

# FUTURE SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR DIVERSITY: WHERE ARE WE NOW, AND WHERE COULD WE BE?

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A “futures thinking” approach to planning for diversity and inclusion, informed by an investigation of the current over-representation of secondary aged students in special schools in England.

Submitted by Alison Elizabeth Black to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in December 2012

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## **Abstract**

In 2011, 65% of the 76,900 pupils aged between 5 and 16 in special schools in England were of secondary age. When this population is broken down further, a constant rise in pupil numbers is seen; from just under 3,500 pupils at age 5, to more than 10,000 at age 15, with a large leap in numbers between the ages 10 and 11. This thesis views these patterns as demonstrations of disproportionality and as indications that inclusion in mainstream secondary schools is not being achieved.

The thesis fills a gap in the literature exemplified by the paucity of studies on this phenomenon. It is distinctive in not only exploring a problem and then suggesting ways of overcoming it, it also tests these suggestions. The thesis is in two parts, the first is a standard empirical enquiry, using a survey methodology, the second uses futures studies methodologies and evaluation techniques to create and develop a vignette of a future school that successfully includes those children currently placed in special schools.

A critical realist perspective is adopted, acknowledging that explanations are contingent and influenced by personal experience and bias (at the level of researcher and participants). Hence a range of stakeholder views are sought, along with the involvement of groups of practitioners and experts in the refinement of a vignette of a future school. The thesis employs a mixed methods approach, in order to base findings on as many sources as possible. It also involves a futures thinking aspect, in the design of a preferable, transforming, normative image of a future education system.

In part one explanations about why the phenomenon of over-representation occur are sought through a literature review, then a questionnaire of key stakeholders (those involved in school placement decisions). Factors that are commented on most frequently are school level factors and within child factors. These findings point to limitations of current models used to understand disability and special educational needs, the thesis posits that an extended multi-dimensional model is needed, and suggests a number of existing models that could be developed.

In part two a vignette of a future school is created by considering how problems and issues raised in part one of the study could be circumvented. This vignette is evaluated by experts who have experiential and theoretical knowledge of the field of special educational needs and inclusion. The evaluation contributes to the further refinement of the vignette.

This thesis highlights the unexplored phenomenon of secondary over-representation in special schools in England and presents an in-depth analysis of the reasons that stakeholders give to explain this over-representation. Uniquely, this analysis is then translated into an imaginary design of a possible future inclusive school, the evaluation of which in turn highlights some of the persistent issues about the purposes and design of schools in a diverse society.

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A number of focus groups contributed to the development of the vignettes contained in this thesis, and although each participant had the right to be named individually as contributors, none of them opted for this. I do however acknowledge each of their contributions, and thank the groups they were part of – focus groups at a JURE roundtable, an NASUWT workshop, a SEND group seminar at the University of Exeter and a SEN POSG seminar. You chose to attend these sessions based on a short abstract, and your contributions were vital to this research – thank you.

I add thanks to my family, for having the faith that the words “I’ve submitted” would one day come, and keeping me grounded in the realities of teaching and school management. Special thanks to Marlene, who checked if I had reported the statistical elements right, to Alan for his empathy and understanding, and to my niece Cadey, who came along in the second year of my PhD, and brought smiles and joy in dark times. Thanks to absent friends also, one who had more faith in me than I ever did in myself, the other whose example led me to take the strange path I have been on for the last six years. Finally, thanks to the Friend that sticks closer than a brother, and who continues to do so.

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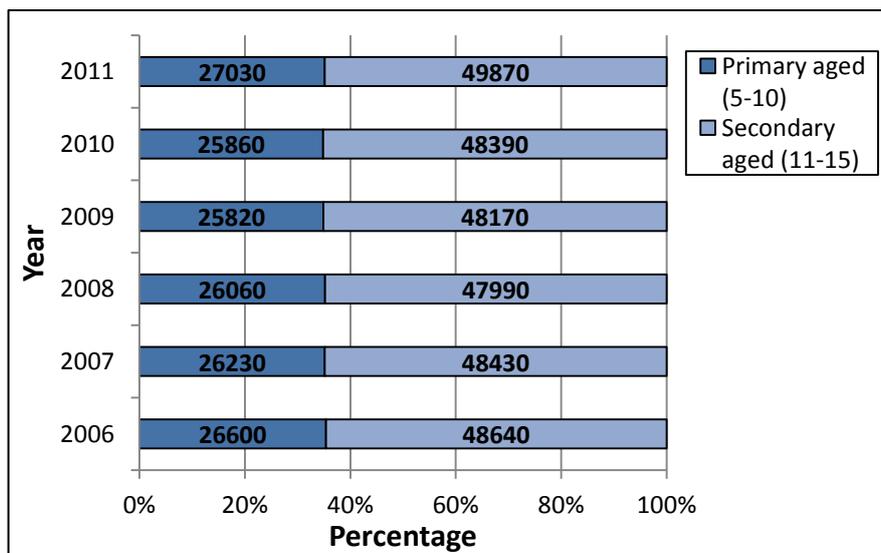
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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

The futurist Wendell Bell, in a recent overview of the field of futures studies states that “the most general question about preferable futures, perhaps, is ‘what ought we to do?’ To make such a decision, of course, we need to know where we have been in the past and where we are in the present, that is, our ‘initial condition’” (Bell, 2001, p. 72). This thesis is an examination of the population of special schools in England, and exploration of reasons behind the phenomena of over-representation by age in these schools – the initial condition. It then seeks to answer the question of “how can we include more children with special educational needs in general secondary schools”, by seeking ways to overcome suggested explanations for the initial condition. This is presented through a description of a preferable future, a vignette that sets out a transforming normative future – that is, a vignette that aims not to predict the future, but to improve it. Bell continues: “we [also] need to know...the future consequences of alternative actions, which is a prediction problem...and we need to assess those consequences as being more or less desirable, which is a value judgmental problem” (2001, p. 72). This thesis seeks to examine the consequences of the future it describes, and evaluate the outcomes through presenting the vignette to practitioners who have experiential and theoretical knowledge of the field of special education and inclusion in an English context. These evaluations inform the reiteration and development of the vignette.

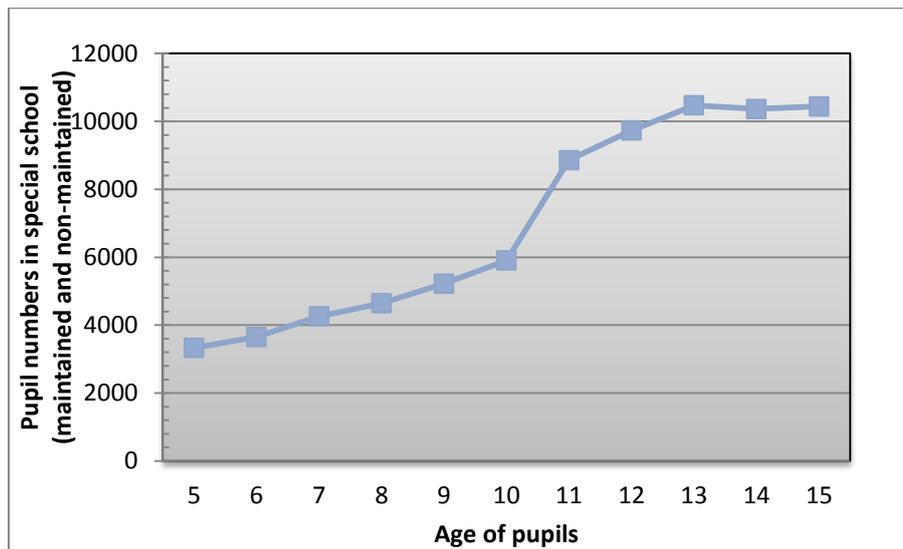
This thesis explores the concepts of inclusion and diversity, acknowledging the complexity of these terms. It explores inclusion, framing it through Slee’s (2008) observation that “the discussion of inclusive education is simultaneously mounted as a general examination of exclusion and inclusion for all students and a claim on behalf of a particular constituency” (p. 107). In this thesis the “particular constituency” I refer to is children with special educational needs aged between 11 and 16. The reason for this particular focus is based on findings in an unpublished Masters dissertation (Black, 2009), which demonstrated that secondary aged children were over-represented in the special school population in England. In 2009 the special school population in England contained more pupils of secondary age (11-15) than those of primary school age (5-10), just under two-thirds being of secondary school age. I have examined current governmental data on school population, and the findings remain the same. In order to contextualise this thesis I set out these updated findings below.

In 2011, of the 76,900 pupils aged between 5 and 16 in special schools in England, 49,870 were of secondary age (11-16), 65% of the special school population (based on data from Department for Education, 2011a). This pattern has remained constant over the past 8 years (see Black, 2009, and Fig 1.1). Indeed, when the raw data used by Will Swann (1985) in one of his early “integration statistics” articles is examined it can be seen that the same pattern existed as far back as 1978 and 1984, in both years approximately 62% of the special school population was aged 11 to 16.

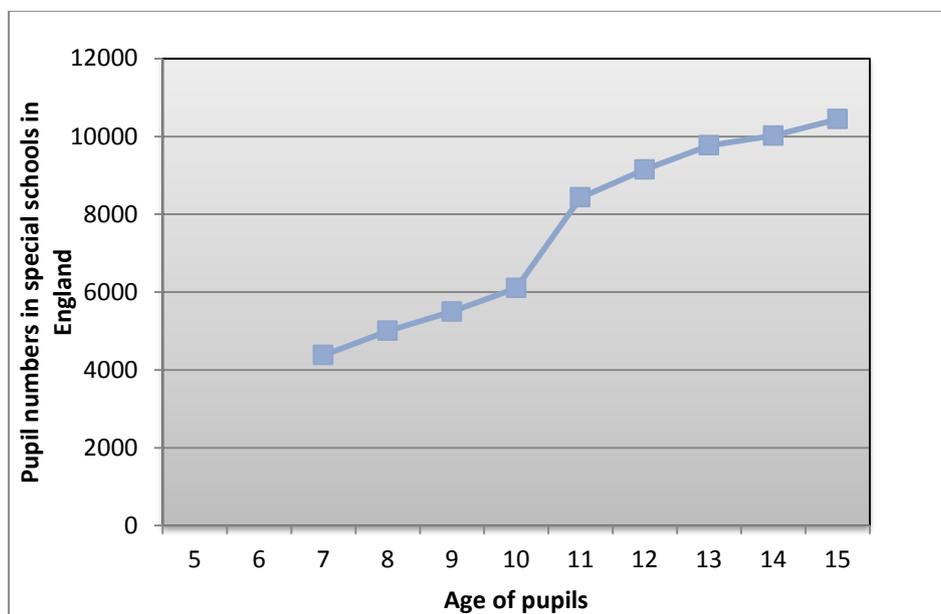


**Figure 1.1: A comparison of the percentage of pupils of primary and secondary age in special schools in England, 2006 – 2011 (Based on data from Department for Education, 2010, 2011a)**

A closer examination of these population statistics involves plotting the special school population according to pupil numbers in each age group (see Fig. 1.2). This shows a constant rise from just under 3,500 pupils at age 5, to more than 10,000 at age 15. The largest leap in numbers is between the ages 10 and 11, from 5,900 pupils aged 10 to over 8,800 pupils aged 11. These figures imply that every year a number of students from a cohort leave the mainstream system and enter special schools, and that a larger than average number of children leave mainstream and enter special school between the age of ten and eleven. There is a possibility that this pattern may reflect some other factor, such as a change in the general population of children, but when one cohort is followed longitudinally over a number of years the same pattern can be seen (Fig 1.3).



**Figure 1.2: Pupil numbers by age in special schools in England 2011 (Based on data from Department for Education, 2011a)**



**Figure 1.3: Pupil numbers by age in special schools, longitudinal sample (pupils aged 15, August 2010) (Based on data from Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007, 2008, 2009a; Department for Education, 2010, 2011a; Department for Education and Skills, 2003b, 2004a, 2005, 2006b)**

This snapshot of the age profile of special school population shows that as age increases the number of students' increases, with a comparatively large increase between the ages of 10 and 11, the transfer age. This phenomenon is seen in the majority of Local Authorities in England, most showing a rise in numbers between these two age groups (Black, 2009).

The Department for Education and Skills (2004b) makes reference, in their document "Removing the Barriers to Achievement", of the fact that "nearly two thirds of pupils in special schools are of secondary age" (p. 34). The Audit

Commission's report on special educational needs (Audit Commission, 2002) describe the pattern of the special school population "grow[ing] with each year group, with a leap around secondary transfer" (p. 20). Neither of these reports discuss these phenomena further, nor do they problematise them. The first aim of this thesis is to explore why there are more pupils of secondary age in special schools, than pupils of primary age, and why the population of a special school rises as a cohort ages.

I recognise that these data, though describing a pattern of inclusion (or exclusion) do not have any explanatory value. As Hinton (1995) observes "these results alone can not distinguish between reasons for a difference, they can only be used to argue that one exists" (p. 20). This thesis identifies and explores possible reasons behind these patterns. My argument is that by exploring this phenomenon the obstacles that need to be overcome when considering how to make secondary schools accessible to students who would otherwise be segregated come to light. This is one aspect of making schools more accessible for the range of students, their cultures, and their needs that make up our education system – that is, the diversity of the student body. Florian, Rouse, Black-Hawkins, and Jull (2004) stipulate the need to go beyond the numbers and examine practice in schools to allow the interpretation of the data. In this thesis I examine the phenomenon of over-representation from the perspective of stakeholders involved in making placement decisions for secondary aged pupils. It builds on work towards my award of a Masters in Education where I explored the phenomena on a small scale, using local authority data comparing it to population density and the proportion of pupils in special schools. This is further reported on in the literature review (Chapter 2).

The first part of the thesis thus seeks to explain the population patterns, filling in a policy and research gap exemplified by the paucity of studies in this area. Some literature does discuss the difficulty students with special educational needs have in the context of secondary school institutions, concluding that it is the organisational practices of "traditional secondary schools" (Carrington & Elkins, 2002) that act to exclude (see for example Dockrell, Peacey, & Lunt, 2002; Plimley & Bowen, 2006; Van Reusen, Shoho, & Barker, 2000). Many of the people I discuss my research with see explanations for the phenomenon lying very much in the organisation of the secondary school.

