to be constraining in that only observable facts will form the findings and outcomes. In some areas of enquiry statistical data is not only unavailable but would be inappropriate. With a constructivist base, however, as described by Woods (2008), it can be argued that studying people is very different from studying, for example, atoms.

In 2006, Ofsted undertook a study into the placement of pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. Their stated aim was to examine the provision and outcomes in different settings for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The findings of the research were presented as numerical data. Closer scrutiny of the research methodology revealed that it had been conducted, in considerable parts, using interviews and questions regarding feelings and perceptions. While, of course, this is a valid method of

research, the findings should not be presented as wholly quantitative as they contain significant qualitative data. The philosophy of the instigators of this Ofsted study may remain fixed in tradition whereby, as described by Burke Johnson and Onweuegbuzie (2004), positivist findings carry more weight than those derived from interpretation. This can lead to statistics being presented as fact while closer scrutiny reveals them to have been elicited from the perceptions of individuals. View, opinions and feelings expressed by individuals are equally important as numerical outcomes but need to be measured using different methods (Woods, 2008). This fact, however, in no way diminishes their significance but elicits more accurate and meaningful data. Qualitative and quantitative methods are, I propose, completely appropriate for different research studies and researchers should be clear and honest about the methods used when presenting their findings.

3.3 Methodology and research design

In the previous chapter, I described, using the literature, a number of research projects which had been undertaken with the intention of establishing the impact of inclusion on school academic standards, both for young people with learning difficulties and for their more typically developing peers. For my research, however, I needed to select methods which would elicit views and perceptions.

3.3.i Selection of methods appropriate to the study's participants

The expression of social interactions is, as outlined by Scheurich (1995), necessarily varied and does not lend itself to the same analysis strategies as raw numerical data. When earlier research sought to examine the experiences of young people with learning difficulties as they transferred from special to mainstream schools (Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans and Soulsby, 2007), the method considered most appropriate was interviews, a research method also adopted when seeking to examine the experiences of disabled pupils and their families (Lewis, Davison, Ellins, Niblett, Parsons, Robertson and Sharpe, 2007).

If Frederickson et al. consider the interview method the best, I have to agree. Some say that questionnaires give data that is easier to analyse – with the learners in my research, this really isn't the case. The termly survey proves that. But I must make sure that I plan it so there is no possibility they can be led to their answers.

Extract from Research Journal

I concur that it is more informative to discuss perceptions with the participants in an open discussion rather than in a closed questionnaire format where their opportunity to explain details is limited or non-existent. Questionnaires or analysis of existing statistical data are appropriate when examining academic results of pupils, with and without learning difficulties, in different settings (Allan, 2003; Florian, Rouse, Black-Hawkins and Jull, 2004) although response rates for the former could lead to questions regarding the reliability and validity of the resulting data. A paper-based questionnaire

approach is, in my experience, inappropriate for use with participants whose literacy skills may be limited. Written material, for learners with weak or non-existent reading skills, can also, I have observed, be needlessly stressful and result in questionable results. Often the participant is eager to complete the task as quickly as possible, is unsure of the purpose, unable to read the questions or nervous about which box to tick. While these issues could be addressed via the use of readers or scribes this would inevitably introduce a possibility of variation in interpretation, leading to potential compromise of reliability and/or validity.

When designing research such as mine, it is important to take account of the needs of the potential participants. As I described in Chapter 1, some young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) have conditions which impact solely on their ability to acquire knowledge at the pace, and in the manner, expected for their age group at any given time (Frederickson and Cline, 2002). Others demonstrate an inability to interact socially with adults and/or their peers (Frederickson and Simmonds, 2008) and both aspects may lead to challenging behaviours born of frustration and/or lack of awareness. Some pupils experience a general cognitive delay while others have social interaction at the forefront of their difficulties.

Communication, productive and/or receptive, is a major barrier to learning for a large proportion of learners with MLD and a number also experience physical and/or sensory impairments. I have found that many young pupils with MLD demonstrate a combination of all of these characteristics in varying

degrees. All of these conditions present enormous challenges to the pupils in their daily lives. At best, they struggle to acquire the academic skills which appear to be so easily grasped by their peers without such difficulties. For many, the academic struggle is coupled with social and/or communication challenges which make each day an even greater challenge. These young people must not be further disadvantaged by a climate which fails to care for them in a personal and individual way, supporting the skills they need to develop to function with confidence and self-esteem. My task was to establish why some pupils were so socially disadvantaged, identify what led to others being more rounded and what should be done to ensure that all pupils with MLD receive the best possible pastoral care before more young people are damaged.

A brief outline of some of the common conditions affecting those described as having MLD is given in Chapter 1 and, here it is relevant to recognise that communication is one of the key considerations to be made when designing research with pupils with learning difficulties. Examples of studies focusing on the outcomes for MLD pupils include those undertaken by Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2002), Ofsted (2006), Pirrie, Head and Brna (2006) and Humphrey and Lewis (2008). While these studies on the impact of inclusion are able to highlight academic development of the pupils under scrutiny, less emphasis has been placed on the social outcomes for pupils with learning difficulties educated in mainstream school settings and it is these outcomes, illustrated by confidence and feeling of self-worth which frame my research – these are the aspects which will enable the young people to progress and

operate successfully in society. I needed to consider the research methods used in the studies mentioned in order to justify the choice of methods selected in my own research. Some, few, studies have been undertaken with the purpose of examining the social experiences and outcomes for pupils with special educational needs (Frederickson and Furnham, 1998a), Frederickson and Furnham, 1998b), (Wedell, 2005) (Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans and Soulsby, 2007) but it would be fair to remark that these have focussed on the experiences of primary school children with little work being found regarding those of secondary school pupils with MLD.

My decision was to give the participants their voice via a series of semi-structured interviews. The next consideration concerned the appropriate interviewer(s).

If I ask other staff to help with the interviews, they might not be all the same in the way the questions are asked etc. I must be a control freak! I'm going to do them all myself, even if it takes longer – that way I'll be sure. I feel better now I've decided, even if it confirms I am a control freak!

Extract from Research Journal

The fact that I have expertise in this specialist area was one key factor that resulted in the selection of interviews as a research method. This expertise enabled me to gauge the amount of support each student needs to understand the question. Therefore, while no two interviews were the same, each student interviewed was given the appropriate support to ensure they

had understood the questions and had the best possible chance to respond to them.

Chris

Chris suffers from Autism and is unable to give eye-contact when in conversation. Many people, therefore, think that he is rude and this can lead to difficulties when he is with people who do not know him. He feels that “if you look at people’s faces, they can get you”.

With encouragement, from familiar adults, Chris can offer good and interesting responses. With strangers, he is awkward and often considered un-cooperative.

Chris is 16 and previously attended a special school

3.3.ii Listening to pupils’ voices

I have worked with learners with a vast range of learning difficulties for a sufficient length of time to feel confident in my ability to phrase questions and pursue discussions in an accessible way without leading the students’ answers. Researchers are taught to avoid closed questions when conducting interviews in order to encourage fuller answers from their interviewees. My expertise and experience, however, equipped me with the knowledge that this was not the appropriate approach to use with participants with learning difficulties. I have spent many years developing the communication skills which facilitate conversation with MLD learners and was completely confident to approach the questions in a different way. Many students with learning difficulties struggle to cope with the type of very open question which may be directed to other learners. For instance “how did you

feel about school?" would be too wide a question to pose to a young person with limited ability to conceptualise or with limited descriptive vocabulary. However, the closed introductory question "Did you like school?" can be followed up with prompts regarding preferred activities, friends, subjects and lead to a gradual opening of the discussion of experience.

Over the years, I have also developed an ability to recognise answers which are given wholly for effect or with the object of shocking. The latter comes hand in hand with the ability to not register shock or surprise at any unusual or bizarre answers. It is through working closely with the young people and becoming familiar with their usual facial expressions and body language that answers or remarks which are designed to shock or mislead have become readily identifiable. In Chapter 4, Callum's responses to some questions are typical of learners who fall into this category. My failure to register amazement to his replies about cult membership or assassination plans were a disappointment to him but permitted me to elicit more meaningful and informative discussion about his experiences at school.

3.4 Research Design and Methods

3.4.i The context of this study

The purpose of my research was to identify and share good practice for the benefit of pupils with learning difficulties in secondary education. Particular focus was on their pastoral care which could be considered to have an impact on their self-esteem and confidence. In order to examine the practices in both mainstream and special schools, data was collected from

two different viewpoints; firstly, recent school-leavers with learning difficulties and, secondly, staff who work with the learners and had done so since their arrival in the Further Education setting. Time and budgetary constraints required that this should be a comparatively small, local study. The intention was, however, that if recurrent themes emerged, there may be further work to be proposed on a national level to explore these further.

In advance of Phase 1 of the study, a small Pilot Study was undertaken in order to evaluate the accessibility and robustness of the proposed structure and analysis of the student interviews. Equal numbers of new students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) who had previously attended mainstream and special schools took part in the Pilot Study and the proposed format for recording informed consent and developing questions was used. Feedback was gathered from the Pilot Study participants as to their experience of participation. The intention was to make any adjustments required before the main study commenced. In the event, the interview questions in the Pilot Study proved to be accessible to the participants, who appeared to enjoy the experience, and resulted in open and informative conversations. The recording and analysis methods were manageable and produced useful information, and the study was able to proceed unaltered. As a result the Pilot Study analysis was added to the Main Study data to provide a greater field of participants in the research

In the main study, I collected data by involving a group of the pupils from as wide a range of local secondary schools as possible. In the first Phase of the

study, learners in their first year of Further Education were invited to participate. I considered that students who had recently left school would be able to offer fresher contributions than those who had left secondary school some considerable time previously and that it was likely that the memories of the newcomers would be more easily recalled and their recollections less influenced by intervening experiences. In the second Phase, levels of confidence and social skills were examined via an analysis of the results of the initial assessments, carried out by experienced and qualified professionals, of the whole first year cohort for the same year. The first Phase was designed to elicit the perceptions of the young MLD students themselves and the second to obtain an objective view from the staff working with the learners and charged with the assessment of, together with other skills, their levels of confidence, social aptitude and self-esteem. The two phases together represented the same issues viewed from two different perspectives, the learners and the professionals.

3.4.ii Pupils' voices, why and how to hear them

The aim of my research was to make a comparison between the pastoral care experiences of young people with learning difficulties in mainstream and special school settings. The schools attended by the students might have been considered to be the most reliable source of information regarding the pastoral systems operated, and it has already been established that schools are required to incorporate the points of Every Child Matters (ECM) into their curricula and Pupil Voice is a strategy, recommended by the government through which learners may express their views and concerns (Ruddock and

Flutter, 2004; Ruddock and McIntyre, 2007). It would be straightforward, then, to approach the schools concerned and consider their stated policies.

My decision was, however, to approach this from the pupils' perspective rather than the schools', bearing in mind that the pupils' perceptions are, to them the reality of their existence. If they perceive themselves to be included as a valued member of the community, then so they are. If, however, they feel stigmatised or isolated in any way, this is the actuality of life for them. All schools should have policies regarding the implementation of Every Child Matters (ECM) and there is no shortage of guidance for them. From Cheminais' (2006) advice for teachers on each aspect of ECM, through Spender's (2006) emphasis, for curriculum managers, on EMC in the curriculum, to the DfES's (2004) guidance on the implementation of ECM¹ (Being Healthy), every aspect of implementation is covered in detail. Schools, then, could indeed offer substantial information about their policies and practices with regard to the non-academic aspects of school life. However this information would inevitably project a picture which lacked objectivity, and presented the social and pastoral systems in place, and the support mechanisms provided to pupils in an understandably favourable light. Additionally, such information would not make it easy to obtain the pupils' perspective i.e. what it is like to be the recipient of the systems and policies outlined.

Society has, thankfully, travelled a long way from the Victorian view that children should be seen and not heard and from the days when

“children have not been accorded either dignity or respect. They have been reified, denied the status of participants”
(Freeman, 1987, quoted in Davie, 1993 p. 253)

Recent, and high profile, cases in the media have highlighted the importance of listening to children who have been denied a voice, dignity or respect simply because their abusers are public figures with more of a “voice” in public perception. The Police Service, the NSPCC and Crown Prosecution Service have, in recent times, published papers and declared publically their commitment to listening to, and valuing, what young people have to report; these young people are the consumers of the education service. Education is just one of the areas in which it has only recently been considered conceivable that the “consumers” might have a valuable opinion to offer.

It can be, as Colebatch (2002) points out, a hazardous path to tread, asking people for their opinions and experiences of the implementation of policies. The impact of policy is borne by those other than the policy makers themselves and they may, in this way, be given the opportunity voice their opposition. For my research, I can think of no more appropriate source of information regarding perceptions than the young people themselves. The basis of the research was to elicit the perceptions of the young people who have recently finished their secondary school education so the most valuable source of information must, surely, be the young people themselves. As Jones (2005) and Ravet (2007) propose, theirs are the views which must be considered, and the voices which must be heard.

The thoughts and ideas of pupils have not, until relatively recently, been sought and those of pupils with learning difficulties may have been elicited even less frequently. Pupil Voice, a valuable mechanism through which pupils are consulted and their views considered, is, I believe, an accessible forum for some pupils but less so for others. Pupil Voice provides opportunities for school pupils to offer their views about a range of issues relating to their school experiences. This takes place in, for instance, group meetings or class discussions. Pupils who are lacking in confidence or who have communication difficulties, however, require a different and individual situation in which to express themselves. It is crucial not to underestimate the pupils (Ruddock and Flutter, 2004) but to acknowledge them as experts in their own realm of experience.

One of the only barriers to eliciting the views, thoughts and perceptions of young people with learning difficulties is the lack of expertise in those undertaking the enquiry. It is, therefore, of paramount importance to select the most appropriate method to undertake such a study (Ruddock and McIntyre, 2007). I approached my research on an individual, personal level via interviews with the pupils themselves. Although the project was small and localised there is no reason to suppose that local findings, if sufficiently balanced and robust, should not be replicated more widely and good practice shared on a national and international scale. If, as the government suggests, Every Child Matters, it should be expected that there is an ongoing quest to disseminate good practice, where it is found, for the benefit of all. It is my

intention that examples of good practice will be shared and promoted to support the social outcomes of youngsters with learning difficulties across the range of educational settings available to them.

3.4.iii The phases of the research

- The Pilot Study

Before embarking on the main study, a small Pilot Study took place. The purpose of this was to explore the accessibility of the questions and the format for the project. Should the Pilot Study result in significant changes to the study being required, the result of the Pilot would have been discarded. The approach used in the Pilot Study was found to be accessible to the participants and resulted in useful and robust data. Feedback from the participants in the Pilot Study was positive concerning their experience of taking part and it was possible to collate and analyse the data without bias or compromise to validity. The Pilot Study participants enjoyed the recorded interviews and being invited to take part boosted their self-esteem. One participant asked if we could repeat the interviews on another occasion. The answers given and the subsequent conversations were informative and useful in terms of the purpose of the study. Therefore, as no changes were needed, the findings from the smaller study were combined with those of the main project and resulted in a slightly larger number of participants in the interview analysis than would otherwise have been the case. The Pilot Study comprised 6 learners, 3 from mainstream schools and 3 from special schools. 3 female and 3 male students took part in the initial study. When inviting participants to contribute to the main study an equal number of

female and male students would have constituted an ideal group. This, however, was not possible as for the last two years the intake to the Foundation Studies department from both mainstream and special schools has been disproportionately male dominated with significantly fewer female learners in the cohort. It would be interesting to explore this phenomenon and whether or not this is an isolated incident or a developing trend. Although this falls outside the scope of this research, it could form part of a post-doctoral study. At this stage, the intake data for a particular year cannot be suggested to represent a trend. A return to the department's intake statistics over the coming years could, however, prove an interesting project for a researcher with an interest in this field.

- Phase 1: The semi-structured interviews

For the main study, 20 young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) took part in the project. As described, the Pilot Study involved 6 learners, resulting in a total of 26 participants across both series of interviews. All were in their first year of Further Education in the Foundation Studies department of the same College. 13 students had previously attended mainstream schools and 13 had attended special schools. In the Pilot Study, each learner had attended a different school i.e. 3 mainstream and 3 special schools and the group comprised 3 girls and 3 boys. In the main study, 5 special schools and 5 mainstream schools were attended by the participants. From the special schools, 2 participants were girls and 8 were boys. From the mainstream schools, 4 participants were girls and 6 were boys. The county in which the College is located is large and diverse

and the schools attended by the learners taking part were a mixture of small, large, rural and urban schools. Where individuals are discussed, the learners' names have been changed to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.

It is, perhaps, relevant at this point to consider the advantages of a small scale research study. While some might argue that larger studies have a greater contribution to make to the field, there are also significant drawbacks to large interview-based studies involving young people with learning difficulties. There is, in extensive studies, a necessity to engage a team of research interviewers to undertake the task of eliciting views from the participants. In a longitudinal study (Polat, Kalambouka, Boyle and Nelson, 2001) such a team were "briefed" on issues which would facilitate interviews with young people with a range of learning difficulties. However, professionals who work with such young people require, and undertake, extensive training and professional development to enable them to successfully interact with them, in particular those who suffer from a learning disability which impacts on their ability to process information and to communicate. The depth and breadth of the briefing given to the interviewers in the research conducted by Polat et al. (2001) would not be comparable with the experience and skills acquired by professionals working with pupils with special educational needs on an ongoing basis. In my experience, the style of successful communication varies with each individual, and many young people in this category are able to express themselves with any degree of ease only after strategies and relationships

are established. It is common to observe students who, when working with someone unfamiliar or with whom they have not yet established a relationship, to respond in an atypical manner. In these circumstances they often demonstrate a desire to please and give answers that they hope will be acceptable rather than those which express their true feelings or thoughts. Others find it very difficult to communicate with people with whom they are unfamiliar and express reluctance to take part at all in activities of this nature.

- Phase 2: Data from specialist professionals

In the second phase to the main study, I sought to consider the feedback from the professionals who work with the young people taking part in the study, all of whom undergo rigorous and detailed assessments of their academic and social strengths and needs during the induction period. The resulting individual student assessment results for the entire cohort for the year in question were then analysed. The participants in both the Pilot Study and Phase 1 were part of the larger cohort. In this way, I was able to make a comparison between the levels of social confidence and ability of pupils who had recently left special and mainstream secondary schools.

3.5 Ethical considerations

3.5.i Informed consent

The ethical issues associated with working in this study with young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) were addressed in accordance with the principles and procedures set out by the University of Gloucestershire (2008) and I, the researcher, have been the subject of an

Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check as required by my work with vulnerable young people. There are numerous ethical issues surrounding a project of this nature and the importance of these cannot be overstated and these were discussed in detail when I was invited to submit my proposal to, and discuss the issues with, the University's Ethics Committee.

The College selected to participate in the project was chosen for practical reasons. It was important, however, to ensure that familiarity did not dilute the requirement to obtain permission for the study to be undertaken in my place of work. I approached the Head of School of the department accommodating the students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), as the manager most familiar with the needs and sensitivities of the students invited to participate, for permission and this was readily granted. Great care was taken when selecting the young people who might be candidates for participation in the research in order to protect the sensitivities of students who would be unable to cope with the situation or whose communication skills were so limited that the experience would be stressful and unproductive. Here, the information available from departmental staff and my own professional experience was instrumental in the obviation of such circumstances.

Coral

Among the potential participants was an elective mute who had recently started at College. It was rewarding to observe her develop over time into a communicative young person. However, at the start of the academic year, I decided that it would have been needlessly stressful for her, and fruitless in terms of the research, to invite her to take part.

Coral, 16, had previously attended a mainstream school

Shona

It would have been counterproductive to invite Shona to take part in the study. She had been school-phobic and it was with great difficulty that she was able to come to College each day. Initially her father brought her to the staffroom each morning. Later she was able to leave her father at the entrance to the College. Any challenge or approach, however, would result in her absconding and remaining absent for several days. It was rewarding to observe, over time, her ability to arrive and enter the College comfortably but, at the beginning of her further education, the pressure of being put “on the spot” would have been damaging

Shona, 16, had previously attended a mainstream school

Cognition, or the awareness of the process in which they were to take part, was key as were confidentiality and anonymity in the relationship between the participant and the interviewer and equal care was given to establishing this dynamic. As identified by Denscombe and Aubrook (1992) and Rose and Grosvenor (2001) there are many issues to be considered when researching the views of young people, such as informed consent and trust in order that no abuse of position could be suggested.

The participants in my research, though chronologically classed as young adults, should be considered in a similar category as pupils much younger than their ages of 16 or 17 due to their issues surrounding processing of information and communication skills. The question of informed consent had, therefore, to be addressed in a sensitive but, at all times, unpatronising way. In parallel to the discussion surrounding research methods using written questionnaires, the ascertaining of informed consent required careful consideration. While the participants demonstrated enthusiasm and willingness to take part in the study, I considered that a formal standard of consent form would not indicate that each young person had fully understood the project in which they were to engage. Equally, as the researcher, I needed to be confident that issues of confidentiality and anonymity were fully understood. For this purpose, a short time was taken at the beginning of each individual interview for a verbal explanation of the purpose of the project, the nature of the interview to take place, the guarantee of anonymity and an assurance of confidentiality. Only when I was confident, from their answers and manner, that the participant was fully aware of these issues,

and confident in them, was the consent form (Appendix iii) signed by both of us.

3.5.ii Confidentiality and security

The participants were made aware of, and their consent obtained to, the recording of the interviews. This method of capturing their views was a more natural and comfortable format for the exercise than the taking of notes which would have involved the introduction of a third party or the necessity to pause during the dialogue. Either of these would have led to a more stilted and contrived atmosphere but any participant who preferred not to have a recording made was able to have his/her contributions made in written form. The digitally made recordings were transferred to computer file and deleted from the recording device. The computer files were password protected, access available only to the researcher, myself. The recordings and notes will be destroyed at the end of this doctoral study. One learner alone preferred not to be recorded and, in this instance, written notes were made and stored securely. The remaining participants enjoyed the recording process and were keen to have their conversations replayed to them, in some cases more than once. They were intrigued to hear their own voices and appeared pleased with the results.

Hilarious – Gemma wants to do a recording every week – will have to talk her out of that one!

I was surprised that they all wanted to listen to themselves – several times in Mark’s case. Strange listening to your own voice – it really made them smile and laugh. Am going to use recordings for the Interview Unit, I think. Hope Gemma forgets about the weekly recording thing – pretty sure she won’t!

Extract from Research Journal

3.5.iii Conducting interviews with vulnerable young people

People with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) should be considered vulnerable on a number of different counts. Their ability to process information is varied and, in some cases, young people take at face value information and requests addressed to them. It is vital, therefore, that conversation is appropriately framed. Additionally many MLD young people have a cognitive level lower than their chronological age. This leads them to be vulnerable as they may appear to be young adults while they lack the maturity and cognition of peers of a similar age.

Any project involving participants with learning difficulties requires that the researcher(s) is sensitive to the vulnerability of the participants. Questions must be framed in a way which is easily comprehended and respondents must be given sufficient support to answer, while not being led by the interviewer. Terms such as “pastoral support” or “non-academic” should be avoided in favour of the more accessible “help with things which weren’t to do with lessons and work”. In my research, I needed to use closed

questions, as described in 3.3 ii, to start the interviews. Then, in order to draw out further views from the young people, it was important to feature open questions when moving from the general to the individual level of conversation (Dockrell, Lewis and Lindsay, 2000). It was equally important that these questions were also framed in appropriate and accessible language for the young participants.

My extensive experience contributed to the ability to design the semi-structured interview phase of the research. To this end, for instance, when focussing on contact time, or the occasions on which pupils had the opportunity to have an individual conversation with their tutor, terms such as “tutorial” and “contact time” did not feature. Instead, participants were asked “how often did you see your Tutor?” To expand this conversation, a stimulus such as “how many other people were there?”, “where did this take place?” and “how did you feel about this” would facilitate the extension of the discussion, ensuring that the pupils were provided with the opportunity to offer their genuine perceptions of the situation. It was paramount at all times to remain conscious of the vulnerability of the young people taking part in the study and to tailor communication to take account of any cognitive impairment and/or communication limitations. It was equally important to avoid language or adaptations which could appear patronising to the young adults who willingly played so vital a part in the project, and my extensive experience of working with MLD learners was instrumental in the success of this approach.

3.6 Data analysis methods

3.6.i Qualitative and quantitative data

The task of handling and the process of analysing and reporting the findings of a research project will vary according to the data collection methods used. However these may differ, the results they must be equally rigorous in order to deliver a credible and robust piece of work (Richards, 2009). When selecting data collection and analysis strategies, the researcher must be aware of a range of tools and methods available and consider the most appropriate for the proposed project. The data resulting from the methods outlined in the previous section required what Thomas (2009) describes as the “analysis of words”. This denotes that it was gathered, in the first Phase, via interviews with students, rather than from the analysis of wholly numerical data. Both quantitative and qualitative research has a number of computer software packages to support the analysis of data. When researchers choose not to use computer packages, there are a number of different approaches to the analysis of data resulting from their research, some of which are briefly outlined here.

3.6.ii Approaches to data analysis

Many of the approaches to the analysis of data in research studies were considered when designing my own research. A *constant comparative* approach, for instance, requires repeated comparison of data in the quest for emerging themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Bliss, Monk and Ogborn (1983) and Walker (1985) outline ways in which these themes may be related to one another and developed via *network analysis* and *construct mapping* respectively. Network analysis could be said to provide a

hierarchical map of themes and ideas while construct mapping results in the themes being arranged in sequential order. Other approaches to the collection and analysis of data include those offered by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the *grounded theory*. They suggest that the evidence will emerge from the situation rather than the researcher approaching the project with fixed ideas from the start, but Thomas (2009) suggests that many researchers profess to be using a *grounded theory* approach when, in truth, they are using a *constant comparative* method, repeatedly examining and re-examining the data in order to identify themes or trends emerging from their enquiry.

Researchers each bring their individual ontological, epistemological and axiological stance to the project on which they embark and must endeavour to ensure that no bias is evident in their approach to their study and that the resulting evidence is robust. When considering data analysis, the emergence of themes, leading to potential causes/effects, has always been central to any interpretative research (Thomas and James, 2006) and these threads should form the basis of subsequent analysis. *Discourse analysis* in social science research, as described by Fairclough (1995), allows for the perspective of both the sociological and the psychological approach to be encompassed in interpretation of data. The sociological approach considers discourses to be forms of language in broader terms defining social relations, while the psychological approach focuses on individual words and phrases in discourses. Each perspective is valuable when studying the wider social environment of the participants and the vocabulary and syntax with which

they relate to individuals in different settings. I expected that both of these aspects would feature in the interpretation of the data collected via the strategies chosen for my research.

I am sure that I need to use the constant comparative approach. However, I question whether my research sample is big enough to warrant the term “constant” which suggests to me something larger. On the other hand, I will be examining the responses to the interviews over and over again to compare them. So it **is** constant comparison. I wonder, do the methods have to have a “label”? I guess they do if you need to describe them to other people. I wonder if researchers ever discover new methods of analysis....?

Extract from Research Journal

When planning this research project, I considered that a constant comparative method of data analysis would be the most appropriate. This involves repeatedly going through the data (Thomas, 2009), making comparisons between each element (expression, phrase or sentence) with all the other contributions. The themes which then emerge form what Thomas describes as the “building blocks” of the analysis. Thomas goes on to indicate that the mapping of these themes is often the weakest element of the interpretation of data and care was taken via the Pilot Study to establish a robust system to link and compare data. This was done by repeated listening, noting and comparing to ensure sufficient information had been gathered and recorded in a format which was able to be analysed.

3.6.iii Variables

There were a number of variables present at the outset of the research but many more may have emerged as the project unfolded. When coding the data resulting from the interviews with the learners and from the assessment feedback from professionals, the biggest existing variable was the type of school (mainstream or special) attended by each participant. During the Pilot Study, it was possible to consider not only potential variables but also to test the validity and reliability of the data analysis methods chosen. The Pilot Study itself was crucial in the testing of the analysis methods to be employed in the main research project and their recording of findings.

3.6.iv Validity and reliability

Cannell and Kahn (1968) suggested that when interviews are used in research, validity was a persistent problem and that this could be exacerbated (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000) by the position held by the interviewer. In the interviews in my project it was important that I framed the questions in such a way that they did not lead the participants to offer answers which substantiate the views or hypothesis formed from my own professional experience. While Silverman (1993) considered that reliability and validity could be controlled by holding highly structured interviews with identical formats, both Scheurich (1995) and Oppenheim (1992) held a different view. They maintained that social interaction is necessarily varied and that controlling wording does not, and should not, control an interview. The questions in my research were identical in the first instance in order to provide equity at the outset before progressing to more personal perceptions.

Given the highly individual needs, including communication difficulties, of the participants, subsequent questions to clarify or elicit further detail often needed to be varied, however, in order to make them equally accessible to each individual learner.

Having considered the most appropriate methods for my research, I felt that interviews with students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) soon after their transition from secondary school would be the most productive and accessible way to proceed, their recollections being from recent experience. The participants had attended, in equal numbers, mainstream and special school and the interviews took place during the first term of their post-school experience. The analysis of the initial assessments of the entire intake cohort for the year, conducted by specialist professional staff, was undertaken immediately after the induction period in the same term. In this way the perceptions of the learners and the findings of the staff reflected the same group and as wide a variety of school as possible. In Chapter 4, I consider the findings from both phases of the research and identify the themes which emerged. These are discussed further in Chapter 5. I aim, through this research, not solely to identify good practice and causes for concern. My goal is that the former should be disseminated to eliminate the latter for the benefit of all secondary school pupils and in particular those with learning difficulties. My many years as an Advanced Practitioner have enabled me to disseminate specialist expertise to colleagues within my own institution and beyond. This experience of designing and delivering training

and mentoring both new and existing colleagues will inform the recommendations made in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4 Findings: “I couldn’t tell anyone at school”

*What surprised **us** most about the pupils was how insightful they were and how fluent many were at expressing their ideas. What surprised **them** most was that anybody was prepared to listen.*

(Osborne and Collins, 1999)

I couldn’t tell anyone at school or they would say they would sort it out but nothing would happen ...and it would make things worse

Louise, who had attended a school for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD)

4.1 Introduction

Osborne and Collins’ remarks, above, are, at once, both encouraging and shocking. It is positive to hear that, on matters which clearly concerned and affected them, pupils were invited to voice their views and opinions. That they should be so surprised that anyone wanted to listen to them, is shameful and regrettable.

Since the publication of Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2003), the importance of the care of the whole child, as opposed to academic progress alone, has become a much publicised requirement for schools. In order to support this endeavour much has been written on the topic of pastoral support and guidance. The development of social skills and confidence will be enhanced by a robust system which equips pupils with the aptitude to operate successfully in the wider world outside and after school. Almost twenty years of teaching and mentoring school leavers with Moderate

Learning Difficulties (MLD) has fostered in me a perception that not all secondary school pupils with MLD have had access to equally strong pastoral support and that this may be related to the type of school they had attended. The aim of my research was to examine the experiences of MLD learners who had attended mainstream and special schools and to consider whether some schools embrace the ethos of pastoral care in a more effective way than others. Pastoral care in secondary schools..... What might it look like? Is it different in different schools? Could this affect social skills and confidence levels in pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties? Who should be asked? To answer these questions I had decided to consult, firstly, the recipients of the pastoral care and, secondly, those who worked with them immediately after it ended; the MLD learners who had recently left secondary school and the professionals supporting them in their next phase of education.

4.2 Phase 1 of the Study: The voices of the pupils

The format for the interviews in this Phase may be found at Appendix iv

4.2.i Giving the pupils a voice

Giving children a voice is a modern concept. The “seen and not heard” philosophy of child-rearing and development was the received wisdom for many generations. And why not – after all adults manage society effectively so that crime, poverty, abuse and conflict no longer feature so, surely, they know best. In reality, adults have failed to ensure the safety of all young

people for centuries and there is no evidence that dangerous, abusive or life-threatening situations for many children have been eliminated since the more recent moves to hear their voices have been advocated. Of course, this view should be tempered by the overarching aim to protect young people and to enable them to benefit from the experience of others. Grace (1995) suggests that, traditionally, young people have been excluded from any process of dialogue even on issues which directly affect their lives. He describes an “ideology of immaturity” which fails to acknowledge the capacity of the young to reflect on issues concerning their lives. I suggest that only by asking children and adolescents for their perceptions can the reality of their lives can be taken into consideration – after all, these perceptions represent their reality, their view of the circumstances in which they operate. Consulting young people about their school experiences could, therefore, be risky – they might give answers which do not fit in with the prevailing political agenda or the finances available.

“Pupil Voice” has become a valued and recommended mechanism for empowering young people to express themselves on matters which concern them, and guidance is offered to schools regarding its implementation (Cheminais, 2008; Ruddock and Flutter, 2004). If schools are, as described by Ruddock and McIntyre (2007), to be pupil centred, it is the pupils who must be consulted about matters which affect them. However, there is a significant difference between asking the questions and listening to the answers. Houston (2013) reminds us, in the wake of the enquiry into child abuse perpetrated by high profile media figures, of the importance of

listening to children, and recent cases have served to remind us of the consequences of failure to do so. If, as suggested by Houston, children's voices should be heard, this must only be in the context of being prepared to respond to them, listening to them all. Some voices may reveal uncomfortable situations and those of us who listen must be prepared to give credence to the perceptions of young people; their perception is their reality.

Over the years I, like most professional people, have attended countless meetings, discussion groups and training sessions. I feel confident that I am not alone in my observation that, in the majority of these events, there are participants who are only too ready to speak up and voice an opinion or ask a question, while some are reluctant to draw attention to themselves or to offer a contribution. Mechanisms for consulting pupils, be they Pupil Voice or other communication methods, will surely present similar situations with some confident and articulate young people making contributions while quieter community members remain unheard.

The aim of my research was to explore the secondary school experiences of students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). These young people are, I suggest, likely to feature among those who lack the confidence and/or communication skills to express their concerns in an open forum. My focus was not on the academic but the pastoral experiences they had encountered in their school, whether it was a mainstream or special school. The method adopted for the main phase of the study was to ask them, to give them their voice. Speaking to the participants individually guaranteed that their voice

was heard and that their contributions valued. The perceptions voiced constituted their reality and should be given appreciation and respect.

Certainly, it would have been possible to ask the schools themselves regarding the nature of the care given to pupils and, as all schools are required to have a policy regarding pastoral care, information would have been readily available. Similarly, I could have approached the Local Authority (LA) with regard to their policy on pastoral support in schools and the support and training available. The decision not to do so was made for the following reasons. Policy and practice are not necessarily mirrors of one another, and it is the implementation of the stated intention which results in impact, rather than the simple existence of a policy, which interested me. Local Authorities have, over many years, seen a reduction in, and erosion of, their powers and responsibilities and Academies and Free School fall outside their jurisdiction. LAs and schools could provide statements of ethos and written documents but only the pupils would be able to describe the reality of the care for them. It was, therefore, for their perceptions I asked and to which I listened.

4.2.ii The participants

In my research an equal number of learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) who had previously attended mainstream and special schools were invited to participate in the study, which took place in their first term in Further Education. Information letters had been sent to parents and carers and informed consent was obtained from all those taking part

(Appendix iii). They had all left school at the end of Year 11, aged 16. Undertaking the study early in their College career would, I considered, enable the young people to recall their school days with ease. The semi-structured interviews were facilitated by one researcher, myself, with specialist experience with MLD learners, to ensure the quality and consistency of approach, and the conversations were recorded with the consent of the participants. One participant preferred not to be recorded and the notes of this conversation were made manually during the interview. The recorded conversations were later transcribed. To ensure consistency the learners were all asked the same questions (Appendix iv). The initial questions were designed to encourage the participants to give some information about their preparation for coming to College but also to enable them to give some factual responses and become familiar with and relaxed about the format of the discussion.

My experience in this specialised field of work meant that I felt confident that the questions and format of the conversation would be accessible to the participants, and my experience enabled me to phrase subsequent questions in a manner with which they would be comfortable yet not feel patronised. At all times, it was important not to lead the learners in their responses but, as in class or individual tutorials, allow them to express themselves in their own way and at their own pace. Apart from one learner, the group were more than happy to have their voices recorded and many asked to hear the results played back. This proved in equal measures amusing and entertaining for them.

I won't get big-headed doing this Paula almost cried with laughter when we listened to the recording (3 times!). Apparently, I sounded like that posh woman with the horses (turned out to be Princess Anne!) and am old enough to be her – and she sounded like “a right chav”!! I can't believe how much they loved the recording – must use it for something else!

Extract from Research Journal

As outlined in Chapter 3, I undertook a small Pilot Study in advance of Phase 1 of the main study, in order to evaluate the suitability and accessibility of the interview format and the practicality of subsequent data analysis. No alterations to the strategies were required and the resulting data was therefore included in the findings of the main study.

4.3 Findings from the Pilot Study and First Phase

.The format and structure of the semi-structured interviews is given at Appendix iv

4.3.i The Semi-structured Interviews

4.3 i a) Interview Section 1 – A bit about you

Results from the questions and discussions about the participants

Figure 1 illustrates the responses of the participants to questions about their situation before, and as, they started their college career.

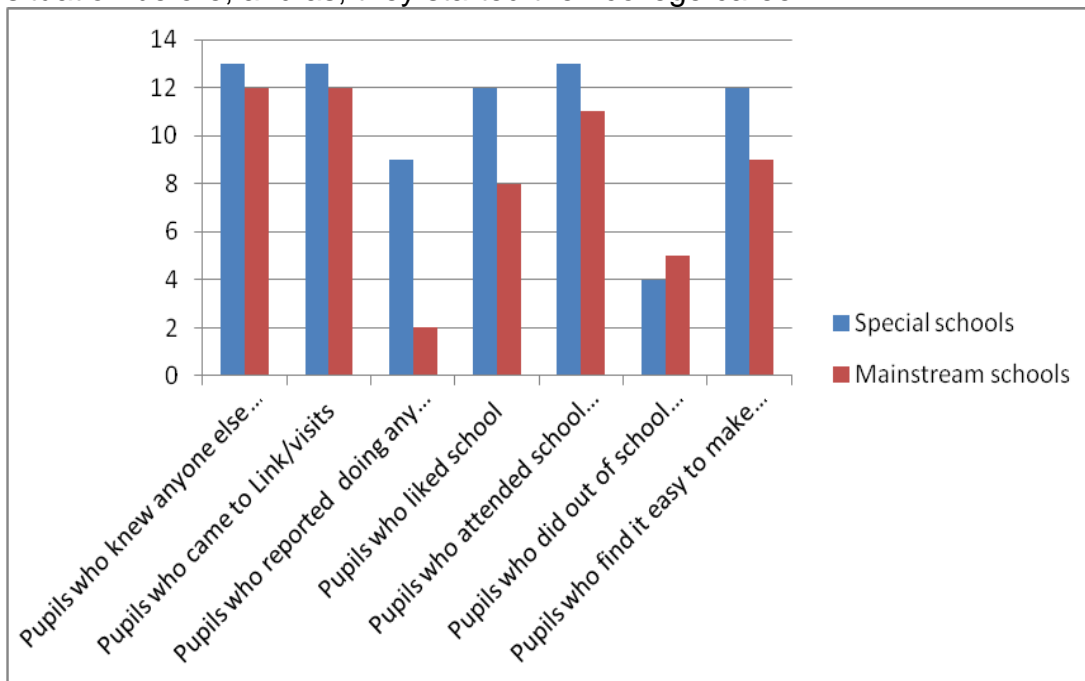


Figure 1 The participants on arrival at college

This initial focus of the discussions had more than one function. Speaking about themselves was an area about which the young people could be expected to undertake with some degree of confidence which would put them at ease and introduce the discussion in a general way. Additionally, it might prove significant if all the participants who responded in a particular way to subsequent questions had had comparable preparation for transition,

came from similarly constituted families or arrived at College with parallel circumstances in terms of friends or acquaintances.

Q: When you came to College in September, did any of your friends from school come too?

All but one of the young people taking part in the pilot and main studies knew at least one person who had come to College from the same school. In the case of the participants who had attended special schools, all but one knew people who were now in the same department at College. The exception was Louise, a learner who had attended a special school for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) and this learner knew students who had enrolled onto courses in other departments of the College. While it could be tempting to interpret this finding as leading to a sense of security as the newcomers were familiar with other students, this may not necessarily be the case. Some of the learners were able to point out that knowing someone and getting on with them can be very different things. It is fair to say, then, that knowing peers before embarking on a new phase of experience could lessen any potential feelings of unfamiliarity while not necessarily result in a ready-made friendship group.

Q Did you do any work at your old school to get ready for coming to College?

The majority of the participants previously attending special schools felt that some work had taken place in school in preparation for college but they were not able to give details regarding the nature of this work. They had all attended Link events where potential students come to College for several

days during years 10 and 11 and this may have contributed to the feeling that preparation had taken place. The majority (12 out of 13) of pupils with learning difficulties who had attended mainstream schools had also taken part in Links and visits but few felt that they had been prepared by school for their transition to Further Education. William, who had attended a mainstream school, commented,

“They were only interested if you were going on to the 6th Form and I wasn’t going to be able to do nothing like that, so I didn’t count”.

It is altogether possible, of course, that preparation had been woven into school life rather than made explicit as a separate focus but the perception (their reality) of the majority of the mainstream participants was that little or no preparation had taken place. Two exceptions stood out. One particularly articulate interviewee was able to give detail of how a staff member had helped prepare her for transition while another was able to describe the support offered focusing only on the bus route to the new place of study. While this may appear to be a trivial aspect of transition, we may all identify with the stress of being unsure how to undertake a journey to arrive at a new destination on time. If, however, this was the only preparation for transition, and this appears to be the case in the perception of the learner, arriving at the destination could be considered an important aspect in which to feel confident but might not prepare the learner for what to expect on and after arrival.

Q Did you know anyone else at College – on other courses, older brothers or sisters ...?

The responses to the question “did you know anyone else at College – on other courses – older brothers or sisters.....” reminded me, as with Question

1, not to make presuppositions. Knowing people, related or not, does not, per se, indicate a feeling of security. It is possible for the young people to be acquainted with other members of the College community with whom they do not feel comfortable and, while being acquainted with other College attendees may engender a feeling of wellbeing and familiarity, we should not be tempted into considering that this is inevitable.

Q Did you like school / Did you attend school regularly?

When asked if they had liked school, the majority of participants in both groups reported that they had. All had been diagnosed with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and 12 of the pupils who had attended special school and 8 of their mainstream MLD counterparts said that they had liked school. This was surprising as all of the mainstream MLD pupils in the Pilot Study and 2 in the Main Study later acknowledged that they had not always felt safe at school.

Further discussion with the mainstream students revealed that liking school hinged on the presence of a friendship group rather than relationships with staff or on the curriculum. On the subject of regular attendance at school all the special school cohort was able to report good attendance. While this would initially appear to be a positive response, it should be taken into consideration that not all the pupils were independent travellers so their prompt and regular attendance would have been supported by transport providers and family members.

The majority of mainstream pupils with MLD had also attended school regularly but extended discussion revealed some interesting insights into the management of behaviour for some of them. One young man, an articulate and enthusiastic participant who I will call Mark, stated that he found it really difficult to come to College as he was required to be there every day, five days a week. Due to what he described as his “naughty” behaviour at school, his timetable had been reduced to the extent that, in Year 11, he had only been required to attend school on two days a week. The way in which the mainstream school managed Mark’s behaviour on the days he did attend school is an interesting feature which emerged when we later discussed his relationship with staff. Any disruption was met with exclusion from the lesson, with Mark being sent to sit at the back of his Form Tutor’s class. This, it transpired, happened on a very regular basis. It would be easy to criticise the school for keeping Mark away from education for the majority of the week. A realist might argue, however, that a mainstream subject teacher with a class of 30 pupils, and pressure to cover the curriculum and for the pupils to achieve, would welcome the days when a “naughty” and disruptive pupil like Mark was not expected in school or was in another room. At College, Mark responded positively to additional support and a curriculum broken into manageable proportions and it is tempting to wonder if his school might have employed similar methods to engage him.

A second pupil, Karla, from a different mainstream school, reported a different variation on a similar theme. Karla, whose domestic circumstances could be described as turbulent, had been regularly sent home as a result of

behaviour issues since Year 7. By the time she reached Year 11 she was allowed to attend school only for exams. While, as in Mark's case, the smooth operation of the school must be maintained, the value of requiring Karla to spend her time in the domestic situation which appeared to be at the root of her behaviour problems must surely be questionable (DfE, 2014). Both examples indicate to me that Michael Gove's encouragement to schools to impose strict sanctions for poor behaviour is deeply flawed. By excluding these two pupils, their behaviour is distanced from the classroom, but no steps are taken to identify the cause or to offer remedial support.

The participants had a range of feelings when anticipating their transition to the College environment. Although some were apprehensive due to the size of the College, all agreed that their fears had been allayed and that Link events and visits had helped them overcome their anxieties. All had looked forward to being in a more adult environment, apart from one who reported,

"I didn't really think about it, I just turned up".

Q Did you take part in any out-of-school activities?

The section of the interviews concerning out-of-school activities was designed to enable learners to talk with confidence about themselves. Callum, previously attending a special school, falls into the category previously mentioned in his tendency to answer in ways he hopes will raise eyebrows. It was not surprising, therefore, when asked if he took part in any activities out of school he responded,

"do you mean do I belong to a cult?"