As a teacher I have had a number of opportunities to work in contexts that are different to the “traditional” secondary school model (which could be exemplified as subject departments and subject teachers). One secondary school I worked in used a primary school curriculum delivery model, one teacher facilitating the delivery of the majority of the curriculum, in one room, with one teaching assistant. As one homeroom was used for the majority of each day’s lessons the children were familiar with and secure in one location. Additionally, organisational skills (such as locating the next room, being equipped for particular lessons) were not as necessary and less learning time was lost by pupils/teachers moving from room to room. In my experience of this approach:

- relationships had time to develop, and become strong;
- awareness of individual pupils’ needs, strengths and weaknesses was high;
- knowledge of the class as a whole enabled formative, informal assessment and evaluation to be used, meaning the teacher had time to adjust pace of lessons through the week to deal with any difficulties/misconceptions.

It is this experience that bridges part one and two of the thesis. A common theme of the concepts of inclusion and diversity is that they involve a level of institutional change as a response to the needs of the pupils that are to be included. The second part of this thesis is an attempt to imagine an alternative to the current system. It aims to produce and develop theoretical ideas about future schooling and creative ways of resolving placement dilemmas (such as those identified in part one of study), for the ultimate purpose of stirring debate about potential inclusive educational policy. This takes the form of a vignette which depicts a future school and educational system, which successfully includes those children currently located in special schools. It also seeks to evaluate the futures studies methods used.

As a graduate of a natural science programme I have struggled with how to “measure” what is “real” in a social science context. Notions of validity and reliability sat uneasily alongside my experiential knowledge of the wealth of opinions that different people have, and the bias researchers and participants bring to the research project. This thesis does not seek to elucidate generalisable regularities, nor does it seek to identify or examine the lived beliefs of people who have experienced the phenomenon, instead it seeks to

develop deeper levels of explanation and understanding. McEvoy and Richards (2006) contend that this is a defining aspect of critical realism. Thus, I approach this thesis as a critical realist, acknowledging that reality exists independently of our knowledge of it, therefore our knowledge is fallible; that knowledge is transient and relative to the context in which it is produced; that individuals can reproduce and transform social structures as well as being formed by them, and *vice versa*; that human actions may be associated with unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences; social structures are real things that have causal powers which may or may not be activated (Burnett, 2007). Critical realism also offers a transformative potential, acting as a mediating force for social praxis (Burnett), and the use of the adjective “critical”, demonstrates the emancipatory potential of this type of social research (Robson, 2002).

The use of critical realism as a paradigmatic framework for the thesis also has implications for the place of theory. I oscillate between inductive reasoning, as there is no previous theory to test, and deductive reasoning, as I frame the findings in the context of previous theoretical models. These models include models in the literature, my own theoretical perspective, and that of the participants. The thesis represents an on-going dialogue between theoretical concerns and empirical evidence (Esterberg, 2002).

This thesis is in two discrete parts. The first part is a standard empirical enquiry, using a survey methodology; the second describes the iterations of a thought experiment using futures studies methodologies and evaluative techniques. Chapters 1, 2 and 9 refer to both aspects of the thesis, chapters 3-5 are related to the empirical enquiry, and chapters 6-8 relate to the futures studies aspect (see table 1.1). The thesis could be viewed as two separate studies, but they are interlinked and connected. The findings from part 1 of the study inform the design of the future school and education system in part 2.

The literature review in Chapter 2 gives an overview of current literature in both aspects of the study, in order to contextualise the thesis and give the reader an overview of all aspects pertaining to it. It explores broad concepts such as diversity and inclusion, narrowing down to a focus on over-representation, particularly the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools. It then broadens to a consideration of futures studies,

presenting futures studies that have been used concerning education, inclusion and special education.

Chapter One: Introduction	
Chapter Two: Literature Review	
Chapter Three: Methodology	Chapter Six: Methodology
Chapter Four: Presentation and analysis of findings	Chapter Seven: Presentation and analysis of findings
Chapter Five: Discussion	Chapter Eight: Discussion
Chapter Nine: Conclusions	

**Table 1.1 Thesis layout, showing separate parts**

**Key:**

-  Whole thesis
-  Part 1: empirical study into over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools
-  Part 2: creation, evaluation and development of a future school for learner diversity

Chapter 3 describes the methods used to gain an understanding of why the over-representation of secondary aged students exists. It describes the creation of a survey tool which was used to explore the question what reasons are most commonly given by stakeholders as to why there are more pupils of secondary age in special schools than those of primary age? The participants were stakeholders involved in placement decisions and included local authority staff, primary, secondary and special school staff and parents of children with special educational needs. It describes and justifies the use of a mixed methods approach to develop the survey instrument, to corroborate findings and to illustrate the results. The process of thematic analysis alongside generation of descriptive statistics is described.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the questionnaire, laying out the common reasons given for the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools. These are presented thematically in order of themes with the most references to themes with the least. It also explores whether there are differences in reasons suggested by different stakeholder groups, comparing the frequency of mentions of the various themes by each stakeholder group.

These findings are discussed in chapter 5 with reference to theoretical models of disability and the findings of other over-representation studies. It suggests that new more complex models are needed to explain over-representation and

disability, current conceptions do not account for each theme suggested. It explores the potential of other models, such as Terzi's (2005, 2007) capability approach and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, as ways of representing the complexity of the findings.

Part two of the thesis begins in Chapter 6, where the futures studies methodology to be used is described. It describes the creation, trialling, evaluation and refinement of a vignette of a school system that is inclusive of older children with special educational needs, asking: What could future general schools for diversity (of learning needs) look like? How can we include more children with SEN in general secondary schools? What kind of education system would work best for diverse learning needs from age 11? How do we overcome/circumvent barriers such as those raised in part 1 of this thesis in order to include more children with SEN? The use of a Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats framework is described, as is the transcription and thematic analysis of discussions that took place with several focus groups that acted as evaluations of the vignette.

Chapter 7 charts the evaluations of the vignettes by discussing the main themes raised by the focus groups. It also describes the methodological and theoretical issues that were raised during these focus group sessions. It presents sections of the final vignette highlighting the changes that resulted from the focus group discussions.

Chapter 8 acts as an evaluation of the future school vignette, based on current definitions of inclusion, the research questions posed and feedback from the focus groups. It discusses themes that emerge from the evaluations such as the role of ideology in inclusion, as well as tensions, dilemmas and contradictions raised by the vignette.

In Chapter 9 the thesis returns to being discussed as a whole as general conclusions pertaining to both studies are presented through a discussion of the contributions to knowledge, along with implications for policy and practice.

This thesis seeks to explain why the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools occurs, and reveals an array of possible reasons. Rather than simply stopping at this point, these possible reasons are used as an impetus for the creation of an alternative inclusive, diverse school system which is being developed and refined and by a range of stakeholders.

## **Chapter 2. Review of the Literature**

### **Future secondary schools for diversity: where are we now, and where could we be?**

#### **Section 2.01 Introduction**

The title of this thesis (as above) helps identify the two main parts of this literature review. The first is an exploration of pupil diversity, which extends into a discussion about inclusion of pupils with diverse attributes in the mainstream school. This develops into a discussion of the various discourses of inclusion. Inclusion and diversity in the organisation and policies of the English education system will be explored, narrowing down into a specific exploration of the population of special schools, including a review of the literature on disproportionality of particular groups of students in the special school sector. At this point the over-representation of one group of learners – those of secondary school age - is considered, discovering what has been written about the barriers and exclusionary practices that mean more pupils of secondary age go to special schools than those of primary age.

The second part of the review discusses the “where could we be” aspect of the title, an exploration of futures studies, starting with the history and development of this approach to research, moving to an examination of work that has been carried out on educational futures, again with a narrowing down to what work has been done on the future of inclusive education systems. This is then supplemented by reviewing exemplar work that has been carried out on the future of special schools.

As such each of these sections can be imagined as an inverted pyramid, starting with a wide over-arching concept at the top, and narrowing to a specific facet of that topic (see Fig 2.1 and 2.2). Further reference to existing literature relating to the methodological and instrument choices made can be found in chapter 3 (Methodology) and chapter 6 (Futures methodology). The review is further extended in chapter 5 (Discussion of findings) and chapter 8 to relate key findings back to literature beyond what is discussed here.

## Part one: diversity, inclusion and disproportionality

### Section 2.02 The concepts of diversity and inclusion

This section defines the concepts which will be referred to throughout this thesis, describing them and drawing out key points as well as seeking to critique and problematise them. Related concepts such as equity, assimilation and integration will also be discussed. The discussion is mainly framed within education systems and policies, although reference will be made at times to the wider political landscape.

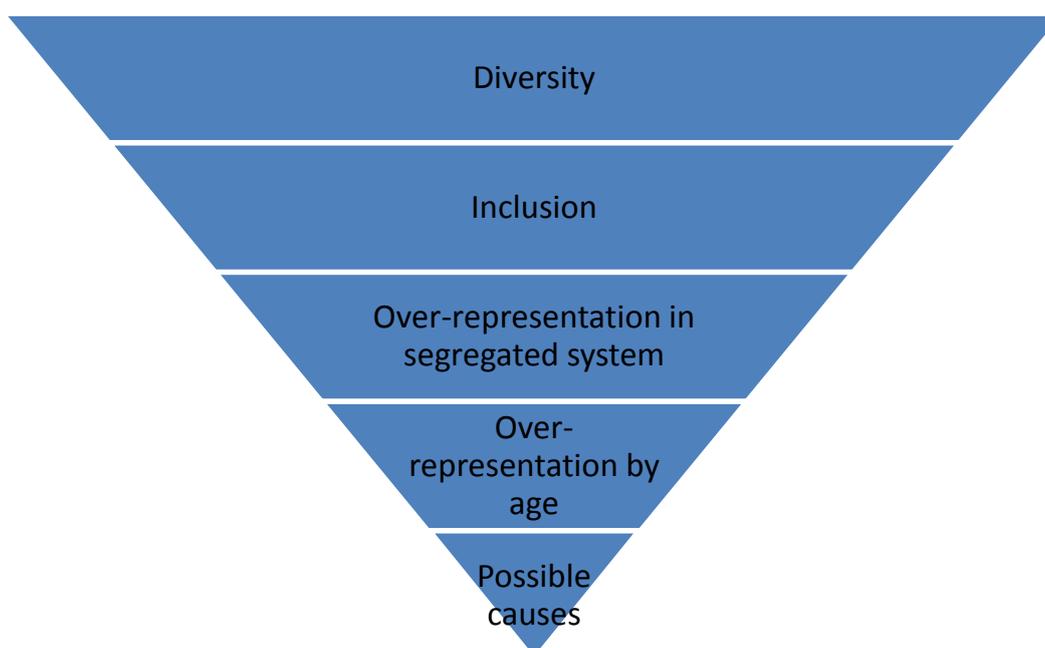


Figure 2.1: Visual representation of part one of literature review

#### 2.02(a) Diversity of student population

With globalisation and freer population movement over open borders the population of schools are becoming more and more diverse, culturally, ethnically and linguistically (Frederickson & Cline, 2002). The concept of diversity includes “but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender and ability...[it] is fluid and multi-dimensional. Different facets of diversity emerge in different contexts” (Powell & Powell, 2010, p. xi). In the context of education the term diversity can be taken to refer to differences between children, and includes differences in attainment, gender, ethnicity, family and social background, interests and aptitudes, social skills, and so on (Miles & Ainscow, 2011a).

The international agenda of *Education for All* (UNESCO, 2000; WCEFA, 1990), first posited in Jomtien, Thailand, in the *World Conference for Education for All*

in 1990, is one with a focus on the rights of all children to receive an education. A preliminary look at the revised goals set in Dakar (UNESCO, 2000), demonstrates a commitment to education for all, meeting the learning needs of all, excellence for all, ensuring outcomes are achieved by all (p. 8). However, this document does outline some groups that could be in danger of not being considered in meeting these goals – the “at risk” groups they identify are based on gender (“particularly girls”, goal 2 and 5), ethnicity (goal 2), the “most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” (goal 1), and “children in difficult circumstances” (goal 2).

It is this identification of at risk groups that distinguishes the concept of diversity from the concept of equality. Boyask, Carter, Lawson & Waite (2009) define equality as tending towards universalism and generalisation (“for all”), and diversity as being concerned with the specificities of context, tailoring a system to an individual or particular group (those at risk of not meeting equity goals). Boyask et al relate this to the English policy context of a few years ago – The Every Child Matters agenda was a list of outcomes for all children in England which recognised that all children have needs and was focused on identifying and addressing the needs of all children (thus addressing equity concerns). However following this policy launch a campaign entitled “Every Disabled Child Matters” emerged, which, Boyask et al contend, demonstrates that it was considered that the needs of this group were not being met.

“Arguably the biggest challenge facing school systems throughout the world [is] that of providing an effective education for all children and young people” (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, p. 15). The population of children who have a right to education is a diverse one, and can include the various “at risk” groups described above (as well as other groups not yet identified). Miles and Ainscow in a later article (2011b) contend that traditionally schools and education systems respond to the diverse groups of learners they encounter by establishing separate provision. Catering for diversity can include different and separate provision for members of the diverse group (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). This segregation can be subtle, as well as the more obvious forms of segregation of pupils with disabilities in special schools and classes. It has been argued that current and recent educational policies are actively reducing the heterogeneity of the school population. For example, the current English policy of school specialisation and development of a variety of school types (such as academies, specialist schools, community schools, free schools) leads

to less diversity in the student population within each school type, and heralds the arrival of a new two-tier system based on socio-economic boundaries (Exley, 2009; Taylor, Fitz, & Gorard, 2005) and the academic-vocational divide (Wolf, 2002). Gorard and Cheng (2011) exploring school segregation patterns based on poverty, ethnicity and special educational needs, conclude that there is evidence of clustering of similar pupils in different schools in England by these variables. This pattern is reflected internationally (Jenkins, Micklewright, & Schnepf, 2006) including countries such as Sweden (Berhanu, 2010). Even the identification and segregation of higher-ability students, the “gifted and talented”, tends to benefit white, upper and middle class students to the exclusion of others (Campbell et al., 2007; Tomlinson, 2008).

Pupil diversity is seen by some commentators as a driver for inclusion: “typically the discussion of inclusive education is simultaneously mounted as a general examination of exclusion and inclusion for all students and a claim on behalf of a particular constituency” (Slee, 2008, p. 107). He cites a number of examples, disabled students and economically disadvantaged students to name but two, and adds “and so the list grows” (p. 107), which relates back to Boyask et al’s (2009) definition of diversity.