His disappointment was evident when my answer suggested that I was actually interested in football, youth-club or scouts and he reluctantly admitted that he did none of these.

Good old Callum! Never fails to disappoint! As soon as he did his head-up-looking-down-his-nose thing, I knew I was in for one of his more bizarre answers. I know not to appear shocked or surprised but it IS difficult sometimes to keep a straight face!

Extract from Research Journal

There was little difference between the groups and their participation in leisure activities and it transpired that the majority did not take part in extracurricular pursuits. It might be assumed that the most of the students were not interested in sporting/social activities but this was not necessarily the case. The group came from a wide range of urban and rural locations. Access to transport, the ability to travel independently, parental support and the existence of activities in the more remote areas may have played a significant part in this result and it should not, therefore, be considered in itself indicative of lack of social confidence or ability.

Q Do you find it easy to make friends?

All but one of the pupils from special schools reported that they found it easy to make friends. The exception was, Louise, the learner who had attended a special school for students with Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties (EBD) and she appeared to have developed a defensive approach to her peers,

particularly other girls. This may, of course, have been due to issues outside the educational environment. During the subsequent discussion about her experiences, however, her responses revealed that she felt vulnerable and isolated at school but it is difficult to identify which behaviours can be attributed to the educational environment and which stem from elsewhere. Four of the pupils with learning difficulties who had attended mainstream schools said that they did not find it easy to make friends. Karla went on to explain that because she spent so little time at school she found it difficult to make friends with people as she felt she had not had the opportunity to mix with people her own age. I suggest that her social isolation was a result of her reduced timetable, but this would not be reinforced by the experiences of Mark, only at school two days a week, who did not appear to feel cut off from his peers and presented an outgoing personality and said he found it easy to make friends with new people. It would not be appropriate, therefore, to assume that Karla's lack of contact alone led her to find it problematic to make new friends.

Discussion about the size of the participants' families revealed that from both school settings, they came from a wide variety of family make-up and background. Two participants, one from a special school and one from mainstream, were in long-term foster care and there was a mix of two-parent, single-parent and step-parent families. Most of the group had siblings and while some did not get along with them, most did. Callum, looking for a reaction once more, reported that one of his brothers had

“a syndrome”.

When asked for further information, he responded that his brother had

“middle-child syndrome”.

This first part of the interviews enabled the students to relax and talk about themselves in a factual and non-threatening atmosphere. It was established that the participants, all with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), came from a range of locations and family backgrounds in addition to coming from a range of different special and mainstream schools. The majority from both settings said that they had liked school and that their attendance had been good. Two participants had interesting stories to tell about the way in which their behaviour had been managed at their mainstream schools and this would be further discussed when the conversations progressed into more detail about school life and relationships. Overall, the special school pupils appeared to have been better prepared for transition but there was little difference between the groups regarding their participation in out-of-school activities.

4.3 i b) Interview Section 2 – At College you have a Personal Tutor

Q At College you have a Personal Tutor – what sort of things do they help you with?

This part of the interviews had a specific purpose. Before discussing school experiences it was important to establish a mutually understood context on which to proceed. Discussion about the relationships and support available in College was designed to enable the students to vocalise the mechanisms they currently encountered in order to provide a frame of reference when looking back to school experiences.

From both groups, special schools and mainstream schools, and in both the Pilot and Main Studies, all the students were able to name their Personal Tutor. Written records in the students' files confirmed that regular tutorial meetings took place between the learners and their Personal Tutors in College. However, in conversation there was some confusion about what constituted a tutorial and what was a chat about something of concern. All the learners reported regular conversations with their Tutors and that they could seek them at any time, even if was not time for a tutorial meeting. Callum was the exception who was alone in stating that, if his Personal Tutor was not available, he would prefer not to speak to another member of staff. Later in the same conversation, however, he gave more than one example of when he had actually approached other staff members to raise an issue. It appeared, therefore, that all the students felt able to access support from their Personal Tutor or from another staff member if required. Mark volunteered that you could also go to,

“one of them chavvers – but I wouldn't ‘cos I don't know none of them”.

The “chavvers” in question were members of the College's staff, Link Workers, who form part of the student support network with particular emphasis on financial matters. Mark went on to confirm that he always felt that he could approach his Tutor or one of the other staff in the department.

At this stage in the discussions, it was reassuring to have it confirmed that the participants felt confident that at all times they could approach a staff member for support or guidance. All had regular conversations with their

Personal Tutors and these were both planned tutorial meetings and discussions which arose on an ongoing basis. The students, from both school settings, reported that their Tutor would help them with matters to do with their work or with anything else which was a cause for concern.

4. 3 i c) Interview Section 3 – When you were at school

Q At school, did you have a Personal Tutor, how often did you see them, what sort of things did they help you with?

Responses to questions about a Personal Tutor at school

Pupils from special schools had significantly more contact with their tutors

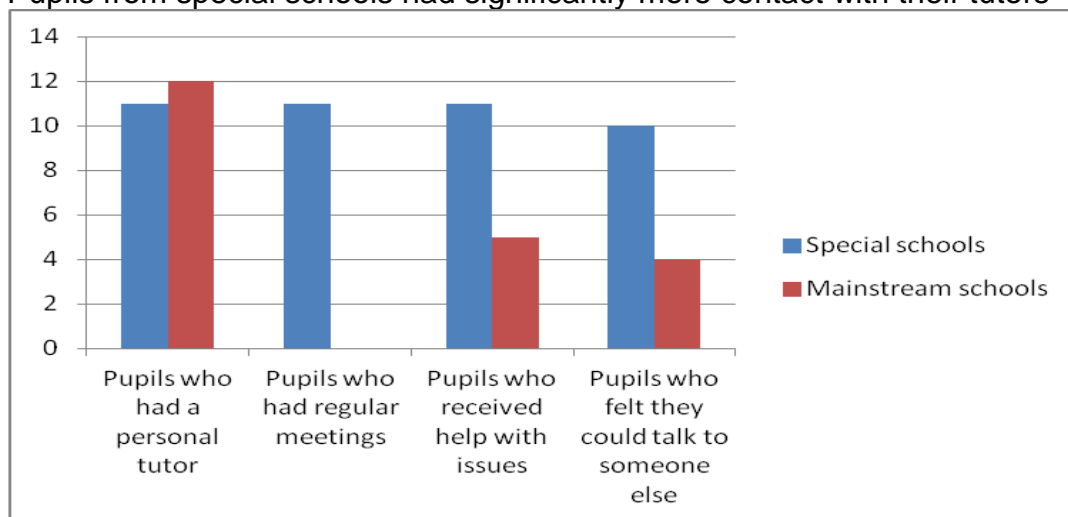


Figure 2 Pupils and personal tutors

It now became necessary to vary the vocabulary during the interviews to ensure that a common understanding of terms used was secure. All the participants were familiar with the concept of a Personal Tutor at College but the terms used in their school settings were varied. The role of a key staff member for an individual pupil was, in some cases, referred to as a Form/Class Tutor, in others it was a Head of Year who was the main contact. For the pupils with learning difficulties who had attended mainstream schools, in both the Pilot and Main Studies, all but one were able to identify

such a staff member. From the special schools 8 pupils out of the 10 in the Main Study could identify a Form or Personal Tutor as could 2 of the 3 in the Pilot Study. In the latter, the exception was Louise who had attended the special school for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) and who stated

“my school was a bit different – there were a lot of naughty people so we couldn’t have one (staff member) of our own”.

I hoped that her response did not imply that this was because it would be too stressful or unmanageable for a staff member to be assigned to individuals or groups. Her elaboration reinforced my initial concern that she perceived that the naughty pupils at her school did not merit the attention of an assigned or individual member of staff. It must be remembered that she must have considered herself to number among these undeserving pupils. There appeared, in Louise’s school, to be no formal, or indeed informal, structure of tutorial process which she could describe. In my experience, the consistency of having a particular staff member with whom a relationship is formed can provide a sound basis for addressing “naughtiness” as it provides an element of security. I have often observed, and Louise is an excellent example, troubled young people whose behaviour altered and modified once they felt secure and became less defensive and disruptive as feelings of trust developed.

It appeared, then, that the majority of pupils with special needs from both special and mainstream school settings could identify a staff member who was a key professional for their class, form, group or year. The conversations resulting from the next two questions, however, uncovered a

very different range of circumstances, indicating disturbing differences in the level and quality of contact time the pupils had with their tutors. “*How often did you see your tutor*” and “*Did you have regular tutorials / meetings with your tutor*” were designed to draw out the nature of the relationship between the staff member and the pupil. At College, the learners would be taught by their Personal Tutor for a significant part of the week, have considerable contact time with them and regular planned and unplanned discussions. The fact that the participants were able to describe the relationship with their Tutor at this early stage in their College experience indicated, I suggest, the value of this regular and repeated contact time. In the Main Study, all the pupils from special schools had worked with their Tutors every day and were able to relate having had regular meetings or conversations with their Tutor in and out of class. This was also the case in the Pilot Study with the exception of Louise and her “*naughty*” peers. Immediately, it was evident that the quantity and nature of the time spent with a staff member who was designated to offer pastoral support to the pupils differed significantly in different school settings.

Callum

Callum, who did not belong to a cult but who did like to seek a shocked reaction from staff, reported that he saw so much of his Tutor that he had time to formulate a plan of how to kill him. Further discussion, and a lack of shocked response on my part, led us to agree that any plans had not been successful as the Tutor remained alive and well.

Callum, 17, attended a special school

As described earlier, I have had years of experience working with young people like Callum and am able to identify from tone, facial expression and body language when remarks and responses are given with the intention of receiving a shocked reaction.

The responses from the participants who had attended mainstream schools suggested far less individual contact; 4 participants were unable to say how often they saw their Tutors while the majority of the others saw their tutors only for registration in the morning and, in some cases, also after lunch, scant opportunity, I suggest, to develop the supportive relationship of trust suggested by Carey (1996) as being so important for positive and robust pastoral care.

Karla

Karla, who only attended school for exams in Year 11, had contact with her tutor at home when she visited the family. When asked about regular meetings / conversations, four of the pupils with learning difficulties who attended mainstream schools were unable to answer and the remainder reported that they did not have such meetings.

Karla, 16, had attended a mainstream school

Mark

Mark, who attended school on only two days a week, saw rather more of his Tutor. The school managed his behaviour by significantly reducing his timetable. On the days he did attend school he saw his tutor regularly as “if I got into trouble in lessons, they just sent me to sit in the back of her class”.

Mark, 16, had attended a mainstream school

The breadth of issues with which Tutors helped pupils ranged from school work, social concerns, problems at home to lost dinner money. Again, the pupils who had previously attended special schools were able to explain that this support was easily accessible as they spent considerable time with their tutors and most were able to agree that someone else would be available if their own tutor was not. The pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) who had attended mainstream schools, for the most part, were able to identify someone who could help them if their own Tutor was not accessible although two of the Main Study participants preferred to wait until they got home and one of the Pilot Study group said that there was no one else she could talk to.

Emerging was a picture wherein the vast majority of pupils from both studies were able to identify a member of staff who was attached to their form, group, year or class and these staff members were able to help with academic and other issues. Pupils who had transferred from special schools had spent considerably more time with this staff member than the

participants who had attended mainstream schools and who, in many cases, saw their Tutor only for registration. The special school pupils, apart from Louise, had felt able to talk to other staff members if their own Tutor was not available. The majority of mainstream participants felt the same, with some exceptions. I am certain that this contact with other staff would have been valuable due to the small amount of time they spent with their own Tutors.

Q Were you ever bullied at school? Who did you tell/ What did they do?

Responses to questions about bullying

The responses indicated that more pupils from mainstream schools had been bullied and felt less confident that the school had sorted it out. The majority from both settings (slightly less from mainstream schools) had felt safe at school.

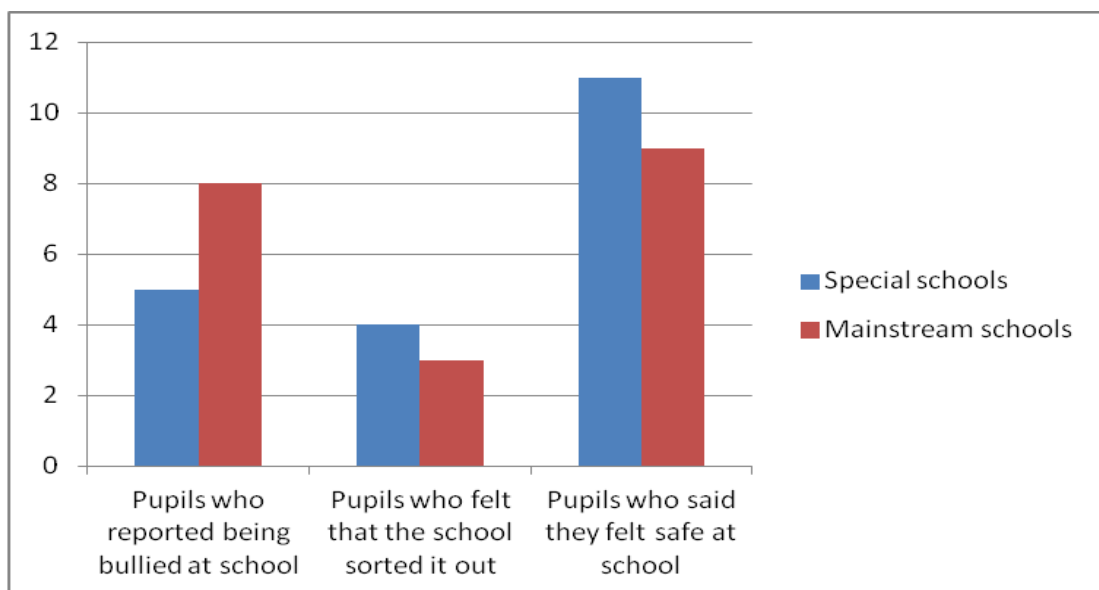


Figure 3 Pupils and bullying at school

The Main Study revealed that 3 of the 10 special school pupils believed they had been bullied at school but that it had been sorted out effectively by staff. 2 of the 3 Pilot Study group from special schools had been bullied and, in

one case, it had been effectively dealt with. Louise, from the special school for pupils with Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties (EBD), had a different experience, saying

“..... for years. I couldn't tell anyone at school or they would say they would sort it out but nothing would happen.... and it would make things worse”.

All the pupils with learning difficulties who had attended mainstream schools in the Pilot Study, and half of those in the Main Study, said they had been bullied at school but in only 3 cases did they feel that the school had dealt with the situation. At his mainstream school, Mark literally took matters into his own hands,

“I turned around and started hitting people and then it stopped”.

Only Louise, and one other special school pupil, said that they did not always feel safe at school while 4 of the pupils with special needs from mainstream schools felt the same.

4.4 Findings from the Second Phase – Analysis of the Essential Skills Assessments undertaken by specialist professionals

4.4.i Learners whose assessments were the focus of Phase 2

Phase 1 of this project had comprised semi-structured interviews with 26 learners (6 in the Pilot Study and 20 in the Main Study). This brought the learners' perceptions to the study and facilitated consideration of how they felt they had been cared for while at secondary school. Some of the Essential Skills assessed were considered to give some indication of confidence levels.

The learners who begin their Further Education experience at the College which participated in this research are thoroughly assessed by specialist staff during their first weeks at college. In addition to academic assessments designed to ensure that teaching and learning activities are appropriately structured, the young people are also assessed against ten Essential Skills (MENCAP, 2001) (Appendix ii) benchmarks. It was considered useful, therefore, to consult the results of the Initial Assessments administered by the team of professional staff at the start of the academic year to offer a second view of the learners' levels of confidence on their arrival at College. Already the learners will have been deemed by the prevailing national assessment benchmarks as being incapable of attaining GCSE grades which would enable them to progress to A Level studies or, at this stage, to vocational courses or employment.

The initial assessment Entry Level benchmarks are streamed into three strands, A, B and C (A being the lowest marker). The Essential Skills in question are designed to facilitate the progress of students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). They are skills which relate to not only vocational goals but also to the management of personal life. This means that in addition to preparation for the possibility of future employment, the young people are able to develop competences which will enable them to live and operate more independently. Skills range from the ability to manage time to decision making and relating to other people, all appropriate for potential work, for social interaction and independent living. The learners are assessed against strand B, the middle ground in the MENCAP (2001)

Essential Skills programme (Appendix ii), by all staff working with them and are deemed to be generally operating at one of the strand levels. Many learners have, of course, a mixed profile with an ability, for instance to *“look after personal belongings”* but challenges with *“initiate communication and respond to others”*. Some elements require organisational abilities while others require cognitive or social skills.

4.4.ii The purpose of the Essential Skills Assessments

Inability to demonstrate a particular skill during the Essential Skills assessment period does not, in itself, indicate the reason for this lack of ability. The competencies which, for instance, ensure that participants are able to take part in a *“communication chain”*, as described by Frederickson and Cline (2002) are complex, and young people with special needs often have problems mastering some or all of these, and language is a receptive as well as expressive medium (Dunn, Pantile and Whetton, 1982). The MENCAP (2001) Essential Skills are specifically designed to, for example, be present at:

Level A - The ability to communicate

Level B - The ability to communicate with a range of others

Level C - The ability to communicate with others in a range of settings

In practice, some learners may be able to respond to a direct, closed question from one person, others to engage in communication with a group of peers or familiar adults. At level C, young people may be able to take part

in conversations with less familiar peers or staff. If a student repeatedly fails to follow instructions this should not necessarily be taken as an indication that he/she is disobedient or defiant. Further investigation may reveal that the young person is unable to understand instructions with multiple steps and needs requests to be given in stages. There may be a communication difficulty present whereby the learner hears information given but has difficulty processing what has been said. There may be a hearing impairment or a lack of confidence in his/her ability to perform a task without additional support. For these reasons, the assessment period is lengthy and detailed so that each learner's strengths and areas of difficulty may be accurately identified and the appropriate support arranged. Many of the skills assessed are likely to indicate levels of cognitive or organisational ability, making complex choices, for instance, and looking after personal belongings. The latter skill, or lack of it, may also result from laziness or what I describe as "*learned helplessness*" where a young person has been over-helped or over-protected by adults. This support is normally undertaken with good intentions and many of us will identify with the frustrating early morning timetable stress when children are learning to dress themselves. Failure to allow them to do this, however, does not, in the long run, encourage the independence they require. Similarly, some young people with learning difficulties have been prevented from developing skills by the protection of adults and, as a result, appear to be lacking skills of which they might actually be capable.

Some of the Essential Skills assessed could be said to be indicators of levels of confidence and self-esteem. Initiating communication, for instance, is arguably more difficult for the young person who fears rejection or who considers their opinions to be worthless. Similarly, identifying a problem and letting someone know may be an obstacle for a youngster who feels that they may be ridiculed if they are unable to perform a given task.

The Essential Skills are presented in the following table together with some indicators of the areas of competence which are gauged by assessment of them. While the indicators offered here are, for the purpose of brevity, concise, they are designed to illustrate the fact that some skills may offer greater insight into the levels of confidence and self regard present in the new students. The skills highlighted are those which the specialist staff consider to be indicators, in particular, of the social confidence of the learners and their current ability to operate successfully with peers and staff.

4.4.iii The MENCAP Essential Skills – Strand B (middle strand)

The full table of the MENCAP Essential Skills criteria is given at Appendix ii

Table 1 MENCAP Essential Skills

Essential Skill	
To follow more* complex instructions	May gauge level of cognitive ability but may also be an indicator of emotional or behavioural levels. * Instructions with more than one step, for instance
To maintain routines as extend the range	May indicate ability to tell the time May also be challenging for learners with autism or Aspergers who find change or routine stressful
To make more complex choices	May gauge level of cognitive ability
To initiate actions and activities	May be an indicator of confidence levels
To identify problems and inform a responsible adult	May be an indicator of confidence levels
To relate to a wider range of people	May be an indicator of confidence levels
To conform to rules of behaviour	May gauge level of cognitive ability but may

	also be an indicator of emotional or behavioural levels
To follow safety instructions	May gauge level of cognitive ability but may also be an indicator of emotional or behavioural levels
To look after personal belongings	May be an indicator of organisational skills
To initiate communication and respond to others	May be an indicator of confidence levels

(MENCAP, 2001)

At the end of the six-week induction period the results of the Essential Skills assessments, combined with the academic assessments are integrated into a Baseline Learning Profile (BLP) (Appendix i, p 8-9) for each student. The BLP sets out the detail of each individual's skill profile together with evidence of how it each skill was, or was not demonstrated. An example might be that "X is observed to be able to demonstrate that he/she is able to follow safety instructions in the kitchen, the workshop and when off-site with the group. Details of how this was demonstrated would be given in order to record that this skill was not observed by one member of staff on one occasion but that the learner satisfied all the staff working with her/him that they were able to do this consistently in a range of different situations. The information on each student's BLP is then used to formulate an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) (Appendix i, p 10) with personalised goals and targets designed to support progress towards individual outcomes. The ILP, discussed and shared with the learner, is the working document which forms the basis of the progress plan for the forthcoming weeks. Two or three goals are agreed, with strategies for the learner to use, and for staff to support in, order to help the learner to acquire the skill. Once again, only when a skill has been consistently demonstrated in a range of situations is it considered to be

achieved. When this has happened, fresh targets are agreed and the process progresses.

The assessment results in Table 2 (page 190) are drawn from several weeks of work with the students and are drawn together from feedback from all the staff who work with each learner. This involves academic staff, Teaching Assistants and Learning Support Assistants. Only when a learner is consistently able to demonstrate ability or confidence in a particular area are they regarded as having achieved the skill. When this is the case they move on to the development of this skill at the next level. If they are “working towards” a skill, staff have indicated that they have demonstrated some ability in the given area but not on a wholly consistent basis and will then remain at this level and receive support to achieve it. Where a student is not able to demonstrate a particular skill they will be given goals at the lower level with a view to progressing toward strand B at a future date.

4.4.iv Analysis of results of initial assessments and learner profiles

In addition to the semi-structured interviews in Phase 1 of the research, therefore, the Baseline Learning Profiles (BLPs) of each learner in the first year cohort of the year in question were analysed. As described, each student’s ability to demonstrate each skill had been assessed by a team of professionals. Information had been recorded and shared and only when a skill was consistently demonstrated in a variety of situations was it considered to be achieved.

For the purposes of my research, particular focus was given to those skills most likely to be indicators of confidence and/or self esteem. The BLPs of 40 pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) who had attended mainstream schools and 28 pupils from special schools were analysed. The 68 pupils in question included the participants from Phase 1 of the research as they were part of this entry cohort.

As identified, and highlighted, (Table 1, page 186) some of the skills assessed are considered to be greater indicators of levels of confidence and self-esteem than others which are likely to indicate cognitive ability or may be symptomatic of a particular condition. The skills in question relate to relationships with other people and the ability to imitate communication and actions. While Phase 1 comprised equal numbers of students who had previously attended special and mainstream schools, this was not the case in Phase 2. As this second tranche of enquiry included the entire departmental intake for the year in question it was not made up of equal numbers of learners from each setting. However, due to the size and location of the participating College, a broad spectrum of backgrounds was represented.

The Foundation Studies department is located on three campuses and in rural and urban locations. The results from the induction period assessments are made up of the observations and feedback from a team of staff members, each learner working with an average of 10 staff in the

course of a week. The intake in the year in question comprised pupils with learning difficulties from 7 special and 13 mainstream schools.

4.4.v Results of assessments for whole cohort

Table 2 Initial assessment results

The pupils from special schools performed better in the skills indicating confidence and self-esteem than those from mainstream schools

Essential Skill	Pupils from Special schools		Pupils from Mainstream schools	
		%		%
To follow more complex instructions	Achieved/working towards	79	Achieved/working towards	77
	Not achieved	21	Not achieved	23
To maintain routines as extend the range	Achieved/working towards	86	Achieved/working towards	69
	Not achieved	14	Not achieved	31
To make more complex choices	Achieved/working towards	93	Achieved/working towards	74
	Not achieved	7	Not achieved	6
To initiate actions and activities	Achieved/working towards	97	Achieved/working towards	62
	Not achieved	3	Not achieved	38
To identify problems and inform a responsible adult	Achieved/working towards	97	Achieved/working towards	69
	Not achieved	3	Not achieved	31
To relate to a wider range of people	Achieved/working towards	97	Achieved/working towards	59
	Not achieved	3	Not achieved	41
To conform to rules of behaviour	Achieved/working towards	79	Achieved/working towards	64
	Not achieved	21	Not achieved	36
To follow safety instructions	Achieved/working towards	93	Achieved/working towards	77
	Not achieved	7	Not achieved	23
To look after personal belongings	Achieved/working towards	97	Achieved/working towards	100
	Not achieved	3	Not achieved	
To initiate communication and respond to others	Achieved/working towards	97	Achieved/working towards	69
	Not achieved	3	Not achieved	31

While the results of the assessments of all the Essential Skills are given in Table 2, particular focus is given in this study to the four skills (highlighted) considered to be the greatest indicators of confidence and self esteem. It can be clearly identified from the table above that the participants who had previously attended special school did significantly better in the highlighted aspects of the initial assessments.

4.4.vi Results of the assessments of the four skills in focus

The results from this element of the research indicated that the pupils who had attended special schools demonstrated significantly higher levels of confidence than their mainstream counterparts

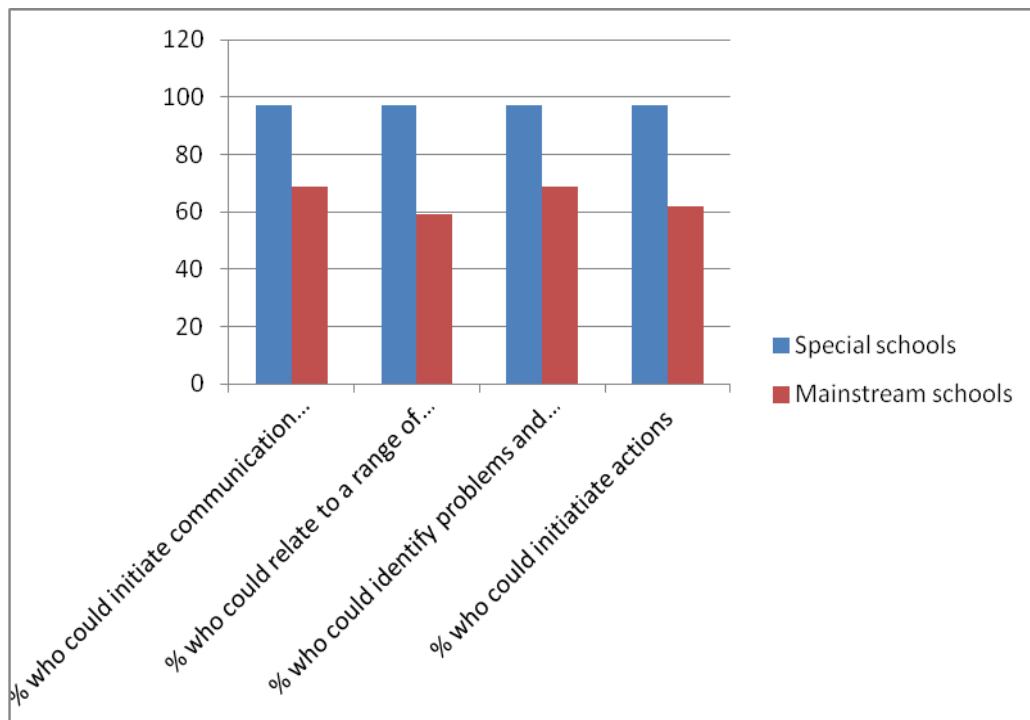


Figure 4 Levels of confidence and self-esteem

4.4 vi a) Ability/skill: Initiating actions and activities

The ability to initiate actions and activities is indicative of the experience of having had one's ideas valued in the past. If a young person is praised for making suggestions they may feel encouraged to offer others. If, however,

their ideas are ignored, criticised or worse, ridiculed, this is unlikely to be the case. Some ideas for action may be inappropriate, impractical or, as in Callum's case, bizarre. However if, as championed by policies described by Ruddock and Flutter (2004) and Ruddock and McIntyre (2007), pupils should have a "voice", their offerings should be encouraged and guided, not dismissed. Scrutiny of the Baseline Learning Profiles (BLPs) indicated that almost all of the pupils from special schools demonstrated the ability to offer ideas and suggestions to activities and actions while only just over half of the pupils with learning difficulties from mainstream schools were able to do so.

4.4 vi b) Ability/skill: identify problems and inform a responsible adult

The ability to identify a problem and inform the appropriate person covers a multitude of circumstances. These range from the confidence to ask for help in the classroom if unsure how to proceed to the identification of a dangerous or threatening situation relating to oneself or others. In my experience, the ability to ask for help, even with a spelling or an instruction, is one which eludes many people, not only learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), and the confidence to say "I don't understand" or "I'm not sure what to do" is daunting for many. In a group of peers, a pupil may feel reluctant to voice the need for support and feel that they are the only one who has failed to understand. Interestingly, however, the great majority of the pupils from special schools felt comfortable to identify a problem and let someone know. Some problems may be perceived rather than actual but a learner's perception is their reality and should be treated as such. Again the vast majority of pupils from special schools were able to demonstrate this

confidence while significantly fewer mainstream school participants were able to do so.

While it could be argued that the majority of mainstream cohort did not feel that there were any problems to be reported, it is usual for anyone settling into a new environment with new people to have need for clarification, at the very least, on some occasions. Past experiences may have an influence here, with some young people did not wishing to single themselves out as needing support, or feeling that the prevailing atmosphere would make them feel foolish if they required assistance. Alternatively, the pupils who did not ask for help may possess sufficient confidence in their ability to rectify problems themselves without help. While this might be an indication of confidence, it would appear likely that a pupil with Moderate Learning Difficulties would, at some stage, require the assistance of a staff member.

4.4 vi c) Ability/skill: Relate to a wide range of people

The ability to relate to a wide range of people is a skill which is difficult for people with Autism, and social competence is the area with which they most often struggle. My experience has offered me the opportunity to work with numerous students with Autism who have gone on to develop strategies which facilitate their social operation. In some cases, they are not aware of the reasons which make a particular behaviour socially acceptable, but can accept that their life will run more smoothly if they behave in a certain way. Once again the pupils who had attended special schools appeared much

more able to relate to a wide range of people than their peers with learning difficulties from mainstream schools.

During the assessment period, the staff made observations of the learners in their ability to relate to familiar peers, new people their own age, staff members they know, other members of the College community and members of the public in the wider community. The size of the schools previously attended by the participants did not appear to be a consideration as the intake came from a wide range of special and mainstream schools of varying sizes. In Phase 1 of the study, the majority of the participants previously at mainstream schools did not feel that they had undertaken significant preparation for their transition to College and it could be argued that this could affect their confidence in forming new relationships. However, they had mostly attended Link visits during Years 10 and 11, designed to introduce potential students to the College experience, so would have felt familiar with the staff and many of their prospective peers.

4.4 vi d) Ability/skill: Communicate in a wide range of settings

Communication is an important area of observation and is closely linked with the ability to relate to other people. People vary in their levels of gregariousness and it is natural that not all pupils will be equally outgoing and talkative. In most situations the ability to respond to the communication of others is valuable, when greeted for example or when asked a direct question. The ability to initiate communication requires something different and is, in my experience with students with Moderate Learning Difficulties

(MLD), often an elusive one. Unprompted communication requires confidence and social ability and, once again, it was interesting to note that the learners who had attended special schools were able to demonstrate this skill far more readily than their mainstream counterparts. The four skills identified as being related to levels of confidence are closely related to one another; all require some level of communication skills and are significant in their relevance to College life and to life in the world outside.

4.5 Summary of the research findings

My research approached the social abilities of learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties from two distinct viewpoints. Firstly, from that of the pupils themselves; did they feel that their school had provided them with individual personal support from staff in order to help them with issues outside the classroom as well as inside? Secondly, the outcomes of a six-week induction assessment period were scrutinised, giving the viewpoint of departmental specialist staff. The learners' perceptions should be considered as reality, for so it is for them. The first phase of the project revealed some differences between the responses of pupils transferring from special schools and those from mainstream, all of whom have Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD).

- The special school students felt that they had been better prepared for the transition from school to College and felt rather more confident in their ability to make friends.
- Most of the pupils from both settings were able to identify a particular staff member who, while they were at school, was assigned to support

them, but the frequency with which they saw this staff member and the amount of contact with them varied, with the special school pupils seeing much more of the person in question.

- The special school participants also felt that, should their assigned staff member were not available, someone else would be able to help them while this was the case for significantly fewer of the mainstream MLD pupils.
- More MLD mainstream participants had been bullied at school but fewer felt that the school had been able to rectify the situation.

When the viewpoint of the specialist College staff was analysed the difference between the settings was even more marked. The four skills considered to be indicative of levels of confidence and self-esteem were considered to be far more evident in the pupils who had recently left special schools than in their MLD peers from mainstream schools. Highly questionable methods for managing the behaviour of two MLD mainstream students also emerged. Two learners represent a significant proportion in a small study such as mine and these would certainly benefit from further examination, in particular the extent to which the pupils were made, by the way in which their behaviour was managed, to feel included in their school community.

There would appear to be little point in asking a question unless willing to listen to the response. The learners were, in Phase 1, of this project given a voice and specialist staff feedback was considered in Phase 2. Having

listened to both I now need to consider the themes which from the replies. I will discuss the responses and their implications in Chapter 5.

4.6 Themes emerging from the research findings

This research project developed from a critical focus regarding the implementation of inclusive education policy in secondary schools. The policy recommends that, where possible and in accordance with parental wishes, pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) should be educated in mainstream schools. The fact that an ongoing tension had existed since inclusion was first proposed in the Warnock Report (1978) suggests that there are many who continue to be concerned regarding the agenda for inclusion. This in no way implies that this disquiet is founded on the belief that pupils with learning difficulties should not be educated alongside their more typically developing peers. I believe that, in many cases and on both sides of the argument, the concern centres around the implementation of various aspects of the policy and the support given to ensure its success for the vulnerable learners. In my research it was the pastoral aspect of implementation which underpinned my enquiry. Extensive experience of working with school leavers with MLD who had attended both special and mainstream secondary school had led me to a conjecture that the pastoral care they experienced in the two different settings was not equally robust and that this may have had an impact on the social confidence and self esteem displayed by the young people.

The data resulting from Phase 1 of the study, the semi-structured interviews with the learners, was analysed using a constant comparative method, through which the responses were revisited time and time again to identify threads, trends and patterns. Phase 2, the results from the initial assessments undertaken by staff working with the students, required numerical recording and comparison to identify the differences between the cohorts from mainstream and special schools. Having considered the findings of the research, described in the previous sections of this chapter, a number of significant themes did indeed emerge, some of which appear to be at odds, not only with the intentions of the Inclusion Agenda, but with the public perceptions of the outcomes of inclusion.

From the semi-structured interviews with the students, I found a marked difference in their perceptions of the preparation for transition to College they had been offered at school. Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) who had attended mainstream schools felt appreciably less well prepared than those from the special school. More of the mainstream participants had experienced bullying at school and few felt that the school was able to rectify the problem. Although the majority of pupils from both settings were able to identify a staff member who had had responsibility for their pastoral care, there were significant differences in the amount of contact with them, with the mainstream MLD pupils spending little or no individual, and limited group, contact time. The two exceptions to this last point revealed disturbing methods employed by their mainstream schools in the management of their disruptive behaviour, this being to distance them from the classroom and

school for a significant proportion of the week, and in one case the entire week.

Further trends emerged from the feedback from the professional staff working with the school leavers in their first term in Further Education. The pupils who had previously attended special schools demonstrated overall greater skill in those areas which are considered to require confidence and self-esteem, in comparison with the pupils with learning difficulties who had previously attended mainstream schools.

The findings which emerged from the research do not sit comfortably with the public perception of the purpose of the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools or with the stated intentions of the Warnock Report. Additionally, and significantly, if there is general view that pupils with special needs who are educated in the specialist environment of special school are over-protected, this is not reflected in evidence from the interviews with students or in the staff feedback - a further point for discussion in the next chapter.

My intention, when undertaking this research was not simply to detect issues for concern. My belief in a solution based approach is paramount and, while shortcomings may be identified at governmental, Local Authority and school level, rather than allocate blame, it is more profitable to galvanise these parties to resolve a situation which emerges as less than satisfactory. If consideration is given to the pressures and agendas prevailing at each level

it becomes easier to offer a vision for a way forward. Governments and Local Authorities are successively charged with financial prudence and the aspiration to remain in authority. They also retain, however, responsibility for the safeguarding and education of all pupils; I have already referred to the decrease in authority and power in these respects of LAs. Schools have the delegated responsibility to educate children to required standards, publish their results, give regard to pastoral care and also maintain financial stability. In February, 2014, the Secretary of State for Education at the time, Michael Gove, issued guidance to schools, encouraging them to employ strict sanctions to tackle bad behaviour among pupils. In the cases of Karla and Mark, for instance, it would surely be more constructive to seek to identify the reasons behind the disruptive behaviour, both having been diagnosed with a learning difficulty, before excluding them from classes or school participation, hardly a sanction in keeping with the ethos to include.

The education and care of the most vulnerable is likely to be the most costly. However, if a true ethos of inclusion is to be manifest at all levels, the resources and specialist expertise must be put in place to ensure the educational and emotional wellbeing of all pupils. Expertise in pastoral care, from the findings here, is clearly available. Systems for the sharing of this must be implemented so that all schools are able to offer effective pastoral care to pupils of all levels of ability while also accommodating their academic differences.

Chapter 5 Discussion: “My school was a bit different”

If inclusion is about increasing the participation of all learners in mainstream schools, then it must go beyond general questions of the presence of children with special educational needs in such schools, and their social and learning participation.

(Lewis and Norwich, 2005)

My school was a bit different – there was a lot of naughty people so we couldn't have one (staff member) of our own

Louise, who had attended a special school for pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

5.1 Introduction

Every child matters, not some of them, all of them. Long before the advent of governmental guidance, this was the case. This may present uncomfortable questions and decisions if schools are asked, for instance, to accommodate Louise or any of her “naughty” peers. Not only do they all matter, they are all different and this chapter is an opportunity to discuss how their differences should be supported if the true ethos of inclusion is to be created.

5.1.i The research questions and the research project

My research study emerged from a conjecture and also a persistent and personal interest in inclusion policies and practice. My hypothesis, in turn, emerged from almost twenty years of working with school leavers with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). Over time I had come to observe that some students with MLD would start College with confidence and self-esteem. Others would appear to have little or none. This would manifest

itself in a variety of ways including the inability to relate to and/or communicate with a wide range of people. Some of the learners had been educated in mainstream secondary school and others in special schools and I had, for some time, questioned to what extent these different educational settings were contributing factors to the level of social confidence of the young people. Schools are, after all, charged with the responsibility, reinforced by Every Child Matter (ECM) (DfES, 2003), to develop the whole child, not only support their academic progress, to enhance their ability to develop within society and operate successfully in it throughout their lives. The five categories which constitute ECM require schools to ensure that a pupil may:

- Be healthy
- Be safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Hoyle (2008) describes ECM as providing a moral imperative with the intention of bringing radical reform to children's services in England. Indeed, as Hoyle attests, no one would argue publicly that only some children matter. However the existence of a policy or structure in no way guarantees practice and it is practice which is reflected in the experiences of the young people. If they perceive that they are safe, for instance, this perception is the reality in which they operate. If they are not enjoying their experience and perceive that they are not achieving, this is the reality of their life in school. It is the

attention to this pastoral element of the pupils' school backgrounds which formed the basis of my enquiry.

5.1.ii The development of the investigation

In Chapters 3 and 4, I have described the methods used to test the notion that different types of schools might approach the pastoral elements of their responsibilities in different ways. This involved listening to the pupils themselves and also examining the assessments undertaken by a team of specialist professionals. Giving the young people a voice on an individual basis provided them with an opportunity which might be denied them in the Pupil Voice structures described by Ruddock and Flutter (2004) and Cheminais (2008). Under these arrangements voices will indeed be heard but I question whether those of the quieter, less self-confident pupils, a category into which many pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) fall, would be offered or heard. Individual conversations, however, presented the chance for pupils to describe their own perceptions, their own reality.

Examining the feedback from the professionals offered the opportunity to consider the social skills relating to confidence of the young people in the whole intake cohort for the year, assessed by a range of staff members against common criteria. Thus the perceptions of the pupils and the evidence from the professionals could be used to compare any similarities or differences between the two school settings. Both of the strands of enquiry were underpinned by a focus on the pastoral aspect of the experiences the pupils felt they had had in schools of different settings and the social

confidence demonstrated by them on their arrival at College at the age of 16.

Underlying this enquiry was the aim of establishing:

To what extent do pastoral care systems affect social outcome for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties?

and to pose the questions

- To what extent does pastoral care for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in special and mainstream secondary schools differ?
- To what extent do social outcomes for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in special and mainstream secondary schools differ?
- Can an association be found between the pastoral care strategies implemented and the social outcomes that follow?

The conversations from the semi-structured interviews undertaken with the learners were analysed using a constant comparative method via which they are examined, re-examined and examined again to establish if any trends became apparent. The feedback from the staff members was compiled and analysed to detect any similarities and/or differences from each school setting. The study was undertaken in one College of Further Education; the College's intake come from a wide variety of urban and rural schools and the participants in the interviews came in equal numbers from a range of large and small mainstream and special secondary school settings.

The feedback from the professionals covered the entire intake of pupils to the Foundation Studies department for the same academic year. The range of school experiences was wide and, while the study took place in one Local Authority, where trends emerged they reflected a considerable number of schools. It was not possible in a study of this size to compare school

experiences across a number of different Local Authorities yet it is reasonable to suggest that this could be usefully explored in order to establish whether they may be reflected on a much wider scale; a possibility for further examination in the future.

5.2 The issues arising from the findings in this research

5.2.i Intent and outcome

In the previous chapter the findings from the research were examined and a number of interesting themes for discussion emerged. While much has been written about the positive aspects of the agenda for inclusion on pupils with learning difficulties, some of the findings from my study appear to be at odds with, for instance, Terzi's (2005) vision of full participation in the educational experience, and the feeling of true belonging described by Asher and Cole (1990). Rather they appear to fly in the face of what might be expected by those involved in the creation of inclusion policies and practices. It is not the ethos behind the inclusion agenda, or the policies promoting it, which emerge as issues for scrutiny, but the methods via which it is implemented which become causes for concern in the areas forming the basis of my research. The main themes to emerge are:

- **1.** In the interviews there was a marked difference in the perception of the pupils regarding their preparation at school for transition to Further Education depending on which type of school they had attended. The pupils with learning difficulties from mainstream schools perceiving that they had received little support.

- **2.** Pupils with learning difficulties from mainstream schools reported more experiences of bullying than those from special schools but fewer felt that their school had been able to rectify the situation.
- **3.** Pupils from both settings were, on the whole, able to identify a staff member with responsibility for their well-being but there were marked differences between the settings regarding the contact they had with them, the special school pupils having access to significantly more group and one-to-one contact time.
- **4.** There were disturbing reports regarding the management, in some mainstream schools, of pupils with learning difficulties who presented challenging behaviour.
- **5.** The pupils from special schools demonstrated overall greater skill in those areas which might be said to require confidence and self-esteem.
- **6.** The prevailing perception that pupils from special schools are overprotected is not reflected in the evidence from the interviews or staff feedback.

While it would be easy to identify an issue and then to apportion blame, I prefer to approach situations with a solution rather than a problem and, with regard to the concerns emerging from this study, solutions may require input at a number of different levels, those of government, Local Authority and school. If an ethos of genuine inclusion pervades the policies and, more importantly practices, of all these echelons of the education system, young people with learning difficulties will benefit from them.

5.2.ii Principle, policy and experience

The principle of the inclusion of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) has received support from the education profession, parents and Local Authorities but there has been considerably less agreement as to whether this principle can be realised in practice (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaugh, 2004). Inclusion does not take place by simply locating pupils with and without particular needs in the same place. Pupils feel included if they are not left out and have the appropriate level of support to access learning. These two elements may not necessarily sit comfortably together. If, for instance, the facilities or special unit, as described by Farrell (2006), or the level of individual support required by pupils sets them apart from their peers without similar needs, I suggest that they are precluded from taking a full part in the school community rather than being included in it. In Chapter 2, Luke described the bungalow where the pupils with learning difficulties were taught, adding that they only joined the majority of their peers for sports lessons. Zigmond and Baker (2004) agree that the level of support and/or in-school segregation required may stigmatise and isolate some pupils with particular needs. But surely, as Sapon-Shevin (1996) reminded us, making significant adjustments to both curriculum and teaching practices is consistent with a pupil-centred philosophy and is consistent with the governmental agenda. If true inclusion is to take place, no pupil should feel isolated or stigmatised. My experience of MLD pupils from some mainstream schools testifies that this is not necessarily the case and the findings from my research might surprise some policy makers and practitioners alike.

Over the passage of time it has become evident that some schools, considered to be inclusive due to their admission policy, approach the agenda to include in a manner which lacks the robust approach described by Sapon-Shevin (1996) with the resulting impact on the outcomes for their more vulnerable pupils. Examples of this emerged in the findings described in the previous chapter and will be further discussed in this.