### **2.02(b) Inclusion as a response to diversity**

Thus, a response to pupil diversity, without resorting to segregation, marginalisation and having inequitable opportunities for different groups of children is the development and maintenance of an inclusive school system. Howard (2007) entreats that as pupil diversity grows, so does the requirement of educational establishments to go beyond assimilation of these groups into existing systems. Rather it involves the changing of systems to achieve equity for all pupil groups. The “business as usual” model should no longer stand. (The concept of assimilation is elaborated on later in this chapter.)

A similar turn of semantics occurs in a discussion on the move from the “integration” of pupils with special educational needs into the mainstream (The Warnock report, Department of Education and Science, 1978) to the “inclusion” of these children. The Warnock report listed three levels of integration, which was expanded to six levels by Meijer & Pijl’s 1994 framework. Warnock’s levels included locational integration (being educated in the same place), social integration (contact between children with SEN and their peers during non-controlled times such as break and lunch) and

functional integration (pupils with SEN participating in regular classes and regular curriculum). Meijer & Pijl (1994) expand this, describing a six stage “level of integration” model, with physical integration followed by terminological integration, administrative integration, social integration, curricular integration, and, at the top layer, psychological integration – the instruction of all students together “in one room, at the same time and using the same programme” (p. 6).

Some theorists (Farrell, 2000; Garner, 2009; Rieser, 2006) argue that integration is simply placing a child in a mainstream school, while the school remains unchanged. The child is expected to fit in, and if they do not, they can be assessed and “excluded”. This can be demonstrated by the exclusionary pressures on the child as discussed by Rogers (2007). She points out three different levels whereby students with special educational needs though placed in mainstream education are actually excluded. A child, though “mainstreamed” can be practically excluded when removed from class for one to one support; they can be intellectually excluded when they cannot access the curriculum in the same ways their peers can; and finally they may experience an emotional exclusion, where their difficulties prevent them from sustaining friendships and engaging socially with others. Booth & Potts (1983) are aware of the limitations of the term integration – stating it is most commonly applied to the “bringing of handicapped (*sic*) children from segregated special schools into ordinary schools” (p. 1). This application implies that the job of involving children in the educational and social life of the school is complete once the children are physically inside the school building. Booth & Potts conjecture that segregation actually occurs as ordinary schools have not adapted their curriculum and organisation to diverse needs, interests and talents. Inclusion, on the other hand, is the child with special educational needs taking “a full and active part in the life of the mainstream school, they should be valued member of the school community and be seen to be integral members of it” (Farrell, 2000, p. 154), as embodied in the Salamanca statement (UNESCO, 1994). This interpretation itself is contested; Croll & Moses (1998) for example do not see how definitions such as these add to Warnock’s definition of functional integration, citing the report’s formulation of functional integration as “require[ing] the most careful planning of class and individual teaching programmes to ensure that all the children benefit” (Department of Education and Science, 1978, p. 101). Indeed, Meijer & Pijl (1994) assert that “it is clear that integration involves

considerable changes within and outside schools... [such as] in society, the revision of statutory regulations and funding systems, modifications to school buildings and transport systems, organisation of common leisure activities, teacher training and curriculum development” (p. 6).

Inclusion is notoriously difficult to define, a complex concept that cannot be captured within a single sentence (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Norwich (2007) sees the concept of inclusion as multidimensional, with a “multiplicity” of meanings (p. 70). Thus far this review has argued that inclusion is not assimilation, nor is it integration but rather it involves the creation of an equitable system as well as school level change. I have given one definition from the literature (Farrell, above). Rather than repeating other authors’ definitions of inclusion I move on to explore specific facets of their definitions and descriptions of inclusion, based on Susan Peters’ (2007) discussion of the concept. Peters discusses inclusion in terms of a/ goals and b/ motivations. (I extend this in the second part of the literature review when I discuss definitions of inclusion in terms of praxis – what the authors say an inclusive school will look like or be like. The reason I have chosen to discuss them at this later point is they could be seen to be visions of a future school.)

#### ***(i) Goals of inclusion***

The goals of inclusion are varied and multifaceted. Peters (2007) presents a varied list of what specific objectives of inclusion could be, noting they may focus “either on improved educational performances and quality of education, or on autonomy, self-determination, proportionality, consumer satisfaction or parental choice” (p. 118). A common goal included in definitions is achieving the presence of all students, including those vulnerable to exclusionary pressures (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Mittler, 2000). Peters (2007) reduces this somewhat, saying a goal could include “the integration of ‘special education [*sic*] needs’ students in classrooms” (p. 117, original emphasis). Another goal of inclusion is ensuring the participation of all students in the curricula, cultures and communities of the local school (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Dyson, Howes, & Roberts, 2002). Inclusion is achieved when all pupils play a full and active part in the life of the school (Farrell, 2000). A related goal of inclusion is the inverse of this - reducing exclusion from the curricula, cultures and communities of schools (Booth, 1999; Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, & Shaw, 2000). Not only should students play a full and active part in the life of the school, they should be valued

members of the school community, and seen as integral parts of the school (Farrell, 2000).

Other authors extend the goals of inclusion beyond schools to wider society (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006) – a goal of inclusion could be to promote social cohesion and achieve a change in societal attitudes (Peters, 2007). A “non-segregated diverse population of children and young people in schools will produce schools which are more sensitive and people orientated...and a younger generation which is more tolerant and accepting of difference. In an inclusive school all will thrive” (Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 1998, p. 199).

### ***(ii) Motivation for inclusion***

The concept of inclusion has arisen from divergent origins which Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou (2011) argue can be seen as:

- a challenge of restrictions to access and participation imposed by existing models of education, by parents, teachers and advocates of students with disabilities
- development of the social model of disability, and its use to critique the role of special education in marginalising and excluding disabled people
- the rise of market driven arrangements in schools, exploring how difference is managed in light of accountability, choice and diversity
- an international aim in providing all children with educational opportunities.

Inclusion is principle driven (Ainscow et al., 2006; Ainscow & Miles, 2008), arising from notions of respect for difference. It is seen as an educational reform (Peters, 2007). It is also regarded as being based on a moral principle. Mithang (1998) and Winzer (2007) acknowledge the landmark ruling by Chief Justice Earl Warren in 1954 (*Brown v Board of Education*) that a separate education is an unequal education as the pivotal point where society was “introduced to the moral principle that no person should be left out of the mainstream of society’s opportunities because of race, poverty level, or disability” (Mithang, 1998, p. 1). Inclusion, in this view, is a rights based imperative (Rieser, 2006).

Inclusion is premised on the fact that some children or groups of children are being failed by the current education system (Mittler, 2008), dissatisfaction with the system as it currently exists (Peters, 2007) and a recognition that it is

the current cultures, policies and practices of schools and the education system that can exclude (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

On a practical (or pragmatic) level inclusion can address economic and resource allocation concerns (Peters, 2007; Thomas et al., 1998) and helps align education systems with the international anti-discriminatory and rights based legislative environment (Thomas et al., 1998). These authors go on to describe two choices they claim governments, administrators and schools face. The first is to maintain existing segregated provision, resorting to inclusion only where economically efficient or as a result of parental pressure. This will result in the stretching of current resources. The more expensive special sector will remain, and continue to be maintained even as the population within it falls. Attempts at inclusion will thus be underfunded, so placements in the mainstream will fail. The government in question will face increasing pressure from the international community in the anti-discriminatory legislative landscape. The second choice is for the government to implement a planned programme of inclusion and shift resources from the special sector to mainstream. Due to the resourcing these placements will be less likely to fail and be more efficient. Thus, one motivation for inclusion is from a resource based funding perspective.

***(iii) The widening definition of inclusion***

The concept of inclusion, though still seen as primarily related to provision for students with special educational needs in some countries (Ainscow & Miles, 2008), has broadened (Ainscow, 2005). It is no longer being restricted to the education of pupils thought to have special needs, but the process by which schools strive to reduce barriers to participation and learning of all students (Ainscow, 1998; Booth & Ainscow, 1998). Many authors now stress that inclusion goes beyond the placement of students with special educational needs, rather it supports and welcomes diversity among ALL learners, regardless of age, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender, attainment, (dis)ability and sexuality (Ainscow et al., 2006; Cole, 2006; UNESCO, 2005). Hayward (2006) notes that “in more recent years, the inclusion agenda and context has shifted from pupils with SEN to those with the full range of *barriers to learning*” (p. 2, original emphasis). The examples she gives include disaffected children, those with mental health issues, gender, significant challenging behaviour and young carers.

Inclusion is “increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners” (Ainscow, 2005, p. 109). As well as being the usage in research circles and in international policy (Ainscow, 2005), this new definition is used in a range of policy documents in England:

“Inclusion is more than a concern about any one group of pupils such as those pupils who have been or are likely to be excluded from school. Its scope is broad. It is about equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, attainment and background. It pays particular attention to the provision made for and the achievement of different groups of pupils within a school” (Office for Standards in Education: Inspection Quality Division, 2000, p. 4).

When making their judgements on inclusion, OfSTED now look at the extent to which a school supports the learning of all individuals within the school. Internationally, too, this wider definition has been adopted (UNESCO, 2005). Although some commentators describe this change from a focus on special education to inclusion for all as happening in the late 1990s (Hick, Kershner, & Farrell, 2009), others report the concept being used as far back as 1989 (Frederickson & Cline, 2002). Betts (2001) describes how a group of practitioners interested in international development noted a change in usage of the binary terms “social inclusion” and “social exclusion”, “from 'otherness' in the past to current emphases on 'the included' and 'the excluded'” (Betts, 2001, p. 3 original emphasis). The conference attendees also described how a current emphasis on 'diversity' has moved the concepts beyond previous 'deficit' and 'deprived' frameworks. They do not however give details of what they feel the definition had moved to.

Various definitions of inclusion can be divided into separate categories; “narrow definitions”, “broad definitions” and “fragmented definitions” (Ainscow et al., 2006; Armstrong et al., 2011). Narrow definitions are those that focus on a specific group of students, usually those who are disabled/have a special educational need, and their inclusion in the mainstream classroom. Broad definitions focus on how schools respond to and include the diversity of all students. Fragmented definitions are ones that originate with either a broad or narrow focus but are then broken down further (or fragmented) to specific groups, those groups in need of extra attention in order for inclusion to happen.

## **2.02(c) Problems of inclusion**

Inclusion as a concept is not without contention. In addition to problems caused by the shift in meaning of the term and in its multiple definitions as reported above, there are problems caused by different educational policy imperatives, as well as the strong association in the literature with a special educational needs discourse, along with concerns raised about the “assimilation” aspect of inclusion.

### ***(i) Policy clashes***

Despite the reforms and desire by the British government to respond to social diversity by making the education system more equitable, through policy and programmes such as *Removing the Barriers to Achievement* (Department for Education and Skills, 2004b) and *Every Child Matters* (Department for Education and Skills, 2003a), there are still problems caused by other policy requirements. This is described by Florian and Rouse (2001):

“The problem is that whilst the government calls for more inclusion and a greater recognition of diversity, it continues to promote social and educational policies that are not supportive of the development of inclusive schools. Indeed, many of the existing market place reforms ignore diversity and stress priorities that make it hard for schools to be accepting of children who will not help them to meet their academic targets” (p. 400).

Some children and young people remain marginalised by current arrangements, despite (or because of) efforts to improve schools (Ainscow et al., 2006). This marginalisation and exclusion of some children and young people within and from mainstream schools in England is one of the key concerns addressed within this thesis.

### ***(ii) Links to discourses of special educational needs***

While national and international policy documents view inclusion as a holistic solution to achieving education for all, some commentators still believe the concept is too closely linked to a special needs discourse, and thus is too narrowly defined. Inclusion is still generally discussed in relation to disabled or special needs students (Sayed & Soudien, 2003), which causes problems on a number of levels. The first problem Sayed & Soudien claim is it narrows the view of educational inequality to simply being about physical or mental disability, when in fact inequality and thus inclusion affects a more diverse population than this. This in turn offers an escape for schools from examining their exclusionary practice by saying “that they are regular rather than special needs schools” (Sayed & Soudien, p. 13). That is, due to the narrowness of

some definitions of inclusion, schools do not have to change as they can say they do not have to be inclusive as there are other schools for the excluded SEN population. I believe it is more complex than that. Under the recent Equality Act (2010) I believe schools are very aware of the legislative imperative to include a variety of “at-risk” groups, however, special educational needs is one group they may argue that they do not have to cater for in a policy climate based on a pledge to “end the bias towards the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools” (The Conservative Party, 2010, p. 53), a pledge repeated in the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition agreement (HM Government, 2010), and in the Green Paper outlining the government’s approach to special educational needs and disabilities (Department for Education, 2011b) .

It is no wonder that the concept of inclusive education is more visible in the special education literature say Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen (2006), as it is focused on challenging the historical separation via a parallel system of children with specific special educational needs and disabilities.

“Inequalities affecting people with special needs and disabilities are merely one element of much deeper and more pervasive inequalities in our education system and in society as a whole” (Mittler, 2008, p. 10). Artiles (2003) notes that when diversity is discussed in literature on inclusion it is generally associated with “diversity of ability levels” (p. 177), his concern is that the plight of minority students within this formulation is ignored. I would argue that this assumption, that inclusion is only concerned with ability, is an extremely narrow view of special educational needs. Also, as will be demonstrated later, the inclusion literature does take account of some minority groups, despite having a focus on special educational needs. I do however acknowledge a need to expand beyond this single focus to one which accounts for all types of learner diversity. Critics may point to this thesis as an example of a focus on special educational needs, but I would argue that “the concerns which are very familiar within special needs education are now being regarded as crucial within the wider sphere of education” (Wedell, 2005b, p. 31), and by extrapolating findings on effective systems that include children with special educational needs, schools can cater for the wide range of learner diversity they will encounter.

### ***(iii) Separatism, assimilation and pluralism***

A further critique of the concept of inclusion is the extent to which it is a mechanism to actively constrain diversity, and control diverse groups to adhere to a dominant structure. Swann (Department of Education and Science, 1985) in his report on “Education for All” discusses the dangers of both policies of separation and of assimilation. Separatism is where each group lives in the same “society” (if it can be called thus) and operate in their own compartments, with little or no interaction. Assimilation is the minority group being “absorbed” and “subsumed” within the majority group. Separatism brings with it a danger of breaking up society, and minority groups would find it difficult to gain equity and justice in a system such as this. However, rights are also in question when the assimilation model is considered as it leads to “a denial of the fundamental freedom of all individuals to differ on aspects of their lives where no single way can justifiably be presented as universally appropriate” (Department of Education and Science, 1985, p. 5). Betts (2001) gives a concrete example of this in describing the “social inclusion” of the ethnic group the Lapps in Norway into mainstream society. This policy acted to constrain diversity, and through political activism they have gained their own separate government and political representation. Betts claims the attempt at social inclusion rather than being benign is actually an attempt by the state to control and constrain diversity.