If mainstream schools are failing to address particular aspects which are vital to the true inclusion of their pupils with MLD, it is likely to be due to the fact that staff feel overburdened by their targets, timetables and the expectations of management. Additionally, they feel ill-equipped with specialist expertise to give appropriate support to their MLD charges. With the exception of the requirement for Academies to follow the National Curriculum in Maths, English and Science, they, and Free Schools, have considerably greater freedom regarding the taught curriculum. This liberty is, nevertheless, coupled with the Ofsted, financial and academic league table imperatives to produce good results and demonstrate financial stability. Solutions to the situation will involve, not only a relaxation of the pressures on schools and staff but also a sharing of expertise between the mainstream and special school staff, the latter having received the specialist training and development required to work with these vulnerable learners. In order to achieve this, significant adjustments at all levels of the education system will be required.

5.3 Themes emerging from the semi-structured interviews with learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties

5.3.i Theme 1

In the interviews there was a marked difference in the perception of the pupils regarding their preparation at school for transition to Further Education depending on which type of school they had attended.

Leaving compulsory education at the age of 16 and embarking on the next phase of learning in a huge step for any pupil, with or without learning difficulties. It is therefore crucial that young people feel prepared for this transition. Among the core questions raised in the government's Green Paper "Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs (SEN)" was "*how can we help more young people with SEN make a successful transition to further or higher education, training or employment?*" (DfEE, 1997). Out of the lack of information regarding routes taken by young people with particular needs when they left school, grew a longitudinal study to examine the issues relating to this question (Polat, Kalambouka, Boyle and Nelson, 2001). The longitudinal study was extensive and encompassed findings from 617 schools and 3,200 pupils with special needs. This is on a different scale to my study which focussed on 26 pupils from 14 schools (6 special and 8 mainstream schools) in the first phase and 68 pupils from 20 schools (7 special and 13 mainstream schools) in the second. Rather than diminishing the findings of my research, I suggest that greater uniformity of insight may be obtained when one consistent interviewer is involved and one single set of criteria is the benchmark against which staff feedback is measured. In my research the young participants could express their perceptions in a conversational setting and their voices could be heard in a

non-threatening and discreet environment, one which might not be accessible via the Pupil Voice mechanisms currently recommended. So it is the individually voiced perceptions which form the basis of this strand of enquiry.

Overwhelmingly, the pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) who had attended mainstream secondary schools felt that there had been little preparation for their transition to Further Education and, where it had taken place, it focussed on practical matters such as bus journeys. For a young person with a learning difficulty, the anxiety of undertaking an unfamiliar journey should not be dismissed, and pupils with Asperger Syndrome and those on other points on the Autistic Spectrum find it difficult to manage change. The focus on these practical matters could, therefore, be considered extremely positive. If, on the contrary, this was the only focus, this might disadvantage the young people with MLD embarking on the next stage of their lives. It is possible that, in the mainstream schools some preparation for transition had taken place but it must be emphasised that the perceptions of the young people is the reality in which they operate. Their perception was that, while some practicalities, important though they are, had been addressed, the remainder of the elements which foster confidence had been neglected. Certainly William's experience, reported in Chapter 4, reflected that his secondary school staff were only interested in supporting transition for pupils who were going on to the 6th Form. The mainstream pupils with MLD did not feel that they had received support to move on and it

is with this feeling of unpreparedness that they embarked on their next phase of education.

Under government regulations schools are required to have a number of policies, many of which encompass the non-academic aspect of the pupils' experience at school e.g. Child Protection, Behaviour and Equality. In the 2001 longitudinal study (Polat et al.), it was evident that the majority of schools had policies relating to the transition, and preparation for transition, in relation to pupils at the age of 16. Philosopher Foucault (1980) and educationalist Paechter (1998) agreed that it is how policy is implemented which is of practical significance rather than who had been instrumental in its creation. Political analyst and author, Colebatch (2002), indicated that those charged with implementation of policy are likely to be other than those who formulated it. All three contributions, from different backgrounds and perspectives, resonate with the present climate; education practitioners frequently feel that the Secretary of State for Education at any given time, and of any political persuasion, is far removed from the practical workforce and workplace where his/her policies must be put into practice. These two stances are in danger of allowing the formulators and the implementers to hold the other party culpable, each blaming the other for any failure in outcome. Changes will be required at all levels if inclusion is to be implemented in an effective way, in keeping with its true ethos. Meanwhile, the pupils receiving the process may be deprived of a meaningful experience. All schools are under pressure to cover an extensive curriculum, produce good results and maintain financial stability. Schools must not be

permitted, however, to use these pressures as justification for the neglect of responsibilities towards the well being of their most vulnerable pupils.

Intent is a necessary, but not sufficient, requirement to inform practice. Yet it is practice, rather than the existence of a statement of intent, which influences the experience of the pupils. The findings in my research exposed a marked difference in the perceived preparation of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) for transition in secondary schools. For schools, it should be emphasised, the preparation for the next phase is equally important to pupils with and without learning difficulties. Does this mean then that the entire pupil population is similarly disadvantaged in those schools which pay insufficient regard to the groundwork undertaken prior to moving on? I argue that this is not the case and that pupils with MLD are at risk of greater hindrance than their peers who do not have such difficulties.

In Chapter 1, the social and political minefield surrounding the terminology surrounding pupils with particular needs or difficulties was highlighted. The term Moderate Learning Difficulties encompasses a huge range of conditions, manifestations and syndromes and, while these were discussed in brief detail in Chapter 1, an exhaustive debate regarding the reach of the term is beyond the scope of this study but remains a basis for future dynamic study. As defined by the Department for Education and Employment (1966) and the Department for Education and Science (1981), pupils were considered to have special educational needs if they required special

provision due to significantly greater difficulties in learning that the majority of pupils of their own age.

This governmental description implicitly refers to the academic education to which the pupils should have access and, while this is important, it is only part of the total school experience. As discussed, the non-academic, social outcomes for pupils are as, if not more, important and far-reaching. It is therefore crucial that the “special provision” referred to above relates to the pastoral as well as the academic systems provided for the pupils with learning difficulties. These provisions are as diverse and varied as the conditions encompassed by the term, Moderate Learning Difficulties. The definition given above falls into the trap described by Wedell (1995) whereby there is an assumption regarding the similarity of pupils in, for instance, a class or group. Robinson (2010) goes still further warning of the dangers of grouping young people together simply on the basis of their date of birth.

In practical terms it is necessary for an education system to have some benchmark by which to group pupils into manageable group sizes. The term “manageable” is used here and many educationalists would question the accuracy of this in relation to teaching group sizes. This point, however, is beyond the remit of this project. Pupils must be grouped in some way but the definition given by the DfEE above allows no flexibility in the diagnosis of children with learning difficulties if they fall outside the range of “*children of their age*”. With some exceptions, the majority of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) involve an impairment in the ability to process or retain

information as accurately or quickly as pupils without such difficulties. In addition, some conditions present young people with a problem when presented with change, be this a small alteration to an embedded routine or a greater change as in transition to another school or college setting. This being the case, I would argue that pupils with MLD, however they are grouped, are more seriously disadvantaged in schools which fail to undertake thorough preparation for the onward journey than in those that do.

The “*misconceived assumptions about the homogeneity of pupils*” was highlighted by Wedell (2005) and rightly so, children being individuals with needs specific to them. It is these needs which should be taken into consideration when planning the education, academic and social, of all pupils in order that Zigmond and Baker’s (2004) child-centred approach is made a practice in reality, not merely in policy. Policies, as previously indicated, do not, per se, necessarily translate into practice and may be in danger of overarching statements which fall into Wedell’s “*misconceived assumptions*”. In light of the finding that the majority of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) attending mainstream schools, unlike their special school counterparts, reported little or no preparation for transition, there appears to a requirement for this aspect of pastoral care to receive further scrutiny. In my study the focus was on pupils with MLD and pupils without learning difficulties were not interviewed. It is altogether possible that they, too, felt that little or no preparation for transition had taken place. Should their perceptions be similar, there is a need for further development in this crucial aspect of pupils’ pastoral care. Important though this aspect of care is for all

pupils (Polat et al., 2001), I propose that those disadvantaged by lack of attention to it are those pupils with MLD attending mainstream schools as they are currently organised.

It is practice which impacts on the experience of the pupils in the period of time which preceded their transition at the age of 16, and for pupils with MLD in mainstream schools, the practice appears to be flawed. A number of reasons for this could be proposed. At grass roots level, lack of space in the school curriculum could be offered as a reason for the failure to provide adequate support. At school management level, the emphasis on academic outcomes might be a greater priority. At Local Authority (LA) level, the reduction in responsibility and funding, as resources are increasingly devolved to schools, limits the ability to provide training and support. Academies and Free Schools are outside LA control and, with the governmental agenda to increase their number, the role of local government in education is under increasing threat. At national level, commitment to ensure that inclusion can be successfully implemented is realisable only if sufficient funding for schools and training for staff is made available. A reason must not be considered synonymous with an excuse, however. At each level there are challenges to be met in every aspect of life affected by policy, and at each level responsibility must be taken rather than blame cast. These will involve changes to structures and systems and only in this way can agendas such as inclusion be implemented in a way which supports and truly includes rather than excludes vulnerable members of society.

5.3.ii Theme 2

Pupils with learning difficulties from mainstream school reported more experiences of bullying but fewer felt that their school had been able to rectify the situation.

I have asserted that the definition of inclusion as *“the act of including – confining within”* (Collins 1968) is over-simplistic when referring to the education of children with learning difficulties or disabilities. The inference of such a definition is that inclusive education requires only that pupils with particular needs are located in the same physical environment as their peers without such needs. Often the term inclusion is used synonymously with “integration”, again the implication being that if a child is in the school inclusion has taken place (Davis and Hopwood, 2002). Pijl, Frostad and Flem (2008) stated clearly that being educated in a mainstream school does not necessarily mean that pupils are included. Inclusion signifies something far less tangible and the widely used “Index for Inclusion” (Booth and Ainscow, 2002) offers a number of indicators such as collaboration, mutual support and the minimisation of bullying.

While research has shown that pupils most commonly choose to associate with similar peers (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001) this has focused on children of primary school age. These choices are mainly based on age, gender and attainment and I suggest that they apply equally when pupils reach secondary school and progress through their teens. For young people and adults alike, similar interests, activities and abilities can be said to foster friendships and relationships and this prevails in a school community and in the wider world.

It is a feeling of belonging on which true inclusion is based. Any feelings of rejection or isolation are genuine barriers to this and are, as described by Asher and Cole (1990), devastating, not only to performance and motivation, but surely also to feelings of confidence, self-esteem and to the development of social assurance. Parents and carers of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) may hope that inclusion in mainstream schools will lead to greater opportunities for contact with local children, increased ability to handle social situations and more friends in their locality (Scheepstra, Nakken and Pijl, 1999; Sloper and Tyler, 1992) and it is to be expected that they would wish for their children to be socially included.

In my study, there were three questions which formed the basis of conversations on the area of bullying and a feeling of security at school:

- Were you ever bullied at school?
- Did the school sort it out?
- Did you always feel safe at school?

Results of discussions about bullying

More pupils who had attended mainstream schools reported having been bullied and few felt that the school had been able to sort it out

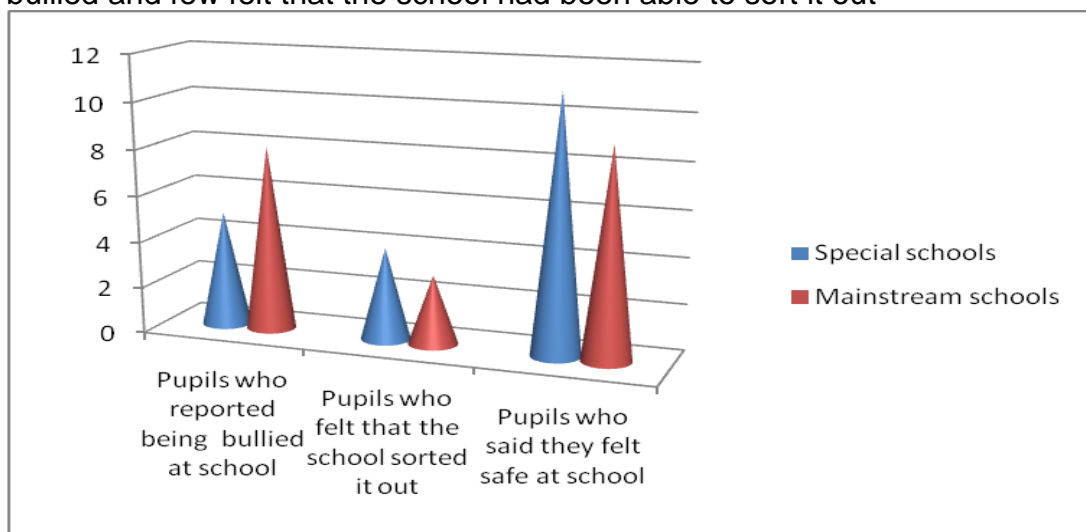


Figure 5 Discussions about bullying

It must be reiterated that the responses represented the perceptions of the young participants, all of whom have Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), and that their perceptions epitomise the reality in which they operate. A greater number of participants from mainstream schools reported having been bullied as opposed to those who had attended special schools. With one exception the special school pupils who did report having been bullied felt that the school had dealt with the situation effectively and that the bullying behaviour had stopped. Of the 8 pupils from mainstream schools who had been subject to bullying only 3 felt that the school had provided a solution. Interestingly, most of the mainstream participants still reported that they felt safe at school for most of the time, suggesting, perhaps they had emotional strategies for coping in an environment which appeared threatening or intimidating. Alternatively this could suggest that, while they felt victimised and isolated, they did not perceive a physical danger to themselves.

It would be easy to direct blame towards the mainstream schools who had apparently failed to address the issue of bullying of pupils. I suggest that there may be a number of issues contributing to their reported inability to curtail these behaviours and that, as with the previous theme, these could be approached on a number of different levels. Rayner (2007) indicates that inclusion comprises *“access with responsibility, participation, engagement and voice”* and these elements indeed describe an environment in which all feel valued and heard.

Pupil Voice, as previously discussed, is presented as a mechanism through which pupils may express their views on all matters pertaining to the school experience. Again, I argue that forums such as those proposed in Pupils Voice elicit the views of the articulate pupil with organised thought processes and the confidence to express themselves. Those of us who work with students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) will struggle to recognise our pupils in this category. A number of Moderate Learning Difficulties are characterised, in some part, by a lack of organisation in thought and in practice. Many learners with MLD struggle with communication skills and others lack the confidence to feel that their views are valuable. In the almost twenty years I have spent teaching pupils with MLD, this last phenomenon is prevalent in youngsters who have had their confidence undermined by comparison with more able peers. It is, therefore, unlikely that pupils who are the subject of bullying will express their situation via an open forum such as Pupil Voice. To whom then are these vulnerable youngsters able to confide their difficulties? This could, perhaps, be a staff member with whom the pupil has had the opportunity to form a relationship of trust and with whom they have contact on a regular basis. In this way the school would be made aware of any bullying behaviour and would be provided with an opportunity to address it. The consistency of this type of relationship in the two school settings forms the basis of the next discussion point (5.3 iii Theme 3).

A lack of “voice” for some learners may be one explanation for the failure of some schools to address bullying behaviours, but it is not unique. While

some pupils with learning difficulties have cheerful and friendly dispositions, those with Autism and Asperger's, as Holloway (2004) describes, struggle with social interaction and can frequently mis-read verbal and non-verbal communications. Spoken expressions will be taken literally and colloquialisms such as "putting your foot in it" or "turning over a new leaf" can lead to confusion and misunderstanding. Equally these young people often display an inability to interpret non-verbal communication, body language for instance. This in turn can cause them to appear rude or insensitive which may alienate them from their peers. Misreading the communication of others in this way can make them feel paranoid and that others do not like them. Thus they may feel that they are receiving unkind treatment even though it is not intended. Even in this latter case it is, once more, important to remember that the perception of unkind behaviour is the reality in which the pupil exists and with which they are required to deal.

The perception of the pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) from mainstream schools was that the majority of them had been bullied and a few of those who had attended special school also reported bullying. In the special schools, however, 4 of the 5 pupils who said they had been bullied felt that the school had addressed the situation effectively. The only exception to this was Louise, who had attended a school for young people with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD). The mainstream school pupils did not appear as confident that their school could rectify matters for them. Once again, it would be easy to blame the mainstream schools for this

but it would be more valuable to seek reasons for, and thus solutions to, this situation.

As I have suggested, it is possible that pupils do not report bullying and, as this type of behaviour tends to take place outside the spotlight, a school could be excused for not addressing issues of which it is unaware. On the other hand, it is incumbent on the schools to ensure that an ethos, together with strategies and mechanisms, is in place which will not preclude vulnerable young people from expressing their concerns and fears. Vigilant staff who know their pupils well will detect any changes in behaviour or decrease in confidence. The significant phrase here is “staff who know their pupils well” and this apparent assumption will be examined in more depth in the next section of this discussion.

In today’s competitive educational climate, schools are understandably concerned with academic outcomes (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaugh, 2004) and financial stability. Additionally teachers are the subject of Woods and Broadfoot’s (2008) “constrained empowerment”, being given some autonomy while remaining confined to a packed curriculum and expected to produce academic outcomes while remaining financially viable. These pressures inevitably result in tensions relating to priorities. Again, the pressures must not be used as a defence for the failure to protect vulnerable pupils within the schools’ care.

There are a number of potential reasons underlying the perception of MLD pupils from mainstream schools that more of them had been bullied than those from special schools, and that, in the former setting, the schools had been ineffective in resolving the situation. Are there, then, also a number of solutions? At pupil level, the voice of the bullied child must be heard in order for the school to address the situation. This can, surely, only happen if pupils feel confident that there is a staff member/staff members to whom they can talk and with whom a relationship of trust has been established. At school management level, time and space for staff to foster such relationships, and training in the particular needs of pupils with MLD could provide an opportunity to address bullying. This points to a recognition at national level that inclusion involves more than support in academic matters but requires that pupils with MLD feel accepted by their peers and that their emotional and social needs are supported by staff who have the time and training to do so.

5.3.iii Theme 3

Discussions about Personal Tutors at school

Pupils from both settings were, on the whole, able to identify a staff member with responsibility for their well-being but there were marked differences between the settings regarding the contact with them

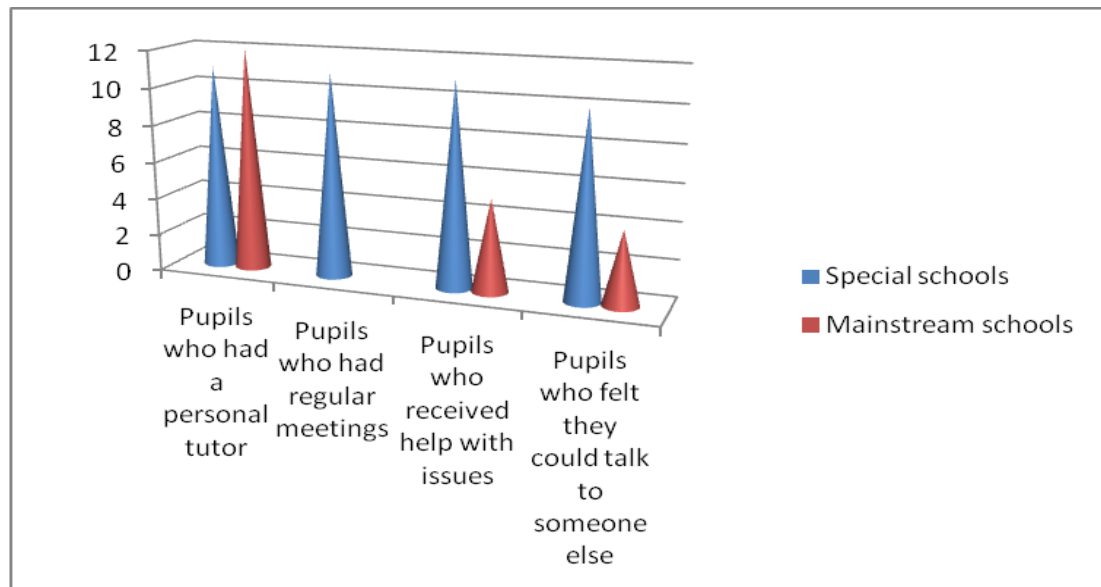


Figure 6 Help from Personal Tutors

Pastoral care is, in educational terms, understood to represent “*the care and advice given by teachers to pupils beyond the basic teaching of their subject*” (Chambers, 2003). For pupils with learning difficulties achievement, while not excluding the academic, relates to a wider and further reaching set of skills. These in turn lead to improved life, social and affective chances (Crowther, Dyson and Millward, 1998). This aspect of achievement applies equally to all pupils, enriching their social and life opportunities. It is, however, particularly crucial for learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) to be provided with access to developing confidence and self-esteem as it is unlikely that they will achieve these through academic success. Sapon-Shevin (2004) suggests that where these pupils have been placed in

mainstream schools, special arrangements will have been made to support academic progress. We must consider, however, whether these measures foster true inclusion or engender a feeling of isolation from the majority of their peers.

Purdy (2013) describes the pastoral care of the learners in any setting as hinging on the relationship between the pupils and staff members, and discussion with the participants in this study revealed a wide range of arrangements which could be said to surround these relationships. Equally, the vocabulary used to describe these differed among the group. All the pupils were able to identify a staff member at College who had responsibility for their well-being, their Personal Tutor. When describing their school experiences, the staff member in question varied from Form/Class Tutor to Head of Year. In the interests of simplicity I will refer to them as Form Tutors. The great majority of the young people from both mainstream and special schools were able to identify an individual who could be said to be the equivalent of their College Personal Tutor. From the special school pupils only one was unable to identify such a staff member. This learner, Louise, had attended a school for children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) and her response

“my school was a bit different – there were a lot of naughty people so we couldn’t have one (staff member) of our own”

was disturbing. Either the staff were not equipped to handle the behaviour of the pupils, or the young people were too disruptive to merit individual care. Either scenario is worrying when referred to an EBD specialist school. When expanding the discussion, Louise indeed confirmed that she perceived

that the “*naughty people*”, of whom she of course was one, did not deserve an individual person to oversee their pastoral care. Professional experts working with pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties agree that consistency is a key feature to successful progress for them (Howarth and Fisher, 2005; Cole and Knowles, 2011) and, in my experience, this is indeed the case. I suggest that consistency is important to all learners and fosters a climate in which they feel secure. Not only was Louise unable to relate to an individual staff member, she felt undeserving of such an opportunity, an impression unlikely to foster confidence and self-esteem and, perhaps, a disincentive to improve behavioural standards. For pupils such as Louise, it is even more crucial that a relationship of openness, support and trust with an appropriate adult is established if they are to feel valuable enough to “deserve” individual attention and have their levels of self-esteem increased. Only in this way will feeling of security underpin the development of the ability to relate to others and behave in a more acceptable way.