Slee (1997) describes the “assimilationist’s hope” for inclusion: managing different students with special educational needs within the present arrangement of regular schooling, reducing inclusion to “a technical problem of resourcing, management, social groupings and instructional design” (p. 411) within an unchanging organisation. Pedagogy, curriculum, organisation and culture are held as constant, and the students being assimilated are to conform. (This returns us to the difference between inclusion and integration, see above.) Sayed and Soudien (2003) continue:

“the notion of inclusion operates on the principle of ‘normalisation’, in which groups, be they kinship groups, classes, structures or whatever, are defined and constituted (socially) in their ‘ideal’ forms, and relative to them *other* communities, groups, and individuals are identified and invariably positioned. Out of this, among other things, the perception is generated that certain groups lack access or entitlements to certain services. Hence, as a consequence, such groups, communities, and individuals need to be targeted for special inclusive measures, which would overcome their exclusion” (p. 10, original emphasis).

Swann (Department of Education and Science, 1985) suggests the notion of pluralism as a way to ensure equity and social justice as well as groups maintaining their identity. Pluralism is a balance between “enable[ing], expect[ing] and encourag[ing] members of all... groups... to participate fully in shaping the society as a whole within a framework of commonly accepted values, practices and procedures” while at the same time “allowing and, where necessary, assisting the...minority communities in maintaining their distinct... identities within this common framework” (p. 5). This approach is reflected in the iterations of the *Index for inclusion* (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth et al., 2000), seeking as it does the participation of all groups in the shaping of the inclusive school, the respecting of others regardless of perceived differences, and the viewing of “diversity as a rich resource for life and learning” (p. 23).

### **Section 2.03      The over-representation of certain groups in segregated settings**

Within special schools in England certain groups are over-represented. The DfES (2004b) notes that the population of special schools is boy-heavy, there is a larger than average number of pupils eligible for free-school meals in these schools, and that two-thirds of the pupils are of secondary age. However, there has been no comprehensive national study of all forms of disproportionality as yet, nor is there a body of research into disproportionality (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2008). These authors have begun to address this, collating work that has been carried out in England on disproportionality in the special needs education system (not necessarily within special schools). They discuss ethnicity, poverty, month of birth, gender and age.

There is a wealth of research into the disproportionality of ethnic minority students in the special schools system, at both a national and international level, with considerable effort put in to try to understand and address this problem (Artiles, 2003; Coutinho & Oswald, 2000), including identifying predictor variables for the patterns (Oswald, Coutinho, & Best, 2002). Lindsay, Pather & Strand (2006) carried out a national study of ethnic disproportionality within special education provision in the UK, finding this was a cause for concern. The conclusions they come to in explaining these issues of over-representation are discussed below when I attempt to apply them to disproportionality by age seen in English special schools.

### **2.03(a) Disproportionality of age in special schools**

The introductory chapter of this thesis made reference to the DfES's statement that "nearly two thirds of pupils in special schools are of secondary age" (Department for Education and Skills, 2004b, p. 34) and the Audit Commission's (2002) assertion that "the special school population in England and Wales grows with each year group, with a leap around secondary transfer" (p. 20). It also referred to previous work I have carried out that reflects these patterns (Black, 2009, 2012). The pattern of secondary age over-representation is not unique to England, the Scottish Executive have identified and investigated the same trend (Pirrie, Head, & Brna, 2006). Similarly, in Germany a related trend has been noted; "from all SEN pupils integrated in mainstream schools, the biggest proportion is in primary schools, compared to secondary schools" (Maikowski & Hausotter, 2004, p. 43).

The pattern of over-representation is seen in most local authorities within England; most local authorities follow the national trend of more pupils in years 7 and 8 in special schools than pupils in years 5 and 6. Only six local authorities go against the trend and have more pupils in year 5 and 6 in special schools than they have in year 7 and 8. A further 15 local authorities have equal numbers of pupils in both the primary and secondary age groups studied, leaving 126 that do have more pupils of secondary age than primary age (Black, 2009). (This is out of the 147 local authorities with both primary and secondary provision.) It is a historical pattern also; when I examined the raw data for an early study of "integration statistics" (Swann, 1985) I found the phenomenon of secondary over-representation existed even then – in both 1978 and 1982 three fifths of the special school population was of secondary age (Black, 2009).

#### ***(i) Reasons behind the patterns***

As Hinton (1995) observes "these results alone cannot distinguish between reasons for a difference, they can only be used to argue that one exists" (p. 20). So, what reasons are given in the literature to explain any disproportionality in the special school population?

None of the main conclusions or recommendations made in the Audit Commission's (2002) report relate specifically to the trend of rising pupil numbers by age in special schools, that single paragraph and the associated graph is the only place it is mentioned. Indeed, there is a paucity of studies relating specifically to the phenomenon of secondary over-representation in

special schools. Those that mention or allude to the phenomenon do so almost as an aside and rarely mention it in their conclusions. Some studies discuss age as a factor within the whole special education system – including the awarding of statements, rather than specifically within special schools. Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) discuss age as a factor in a section entitled “other forms of disproportionality”, indicating that proportionally more older children are identified as having special educational needs. They do not attempt to explain this finding. Dockrell, Peacey and Lunt (2002) state that “numbers of children who are formally assessed and provided with a statement of special needs increases with age” (p. 6) but their conclusion finds that a child’s special educational need could be affected by gender, ethnicity, parental income/social class, troubled family circumstances and the vague catch-all “other significant factors.” They do not specifically mention age, despite drawing attention to the fact that the number of statements, and presumably therefore the number of children identified as having special needs, increase with age. Another study profiled the characteristics of the population in special schools for those with moderate learning difficulties (Male, 1996) and reported findings under a number of variables, such as pupil numbers, proportion of boys to girls and pupils excluded, but did not discuss pupil age as a characteristic, something I see as an omission.

Statistical analysis undertaken by myself (Black, 2009) did not show any relationships between this secondary over-representation and various other factors. For example, local authorities with a higher proportion of pupils in special school were no different from those with lower percentages in terms of the primary-secondary difference (number of children in year 7/8 subtract number of children in year 5/6 in special school). Nor was there any notable relationship between the population density of local authorities and the primary-secondary special school difference.

The patterns could be explained by changes in the general population of school aged children. Swann (1985) considers the overall change in population in both the primary and secondary age range in the total school population, and within special schools, in England over a five year period. He found that the secondary special school population fell at a similar rate to the total secondary school population, whereas the primary aged special school population fell at half the rate of the total. I repeated his study with statistics between 2006 and 2010. The total population of students aged 5-15 in

schools, including in special schools, has fallen (by 3.92%). The special school population fell by 1.33% in the same period. This “fall” in pupil numbers is seen in both the primary and secondary sector, but the primary special school population fell at a similar rate to the whole population aged 5-10; that is 2.78% and 3.33% respectively. The total secondary aged population fell at a rate of 4.6%, however the special school population of this age group only fell by 0.53%. So while population change has occurred and has had an effect on pupil numbers in all school sectors, the secondary aged population of special schools has fallen less than the whole secondary aged population.

The proportion of students in special schools out of the main population also changed over the five years Swann studied. He found that the proportion of students in special school increased by 8.41% in the primary group, but only 1.06% in the secondary group over a five year period. As this finding is only setting the scene for his research he makes no specific reference to it in his conclusions. I conjecture that they demonstrate a trend to segregation, at both levels, but at a much higher rate at the primary age range. Again, I repeated this study with data from 2006 and 2010. There has been a very slight increase in the proportion of pupils in special schools over this period, rising from 1.17% to 1.20% of the total population. However, once again, there is a large difference for each age group (albeit an opposite pattern to Swann’s findings). In the primary sector the proportion of students in special schools out of the whole primary population rose slightly, by 0.57%, in secondary the proportion of children in special schools rose also, by 4.26%, over the five years looked at in this study. This could be seen to demonstrate a trend towards segregation in both sectors, however, greater segregation in the secondary sector can be concluded, as the proportion of students in the special school sector at this age has risen at a greater rate.

Pirrie et al (2006) observe that the age profile of the special school population has changed over time in Scotland, and that currently the majority of children and young people attending free-standing special schools are of secondary school age. They use this to support their hypothesis that the push towards “mainstreaming” has resulted in the placement of more children with special needs in mainstream primary schools. One respondent to their special school survey reported “there are fewer children coming into the school at the P1 [Primary 1] stage than there were five years ago.” A statistical conclusion is reached by the participant here – the age profile exists the way it does because

numbers have fallen in the primary sector, but not fallen in the secondary, leading to the “imbalance” seen. The recent trend of LAs working to reduce the number of statements has the effect of younger children being less likely to have statements than older students whose statement is maintained (Florian et al., 2004, p. 18). Could this influence the age patterns in special schools: the younger the child, they are less likely to receive a statement, consequently they are less likely to have a special school as a named provision? I would argue the impact of this reduction of statements on the proportion of secondary aged pupils in special schools seems to be negligible, the proportion that is reflected in 2008 was also seen in 1982 and 1978 (Swann, 1985). Pirrie et al (2006) suggest that “one possible explanation for the over-representation of older children in the special school population is that the process of ascertaining the most appropriate placement can be protracted and difficult for all parties” (p. 6). In short, the process of getting into a special school takes so long that by the time children arrive there they have aged considerably.

The exploration statistics outlined so far describes the situation as it exists. It can be summarised thus:

- Secondary aged children are over-represented in the special school population.
- This pattern is true for the majority of local authorities in England, and is reflected internationally.
- The over-representation of secondary aged pupils was seen in 1978 and 1982.
- It has not changed in line with school population changes.
- There have been few reports of the phenomenon in the literature, and where the pattern has been reported it is not explored, explained or problematised.

In order to find an explanation for the pattern I need to move beyond the data: “meaningful answers to questions about inclusion and achievement can be found but they require more than number crunching” (Florian et al., 2004, p. 120).

### **2.03(b) Possible causes**

As already mentioned there is a lack of discussion of the phenomenon of secondary over-representation in the literature. To overcome this I look for possible explanatory factors in the ethnic disproportionality literature, as well

as making reference to speculative comments contained in the literature on the difficulties of secondary school for the child with special educational needs.

**(i) Causes outlined in disproportionality studies**

There are a wide range of proposed causes of ethnic over-representation (Artiles, 2003). Lindsay, Pather and Strand’s (2006) review of studies grouped reasons given in the body of literature to six areas that explain ethnic disproportionality – systemic factors, ethnic bias in identification and assessment of SEN, teacher ethnicity, parental and school support, socio-economic environment, and health care and related matters (see table 2.1). They do add that these conclusions are mostly based on opinion, but reinforced by some “limited” evidence of small scale studies.

<b>Systemic factors (associated with in-school organisation and interactional factors)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher attitudes and expectations,</li> <li>- teacher representation,</li> <li>- teaching,</li> <li>- teacher training,</li> <li>- culturally sanctioned behaviour versus acceptable school behaviour</li> <li>- curriculum,</li> <li>- marketisation</li> <li>- resources</li> </ul>
<b>Ethnic bias in identification and assessment of SEN</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teacher perceptions of conduct and its impact on identification of SEN is underpinned by ‘ethnic bias’</li> <li>- mismatch in perceptions about behaviour could be a genuine attitudinal position or a trans-cultural communication failure</li> <li>- a possible mismatch between school and parent perceptions</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher ethnicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where there are low numbers of Black teachers, there are greater numbers of Black pupils identified with SEN</li> </ul>
<b>Parental and school support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- poor Black pupils fail because of a lack of parental and community support</li> <li>- students feel that teachers are not supportive</li> </ul>
<b>Socio-economic environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relationship between social disadvantage and some forms of SEN</li> <li>- schools which identified high numbers of Afro- Caribbean pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties tended to be concentrated in low socio-economic areas</li> </ul>
<b>Health care and related issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early identification of a number of developmental conditions provides the opportunity for action to ameliorate or overcome such difficulties</li> <li>- A lack of intervention at this stage may lead to enhanced risk of developmental difficulties</li> <li>- Minority groups less likely to access healthcare</li> </ul>

**Table 2.1: Six areas that explain ethnic disproportionality in special education (Lindsay et al., 2006)**

Some of these issues could be easily transposed to the over-representation of older children, such as systemic factors. Of particular relevance could be the notion of early identification. If conditions are not identified early developmental difficulties worsen to a point where the child can no longer access mainstream education. Others do not transpose so easily, for example, it is unlikely that “where there are low numbers of older teachers, there are greater numbers of older pupils identified with SEN”.

Dyson & Gallannaugh (2008), building on the work of Oswald & Best (2002) make the following conjectures to explain the phenomenon of disproportionality:

- a) there exists a real difference in incidences of disability in the different groups
- b) there is inappropriate interpretation of difference as disability (at teacher and school level)
- c) identification is mediated by achievement, or lack of achievement (explains gender over-representation, as boys perform less well than girls)
- d) it reflects deeper social division and inequalities (the inequalities in identification are reflected in health and employment).

Could these form the basis of an explanatory model for the over-representation of older students in special schools? As pointed out above in the discussion of the study by Lindsay et al (2006), there may be a real difference in incidence of disability as a result of late identification. Older students with special educational needs might perform lower than expected, and so are assessed and identified as having special educational needs at a later point of school life. Again, there are limits to the applicability of this model to disproportionality by age, for example, it could be argued that social divisions would act whatever the age of the child.

Artiles (1998) discusses the ethnic disproportionality issue, drawing parallels with his dilemmas of difference theory. He suggests that a closer examination needs to be made of the general socio-historic perspective of the ethnic minority population as different to the “norm”, as a theoretical background to disproportionality studies. This suggestion has limitations - boys are over-represented in the special needs system in England, but what norm are they different to? Older children are over-represented in the special needs system, but who are they different to? This suggests Artiles’ theory is incomplete, and perhaps as well as seeing difference mediated through the dominant culture, we need to examine difference to notions of the “ideal” child.

Sometimes problems and difficulties faced by a school or a teacher can be attributed to the presence of certain students (or groups of students) (Ainscow, 2005). That is, it is the difficulties faced by the teacher that are caused by the difficulties within students. Deficit assumptions influence perceptions of certain students. Ainscow identifies these groups not only as those with

disabilities and/or special educational needs, but also socio-economic status, race, language and gender. Again, is there space in this model for age as being an “other”?

***(ii) The nature of secondary education***

“The way secondary education generally is organised in many countries results in some serious challenges for students with SEN” (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2005, p. 13). This is one study that gives empirical reasons for this, based on international case studies, literature reviews and expert observations and evaluations. They sought to describe various approaches to inclusive education in a post-primary context and to make information about these approaches more widely available.

The quotation above acknowledges the role that secondary organisation has on the inclusion or otherwise of a child with special educational needs. The EADSNE note that inclusion generally develops well in primary school, but “problems” emerge in secondary schools (what form these “problems” take is unclear). These problems they assert are caused by

- subject specialisation
- different organisational structures
- the emphasis on educational outcomes in the secondary sector
- “market thinking” resulting in a tension between schools wishing to achieve higher academic outputs and wishing to include more students with SEN.

Perhaps it is not surprising that these are all school based factors as the study was based on the premise that “inclusive education mainly depends upon what teachers do in classrooms” (p. 12). One additional factor they did mention was not related to school/classroom organisation, that of the challenges caused by “the gap” between the students with SEN and peers increasing with age. The report does not indicate in what area this gap occurs, that is whether it is an attainment gap, a social gap, or some other gap.

Other literature discusses the challenges posed by school organisation on pupils with special educational needs, but this is conjectural and speculative on the whole. My decision to explore this literature at all is based on one focus of inclusion as being the identification and subsequent removal of “barriers to learning and participation” (Booth et al., 2000, p. 13). Barriers can

be thought of as the things that prevent access to a school, or limit participation once in the school.

The general reason authors give when explaining why secondary aged children with special educational needs find secondary school so difficult is the difference in organisation, expectations, and outcomes between the primary and secondary models (Audit Commission, 2002; Dockrell et al., 2002; M. Farrell, 2001; Morrison, 2009; Plimley & Bowen, 2006; Rogers, 2007b; Row, 2005; Sayer, 1987; Van Reusen et al., 2000).

Other factors that could be argued affect secondary age over-representation include: the effect of transfer between primary and secondary schools at age 10-11 (Galton, Gray, & Ruddock, 1999; Hargreaves & Galton, 2002; Office for Standards in Education, 2002; Sumner & Bradley, 1977; Tabor, 1993); parent views and wishes (Mallet, 1997; Rogers, 2007b; Row, 2005); and the personal and social demands of secondary school (Rogers, 2007a; Warnock, 2005). Each of these areas needs a thorough exploration, as currently they are not reinforced by empirical studies, a gap which I propose to fill through this research.

## **Section 2.04            Summary of part one of the literature review**

Concepts of diversity and inclusion are diverse and overlapping, the school system as it currently exists cannot be said to be fully inclusive of all pupils, or diverse pupil groups. This is demonstrated by the existence of a segregated system (special schools) and also by population patterns in mainstream and special schools. Certain types of pupils are over-represented in special schools. The disproportionality of some ethnic minorities in special schools and special education systems has been recognised and explored. The over-representation of secondary aged children has been recognised in some places, but it has not been problematised or explored empirically. Some (but not all) of the explanations of disproportionality of ethnic minorities have the potential to be applied to over-representation of older children in special schools. There is a general assumption that the structures and organisation of secondary schools may contribute to difficulties in including children with special educational needs in secondary schools, but this has not been empirically tested.

This thesis is concerned with including children with a diversity of learning needs in mainstream schools. In order to do this it seeks to explore why there

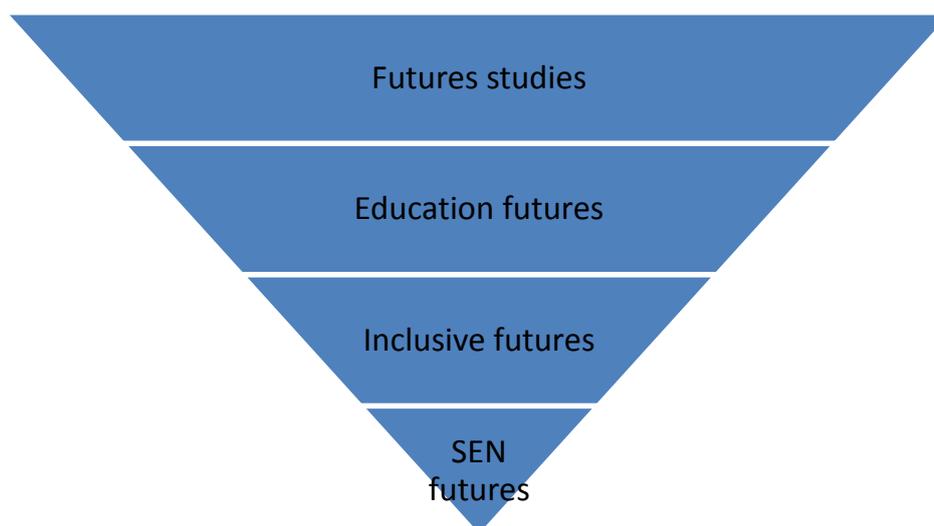
are more pupils of secondary age in special schools, than pupils of primary age, and why the population of a special school rises as a cohort ages. The research questions that arise from this aim, and that have evolved over the study are:

- *What reasons are most commonly given by stakeholders as to why there are more pupils of secondary age in special schools than those of primary age?*
- *Are there differences in reasons suggested by different stakeholder groups?*

## **Part two: the study of the future, and futures of education**

### **Section 2.05 Introduction**

In this second part of this literature review chapter I outline briefly the history and landscape of futures studies. I then narrow the focus to describing and comparing a selection of studies that have explored the futures of education, followed by studies that have explored inclusive schools, finishing with studies that have explored the futures of special educational needs and special schools. I conclude with a discussion of some of the problems associated with the use of futures studies in education, and a summary of the purpose, aims and findings of futures studies in education, identifying any gaps. See Figure 2.2 for a diagrammatic representation of the focus.



**Figure 2.2: Visual representation of part two of literature review**

## Section 2.06      The study of the future

The formal study of the future goes by a number of names (Bell, 1996; Milojevic, 2002; Sadar, 2010; 2006) such as futures studies, future studies, foresight, strategic foresight and prospective studies, some based on the language they were developed in (Smart, 2006), such as *prospective* (Spanish/Latin American), *prognostics* (Eastern European) and *futuribles* (French). Each of these terms point to a different aspect of futures thinking (Milojevic, 2002). Each of them share the common theme of using a systematic approach to considering the long term. Throughout this thesis I have used the term “futures studies” to emphasis the “plurality and diversity” (Sadar, 2010, p. 177) of approaches to studying the future, and of the futures that are possible.

Attempts to predict the future have been practised for aeons – consider divination by mediums, or the roots of astrology (Barrett, 1996; Slaughter, 1999). Humans speculate about and plan for the future in some way every day (Hicks, 1998); indeed it could be argued it is this that makes us human (Masini, 2006). Describing the future has also been a facet of the literary genre of utopian (or dystopian) fiction, examples being work by authors such as H.G. Wells, Thomas More and Jules Verne (Bell, 1998; Milojevic, 2002). The first formal strategic studies of the future, with associated “conceptual and methodological foundations” (Bell, 1998, p. 18) is often seen as beginning in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bell, 1998; Sadar, 2010; Slaughter, 1999), with a move from “a focus on utopianism to one of ‘scientific’ prediction” (Milojevic, 2002, p. 33, emphasis in original). Masini (2006) begins her exploration of the evolution of future studies from World War 2. The development of modern futures studies are often portrayed as happening separately, but simultaneously, on both sides of the North Atlantic (Bradfield, Wright, Burt, Cairns, & Van Der Heijdena, 2005; Masini, 2006; Moll, 1996) each with a focus on a different dimension of futures studies (Masini, 2006; Moll, 1996). Developments in the USA were seen as an “endeavour to anticipate events through scientific analysis of trends and indicators of change” (Masini, 2006, p. 1159), whereas developments in Europe were seen to be more cultural (Moll, 1996), addressing the philosophical and sociological dimensions of future studies (Masini, 2006). Slaughter (1999) also sees two different dimensions of development; however he does not base this on geographical location, but makes the distinction based on aims and methods.

According to Slaughter the logistics of planning for modern warfare gave rise to tools for strategic planning, management and marketing, using forecasting, trend analysis and scenarios. Then “educators, social innovators and others” (p. 838) developed a more “facilitative and egalitarian approach” (p. 838), using imaging, visioning and a collective approach to futures building. Bell (1996, 1998) views futures studies as developing simultaneously as several “strands” or “paths”: operations research and think tanks with a military origin (such as the Research and Development (RAND) Corporation); analysis of social trends; bureaucracy organised efforts at national planning; and the creation of international groups with associated memberships and conferences (Marien, 2002) with a central purpose of evolving a knowledge base of future studies (such as the World Futures Studies Federation, (Masini, 2006)).

In the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century future studies shifted from this wide global and national focus to an institutional one (Milojevic, 2002). The oil giant, Royal Dutch/Shell is credited with developing the methodology known as scenario planning (Börjeson, Höjer, Dreborg, Ekvall, & Finnveden, 2006; Ramalingam & Jones, 2007; Schoemaker, 1993): the focused development of scenarios based upon broad drivers. The scenarios were future ‘stories’, developed by a team headed by Peter Schwartz, which the company then used to plan strategically for any of these futures that might occur. Ramalingam & Jones (2007) believe it is the development of this tool that has led Shell to move from being the seventh to the second biggest oil company in the world. Shell still has a dedicated scenarios team today (Shell, no date, accessed June 2011), and the co-creators of the process, Oglivy and Schwartz, formed a company called Global Business Network “dedicated to gathering and applying the sorts of intelligence necessary to be used in strategic planning” (Ogilvy, 1996, p. 29). This demonstrates that “by assessing the consequences of different measures, scenarios can be used to prepare action plans for companies, as well as organisations and governments” (Dahle, 1996, p. 91). Milojevic (2002) and Inayatullah (2003) recognise another shifted focus, from a cooperate and governmental strategic planning tool, to a framework for social emancipation (Milojevic, 2002), such as feminist futures (Milojevic, 1998), and the future of disabilities (Inayatullah, 2003).

This wealth of different developments, with their varying purposes and methods can be represented on a spectrum (Slaughter, 1993, see figure 2.3), with “futures research” at one end, and “futures movements” at the other.

Slaughter places “futures studies” as lying between these two poles. However, I would argue that the term “futures studies” represents the plurality and diversity of approaches to the future and so futures studies encompasses both the poles and the space between, in other words “futures research” and “futures movements” come under the umbrella of “futures studies”. In the discussion of futures studies in education below it is apparent that it is not easy to locate a project on this spectrum, as they can involve many of these areas. For example, some identify and analyse various drivers and trends, then explore the impact these drivers may have on education systems, and also express a hope and ambition to achieve a fairer, more equitable society, exploring how the education system can achieve this.

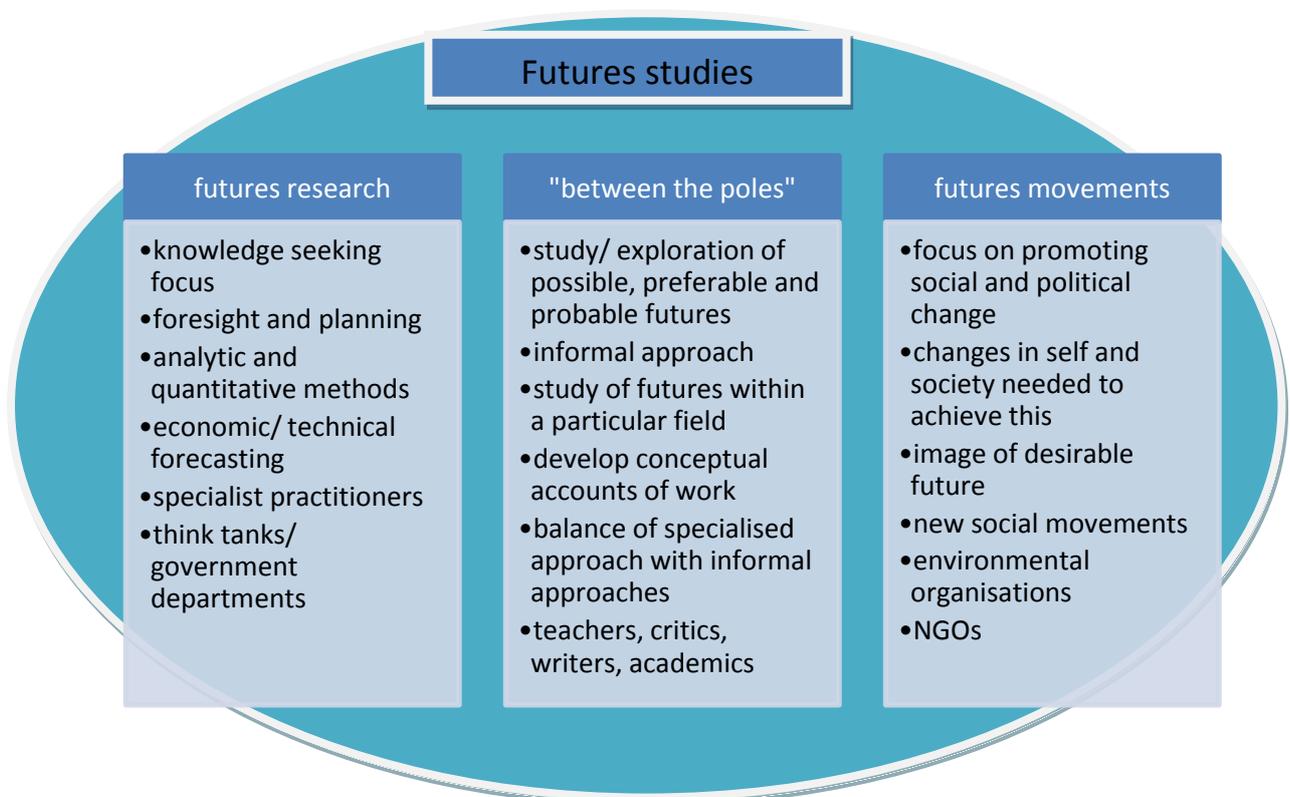


Figure 2.3: The spectrum of futures studies adapted from Hicks (1998) and Slaughter (1993)

This wealth of different and disparate approaches and traditions in the discipline of futures studies are tied together by a range of key philosophical assumptions, as listed by Milojevic (2002, p. 11):

- The future is not predetermined and cannot be “known” or “predicted”.
- The future is determined partly by history, social structures and reality, and partly by chance, innovations and human choice.
- There is a range of alternative futures which can be “forecasted”.