Other than Louise, all the special school participants were able to single out a member of their school staff who had particular responsibility for their wellbeing. Similarly the majority of the participants with learning difficulties who had previously attended mainstream schools were able to do so. However, as this area of analysis developed, a marked divergence in the experiences of the pupils from the different school settings emerged. Reinforcement, shaping and modelling (Gresham and Elliott, 1993) and coaching (Cartledge and Milburn, 1986) are recommended as strategies through which confidence and social well-being may be fostered in young

children and there is surely no reason why these should be equally effective with older pupils. In the title of the Gresham and Elliott publication “*systematic approaches*” are cited as positive solutions to social progress. All the strategies outlined require consistency and recurrence and these can be best provided through regular and on-going contact. At College, the young people would have regular contact with their Personal Tutor, being taught by them and having regular planned tutorial meetings and unplanned discussions as the need arose. From the special schools, apart from Louise, all the pupils reported that they had regular contact with their Form Tutor, being taught by them for at least part of the week and having regular conversations on a range of topics relating to academic and non-academic issues. Overall their feeling was that this Tutor could help them with a variety of concerns and topics and that, should their Tutor be unavailable, another staff member could be approached. The strength of this relationship appears to be key in the development of security and well-being. Additionally the learners are empowered and given a voice to express concerns, and positive points, which might be inaccessible to some of them in the open forums recommended by Ruddock and Flutter (2004) and Cheminais (2008) via Pupil Voice strategies.

There was an overall consistency in the pastoral approaches expressed by the pupils who had previously attended special schools. The picture described by their mainstream counterparts was, however, quite the contrary and, in some cases, the schools strategies for the management of poor social skills and behaviour were distinctly questionable. While the majority of

this group were able to identify a staff member, none could report regular meetings or individual contact with them. This gave me cause for concern. When did they have the opportunity to discuss their issues and worries? To whom could they turn if they were troubled? Fielding (2004) has suggested that the voices of many pupils may go unheard in the forums provided for this purpose, and I suggest that the majority of the mainstream pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) may fall into this category for a number of reasons. The majority of pupils with MLD in mainstream schools felt that the school had failed to resolve the issue of bullying. This, in turn, suggests that the bullying behaviour was ongoing. It is unlikely that a pupil who perceived themselves to be in a threatening or oppressive climate would speak out publicly and risk being ridiculed.

Many learners with MLD have communication difficulties (Frederickson and Cline, 2002) limiting both confidence and skill to voice issues in an open forum. In my experience these pupils are able to express themselves with greater ease in the context of a conversation with one person with whom they have a relationship of trust and who is able to implement strategies to facilitate their communication. *“Talking is probably the most common, yet unique, human activity, particularly as a means of communicating and reducing distress”* state Bancroft and Carr (1995). This may indeed be the case but it can only serve this purpose if the opportunity to take part in the conversation is made available and the teacher has the skills to conduct the conversation. The majority of mainstream participants had seen their Tutor only for registration in the morning and, in some cases, again for registration

after lunch, hardly a situation likely to provide chances for the discussion of concerns or anything other than day to day practicalities.

The mainstream participants, with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), had very limited contact, it emerged, with a staff member to whom they could relate on a one-to-one basis and with whom they could discuss any concerns or issues. This is in sharp contrast to the participants who had attended special schools who spent much more time with their Tutor, both in group situations and on an individual basis. Should this be considered to be a problem? If the schools had failed to prepare the pupils sufficiently for transition and to address bullying behaviours, I suggest that it should. The discussion of the remaining themes emerging from the analysis may indicate a similar cause for concern but, as before, there is unlikely to be one simple solution. The fact that overall the participants from special schools were assessed by staff to have greater skills in those areas which indicate confidence and self-esteem, it is likely that there is a relationship between the level of support perceived and the development of these skills.

The results of my research indicate that there is a positive impact on pupils where they are able to feel that there are staff members to whom they are able relate and who they feel will offer them pastoral support. Solutions to any deficit in this system come at a number of different levels. At school staff and pupils level, the learners with MLD require sufficient individual support, given by staff equipped to offer this to pupils with a range of communication, learning and social difficulties. At school management level, there may be a

requirement for staff training to facilitate this and the creation of space in the timetable for the staff and pupils to spend time together. At governmental level, a true acceptance that “inclusion is more than a place” (Ryan, 2009) is vital and that pupils with particular needs require particular support from those trained to provide it (Wedell, 2005). Raising standards of achievement for pupils is a commendable aim but the pressure to do so appears to have the potential to produce a negative impact on some schools’ ability to offer individual pastoral care to pupils. Addressing the academic and the pastoral is achievable, as demonstrated by the findings from pupils in this study who had attended special schools. It will require efforts on the part of all echelons of the education system, and significant adjustments to it, to incorporate robust pastoral care. Collaboration between special and mainstream schools at management and staff level would prove a positive and mutually rewarding experience and empower mainstream schools to offer this vital relationship to all pupils. Yet, in order for mainstream schools to be able to operate these strategies, more far-reaching adjustments to timetables and curriculum will be needed.

5.3.iv Theme 4

Some schools took a negligent approach to behaviour management

An image emerged from the conversations with the mainstream pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) where there was little contact with their Tutor and none on an individual basis. There were two exceptions to this, Karla and Mark. In the Pilot Study, Karla, suffering from a general cognitive

delay and emotional issues, confided that she had displayed disruptive behaviour throughout her secondary school education. Her school had managed her behaviour by reducing her timetable to such an extent that in Year 11 she attended school only for exams. Her Tutor had visited her at home to offer her work and to monitor her progress. Karla did, in fact, have the opportunity to take part in the individual discussions denied to many (Fielding, 2004). I doubt, however, if Fielding would consider this forum to be ideal, given that the feelings of rejection or isolation are real barriers to inclusion (Asher and Cole, 1990); Karla's isolation from the school must surely have heightened her feeling of rejection rather than that of being included. Ryan's (2009) assertion that "*Inclusion is more than a place*" holds no resonance in relation to Karla's experience. For her, although she was able to converse with her Tutor on an individual basis, inclusion was not even a place.

Mark was one of the pupils who took part in the semi-structured interviews in the Main Study, and was the only one of the mainstream interviewees to report that, when he was in school he saw a considerable amount of a particular member of staff with whom he had developed a successful relationship. Was this to be the model of both location and individual support which fostered the ethos of inclusion? In the event, it was the model of neither. Mark has a communication difficulty and Fielding (2004) might have expected him to be one of the "unheard". Mark also displayed, by his own admission, very disruptive behaviour and was confident to voice his opinions, however difficult they might be. He was not included in any of the formal

forums recommended by Pupil Voice (Ruddock and Flutter; 2004; Cheminais, 2008) but neither did he appear to fall into Fielding's voiceless group. Further expansion of the discussion revealed a second, and disturbing, behaviour management strategy on the part of Mark's mainstream school. By the time he reached Year 11, his final year at school, Mark's timetable had been reduced to the extent that he was required to attend school on only two days each week. Again, this could not be described as a situation likely to make Mark feel part of the school community, a requirement for a climate of inclusion (Booth and Ainscow, 2002). While, in the first instance, the regular contact with a given member of staff might appear more positive, Mark confided that his contact with this staff member constituted,

"if I got in trouble in lessons, they just sent me to sit in the back of her class",

- hardly the basis for supportive conversations or the development of strategies to address the disruptive behaviour displayed, for whatever reason, by him. A governmental press release in February 2014 encouraged schools to employ severe sanctions to combat unacceptable behaviour, suggestions including writing lines or an essay. I suggest that it would be more beneficial if staff were to seek to address the cause of the poor or disruptive behaviour. For Mark and Karla there were underlying social and emotional issues present, together with frustrations with their inability to develop the skills to write the lines or essay suggested in the guidance.

The examples given above appear highly critical, and so they are. Consideration must be given, however, to the circumstances of schools, their

staff and the pressures upon them. This in no way exonerates Mark or Karla's schools. However, the secondary school teacher of a class of, perhaps, 30 pupils, with the requirement to ensure that they achieve an A to C grade at GCSE, must surely welcome the lesson, or the day, when Mark and Karla are not present.

In June 2013, the coalition government proposed changes to the GCSE exams to be undertaken by secondary school pupils at the end of year 11 and Carr and Hartnett (1966) blamed any feelings of upset and malaise among education professionals on the constant stream of reforms imposed on education. This climate of constant change must certainly result in additional stress and frustration for teachers and school managers alike. This alone, however, may not be the sole cause. Today the education environment is one of competition, both academically and financially. In mainstream schools, academic outcomes must be good (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaugh, 2004) but at what cost? The inclusion of learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties may impact on this and present an additional challenge to schools. For a mainstream subject teacher with a large class of pupils before him/her and an imperative to ensure that their academic outcomes meet the required standards, the days when Karla or Mark were not required to attend would indeed be more manageable. This approach, however, is incompatible with an inclusive ethos in which a school would devise strategies and involve staff with the appropriate training to support the pupils with behavioural difficulties rather than remove them from the teaching environment. Examples such as Karla and Mark may be

replicated in schools on a wider scale than represented in this study. They serve to indicate the tension between the imperative to support the majority and the ethos of including the vulnerable. Once again, this tension must not be used as defence, at any level, against failure to implement the inclusion agenda to support those most in need. If the mainstream schools are not equipped to teach and support some pupils with specific needs, this poses a dilemma. Either, considerable funding and training, allocation of time and resources must be put in place, or some of these pupils need to be educated elsewhere, in specialist provision. This latter point poses the interesting question as to whether there would then be a requirement to return to the pre-Warnock climate with the need, in some areas where closure has taken place, for specialist provision to be re-created.

For pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and behavioural issues to remain included in the school week, strategies must be developed to facilitate this. Furthermore, if they also have access to the supportive relationship described, there is likely to be an improvement in their behaviour. As before, individual contact with designated staff members who are equipped with the skills to guide and support learners with MLD, will facilitate the development of behaviour management strategies to enable the learners to stay in the school. This will, at school management level, require the arrangement of training for individual tutors and the advancement of in-class practice.

All schools are required to have a policy relating to behavioural issues and procedures and to Special Educational Needs (MacKay, 2002) but those implementing the policies may be those other than those who formulated them (Colebatch, 2002) and a policy can be described as a statement of intent; it is practice which impacts on, in this case, the pupils. In the case of Karla and Mark, practice in no way supports an inclusive ethos which addresses the needs of learners with Learning Difficulties. Local Authorities are, with their overview of the local education provision and needs, well placed to facilitate training and the recommendation to government of the needs of their local area. The progressive lessening of their powers and ability to direct resources, however, must have a serious negative impact of their ability to provide this support.

At governmental level, if policies such as inclusion are driven by Kant's philosophy (Paton, 1948) whereby the motive to do good is paramount, they must be supported by the provision of sufficient financial resources to facilitate their implementation. The motives underpinning inclusion policy may be admirable in their intent to ensure that no group is excluded from a given situation. Some will argue, however, that in inclusion policy, Kant's philosophy has been also tainted by a different imperative, to save money and produce a more stable economic situation. Governments may argue that the increased autonomy brought by devolved funding (Woods and Broadfoot, 2008) delegates the responsibility of financial matters to schools themselves. However, schools cannot feel truly liberated to allocate funds as desired under the ongoing pressure of government driven admissions

policies, the curriculum focussing on published test results and their natural concern about the impact of inclusion on overall achievement for their pupils (Farrell et al. 2004). Tomlinson (2008) identified that tension is produced by the requirements to raise standards and to offer equality of opportunity, unless there is a complete philosophical commitment and substantial support. The responsibility lies at each level of the system, but the impact is primarily and directly felt by the pupils.

5.4 Themes emerging from the analysis of assessments undertaken by specialist staff

5.4.i Theme 5

The pupils with learning difficulties from mainstream schools demonstrated overall greater skill in those areas which might be said to require confidence and self esteem.

All the students who attend College's Foundation Studies Department suffer from Learning Difficulties and all are assessed by a team of specialist staff using Mencap's (2001) Essential Skills (Appendix ii). The skills assessed relate to the vocational goals of the learners, social skills and the management of personal life.

Many of these assess cognition, short term memory and the processing of information. Others are designed to establish communication and confidence levels together with social aptitude. The latter skills:

- To initiate actions and activities
- To identify problems and inform a responsible adult
- To relate to a wider range of people
- To initiate communication and respond to others

are gauges of the extent to which the young person feels able to interact with peers, departmental staff and the wider community. Additionally, the confidence to offer contributions and ideas can be measured here, together with the ability to ask for help rather than wait for a problem to be identified by staff members. The skills are assessed over a prolonged induction period by a range of staff members and are deemed to be achieved only when demonstrated consistently.

Results of Essential Skills assessments: the skills related to confidence and social ability

The assessments indicated that the pupils who had attended special schools performed better in areas judged to be indicative of social confidence and self-esteem

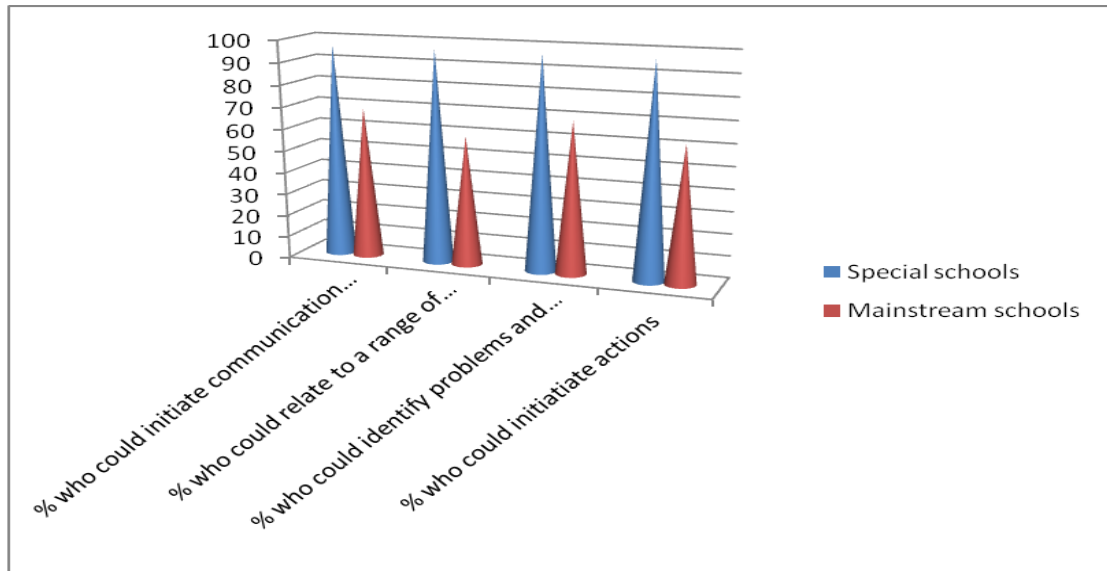


Figure 7 Levels of self-esteem and confidence

The graph above illustrates the assessment results for all 68 students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) who transferred to the Foundation Studies Department at College at the start of one academic year. Unlike Phase 1 of the study, which compared the experiences of an equal number of pupils from mainstream and special schools and an equal number of schools, the intake cohort did not, of course, fall so neatly into the two categories of school. In Phase 2, 40 pupils had attended mainstream schools and 28 had attended special schools. The findings therefore represent the percentage of each group of students assessed as achieving a particular skill rather numbers of individuals.

Long before the Warnock Report (1978) heralded the movement to include pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools, there were voices

supporting the methods in place in special schools (Burt, 1917) suggesting that the smaller class sizes and specially adapted teaching was more appropriate for some learners. The fact that this conversation is ongoing almost 100 years later suggests that there continues to be great strength of opinion of either side. Sapon-Shevin (2004) maintained that the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties is not only popular but that it is also right. Kant's categorical imperative (Paton, 1948) to follow a deontological path to do good, regardless of the consequences, could be said to join the circle created by the opposing opinions of Birt and Sapon-Shevin. The latter proposes that to include is good, but is this good for everyone and should account of the consequences also be taken? Complete philosophical commitment and substantial financial support, and the extent to which they are present, have a considerable contribution to the success, or otherwise, of an inclusive climate.

The optimum outcome of the education system is that young people finish their secondary education with proficiency in areas beyond the academic – self-assurance and feelings of self-worth leading to the ability to interact positively with others and contribute to society. The findings illustrated here, therefore, are interesting. The team of staff assessing the intake cohort found that consistently the young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) from special schools were more able to perform the skills relating to confidence and self-esteem than their mainstream counterparts. They were able to initiate communication and respond to others and relate to a wide range of people, adults, peers, the wider College community and the public

with greater ease. They were more likely to ask for help if they needed it and, perhaps significantly, offer ideas and suggestions of their own. This could be attributed to the fact that, at their special schools, class and group sizes were smaller (Birt, 1917) and that the staff at their schools were specially trained to work with pupils with a variety of learning difficulties. Many mainstream schools, however, create smaller groups for learners with additional needs to receive support. It is therefore not simply the size of the group, contributory though this may be, which is the sole cause for this marked disparity. Could the specialist training of the staff be a factor? Lewis and Norwich (2005), exploring the pedagogies relating to the teaching of pupils with Special Educational Needs consider at length the question of how specialised this teaching should be and examples given earlier in this research have described the challenges and expertise involved in working with these learners.

As I indicated earlier, it is not purely the academic with which the school must concern itself and many of the developmental aspects considered here may take place via strategies other than class teaching. My research demonstrates that the participants in this study who came, with MLD, from mainstream schools had little or no individual contact time with a staff member designated to support their pastoral care and potential reasons for this were discussed. Time spent with an individual staff member, with whom the young person has been able to establish Carey's (1996) positive and non-judgemental relationship, could be a mechanism for the development of some of the skills illustrated above, but not all. There is clearly a wider

aspect to the pastoral care which has enabled some pupils to demonstrate greater social ability than others. It must be recognised, of course, that there are many personal, social and domestic influences on social aptitude. However, as Best (2007) reminds us, children spend a large proportion of their waking time, five days a week, in school. The prevailing climate in the school must surely, therefore, be a major contributing element to the experience of the pupils.

From the staff assessments, an overall picture emerged that pupils with learning difficulties who have been taught in smaller classes by staff specialising in the support of the academic and social needs of their learners were likely to demonstrate skills which indicate confidence and self esteem. From the interviews, it appears that these pupils also had significantly more individual contact time with a staff member with whom they could identify. Importantly, this group also felt that, should that staff member be unavailable, other members of staff could be approached for support. Again, the solution to this apparent lack of pastoral support in the mainstream schools requires a change in emphasis at all levels of the education system. In order for staff to be able provide this care; schools will need to address a reorganisation of time pressures on staff members. In order for this to take place, the expectations of central government, amongst others, must allow for more flexibility in the curriculum and in the allocation of resources. Additionally, Local Authorities, with their overview of regional education may be required to facilitate the appropriate training and/or the cross-fertilisation of skills between mainstream and special school staff. Government should,

therefore, give consideration to the devolution of both responsibility and finance.

5.4.ii Theme 6

The prevailing perception that pupils from special schools are overprotected is not reflected in the evidence from the interviews or staff feedback.

Underpinning the desire to see young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) placed in mainstream schools may be the belief that this will provide greater opportunities for them to be in contact with local children, support their skills in social situations and to make friends in their locality (Scheepstra, Nakken and Pjil, 1999; Sloper and Tyler, 1992). At secondary school level this is, I believe, based on some false premises. Certainly in the United Kingdom in the State Sector, the large proportion of pupils aged 4 – 11 attend the primary school closest to their home, with the exception, perhaps, of faith schools. Once the primary school education finishes, this ceases to be the case. The reason behind this is that, where a two-tier State Sector exists i.e. grammar and comprehensive schools in the same Local Authority are present, competition for places at what are perceived as the “best schools” is fierce as parents and carers understandably seek the highest quality education for their children. As a result, secondary school pupils from the same geographical area may attend one of a number of comprehensive schools, a single-sex grammar school, a mixed-sex grammar school, Academy, Free School or a faith school. Thus pupils with MLD from one area, if included in a mainstream school, are no more likely to attend the same school as their neighbours than pupils without special needs.

Research has shown that primary school children most commonly choose to associate with similar peers (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001) and that these associations are based mainly on age, attainment and interests. Teenagers form friendship groups with those with similar interests and there is no reason to suppose that the findings cited by McPherson et al. do not also apply to secondary school pupils. Thus we can see that social development relies on far more than association with peers from the locality in which young people live.

If, as suggested by Scheepstra et al. (1999) and Sloper et al. (1992), one of the driving desires behind a family's wish to have their child with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) included in a mainstream school stems from their belief that they will increase their ability to handle social situations, the results of the feedback from the staff assessments bring this belief into question. As I described in the previous section on the analysis of staff feedback, the special school participants were able, overall, to demonstrate greater skill in relating to a wide range of people, initiating and responding to communication and seeking help when necessary. It has been shown that they were able to identify a staff member to whom they could relate in terms of pastoral care and academic progress and with whom they had regular group and individual contact; this in contrast to the mainstream pupils with MLD who did not have such contact. The special school pupils also felt more confident that, should bullying have been an issue, the school had resolved the problem, suggesting a climate of confidence to speak out and trust that their voice would be heard.

Some might suggest that pupils in special schools are over-shielded, kept away from the wider society (Runswick-Cole, 2008), but the social skills demonstrated in their assessments suggest otherwise. Children who are excessively protected for whatever reason can develop a “*learned helplessness*” and this can apply to young people with and without learning difficulties. Examples of this are the 4-year old pupil who cannot dress him/herself because someone has always done this for him/her. Similarly, a teenager who has never needed to prepare what needs to be taken for the day at school will not know how to do this. The latter is typical of students with learning difficulties with whom I have worked. Kirk, for instance, was 17 and did not know how to chop salad ingredients. He had no deficiency in either motor skills or hand-eye co-ordination but had simply never been allowed to learn this basic life skill. Of course, as Goodwin (1986) points out, there is a responsibility to protect the young and vulnerable and they should receive the support they require and it is commendable that much guidance is available to underpin and facilitate this. However, if there is a prevailing perception that the climate in special schools is protective to the point of fostering reliance (Scheepstra, Naaken and Pjil, 1999), the staff feedback in my research disputes this. Specialist staff are trained to enable their pupils to learn life skills, both practical and social. The young learner who was unable to chop salad ingredients had, it should be noted, not attended a special school. The analysis of feedback has revealed skills present in the pupils previously attending special schools which suggest confidence and self esteem. Other skills assessed relate to the ability to operate independently, for instance the capacity to maintain a routine and to vary it if

necessary, or the competence to take care of personal belongings. The students were observed in order to ascertain if these skills were consistently evident.