- Future outcomes can be influenced by human choices.
- Early intervention enables planning and design, while in “crisis response” people can only try to adapt and/or react.
- Ideas and images of the future shape our actions and decisions in the present.
- Our visions of preferred futures are shaped by our values.
- Humanity does not make choices as a whole, nor are we motivated by the same values, aspirations and projects.

There is a danger, recognised in the literature, of seeing futures studies as a Western enterprise, developed and carried out in solely in North America and Europe (Inayatullah, 1998; Slaughter, 1999). This could be a result of the actual exclusion of non-Western references from encyclopaedias and handbooks of the future (Inayatullah, 1998), historical conditions, such as the West encountering modernity first, and having the resources to respond to modernity, and the non-West dealing with poverty, the after effects of colonisation, and these factors mitigating against the “rapid development of futures interest and capability there” (Slaughter, 1999, p. 839). Alternatively it could be a result of the ontological perspective of the “discipline” of futures studies reflecting the worldview of the West, and this being the dominant mode of thinking about the future (Sadar, 2010), privileging masculinity, technology and the Western perception of time and space. Inayatullah (1998) sees benefits in viewing the future from other cultural perspectives, rather than employing the linear temporal frame the West employs, situated as a battle against death as the inescapable ultimate future. Masini (2006) believes progress has been made in this area, and lists examples of “developing countries” (p. 1161) that have been expanding their activities in the futures field. This theme will be referred to again below.

Further discussion on the methodologies and tools of futures studies can be found in Chapter 6 of this thesis, as I describe the methods which I selected for the futures thinking aspect of this project. I will conclude this section with a quote from Arvizu (1994) who contributed a chapter in *“Diversity in schools: from rhetoric to practice”* (DeVillar, Faltis, & Cummins, 1994): “to a great degree, the future is predictably unpredictable because of technology, natural disaster, and human-caused catastrophe. Nevertheless, planning for the future remains a necessary and common practice” (Arvizu, 1994, p. 89). This

planning for the future is seen in the policy recommendations that are one of the many outcomes of the projects discussed below.

## **Section 2.07        Futures in Education**

Education and schooling practices are replete with the vocabulary and terminology of the future (Facer, 2011a): policy makers use it in laying out policy commitments and aspirations, targets are set for schools and pupils, we use it when talking to children about subject choices, and in transition reviews/annual reviews for pupils with special educational needs. We embed many of our discussions with ideas about the future (Facer & Sandford, 2010). There are national political and media led debates about what kinds of curriculum and pedagogy will equip society for future social, cultural and economic needs (Beyond Current Horizons report, Facer, 2009). One example is the substantive capital outlay made in the first decade of the 21st century to “re-imagine and redesign the school estate for the next century” (Facer & Sandford, 2010, p. 74), the Building Schools for the Future project, premised on the need for schools to be designed to:

“take account of current and likely future developments in education and technology...[such as] the impact of a more diverse curriculum; new ways of learning and the impact of ICT; opening up the school to other pupils and the community as a whole and the inclusion of pupils with special needs into mainstream schools” (Department for Education and Skills, 2002, p. 4).

As one of my aims is to imagine and create a school of the future it is pertinent to examine some current images of education in the future. There have been many attempts to explore the futures of education and special educational needs, and these are almost as diverse as the types of futures studies that exist. Projects such as Beyond Current Horizons (Facer, 2009) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s Schooling for Tomorrow series (2001) involve methods such as foresight and scenario planning, and involve a complex programme of exploring trends and drivers, designing scenarios, having experts contributing papers and reports. Related to this approach are smaller scale projects such as that undertaken by the SEN Policy Options Steering Group (Norwich & Lunt, 2005) who explored “future schooling that includes children with special educational needs”. A third approach is a more philosophical one, usually carried out by an individual, and could result in a description of education changing over a

period of future time (Egan, 2008) or an imaginary focus group, who have no knowledge of current educational norms, planning a “new” educational system (Tooley, 2000). Another approach is a strategic one, involving a review of some aspect of education and resulting in a set of recommendations that will go some way to achieving a particular goal or vision of education. These include a review of the future of teaching and learning (the Gilbert report, 2006a), the future of curriculum (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2004), the future of lifelong learning (Schuller & Watson, 2009) and the future of teaching in the “Teaching 2020” project, reported on by Mike Newby (2005) which all formed part of the Labour government run DfES “Futures programme”. It is likely that the findings from these projects may have contributed to the 2009 White Paper entitled “Your child, your schools, our future” (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009b). A final example of this type of strategic futures thinking in education are the works that describe what an inclusive school (a school that effectively includes children with special educational needs) should look like (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2005, 2006; Thomas et al., 1998). Although these examples do not follow a specific futures studies methodology I include them here as I argue that as they explore ways of making inclusion happen (Thomas et al., 1998), and describe successful practice that allows an inclusive praxis to be implemented (EADSNE 2006), they do describe a future vision of an inclusive school.

I report on each of these projects below, discussing aims, methods, outcomes, and any reference made to inclusion or children with special educational needs as this is the main focus of this thesis. Some of the projects I report on will be based on secondary sources, as the primary source is in a language other than English, or in the case of government initiatives only exist in the grey literature since the change of administration in the government of the United Kingdom in 2010. This will be acknowledged in the text.

There also exists a body of literature on “futures education”, that is, pedagogy and curriculum that can be implemented to allow children and young people to think about and plan for their own future. The World Yearbook of Education was based on the concept in 1998, and David Hicks and Richard Slaughter would both be proponents of this curricular area (Hicks, 2004, 2008; Hicks & Slaughter, 1998). It is an area beyond the remit of this thesis, and so I will not be exploring it further in this literature review.

## 2.07(a) National and international “futures of education” projects

I consider seven projects in this section, two at a regional level (autonomous), three at a country level and two international ones (though not global). For ease of references I will use abbreviations or country names when referring to the reports. (Summary information regarding the country in which the project took place, the title of the project, original authorship and sources of secondary reporting, if appropriate, of each report is contained in table 2.2). The national projects listed and discussed below were without exception the result of a governmental or ministerial mandated request. The international OECD project was instituted at the request of several Ministers of Education from OECD countries (Luisoni, Istance, & Hutmacher, 2004).

Country	Title,	Authored by/reported by, date	Original report	Commissioned by	Moniker/ acronym
International	<i>“Schooling for tomorrow, what schools for the future”</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2001)	Yes	OECD Ministers of Education	OECD
International	UN Millennium project <i>“2007 State of the future”</i>	Glenn and Gordon (2007) Reported by Sandford and Facer (2008)	Yes	UN presidential commission on education	UN
England	<i>“Educational, social and technological futures: a report from the Beyond Current Horizons Programme”</i>	Beyond Current Horizons, Facer (2009)	Yes	Department of Children Schools and Families	BCH
Canada (Ontario)	<i>“For the love of learning”</i>	Ontario Royal Commission on Learning (1994) Also as reported by Van Aalst (2001)	Yes	Minister of Education and Training, Ontario	Canadian
Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia)	<i>“The future of education, schools of the future”</i> (As reported by Van Aalst)	<i>Denkschrift der Bildungskommission</i> , (1995)  Reported by Van Aalst, (2001), and Wrigley (2003)	No	Premier of North-Rhine-Westphalia	German
Japan	<i>“The model for Japanese education in the perspective of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”</i> (As reported by Van Aalst)	Japanese Central Council for education, (1996)  Reported by Van Aalst (2001)	No	“ministerial request”	Japanese
The Netherlands	<i>“Futures for basic educational policies”</i> (As reported by Van Aalst)	In’t Veld, de Bruijn and Lips (1996)  Reported by Van Aalst (2001)	No	“initiated at ministerial level”	Dutch

Table 2.2: Details of “futures of education” projects examined in this review

***(i) Key aims and questions of the projects***

Each project set out a number of aims or research questions which they hoped to respond to during the process. Some were tasked with “ensur[ing] that schooling is more strategically informed about major long term developments” (Van Aalst, 2001, p. 157), indeed that is why Van Aalst selected the German, Canadian, Japanese and Dutch studies to report on. These long term developments refer to societal trends or driving forces, implying a necessary focus on identifying these trends and their effects. The OECD sought to identify what trends would be most influential in shaping education, BCH had a specific focus on the potential implications of socio-technological change on the education system in the UK, and spent a lot of time and energy finding what these trends could be, and finally the German study questioned what the consequences of various identified drivers for education where. The UN project set out to explore the “possibilities influencing education by 2030” (Glenn & Gordon, 2007, p. 71) but also framed this as “future possibilities for education and learning” (pp. 7, 70), so whether they are societal possibilities that will affect education, or possibilities of and for education is unclear. (On analysis they seem to be a mixture of both, for example there is the possibility of adult brains being kept healthier for longer, which will perhaps impact on who is learning, on the other hand the educational policy of individualised education is one that is internal to education itself.)

In tandem with this aim of identifying long term trends there is the parallel aim of having a strategic response – just knowing what trends might occur and how they might affect schooling and education is not enough, how could schools respond to these challenges, and how should they respond? One of the key aims of the BCH project was for educators to be able to “to take informed and thoughtful decisions about which of these emergent developments we wish to embrace, to challenge or to overcome” (p. 14). They also set out to translate their findings from the evidence reviews and scenario activity into a set of recommendations for action. The German programme asked not only about the consequences of international developments for education but also what changes, cultural developments and value-orientations are needed by education in the future. The Japanese study explored the responsiveness of existing educational arrangements to the changes being experienced by society. The OECD study sought to explore the potential role of policy to help shape these futures” (p. 77). Though not explicitly an aim, the UN project asked “if educational policy makers believe

these results, what steps should they take today” (Glenn & Gordon, 2007, p. 72). The Canadian study set out to present a vision and action plan to guide reform of schools.

As well as identifying the trends within both education and society there was an aim in some of the studies to report on the current state of education in the region/country the project was focused on. The Canadian project was asked to report on existing programme aims and organisation and accountability and governance regimes employed in school. The Japanese project had a focus on exploring “urgent contemporary issues” (Van Aalst, 2001, p. 166) in the education system, such as bullying and school refusal. Although the OECD do not set out a specific aim to examine schools and education systems as they currently exist, Chapter 2 (pp. 59-78) of their report describes the common aspects of member states’ school systems (school systems are massive in all countries, there is greater retention of “non-traditional” students) and differences between member state countries (such as student: staff ratios). The same chapter also describes current developments in the educational landscape, such as the flexible use of facilities and buildings, and involvement of adults other than teachers in learning.

Another aim was a creative one, the creation of image/s or visions of the future. The BCH team were tasked specifically to “build a set of long term and challenging scenarios for the future of education 2025 and beyond in the context of socio-technical change” (p. 16). They also sought to “understand what society might look like in 2025”. The OECD were asked to “assess alternative visions of schools for tomorrow” which implies a need to first create these visions. The Dutch project was initiated to develop “visions for future-orientated educational policies” (Van Aalst, 2001, p. 169), and the Canadian project was to “present a vision and action plan to guide Ontario’s reform of...education” and “set new directions in education” (Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, 1994, p. 34).

Thus the aims include reporting the current state of education, identifying what trends might affect schooling in the future, and making recommendations how schools, politicians and wider society should react and respond to these trends and their effects, in some cases creating a new vision to aspire to. Some of the projects reported an additional aim of facilitating and using dialogue and collaboration with members of society; this was the case for the Dutch, German and English studies and although the Canadian study

did not have this as a primary aim, it sought to do this, unsurprisingly, perhaps, as it was a public inquiry. The BCH project had an aim of disseminating the scenarios and the materials to inform their design to “stakeholders and policy makers for use in supporting long term strategic planning” (p. 16). A final goal was one of assessment of visions of the future schools – the entire OECD project was premised on the evaluations of these visions as can be seen in the preceding paragraph. The UN project also assessed each of its “possibilities for education” in terms of:

1. What might make it happen?
2. What could prevent it from happening?
3. What are some of the positive consequences?
4. What are some of the negative consequences? (Glenn & Gordon, 2007, p. 72).

***(ii) Processes, methods and outcomes***

Facer and Sandford (2010) describe the process they underwent in the Beyond Current Horizons project: scoping the field, building the evidence, creating the scenarios and translating the scenarios into policy recommendations and actions (pp. 81,82). Although not all the projects listed below used the scenario method I will use these stages to frame a description of the methods and processes used.

In order to scope the field and build an evidence base most projects engaged in wide consultation of the general public and of “experts” in the field of education, and in some cases beyond (for example the report from Germany for which the main committee constituted of senior academics, politicians and business leaders). Some reported active attempts to connect with marginalised groups, and people who are not normally consulted, the Canadian report describes how it visited schools, set up consultations in shopping malls, used the media to draw attention to the consultation project, and made a concerted effort to consult young people and those who might otherwise be under-represented, such as the disabled and minority ethno-cultural groups. The only project that does not make use of broad consultation is the UN one. It selected and surveyed an international panel of 213 “experts” (in what areas is unstated) to rate the likelihood of a range of “future possibilities for education and learning” (Glenn & Gordon, 2007, p. 70).

In addition to this consultation some projects undertook or commissioned in-depth reviews of the literature; the OECD and the Beyond Current Horizons project report these reviews as chapters or as separate review papers. The Ontario Royal Commission reports undertaking an extensive literature review, and the German project is said to have used expert reports. The UN study used a literature search to identify 19 developments that could influence education. (Van Aalst (2001) does not report the use of literature reviews in the Japanese or Dutch study, however the original report documentation should be consulted before it is said these did not occur.) The Beyond Current Horizons project took this a step further, and reports how the reviews and consultations were then analysed to identify developments that would be common to all futures and developments that could affect different futures depending on their specifically identified variables of social values, and of educational system response.

The next stage in the process is the creation of a vision of a future school. Not all of the reports resulted in scenarios being created; some, such as the Canadian project, simply reported the findings of the research activity and then created a list of recommendations. It is this list of recommendations that makes them futures studies – they are recommending a “different from now” approach to education. Indeed they entitle their summary of conclusions, recommendations and suggestions as “our way to the future” (p. 29). At the end of the German report the reader is presented with a single generic vision of future schools (as cited by Wrigley, 2003):

“School is a house of learning

- a place where everybody is welcome, where learners and teachers are accepted in their individuality
- a place where people are allowed time to grow up, to take care of one another and be treated with respect
- a place whose rooms invite you to stay, offer you the chance to learn, and stimulate you to learn and show initiative
- a place where diversions and mistakes are allowed, but where evaluation in the form of feedback gives you a sense of direction
- a place for intensive work, and where it feels good to learn
- a place where learning is infectious” (p. 5).