Overall, the participants who had attended special schools were more able to demonstrate their ability to maintain a routine, arriving on time for classes and other events and adapting to changes required in this routine from time to time. When the capacity for looking after their possessions was considered, both groups demonstrated similar skills in bringing what they needed to college for any given activity and failing to lose or leave their possessions. Had those pupils from special schools been over-helped while at school, I doubt that they would be so adept in these areas as they embarked on the next phase of their education. Clearly the staff members who taught and supported the young people in the special school settings had the skills and expertise to facilitate learning in a manner suited to the needs of the pupils. My specialist experience and training permits me to propose that these involve a myriad of different strategies to teach the same skill, as each learner presents an individual challenge in terms of learning. Mainstream secondary staff are, at present, ill-equipped in terms of skills, or time, to offer this support. The skills can be acquired by specific training and schools and individual staff must take responsibility for seeking this and for allocating the time and resources required to learn and deliver the appropriate support.

From the findings described in Chapter 4, a number of recurrent issues emerged relating to the differences in pastoral care available to pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in special and mainstream secondary schools. There appears to be a correlation between these differences and the levels of confidence, social ability and self-esteem present in the young people when they left school at the age of 16. Some potential explanations emerged but these are not to be confused with excuses for inadequate practice at any level. In the next Chapter, I will consider the relationship between pastoral care and successful social outcomes and, where good and effective practice is found, I will make recommendations as to how this may be shared for the benefit of pupils in all types of schools. Beyond school level, responsibility also lies with government, national and local, and significant changes in approach will be required. Expertise clearly exists and this must be shared for the benefit of all the pupils, via skills exchange, Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Initial teacher Training (ITT) and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). Good practice must be supported at each echelon in order that, at no level, can responsibilities be abdicated to the detriment of the most vulnerable pupils.

Chapter 6 : Summary and recommendations: “She knew about my dad and about what happened to the dog”

Inclusion is more than a place.

(Ryan, 2009)

She (tutor) knew about my dad and about what happened to the dog and how that made me feel.

Trisha, who had attended a special school

6.1 Revisiting the origins of the enquiry

Here, I take the opportunity to look forward in light of my research and having had the opportunity to reflect on the outcomes of my enquiry. I also review the process of the study, giving consideration to the methodology, its strengths and areas which, had time and resources been unlimited, might have been developed. For me the journey has been long, fascinating, and rewarding. The process has enabled me to work, often with a smile, with a range of interesting, enthusiastic and engaging young people. It has also made me angry – to observe first-hand the results of, at best, ineffective systems of pastoral care and, at worst, in some schools, negligence.

I have outlined the conjecture which inspired me to pursue this research. My considerable experience, my specialist training, my passionate belief in fairness and my commitment to disadvantaged learners were, and continue to be, my driving force.

My strong suspicion that learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) are, in some schools, failing to receive robust pastoral care needed to be tested. My instinct that this failure results in a discrepancy in pupils' levels of social confidence and self-esteem also required examination. Both conjectures proved to be sound. There was a significant difference in the pastoral care experienced by MLD pupils in mainstream and special secondary schools and this was mirrored by a marked difference in the social outcomes for each group, the special school pupils demonstrating higher levels of confidence and self-esteem.

2010 saw the enactment of the Equality Act which brought together numerous separate items of legislation into one Act. The Act brought the current climate into focus, yet the education of young people with particular needs is not a new area of concern. Is, however, the Act being dishonoured by the manner in which one, at least, of its stated intentions is being inadequately implemented? My research findings suggest that this is indeed the case. Since the publication of the Committee into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People, more commonly referred to as the Warnock Report (Warnock, 1978), extensive discussion and literature has been generated regarding the inclusion in mainstream schools of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). My study in no way sought to question the school of thought underpinning the inclusion of these pupils, but rather some important aspects of its implementation. The concept that all children should be given opportunities to take part in as wide a range of experiences, and with as extensive a breadth of their peers as is practical, is long

established and is endorsed by psychologists such as Vygotsky (1978) and educational theorists Piaget (1925).

If a policy is born out of a genuine desire to foster improvements, its implementation must be effectively supported to ensure that, rather than the successful outcomes desired, damage does not result through unintended consequences resulting from lack of skill, experience or resources. The responsibility for the implementation of policy is often far removed from those who have created it (Taylor and Balloch, 2005; Moran, Rein and Goodwin, 2008) and I propose that the policy of inclusion can only produce positive results in practice if, in its implementation, due and appropriate consideration to all aspects of the school experience is given.

Theorists and philosophers may hold entrenched views that the “good” agenda must be pursued regardless of the outcome. I have previously referred to 18th century German philosopher, Kant, who would, I believe, support the implementation of inclusive practices based on his philosophy that to do good should always be the aim, whatever the outcomes (Paton, 1948). His ideology dictated that the motives behind what is now understood to be a policy or an agenda were paramount, and that the outcomes were secondary. However, while I do not dispute the drive to ensure that this good is done, Kant’s apparent lack of emphasis regarding the consequences of the worthy actions does concern me, based, as it is on laudable principles that prove unrealistic. If the values underpinning the 2010 Equality Act are to be upheld, Bentham’s utilitarian (1789) ideals concerning the rights of

disadvantaged groups must be considered, though Bentham's focus on outcomes for the largest number is also problematic. I propose that, rather than taking these extremes in isolation, there is a third way to move forward to ensure inclusive education benefits pupils with learning difficulties while not disadvantaging those without such conditions.

6.2 The context of this study

Research, in any field, scientific or social, should be designed to inform and potentially to change or improve (Thomas, 2009) and my project was underpinned by a powerful desire to do both. There is the potential for information gathered to inform and to be shared to develop and advance. This is intended, in turn, to influence those who are in a position to change approaches; policy makers at all levels. My interest in the experiences of young people with learning difficulties is evident in my work with them in their post-school educational setting, and my interest in, and experience of, improvement of practice stems from extensive work in the training and mentoring of professional education practitioners.

The insight which I have been privileged to obtain, through my research, is based on the perceptions of the young people themselves, and it must be recognised that their individual perceptions are, for them, the reality in which they function. Pupils with learning difficulties often struggle to express their thoughts and feelings and many misinterpret signals and situations in their everyday life. This can result in them being considered unresponsive, awkward or rude. Specialist strategies developed through professional

practice provide, not only appropriate and effective communication approaches, but also the ability to interpret the responses, verbal and non verbal, of often mis-understood pupils with learning difficulties. I have worked with many learners with, initially, little confidence or sense of self-worth but who have blossomed into more outgoing and assured young people when taught in an environment where the individual strategies they require are implemented. In addition to the perceptions of the pupils, I have been able to observe, discuss and assess the personal and social attributes which they have developed during their time in secondary education. Good practice identified offers the opportunity for change; information and change which should benefit the young people in question and, potentially, all young people in secondary education.

In this research, my concern was the social rather than the academic outcomes for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in secondary schools. While academic learning is, of course, an important aspect of education, it is only part of a much wider picture which equips young people for their journey through life, and this belief underpins my enquiry. In today's competitive educational climate, academic outcomes for pupils with, and without, learning difficulties is naturally a priority for schools and Dyson, Farrell, Hutcheson, Polat and Gallannaugh (2004) emphasise schools' concern regarding the impact of inclusion on overall academic achievement. While a number of studies on this impact have been undertaken, much less has been written regarding social outcomes for pupils with MLD when included in mainstream schools. One UK study, undertaken by Frederickson,

Simmonds, Evans and Soulsby in 2007, took as its focus the social and affective outcomes of inclusion on primary school children. The experience, which led to my initial hypothesis, has been with school leavers, aged 16 – 18, with Moderate Learning Difficulties. Therefore, my enquiry sought to examine these outcomes in secondary school pupils. Were there differences in the pastoral care experiences of pupils with MLD from mainstream and special secondary educational settings? Were there differences in the levels of confidence and self-esteem apparent in pupils from these settings? Finally, if such differences were evident, could an association between them be made? This was necessarily a localised and relatively small study. However, I propose that the findings, which are balanced and robust, may be reflected on a larger, national and international scale.

6.3 The development of the study

Since the inception, in the last century, of the notion of an inclusive society, through which services such as health and education are available and free to all, there has been a need for legislation to ensure that groups and individuals do not suffer discrimination. However, and I consider more importantly, there has been a requirement for attitudes to change. Not least among these is that young people should no longer, while being seen, remain unheard. Children's voices should be heard and their opinions valued and acted upon. This is the underpinning ethos behind the introduction, in 2003, of Pupil Voice, a strategy designed to empower young people to express their views and opinions about the school experience, and which appears to provide a platform for pupils to be heard. Does it, however,

provide a platform for all pupils? I suggest not. The range of difficulties which are encompassed by the term “Moderate Learning Difficulties” (MLD) is huge and many were described in Chapter 1. Some conditions are typified by outgoing and sunny dispositions. Many more conditions however manifest a variety of communication difficulties, lack of social awareness and significant delay in the processing and retention of information. Pupils with these specific difficulties are unlikely, I suggest, to voice opinions in an open forum and need individual discussion with appropriately trained staff to facilitate the hearing of their voice. For this reason, my research was designed to offer these learners exactly that, a voice. Now I wish to consider how to act on what they said.

6.4 A critique of the study undertaken

No research, large or small, is without challenges and it is important to consider whether any aspects of a study might be improved, undertaken differently, included or expanded. Often, the scale of a study is constrained by time and/or resources. In other cases, while alternative arrangement or methods are explored, they may be considered to attract drawbacks as well as advantages. In this latter case, careful consideration of the positive and negative elements is required.

My study was situated in one college, comprising multiple campuses, in one Local Authority, resulting in findings relating to that geographical area alone. It would not be appropriate to consider that these could be generalised and presented as attributable to, for instance, the national situation. Examination

of statistical information published in, for instance, school census tables, indicates that Gloucestershire, where my study took place, falls closely in line (slightly below) with the national picture for England in terms of the incidence of special educational needs (SEN), statements issued and attendance of pupils with SEN at mainstream and special schools (ONS, 2010; DfE, 2013; DfE, 2014i; DfE, 2014ii). In some areas of the country, London and the South East of England, for instance, statistics indicate a far higher population of pupils with special educational needs. The many and various reasons why this might be the case, while a topic for interesting discussion, fall outside the scope of my research.

It was pleasing to discover, during the research interviews, how much the participants enjoyed the process, and in particular the recording of their voices. This fact led to a certain elasticity in the timetable for the interviews and, in turn, to the consideration of greater time allocation for each interview should the process be repeated. This latter point prompted a further question. To elicit findings on a larger scale, could the research have been replicated using similar methods but in a greater number of Local Authorities ie small projects taking place in numerous locations? Two mechanisms for this would be appropriate. Firstly, one single researcher could visit a number of different LAs and undertake the project multiple times. Secondly, a team of researchers could be involved to conduct the study simultaneously in different locations.

The consistency of approach involving one interviewer, experienced in communicating with young people with learning difficulties, was, I consider, a strength of my research. This method, coupled with time availability in a professional doctorate, did, however, constrain the size of the study. While a greater participation in terms of LAs and young people would attract more data, I would question the robustness of that data where a large team of different interviewers had been involved, each with different levels of experience in the field. Similarly, a greater quantity of data would, inevitably, require reconsideration of the data analysis methods employed for both Phases of the research, leading to increased cost, training and time commitment.

I have explained my decision not to examine the policies of the schools which featured in my research, as they would offer statements of intent rather than evidence of practice. It would, however, had time and resources been available, been informative to gather additional evidence from the schools attended by the participants by visiting them, considering the inclusion of pastoral elements and opportunities in the timetables and observing their practice of offering support and guidance.

I have described the shift in emphasis in the education of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) since the publication of the Warnock Report (1978) and the resulting impact on the educational settings they attend. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs are more likely to attend a special school with many pupils with SEN but without statements are placed in

mainstream schools (ONS, 2010; DfE, 2013; DfE, 2014i; DfE, 2014ii). Learning need alone is not the only criteria when considering the placement, or otherwise, of the latter group in mainstream schools. Evidence suggests that in London and the South East of England, mainstream secondary schools have a significantly higher proportion of pupils with SEN than in the rest of England. Geography, then clearly plays a part. Geography may also have a more localised impact on the choice of school place, in that availability and access to transport may be a factor. This aspect of school placement was not included in this study and might prove an interesting point to explore further in future studies on inclusion.

My own experience has led me to recognise the great disparity in parental involvement in pupils' education. Some parents are articulate, informed and committed to the support of their children. Others struggle to involve themselves and some are reluctant to engage with the system at all. All of these factors may affect the placement of a pupil with learning difficulties in a school setting, with the former group equipped and able to argue their case when seeking a particular placement, mainstream or special, for their child. Again, this interesting and important aspect of inclusion and placement could usefully be explored in a study which attracted sufficient time and funding.

In earlier chapters, I discussed the background to the inclusion debate. The philosophies of those who influence the creation of policy is an area which I consider to be worthy of further examination. The adversarial political climate in which education, and other areas, is situated colours the

confidence with which the motives on which particular policies are considered. Consideration, in depth, of these motives, political, financial or Kantian, could form the basis of interesting and informative further study.

6.5 The research findings and issues which emerged

The voices of the young MLD learners who took part in my research revealed significant and disturbing differences between the care taken with their personal and social development in the secondary schools they attended. The care, and approaches to behaviour management, experienced by those who had previously attended mainstream schools was inferior to that of the participants who had recently left special schools, and this had a consequential effect upon their levels of confidence, social aptitude and self-esteem.

There are acknowledged pressures on mainstream schools to ensure good academic outcomes for their pupils and they are understandably concerned regarding the impact on these of the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties. Additionally, the need to identify and resource priorities, while maintaining financial stability and adhere to the extensive curriculum, impose considerable demands. If inclusion is truly to underpin the ethos of education in our schools, systems must be developed to address these issues in a constructive manner which will also result in the elimination of inadequate behaviour management and weak pastoral care. This development will need a substantial re-thinking of education priorities. Michael Gove's vision raises concerns regarding the standards of education

in schools. My research findings indicate that the situation about which he voiced concerns when appointed has continued to deteriorate, and the Academies programme has failed to produce the panacea he intended.

6.6 Recommendations made based on the research findings

Ainscow (1999) reminded us that none of this is easy and, if it were, I doubt we would be continuing to discuss the approach to inclusive education so many years after Warnock (1978). Innovation and advancement do not come easily and require imagination, hard work and above all, commitment.

I believe in a solution-based approach to matters and propose to make constructive recommendations to further the true inclusion of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in schools. My research has highlighted examples of apparently outstanding pastoral care, leading in turn to the development of social confidence, self-esteem and a sense of belonging to a school community. These should be celebrated as beacons of good practice and shared on a wide scale in order that pupils with MLD, and indeed all pupils, might benefit from them, particularly in schools which apparently fail to offer this support.

My research findings indicate there are definite advantages for secondary age pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) where they have access to robust pastoral care with staff members who are able to address their needs. In this study, these systems were found to be embedded into

the provision for special school pupils but lacking in that for mainstream learners with MLD. As a result, the levels of confidence, self-esteem and social aptitude were found to be higher amongst the pupils leaving special schools. Inclusion is indeed an admirable ethos but It will only result in admirable outcomes if steps are taken to ensure that it does not take place in name only but pervades the entire educational climate in practice. This has implications at all levels, governmental, Local Authority and in schools.

6.6.i Governmental level:

Through Acts of Parliament governments have, introduced measures to provide an education for pupils with physical or learning difficulties. As a result of the Education (Handicapped Children) Act (DES, 1970), pupils who would have previously been accommodated in training centres, care units in hospitals, private institutions or at home, became entitled to special education, identifying them as warranting an education service. As described earlier, Warnock's (1978) recommendations resulted in an agenda to incorporate these pupils still further, by including them into mainstream schools.

There must be recognition, however, that inclusion does not merely involve the placement of pupils with learning difficulties into mainstream secondary schools but that this, in turn, requires that those pupils require more time (money) spent on their care – not just on their academic progress. Of course, the pastoral care of all pupils is an important aspect of the school

experience but, for some, additional special arrangements need to, and must be made.

In today's climate of financial devolution, it is for schools to take decisions regarding the allocation of time and funds to various areas. Headteachers, however, have been left "confused" over the rules relating to the funding of SEN (Murray, 2013). Headteachers, including those responsible for schools considered to be highly inclusive, find that inclusion comes at a considerable cost and, while reluctant to talk about children in these terms, admit that for individual pupils the cost of supporting them is significantly higher than the additional funds allocated for this. Murray reports that, for some schools, these costs are a disincentive to admitting pupils with particular needs. While it is not permissible to openly discriminate against these children, informing parents that a school "does not have the resources to support your child" may be a covert way of doing just this. Funding, then, is an area where a government which openly endorses inclusion must ensure that sufficient funding is available for schools to support the additional needs of their most vulnerable pupils.

Funding, however, is not in itself the sole solution. Money may enable schools to employ additional staff, resources and equipment but, for school staff in mainstream schools, the most valuable, and the scarcest, resource of all is time. The curriculum is packed to and, some argue, beyond capacity and there are immense pressures on staff to produce good examination results for their pupil (Blower, 2014). It is, of course, appropriate that schools

should aim for their pupils to achieve high standards but if this precludes the ability of staff to spend quality time with the pupils with learning difficulties, it is completely at odds with the agenda to include. Blower describes the relentless pressure on schools, and the resulting overwhelming 60-hour week workload of teachers. Staff cannot be expected to sustain this level of workload and accommodate, with additional skills and time, pupils with particular and challenging requirements.

Under the government's Ofsted school inspection system some judgements are "grade limiting". This denotes a judgement which if, deemed to be less than "outstanding", will prevent the school receiving, overall, the highest accolade, even if other areas were found to be of the highest quality. Ofsted should, I propose, apply grade-limiting status to their judgement on the provision of pastoral care and social outcomes for all pupils, but in particular those with learning difficulties. Schools would be left in no doubt as to the importance of this aspect of their provision and compelled to give it the attention, time and resources it merits.

If the pastoral care systems which support pupils like Trisha (quoted at the start of this chapter) are to be introduced and sustained, there is a need for the mainstream school staff to feel equipped and confident to deliver them. The knowledge, skills and understanding to facilitate such pastoral care should form part of the qualifications required to be undertaken by graduates before embarking on a teaching career in secondary schools. Mainstream school teachers are expected to meet the academic needs of pupils with

learning difficulties, and this requires specialist skills. The development of the skills in communication, learning strategies and the ability to support, for instance, autistic pupils in the classroom is, therefore, crucial. If true inclusion is to take pervade the ethos of a school, staff must also be equipped to support these pupils in their emotional, personal and social wellbeing. The routes into teaching, the length and types of training, are now varied. Within the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), there is capacity to include (some) input regarding the support and teaching of pupils with learning difficulties. It is questionable, however, whether the same can be said for the School-Centred Initial Teacher Training, the Graduate Teacher and Registered Teacher Programmes, with their emphasis on in-school training. I have described the pressures on schools and existing staff; hardly a climate where the additional skills required working with pupils with SEN may be acquired by trainee teachers, who are likely to be mentored by staff who do not possess this expertise themselves.

There are opportunities to develop additional skills in working with pupils with learning difficulties through the Core Skills in Special Educational Needs and Disability, and SEN and Disability Skills: Advanced Skills programmes. Fitting the additional training into the previously mentioned packed week is however, a challenge for even the most committed member of staff. If it is truly committed to an inclusive ethos in the education system, the government must require that all teacher training programmes incorporate, as a priority, the knowledge, understanding and skills to work with pupils with learning difficulties. Skills cannot be implemented, however, unless there is

scope in the timetable to do so; this will require an adjustment of priorities at all levels.

The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) should empower headteachers and potential school leaders with the confidence to take the appropriate decisions regarding finance, staff training and resources to support the care of their learners with Moderate Learning Difficulties. In April, 2004, the NPQH qualification became mandatory for all newly appointed headteachers in England and Wales, although this ceased to be a requirement in February, 2012. In their manifesto for the May 2005 general election, the Conservative Party proposed doing away with the qualification for headteachers but today the NPQH continues to invite and accept applications for its leadership programme. The national College for Teaching and Leadership provides courses designed for potential school leaders, offering a range of modules, one of which refers to Special Educational Needs. Significantly, this bears reference to academic attainment, an understandable emphasis in the current educational climate.

Both teacher training and leadership development programmes are crucial in the development of a philosophy of inclusion, where learners of all abilities receive the appropriate support. If, however, government is to promote this philosophy, it must go hand-in-hand with the flexibility to enable teachers and head teachers to put it into practice; this is feasible only with a radical review of the priorities faced by the education workforce and the resources with which they are equipped.

6.6.ii Local Authority Level:

Tensions exist between central and local government regarding the devolution of resources and responsibilities over a range of areas, in this case education, are numerous and ongoing and, for those interested in the agenda for the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties, of great interest. Local Authorities consider, with justification, that they hold less, and decreasing, power and funding than previously. They feel burdened, however, with considerable responsibility and Woods and Broadfoot (2008) have identified this as “constrained empowerment”. Central Government’s policy, as described in 2006 by Ruth Kelly, the then, Communities Secretary, was to give Local Authorities “*more power at local level, setting overall goals, but we (Government) will step back and allow more freedom at the local level*” Woodward (2006). While this may sound liberating, it is accompanied by the dictates of the Localism Act (2011) whereby the government gives more power to Local Authorities to decide how to spend public money to meet local need while making sure that the local communities receive value for money and are made more transparent and accountable (HMSO, 2011). Responsibility is devolved while, as described by Whitelegg (2012), lack of funding and power leaves Authorities in a complex position. These tensions lie, however, outside the scope of this study while remaining an ongoing agenda at central and local government level and need to be mapped and challenged, perhaps in a post-doctoral project.

Having recommended strategies via which central government could support the improvement of pastoral care for pupils with Moderate Learning

Difficulties (MLD) in mainstream schools, I need to consider how a Local Authority (LA) could also do so. In 2003, it was reported that Local Education Authorities (LEAs), now Local Authorities (LAs) were increasingly sharing some of their support and advice services with, for instance, outstanding classroom practitioners and school managers and that this was considered to be mutually beneficial (Fletcher-Campbell and Lee, 2003). While this shift appears positive, it should be tempered by the fact that, as described, mainstream school staff are not equipped to offer support in some important areas, the pastoral care of the most vulnerable pupils, for instance. This change in Authorities' method of support went hand-in-hand with their decreasing ability to deliver it themselves as their specialist advisory services were decimated by withdrawal of government funding.

Clearly, there had been structures in place for training to be developed and delivered locally, or to be purchased by external specialists in a given field of expertise, and these must be regenerated for the benefit of local schools, offering skills exchange and training for school staff on the topics relevant to the care of pupils with MLD via an accessible and affordable mechanism. When training and development is required, expert practitioners in a given field are the preeminent choice of those equipped to provide the understanding, knowledge and skills required. The special school staff who are, from my research findings, equipped and trained to successfully manage pastoral care systems for pupils with MLD, are well placed to assist in the designing of training and to mentor their mainstream colleagues. They have expertise in strategies designed to facilitate communication with pupils with

MLD and to accommodate their various difficulties. Where such training is developed locally it should then be disseminated to the wider education sector. This will alleviate some financial concerns while, more importantly, ensuring that secondary school pupils with learning difficulties are supported as widely as possible as their teachers develop the expertise they require to do this.