A different approach is that used by the UN, the results of a “Real Time Delphi”. The Delphi technique is a futures studies method, “specifically invented by futurists for the study of the future” (Bell, 1996, p. 17), that aims to “predict and explore alternative futures possibilities , their probabilities of occurrence and their desirability by tapping the expertise of respondents”

(Bell, 2003, p. 268). (It should be acknowledged that the Delphi technique is not always seen as solely a futures method; one definition of this tool is “simply described as the iterative administration of a questionnaire designed to elicit the beliefs and judgments of a panel of experts, with the results from each round shared with the respondents, who might modify their responses in subsequent rounds accordingly” (Sandford & Facer, 2008, p. 6). These authors trace the roots of the technique as a forecasting tool, as does Bell, and report on its use as a method for forecasting.) As a futures studies method it uses experts (or “oracles”) in a series of repeated panel surveys. Questions are asked about the nature and timing of future developments, then re-asked, several times, after the experts have been told about other responses. A consensus is arrived at through the reasons each expert gives being fed back to all participants who read the responses, then re-rate each statement in order to “harmonise” these opinions (Bell, 1996; Börjeson et al., 2006, p. 731). A Real Time Delphi is one that is carried out over the internet allowing for participation by experts from a range of geographic locations. It is time saving and instant –the responses others have made can be seen immediately and no intermediary is needed to collate and re-distribute the results after each round (Gordon, 2009). By using this process the UN created an ordered list of 19 possibilities for education and learning, 14 of which were rated as having a more than 50% chance of occurring. This list of ranked possibilities provides an interesting picture for the future of education.

The OECD report and the BCH report were both specifically tasked with creating scenarios as an exploration of futures. They both created six detailed scenarios, or images of a future world. Neither of these groups focused only on describing schools of the future, but spent time describing society as a whole and other organisational and political structures. Van Aalst (2001) states that the Dutch project resulted in six pictures of future schools which the authors created by giving different weights to the identified driving forces. They also developed three pictures of the wider environment of policies and administration and the effect those different stances had on provision. Facer (2009, p. 27) sets out the 8 steps taken by the Beyond Current Horizons group to create the scenarios. They structure their scenarios around three worlds with varying trajectories of a single variable, that of social values. (One world was described as “individualised” social values, another as communal social values and a third with these values in tension.) Each world had two variations, two scenarios, which were based on divergent educational

responses to the social values and their implications. Throughout all the scenarios were the interactions of pre-determined elements, trends that are likely to occur, and likely to have an effect on the other variables. These then went through various iterations with an expert advisory group drafting the initial scenarios and commenting on succeeding versions. The OECD study does not give the same level of detail on the methods used for creating the scenarios, but does imply that a similar process to the one employed by BCH was used as it describes the combination of “trends, plausible inter-relations between clusters of variables and guiding policy ideas” (OECD, 2001, p. 78). Two of their scenarios are premised on the continuation of existing models, two on schools and school systems being changed and refined/redefined, and two on the decline and disappearance of schools as organisations. The scenarios are presented as narrative descriptions that spread over 20 pages in both reports, which can be a lot to take in and makes comparison between the different potential futures difficult. Both reports do provide a summary, either as a set of tables or in a related article that abbreviates and summarises the information for ease of reading and comparison.

The next part of the process involves organising the findings into policy recommendations and actions. BCH presents outcomes as three philosophical challenges to educational assumptions, and a set of “priority agendas” (Facer & Sandford, 2010, p. 86) or recommendations. The OECD report laid out a set of “policy questions” (p. 101) raised by the different futures. The Canadian study lists 167 recommendations in its report to meet the aims, which Van Aalst (2001) groups as recommendations and “key intervention strategies” (p. 161). Van Aalst also reports on the recommendations made by the German study. The UN study, though not setting out a list of recommendations does publish the contributions experts made to the Delphi study when they consider “what might make these possibilities happen” and “what prevents the possibilities from happening”. These could be read as action points if policy makers chose to follow them up.

It is the OECD scenarios that reported the most innovative and useful example of using the scenarios as a tool for discussion, rather than an end product. It carried out empirical evaluations of the scenarios, asking stakeholders to rate both the likelihood and desirability of each scenario on a 4 point quantitative rating scale. Findings are reported to some extent in the OECD booklet (Chapter 12, Hutmacher, 2001), and in a follow-up article by Luisoni et al

(2004). This is a useful task as it helps narrow a focus to which scenarios are desirable and achievable, rather than being overwhelmed with 6 in depth scenarios. A weakness of the study is that the authors do not describe the stakeholder role of the participants, just that they attended various meetings, so there is the possibility that only one type of stakeholder was consulted with the rating scale, resulting in a focus on a scenario desired by one constituent group.

In addition to this, in one of the seminars where the scenarios were presented the researchers asked participants to choose a scenario and analyse it in detail using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis grid (Luisoni et al., 2004). This gave rise to “enriching” discussions that could be used to further develop each of the scenarios. This type of evaluation process is a necessary part of futures work – Marien’s (2002) “questioning” of futures (see chapter 6); it is a shame that it seems to be an incidental aside of the larger research project as opposed to a primary tool.

### ***(iii) References to inclusion or pupil diversity***

The Canadian report recognises more needs to be done for those whom the current education system treats unfairly, making specific reference to girls, ethnic minorities and the aboriginal populace. It also dedicates a chapter of the final report to “*Supports for Learning: special needs and special opportunities*” (Chapter 10, p. 205-233), 14 of the 167 recommendations occur in this chapter. They do see a place for “segregated facilities” for students with disabilities, and list the difficulties children may face in integrated provision (for example, lack of a similar peer group, lack of resources). Despite stating “no one countenances the segregation of children in wheelchairs in special classes because some school buildings do not have wheelchair access” (p. 214), they recognise that no amount of environmental adjustments will enable youngsters “with all types and degrees of disability to be accommodated in neighbourhood schools” (p. 212/215). A few pages following this they discuss the inefficacy of educating pupils with learning difficulties in a segregated setting. Despite this evidence they then recommend that “while integration should be the norm, school boards continue to provide a continuum of service for students whose needs would...be best served in other settings” (p. 244). In terms of curriculum provision they see the potential of ICT in delivering greater individualisation of pedagogy.

The report Van Aalst makes of the German study makes no specific reference to inclusion or special educational needs, but the “broad” inclusive vision (Ainscow et al., 2006) is evident in the first description of the future school – “a place where everybody is welcome, where learners and teachers are accepted in their individuality” (Wrigley, 2003, p. 5). The Japanese study recognises the current system has “inadequate consideration of individuality and mutual differences as Japan ‘is a society bound by homogeneity’” (as cited by Van Aalst, 2001, p. 167, emphasis Van Aalst). The Dutch report notes that if a current trend continues “fewer children will attend special schools; the focus of equity policies is shifting increasingly from groups to individuals and organised as projects” (Van Aalst, 2001, p. 170), and that differences will become better accepted and accommodated.

The Beyond Current Horizons report only mentions disability in terms of the challenge posed by technological advances in prosthetics, the danger of seeing prosthetics as a cure, and the potential effects of pharmaceutical enhancements of cognitive function. This theme is further explored in the UN report (Glenn & Gordon, 2007), where they report that “chemistry for brain enhancement” had a 75% chance of being a possibility for education by 2030. Genetically enhanced learning is seen as much less likely, but individualised education is seen as having a 60% chance of occurring. The OECD report does not mention inclusion or special educational needs specifically, but does acknowledge the tension of tailoring to individualised learning while valuing skills such as cooperation and team work.

It is interesting to note that none of the reports above are from “developing” countries – is there a lack of interest in these countries for applying these methods, or are there simply no resources to do so? The OECD study is an exception to this; follow up work by Luisoni, Istance & Hutmacher (2004) surveyed both OECD members and African delegates and concluded that the results of the rating scales “strongly suggest” that the 6 scenarios created by the OECD are universal (p. 177). However they do acknowledge that participants from one of the conferences in Africa saw a need to carry out the scenario planning exercise which “take[s] account of African realities and specificities” (p. 177).

As seen above a lot of work has examined (and re-examined) the driving forces and societal trends influencing schooling in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We can be assured that drivers such as the changing economy, changes in families,

demographics of age, the influence of cyber-technology and the changing nature of knowledge, to name but a few, will have an effect on schooling. This has resulted in a wealth of illustrations of future schools, or future education systems, resulting from drivers, as well as recommendations to meet these challenges. There is a gap in futures thinking research in education for projects that use a methodology other than identifying the effect and impact of drivers on the educational system, a gap this thesis hopes to fill.

### **2.07(b) The policy led approach to futures thinking**

Another way to approach futures in education is a policy focus approach. Facer and Sandford (2010) note that at the time of writing their report “in the UK alone...the last 5 years have seen 4 major educational futures projects” (p. 75): the Training and Development Agency for Schools (Department for Education and Skills, 2006a), the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2004) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Schuller & Watson, 2009) inquiries as well as the Building Schools for the Future projects. They cite websites where the public can access these reports, however, as the QCA and the TDA no longer exist, their websites have been archived and the final reports are themselves very difficult to find, as is any discussion on the methodology or procedures used to develop them. For this reason I have chosen not to discuss them in detail, other than say they follow a similar pattern of presenting a list of recommendations that will achieve a particular vision of an education system/curriculum/work force. This serves to illustrate that both education and futures are subject to political drivers and agendas, and the problem of research work being commissioned by transient political parties.

### **2.07(c) The philosophical approach to futures thinking**

Another type of futures thinking, demonstrated by authors such as Tooley (2000), Egan (2008) and Seldon (2010), comprises of think pieces/thought experiments. They may involve a degree of reference to the literature, and often end with a list of recommendations. The respective titles of these specific books may illuminate why I have chosen to discuss them in this section of the review of the literature: Egan’s “*The future of education*”, Seldon’s “*An end to factory schools: an education manifesto 2010-2020*” and Tooley’s “*Reclaiming education*”.

#### **(i) Key aims and questions of the “project”**

The key aims of Tooley’s (2000) book are to present solutions to the

fundamental challenges facing education, to set out an agenda to “reclaim education” from the state, and from the “tyranny of schooling” (p. 1). This tyranny of schooling is viewed as the trend of putting all educational expectations into schooling; Tooley asserts that education and schooling are not, and should not be seen as, the same things. The central question he asks the imaginary focus group to examine is “what kind of education would you choose to create?” (p. 22, 34), if they had been stripped of current notions and perceptions about education. This was followed by the question “what role do you see for the state in this system?” (p. 34).

Seldon (2010) prefaces his report by painting a picture of his thoughts on what schools should be, and how stakeholders should be involved, comparing it with the current “reality”. He suggests that education is no longer working, and he lists 5 pieces of evidence for why it needs to change, which I paraphrase below:

- Government spending on education has increased, but standards have not risen commensurately
- The traditional model of large, depersonalised and exam-focused school is not appropriate for the holistic development of young people
- The demands of the future necessitate a range of skills in multi-modal domains
- ICT is and will continue to revolutionise the classroom and pedagogy
- Advances in neuro-science show the importance of humour and environmental factors on learning.

He specifically aims to set out a “manifesto” of what schools “could and should be” (p. 5) in order to solve the current problems of education.

Egan’s (2008) account of future schools, over a 50 year period, is based on how we can change educational institutions that avoid the various problems he outlines, and includes his beliefs on how minds can be better educated. His aims are to describe and problematise the current education system, then to offer a new way of thinking about education, followed by describing how this new kind of education can replace current forms of schooling. He focuses on “changes in teaching, in the curriculum, and more generally in the institution of the school” (p. 87). He acknowledges that these will not change at an equal pace, and changes to one will inevitably result in changes to others. In his imagined future education becomes more like health – a concept generally understood and agreed on. So, just as it is clear what it

means to be healthy, it is also clear what it means to be educated. Education is seen as lifelong, maximising for each student the array of cognitive tools and kinds of understanding available.

***(ii) Processes, methods and outcomes***

Tooley (2000) takes a philosophical approach, basing his work on the example of Plato's dialogues with imaginary focus groups, a move from "dwelling on past empirical evidence...but an examination of the underlying theoretical arguments that support the case" (p. 20). The thought experiment takes place within the author's own head, and involves taking an imaginary group of children and young people through a "veil of ignorance" (Rawls, 1972, cited by Tooley), which strips them of conceptions and life experience of what education is, while endowing them with "adult gravitas and sensibility and knowledge" (Tooley, 2000, p. 22). It is set out as several chapters (or "sessions", p. iii) which are broken into three sections: a prologue where Tooley presents "the general ideas, motivating arguments and disputes" (p. 23) about the topic, with reference to current literature and political ideas; the imaginary focus group discussion; and a concluding commentary which reviews the focus group discussion in the context of the theory discussed in the chapter prologue. The focus group discussion is presented as a narrative from the perspective of one of the children. The two other parts to each chapter are written in an academic tone. The focus groups are based around key questions about education which the participants try to resolve.

The challenges for education which Seldon outlines (the five pieces of evidence why education needs to change as listed above) could be seen as drivers for change. After he outlines them, he makes a number of recommendations to meet these challenges, as in some of the future projects described above do. Unlike Tooley, he sees a role for the state, but in the background. Schools and head teachers would be subject to "accountable autonomy" (p. 6) – indeed his first recommendation is for "genuinely independent state schools" (p. 6). Schools "should be free" (p. 6, 7, 10) but "should be encouraged" (p. 7), "should have..." (p. 7), "could be..." (p. 8). Following this list of recommendations, he sets out a range of "dilemmas" in the current system, which he evidences, then "a way out of the dilemma" – his suggestion on how schools and the education system can be changed to resolve these dilemmas.

Egan's book is in two parts, the first part describes "the knotted idea of education that currently drives our schools and shapes what goes on in them"

(p. ix). He describes three main ideas behind education (socialisation, academic ideal, developmental idea), their inherent flaws, and how these flaws are exacerbated when the ideas are combined. The first half of his book is his account of why education is a contentious activity, and why schools are unsatisfactory, based on examinations of the literature in these areas. The next part of his book is the futures studies aspect. Egan's future education system is a "historical account" written from the perspective of an education historian writing in two millennia's time, describing the changes in public schools during the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a text book. It is a progressive description, several of his chapters describe the "history" of education over a decade (Chapter 5 for example describes education in between the years 2020-2030). He describes the struggle between two competing approaches to education ("progressivist" versus "traditionalist") throughout the years. His narrative notes the trouble and tensions that arise, all of which act as stepping stones to his school of the future. The future depicts the role and effect of poverty and an ecological crisis on education. The description includes several key pivotal events in education that change the focus. Each of these chapters make reference to teaching, the curriculum, and the school in the decade it describes.