In the area in which my research took place there was anecdotal evidence of college staff visiting special schools in order to enhance their experience but evidence of secondary mainstream schools inviting or taking part in reciprocal visits to special schools was not apparent. Once again, the development of expertise in this important aspect of school life must be pursued within the constraints of time, curriculum and other pressures which may impede the ability of staff from one school to visit another. These should be addressed, through, as necessary changes in priorities and attitudes.

6.6.iii School level

My research has indicated that pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties benefit from robust pastoral care, involving relationships of trust and opportunities for discussion on a personal basis. Also indicated is the fact that such support is lacking in mainstream secondary schools.

Financial constraints cannot be discounted when discussing inclusion and I have described the pressures identified by school leaders in providing

support for pupils with SEN within the budget provided for this, and the effect this can have on schools' willingness to admit pupils with specific needs. Either a school can consider itself to be inclusive or it cannot. If a school is to be truly inclusive, it must take measures to support the academic needs of all its pupils and, equally importantly, put structures in place to develop the personal and social aspects of these pupils' lives and give them a voice. Where this requires funding which is not currently available, schools must relentlessly, and publically, pursue the government to provide it.

Clearly any system which involves one-to-one contact on a regular basis requires time to be made available and, in light of the previously identified pressures on schools and teachers, this is precious commodity in a packed timetable of academic study. Mainstream schools, if they are to describe themselves as inclusive, must, however, make time, within the hours available to them, to support these valuable aspects of pupils' experience. It has been established that being included does not merely require shared space, but a feeling of belonging, being valued and being heard. Schools will have undertaken training to support the implementation of Every Child Matters and Pupil Voice, in addition to that provided for curricular changes and delivery. The development of strategies to support the pastoral care of vulnerable pupils must be given equal importance. If staff are ill-equipped to work with learners with communication, cognitive or social limitations, the development of appropriate skills should form part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). There is, as described, specialist training available and it should be acknowledged that this involves further time and

financial commitments. Skills exchanges, however, between the staff of special and mainstream schools are more easily facilitated, involve less time and, it could be argued, are more effective on a need-to-know basis.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators hold a key role in school and, since 2009, have been required to gain the Masters-level National Award for Special Educational Needs Co-ordination within three years of taking up their post. It is commendable that this role is considered sufficiently important to require this standard of additional qualification. Academic, as opposed to pastoral or social, support appears to be the main focus of this training and it is to be hoped that the additional study needed will not deter outstanding, but already overburdened, teachers from undertaking it.

In 2006, a study indicated that the vast majority of the teachers who took part were dissatisfied with their preparation for the management of the behaviour of their pupils, although they felt that it was of major importance (Merrett and Wheldall, 1993). Similarly, many of the teachers who were interviewed for a study focussing on Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties (EBD) in mainstream schools were unaware of their Local Authority's policy on EBD (Daniels, Visser, Cole and de Reybekill, 1999). No wonder, then, that staff feel under trained at initial and continuing levels of professional development. The encouragement, in February 2014 from Michael Gove, for schools to employ robust sanctions for poor behaviour is, I believe, counterproductive if teachers continue to lack confidence in this area. Furthermore, these

sanctions lack the insight as to why some pupils with learning difficulties fail to behave appropriately.

My research revealed behaviour management strategies employed by some mainstream schools which indicate that, as described in the Department for Education's (2014) press release, staff do, indeed, feel ill-equipped to handle some of the challenging aspects of working with pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD), and without appropriate training this cannot be considered surprising. Once again, schools should have training and/or support from specialists to empower them to feel confident to keep their pupils in school rather than "manage" them out of the premises. If, as I have suggested, Ofsted had a robust agenda, with a limiting grade attached, to judge the quality of a school's pastoral care of its pupils with MLD, the imperative to ensure that this care was of an outstanding quality would become a priority on schools' agendas.

The arrangements for schools' Advanced Skills Teachers ended in August 2013, leaving schools with the option to create higher salary posts for teachers whose main purpose is leading improvement in teaching skills. These Leading Practitioners are to take on a leadership role, practice within their workplace and contribute to their schools' improvement. The role does not, however, encompass the wider dissemination of good practice. This is, I suggest, a missed opportunity for a practitioner, skilled in the area of pastoral support, to offer these skills to a wider audience for the benefit of a greater number of pupils.

There is responsibility to be taken at each level of the formal education system when considering the pastoral care given to pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties in secondary education. Central government has a vital role to play. If it fails to do so, its policies may be seen to do no more than pay lip-service to the agenda to include. Local government must use what resources it retains to facilitate and promote good practice across the schools in its authority. Schools must admit pupils with specific needs, where appropriate, and support their personal and social development with staff equipped with the specialist training and expertise to do this.

6.7 And finally.....

I believe that inclusion in its true sense is to be commended. No one should feel left out. For some pupils with disabilities and learning difficulties, specialist provision is the most appropriate educational setting. For others, including many with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), placement in a mainstream school is recommended. However, this can only be considered to represent true inclusion if the young people in question are fully integrated into the setting, their specific needs addressed and their social progress, over and above the academic, is given priority. It is evident from the findings in my research that it is possible for schools to offer the pastoral support to enable pupils to feel valued, heard and supported in all aspects of school life. It is equally clear from my research that mainstream schools, at present, are failing to do so. There is outstanding expertise available in special schools and this must be used to empower those in mainstream schools who feel ill-

equipped to offer the best possible experience to their most vulnerable pupils. Importantly, beyond the school gates, at both local and governmental level, there must be a commitment to enabling schools to implement the expertise available to them by relaxing the constraints which prevent them from truly embracing inclusion.

I believe that people of all ages and in all groups, should feel part of the wider community and should not suffer discrimination for any reason, and I suggest that inclusive education is an admirable ethos. I do not, however, recommend that the education of pupils with MLD in special schools should be abandoned. Some pupils with MLD need to, and should, be educated in a particular specialised environment, a special school. Others may truly benefit from inclusion in a mainstream setting, but only if considerable measures are taken to ensure their social and emotional wellbeing.

Wedell, writing in 1995, asked us to look ten years ahead, to 2005. If three insights had not been sufficiently acknowledged, we should, he said, reproach ourselves. His three points related to failures to recognise the shortcomings in the, then, education system to acknowledge and accommodate diversity. The second involved the failure to recognise the existence of sound practices already in existence and which could be implemented. His final insight was that attempts to “graft” inclusive education for pupils with SEN onto a system not designed for this diversity are likely to fail.

We are now almost twenty years from his time of writing and I suggest that the “*reproach*” predicted by Wedell is not only deserved but shameful. It is possible to use my research as symptomatic of how many pupils with learning difficulties have suffered as a result of failures to address the issues, and my recommendations to ensure that this does not continue.

All of the recommendations above involve funding, training but, above all, commitment. This, in turn requires a re-structuring of the priorities in the education system. Government must ensure that schools are no longer over-burdened with constant change, curriculum pressures and bureaucracy. Local Authorities must be given the resources and power to support their local schools. Mainstream schools, must embrace the ethos of inclusion in their undertaking of training and development in the pastoral element of their pupils’ education. Then, and only then, will all pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties be able to swing their arms as they walk down the corridor.

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APPENDICES

XXXXX XXXXXXXX		XXXXXXXXXX	
10/11/1996		Age on 31 st August 2012 - 16	
Looked After	Care Leaver	Young Carer	
Young Parent	Section 139a/MOP	CAF	
Living in care - supported	Living in care - independent	SEN	

Learners Personal Details			
Address (if different)	X XXXXX XXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXX XXX XXX		
Landline Number		Mobile Telephone Number	XXXXXXXXXXXXX
Emergency / NOK Contact Details			
Name	XXXXX XXXXXXXX	Landline	
Relationship to Learner	Father	Other	XXXXXXXXXXXXX
Address (if different)	As above		
Support Services Details			
CRO / YSS	XXXXXX XXXXXXXX-XXXXXX		
Doctor			
Social Worker			
Carer			
Key Worker			
Other			

Current / Previous Education Provider			
School / PRU	XX XXXXXXXX XXXXXX		
School Contact	XXXXXX XXXXXX	Telephone	
Support Needs and Additional Information	<p>Application received for IWS, Gloucester. Will invite to Feb Link Days XX</p> <p>04/03/13-XXXXX did not attend the Link days in February but I have contacted XXXXX (stepmother) to arrange to meet XXXXX and XXXXXX at the Gloucester Campus on Wednesday 27th March at 10:30. XX</p> <p>27/3/13 – XXXXX attended the college with step-mum XXXXX. He came for a look round. XXXXX had been prior to XX XXXXXXXX XXXXXX referral XXXXXX which closed and then he was at CCP which has also closed. He was quiet and unsure of what he wants. He said that he is not good at English and Maths and likes to work in the Bricklaying and Mechanics workshop at the Centre. We explained what college had to offer and he seemed keen and asked to be put on our waiting for September 2013. He enjoys sports and is doing a level 1 gym course at Cheltenham@Leisure with XX XXXXXXXX XXXXXX. He said that he would need help with the bus fare when he comes to college. (KK 27/13) (will pass this information on to XXXXX</p>		

28/03/13

Emailed YST to enquire who the CRO is for XXXXX as XXXXXX thinks he has a SEN. CRO is XXXXXX XXXXXXX-XXXX. XXXXX SEN is for BESD
Moving on Document will be sent out in April. XX

Behaviour Profile

Learning Difference / Additional Need	✓	Additional / Specific Information
Moderate Learning Difficulties (EL3/ L1) (MLD)		
Severe Learning Difficulties (P levels and EL 2) (SLD)		
Physical Development (all levels) (PD)		
Social Communication Difficulties (SCOM)		
Autistic Spectrum disorder (ASD)		
Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties (BESD)		
Personal Support Plan (PSP)		
School Action Plan (SAP)		
School Action Plan Plus (SAP+)		
Anxious Learner		
LSA Input - How are they used?		
Over confident/ Unrealistic		
Other		

Behaviour Management Strategies

Please detail specific behaviours that might cause a marked change in behaviour, anxiety levels, emotion etc and advise on effective strategies used to deal with these behaviours.

Likes to be called XXX. XXXXX benefits from a high level of support, one to one support with written tasks and working within small groups.

XXX's low self-esteem affects his ability to cope with test situations and will benefit from support and preparation to try and address this. Mat sometimes feels very negative and is difficult to motivate, but these moods are decreasing.

Long Term Goals

E.g. Independent living, employability, progression within education.

XXX would like to progress to the Work Skills Multi Skills course in September 2014

Short Term Goals

E.g. Course specific, independent living, employability, educational and personal.

Apt Awards Certificate in Skills Towards Enabling Progression (E3 – 600/8498/4)

Units:

- Aspects of citizenship
- Introduction to Carpentry and Joinery
- Basic Cooking

- Young Parenthood
- Introduction to Making & Using Sacks for Family Learning
- Take part in an activity
- Introduction to Customer Service Skills

Apt Awards Certificate in using Employability skills (E3 – 60085095)

Units:

- Undertaking and Enterprise Project
- Working with Others
- Working as a Volunteer
- Action Planning to Improve Performance
- Applying for Jobs and Courses
- Making Career Choices
- Preparing for and Taking Part in an Interview

Functional Skills – Literacy, Numeracy and ICT

Strengths and Needs

Educational Needs:

To develop XXXXX's expressive language skills, promoting full participation in the curriculum and encourage social integration.

To increase XXXXX's levels of verbal comprehension, in particular understanding abstract language.

To develop effective communication skills and to provide strategies to enable him to process the language of others.

To support XXXXX in understanding what is required of him at college.

To develop XXXXX's ability to realise the importance of following an accepted code of behaviour during the college day.

To support and encourage organisational skills and to encourage independent learning.

To develop XXXXX's ability to accept adult direction, particularly with reference to completing work.

To develop his attention and concentration skills.

To develop literacy and numeracy appropriate to his age and abilities.

To develop skills and strategies to cope with test situations.

Strengths:

He converses easily with staff and although he finds some lessons challenging, he is willing

to attempt tasks. XXX has shown a good understanding of college rules and expectations. XXX responds well to one to one reading and spelling support. XXX can express his feelings when interacting. He is willing to ask for help, as well as accept it when it is offered.

Essential Information for Staff

E.g. Background information, personal circumstances, parental contact. To be updated as changes occur.

Likes to be called XXXt. XXX attended XXX School until it was closed. He was then placed with XXXX Academy. As with all key stage 4 XXXX Academy students XXX was placed in alternative education and was based at XX XXXXX Pupil Referral Unit. XXX responds well to one to one reading support. XXX can express his feelings when interacting. He is willing to ask for help, as well as accept it when it is offered. His attention and concentration skills have improved to the extent where he now will focus on a task and try his best without giving up. XXX is now able to interact fully both with staff and peers. XXX was very nervous on the enrolment day and did not want to leave the classroom at break times. However he has made new friends at college and seems to feel comfortable here. He converses easily with staff and although he finds some lessons challenging, he is willing to attempt tasks. XXX has shown a good understanding of college rules and expectations. He still has times when he feels very negative and is difficult to motivate but these have decreased.

XXX used to live with his mother but the relationship broke down due to XXX's BESD. He now lives with his dad and step mum and feels happy and settled now he has built up a relationship with them. XXX's brother has been to prison and XXX is very worried he might follow the same path.

XXX has double vision in his right eye and is trying out new contact lens to try and help with the situation. Unsuccessful in the past as he was not keen on this idea.

Medical Information & Allergies

Medical Form Received	YES	NO
Essential Medical Notes	XXX has double vision in his right eye and is trying out new contact lens to try and help with the situation. Unsuccessful in the past as he was not keen on this idea. (KK27/6/13)	

Photographic & Marketing Consent

YES	NO
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Other Information

--

Induction Assessment

KEY:

Achieved

Working Towards

Not Achieved

Essential Skills Tracking						
Level A	Week One	Week Two	Week Three	Week Four	Week Five	Week Six
To follow instructions						
To follow routines						
To make choices						
To behave appropriately						
To relate to others						
To keep safe						
To take care of belongings						
To communicate						
To take part in activities						

Level B	Week One	Week Two	Week Three	Week Four	Week Five	Week Six
To follow more complex instructions			Working Towards			Working Towards
To maintain routines and extend			Working Towards			
To make more complex choices				Working Towards		Working Towards
To initiate actions & activities				Working Towards		
To identify problems and inform an adult					Achieved	
To relate to a wider range of people		Achieved				
To conform to rules of behaviour	Achieved					
To follow safety instructions					Achieved	
To look after personal belongings		Achieved				
To initiate communication and respond to others	Achieved					

Level C	Week One	Week Two	Week Three	Week Four	Week Five	Week Six
To vary routines						
To manage time						
To make decisions						
To pursue interests						
To solve problems						
To recognise cause and effects						
To anticipate danger						
To take responsibility						
To help others						
To communicate with others						
To develop self-awareness						

Induction Assessments

Preferred Learning Style *(highlight)*

Visual

Auditory

Kinaesthetic

Read

Additional Notes:

Functional Skills

	Initial Assessment Level	Diagnostic Assessment Level	Areas for Development
Literacy	E1	E1 89%	
Numeracy	E3	E3 37%	
ICT			

Baseline Learning Profile

Essential Skill Target	Assessment Decision, Notes and Evidence	Target(s)
To follow more complex instructions (B)	XXX needs support to follow more complex instructions such as a plan of work or activities. He will benefit from regular checks and recapping, praise and encouragement.	To follow more complex instructions (B)
To maintain routines and extend (B)	XXX often arrives late for the 9 0 clock slot session but is always on time for lessons. He has also missed a few days because of feeling poorly. He will benefit from further encouragement and support to develop and maintain his routines.	To maintain routines and extend (B)
To make more complex choices (B)	XXX is trying hard to behave appropriately and needs a quiet, calm environment for learning. There have been a few examples of him making a poor choice in terms of behaviour and incidents outside college, so he will benefit from further reinforcement of guidelines and pastoral support to achieve this skill.	To make more complex choices (B)
To initiate actions & activities (B)	XXX participates in most activities in a positive manner. He will benefit from further opportunities and encouragement to make suggestions when the group are planning a task or activity.	To initiate actions & activities (B)
To identify problems and inform an adult (B)	XXX is able to ask for help when he needs it and discuss any worries or concerns with some encouragement. He will benefit from further support to recognise cause and effect in a range of situations and scenarios.	To recognise cause and effect (C)
To relate to a wider range of people (B)	XXX has shown he is able to interact with peers from other groups during trips and mixed group activities. He will have further opportunities to develop this skill during his enterprise unit and employability visits. It will help him to focus on the C strand skill of developing his self-awareness and self-image when interacting with	To develop self-awareness and self- image (C)

	a range of others in different settings.	
To conform to rules of behaviour (B)	XXX has shown he can conform to rules of behaviour in college and off site. He can sometimes be influenced by others so he will benefit from support to focus on helping others to conform to rules of behaviour and taking responsibility for his own behaviour.	To help others (C) To take responsibility (C)
To follow safety instructions (B)	XXX has shown he can follow safety instructions in the classroom, kitchen, art room and during off site activities. He now needs to think ahead and be able to anticipate danger in a range of settings if he or others do not follow safety instructions.	To anticipate danger (C)
To look after personal belongings (B)	XXX has shown he can look after his personal belongings in college. He now needs to take responsibility, for example for collecting his file and filing his work correctly in it.	To take responsibility (C)
To initiate communication and respond to others (B)	XXX has shown he is able to initiate communication with peers and staff and respond to others in an appropriate manner.	To communicate with others in a range of settings (C)

Individual Learning Plan: Current Targets

Essential Skills Targets

1	<p>To maintain routines and extend (B)</p> <p>XXX often arrives late for the 9 0 clock slot session but is always on time for lessons. He has also missed a few days because of feeling poorly. He will benefit from further encouragement and support to develop and maintain his routines.</p>
2	<p>To follow more complex instructions (B)</p> <p>XXX needs support to follow more complex instructions such as a plan of work or activities. He will benefit from regular checks and recapping, praise and encouragement.</p>
3	<p>To initiate actions & activities (B)</p> <p>XXX participates in most activities in a positive manner. He will benefit from further opportunities and encouragement to make suggestions when the group are planning a task or activity.</p>

Independent Skills Targets

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Employability Targets

Volunteering and Work Skills Pathways only.

To attend all sessions delivered by the Work Experience Manager and Job Coach. To participate in employer/agency visits to college and those organised on employer's premises.

Outcomes and Destinations

Awarding Body	Qualification	Level Achieved

	Destination	Destination Code	Notes
Formative	SFS Multi Skills	02	
Summative			
Final			

Destination Key

CODE

DESCRIPTION

01	Continuing existing Programme of study
02	New Programme of study at this institute
03	Further Education
04	Higher Education
15	Employment, with training
16	Employment, without training
17	Continuing employment with training
18	Continuing employment without training
19	Other training - no employment
98	Other
99	Not Known

The Structure of the Award

Levels and Standards

The essential skills learners need to develop at each level of the award are as follows:

Introductory Level A	Introductory Level B	Introductory Level C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To follow instruction • To follow routines • To make choices • To behave appropriately • To keep safe • To take care of belongings • To communicate • To take part in activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To follow more complex instructions • To maintain routines and extend the range • To make more complex choices • To initiate actions and activities • To identify problems and inform a responsible adult • To conform to rules of behaviour • To follow safety instructions • To look after personal belongings • To initiate communication and respond to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To vary routines • To manage time • To make decisions • To pursue interests • To solve problems • To recognise cause and effect • To anticipate danger • To take responsibility • To help others • To communicate with others in a range of settings • To develop self-awareness and self-image

Pastoral Care Research Project
Consent Form

➤ Liz has explained what her project is about	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ We have chatted about it and I know that she is going to ask me about when I was at school	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ I am happy that Liz is going to record us talking	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ I understand that when Liz writes about what I say, no one will know who I am	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ I know that Liz will keep the recordings and her notes in a safe place where no one else can see them	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ I understand that I can change my mind about taking part in the project at any time	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name:

Date:

Researcher:

Date:

Pastoral Care Research Project

Participant code:

Special / Mainstream

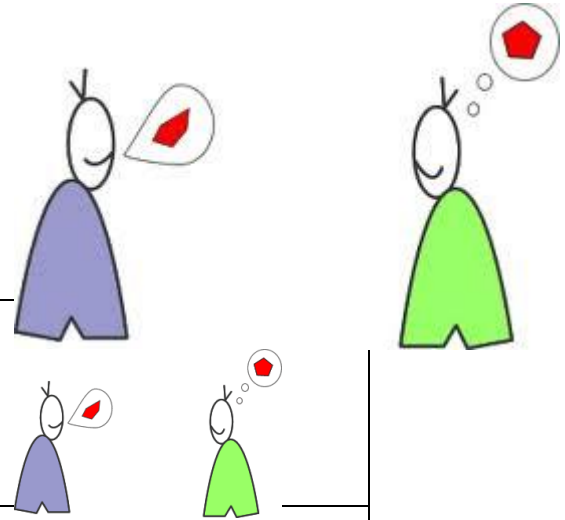
School code:



1. A bit about you

When you came to College in September, did any of your friends from school come too?	
Before you started College did you come for a visit or for Link Week?	
Did you do any work at your old school to get ready for coming to College?	
Did you know anyone else at College – on other courses, older brothers or sisters?	
Did you like school?	
Did you attend school regularly?	
Did you think that College would be better or worse than school, or just the same?	
Did you do any activities outside school (scouts, football, youth club)?	
Do you find it easy to make friends?	
How many people are there in your family at home?	

2. At College you have a Personal Tutor



<p>What does your Personal Tutor do to help you?</p>	
<p>Do you have tutorials (meetings) with your Personal Tutor? How often?</p>	
<p>Suppose you are worried about something and are not due to have a tutorial?</p>	
<p>What happens if you are worried about something and your Personal Tutor is not there?</p>	

3. When you were at school



<p>Did you have a Personal Tutor (Form Tutor) ?</p>	
<p>How often did you see your Tutor?</p>	
<p>Did you have regular tutorials / meetings with your tutor?</p>	
<p>What sort of things did your Tutor help you with? School work / stuff to do with lessons?</p>	

Other things? Such as.....?	
Suppose you were worried about something and were not due to have a tutorial / meeting?	
What happened if you were worried about something and your Personal Tutor was not there?	
Were you ever bullied at school? If so, what did you do / who did you tell? What did they do?	
Did you always feel safe at school? If not, what did you do / who did you tell? What did they do?	

Thank you so much for helping me