Tooley recognises that socio-historical and socio-cultural viewpoints can cloud his audiences' response to the aim of his study. Everyone, Tooley claims, has pictures of schools, teachers, head teachers, playgrounds, exams, everyone brings their own baggage. If our minds had been stripped of these conceptions, would we think differently about these? Egan also acknowledges that "we behave as we do, design schools of the kind we have, as a result of the ideas we hold" (p. x). Both authors use this as a justification for their use of a futures approach, illuminated most clearly by the need for Tooley's "veil of ignorance" focus group participants pass through prior to their imaginary contributions. However, these assertions can be used to critique their own models. It is likely with being the work of just one person that bias will slip in. This is especially so for someone like Tooley, who argues so fervently for markets in education. Subjective experiences and ideals are bound to colour the scenarios produced.

### ***(iii) References to inclusion or pupil diversity***

Tooley dedicates a whole chapter to the concept of equity, which he equates with the concept of universal education. He disputes the notion that only

state intervention can promote universal education and equity, in fact he claims that states are currently failing to ensure universal education (citing school exclusions, high levels of functional illiteracy and innumeracy as evidence of this). He does use the term diversity, but in the context of diversity of educational experiences and provision. He argues that diverse individuals benefit from a diversity of options (comparing this in one focus group scenario to competition between suppliers, and customers' and suppliers' demands on quality from the manufacturer all contributing to quality of provision). In an imagined educational landscape he states "within the same geographical jurisdiction there would be five or six competing educational companies each managing different 'schools'... plus a multitude of smaller companies or outlets, as well as home schooling, and so on" (p. 195). In this context he argues that these competing establishments would cater efficiently and effectively for children with special educational needs and equal opportunity, without the need for state intervention. This reinforces his assertion that "we will realise that if we want education to be of the highest quality, inclusive of all children and all their varied needs, and to respond to the needs of society and encourage life-long learning, then our current system simply cannot deliver it" (p. 10).

Seldon also discusses diversity in terms of provision: "diversity in learning and teaching, in examination and curricula" (p. 35) and links this to parental choice. He describes a number of examples of diverse models of education that currently exist (such as state boarding schools, international schools and studio schools). His vision of the future is one where choice and diversity of school will "flourish" (p. 79). Special educational needs is mentioned only in terms of locating services for these children in local authorities or social service departments; he makes no mention of inclusion. His comments on equity and equality of opportunity include a discussion on the causes and effects of the closure of grammar schools: "the elimination of almost 90% of the grammar school sector, a move designed to bolster equality of opportunity, in fact deepened educational apartheid in Britain" (p. 14) by removing a pathway for high achieving children from "non-privileged backgrounds".

Egan makes reference to pupil diversity when describing a difference between the two educational approaches he describes in his "education text book". A critique of the "traditionalists" was based on their supposed approach to segregation, based on the Platonian classification of people, gold, silver and

bronze. Only the “gold” people in Plato’s model were worthy of education, thus only one set of children would benefit from education, and it was an educator’s task to identify these. This was backed up by notions of measurement that showed that some children learn better than others. However, this notion of children having varying levels of ability was used in “non-traditional” forms of education, through streaming, setting and withdrawal. Thus, at the end of the 2020 there was recognition that “equality of opportunity” was a hypocritical and invalid claim. How he resolves this tension throughout the remainder of his scenario is unclear. In his discussion of the problems of education today he discusses the conflicting principles of an academic ideal – minds being shaped by progress in understanding in the range of disciplines, and requiring schools to accommodate different styles of learning and different educational outcomes.

These are examples of creative ways to think about the future of education and creative ways of presenting the results. They are problem focused, and present ways to present the various problems. They are reinforced by literature and theory, but could also be seen as opinion pieces, allowing the author to explore their own views on what education should be about.

## **Section 2.08      Futures of inclusion**

There are few futures studies that describe visions of future inclusive schools, and none that do it to the extent of the “futures of education” projects described above. I have selected four examples of what could be described as futures studies; they each present an image or a vision of a future inclusive school. One of these outlines the methodology and tools that were used to generate the scenarios described (as reported in Norwich, 2007; Norwich & Lunt, 2005; SEN Policy Options Steering Group, 2005). The other three do not describe a methodology, but are rather think pieces like that of Egan, above (Armstrong, 2012; Burnett & Carrington, 2006; Mittler, 2008).

There is another source of descriptions of future inclusive schooling; these can be found in researchers’ and commentators’ views on describing what makes a school inclusive. Although these do not follow a futures methodology in their design they could be seen as describing a preferable future state (Thomas et al., 1998). Some studies have explored the strategies schools have used to include pupils with SEN and various approaches to inclusion (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2005, 2006; Thomas et

al., 1998). They are based on various research outputs (literature reviews, case studies of schools, country based literature reviews) and thus descriptions of them are included here. The final type of work I refer to in this section is a briefing paper by Wedell (2005b) that forms part of the POSG work on educational futures (Norwich & Lunt, 2005). These studies and reports are not the only examples of descriptions of inclusive schools I could have used, but I have chosen them as they represent a variety of approaches.

## **2.08(a) Key aims, questions and methods used**

### ***(i) Aims/key questions***

As three of the studies were empirical their aims are clearly stated in the project reports. The exercise undertaken by the policy options steering group had an aim of exploring the scope for an educational response to two different socio-political scenarios, with reference to issues around meeting the needs of those requiring special educational approaches. A second aim was to “create knowledge-based future scenarios...through the participation of informed stakeholders” (Norwich, 2007, p. 73). Thomas et al’s (1998) book aimed to “fuse a discussion about the ideals behind inclusion with a picture of an inclusion project in practice” (p. 192). The authors position the study as being both a summative evaluation of an inclusive project and also developmental, suggesting how future inclusion projects can progress. The EADSNE (2005) project aimed to explore what works within inclusive settings in order to gain a deeper understanding of how inclusive education works. The focus was on practice at a classroom level, and as such a key goal of the project was to provide key people with knowledge of strategies for handling differences in the secondary classroom.

Wedell’s (2005b) paper describes his attempt “to build up a picture of what an inclusive education system might look like” (p. 19) with reference to current government policies. The aim of Armstrong’s “thought experiment” (2012, p. 108) is to give the reader “space to think” – “to visualise, explore and draw conclusions from this imaginary place” (p.108). His stated intention is to provoke reflection on the current education system, policies and approaches to inclusion and special educational needs by presenting an alternative future. The papers, or think pieces, by Mittler (2008) and Burnett & Carrington (2006) do not specify aims, but rather seek the answers to questions about the future. Mittler asks “what kind of future do we want to see for a baby born with a significant disability today? What changes will be needed in society and

our schools for both the child and for the family?” (p. 2). The key question that Burnett & Carrington set out to address is “what type of schools do we need that would be able to educate all students in one setting?” (pp. 1&4).

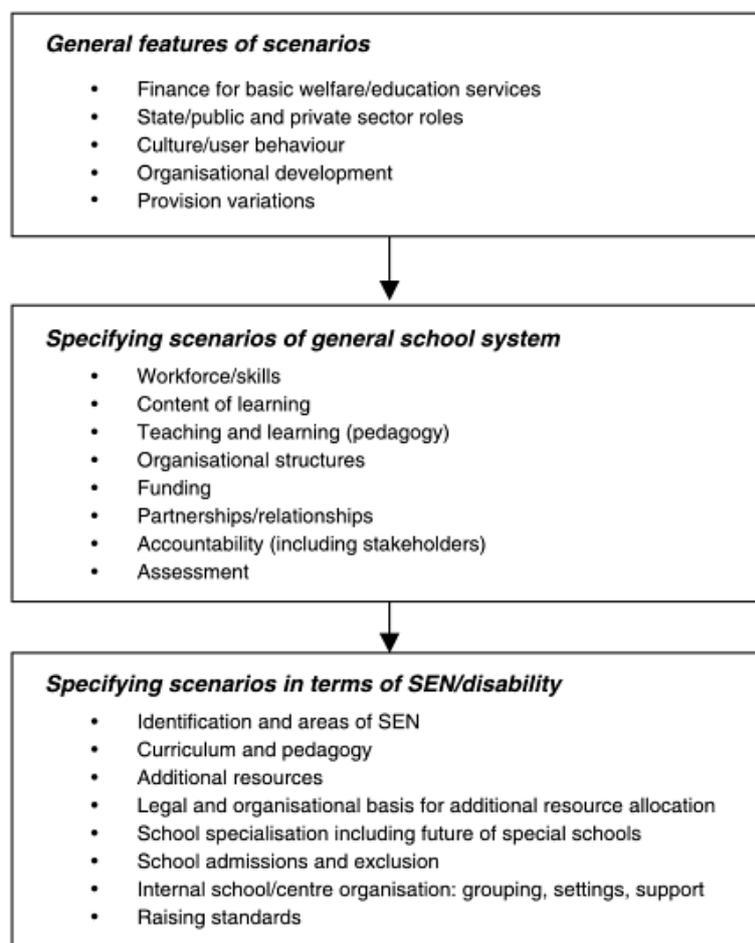
***(ii) Processes, methods and outcomes***

The three empirical studies followed a clear set of methodological processes, which are described in their reports. Thomas et al used a case study approach to examine the experiences of a group of children and young people as they moved from a special school to mainstream schools. They combine this with a theoretical exploration of inclusion, and so their final report documents the theory and practice of inclusion. The EADSNE study was based on findings from literature based descriptions of different models of inclusive education in the member countries, case studies exploring how inclusion works and what makes it work, and expert visits and exchanges. These all fed into a “broad”, “qualitative” understanding (p. 14) of inclusive practice in secondary schools.

The POSG study used a futures study methodology, specifically a scenario planning approach, as they recognised “these exercises were useful in considering future options for the school system in general terms” (p. 4). They acknowledge that little previous futures work has been carried out from the perspective of SEN and disability, and it is this gap they hoped to fill. Norwich (2007) reports the stepped approach they used to constructing the scenarios, which were created during a 2 day workshop. The workshop was led by a facilitator with a professional background in business/corporate strategy planning. The stepped approach to scenario development began with a consideration of general socio-political features, which then narrowed to the creation of vision statements about the general school system and finally a formulation of aspects relating to SEN/Disability. The “vision statements” were formulated around a list of 21 statements, 5 related to the socio-political landscape, 10 related to the education system and 8 related to implications for SEN and inclusion policy and practice (see Fig 2.4).

A distinction of the process used by the POSG is that the scenarios are based on what education, inclusion and provision for students with special educational needs and disabilities could look like if certain policy formulations are carried through. The other scenarios and descriptions of inclusive schools have a focus on what the future school should look like, as well as making recommendations on how they become this way.

The outcomes of the POSG study are presented as 3 scenarios, and contain details at each of the levels outlined in figure 2.4. They are descriptions written in the present tense, describing the scenario as if it currently existed. Scenario 1 was entitled “inclusive citizenship”, scenario 2 “extended choice and diversity” and scenario 3 “regulated choice and diversity”. Armstrong also presents a scenario, entitled “*An ideal school?*” written in the present tense, describing what the reader as a visitor to the school would see. Although it is unclear if a specific futures studies’ methodology was used, Armstrong states that it is structured around the key points made by other contributors to the edited book, as well as “other accounts”. What these other accounts consist of is unclear.



**Figure 2.4: Stages of scenario creation and headings of vision statements (Norwich, 2007, p. 75)**

A scenario of a future school is also presented by Burnett and Carrington, entitled “*The 2050 (Special) School*” and describes a future school written in the present tense. There may be some confusion caused to readers, due to the use of the word “special” in the title of the scenario. Their remit was to address the question of “what type of schools do we need that would be able to

educate all children in the one setting?”, and yet the word special seems to describe a particular type of school. This is further confused by the first statement in the scenario “all pupils, no matter their level of disability, attend their local P-12 school” (p. 4). This could be taken as all pupils in an area, with and without disabilities, or all pupils with a disability in an area.

The main outcome of the Thomas et al study is a book, the first half of which “makes the case for inclusion” (p. ix), examining its “provenance and practice” (p. ix). The second part of the book describes the research project. The specific outcomes I describe in this literature review are taken from the final chapter (Chapter 12), which contains a list of recommendations for the development of inclusive projects. These recommendations stemmed from the theoretical discussions and from their research findings. As they are framed as recommendations they are to be seen from the perspective of a mainstream school setting up an inclusion project like the one they are describing, rather than a future inclusive state. The EADSNE study also results in a set of recommendations, in this case to engender inclusive classroom practice in secondary schools. These are illustrated with extracts from the case studies, literature reviews and expert visits.

Mittler sets out an “agenda for reform” (p. 4) where he outlines the current situation faced by children with disabilities and their families, and gives examples of how this can be improved. The last two pages of his article outline changes that could be made to current policy reforms to “begin to address the wider social and personal needs of those who have been failed by the system” (p. 7), in the case of his article the child “with a significant disability” (p. 3). Wedell also outlines factors in the current system which “militate against responsiveness to children and young people’s individual needs” (p. 19). He then outlines a set of systematic changes which will overcome these factors. It is this set of systematic changes and reforms that I refer to below. Burnett and Carrington also describe some of the theory behind inclusion, including a discussion of the social model as an explanation of the current influence and practice of special education. This is an outcome in addition to their scenario as described above.

The context of each description of an inclusive school varies; the work by Wedell and the POSG has a national focus, specific to the policy and legislative context in England. Mittler’s paper begins with an international context, but quickly narrows to a focus on England. The work by Thomas, Walker and

Webb examines national and international literature on inclusion, but again, narrows this focus to a specific inclusion project in one area in England. Armstrong mentions his ideal school is located in a UK context. The EADSNE project examines inclusion in a range of European countries. Burnett and Carrington do not contextualise their project, or the location of the inclusive school they describe.

### **2.08(b) An “inclusive school”**

As the focus of each of these papers is on inclusive education it is of little relevance to examine specific mentions of inclusion or diversity. However, they all agree that in order to achieve a more inclusive school or education system a restructuring process needs to be worked through, restructuring from what exists currently to a future state of inclusive schools. Each authors’ description of an inclusive school describes one that is different to the current model of education.

Most of the studies I refer to make no distinction between primary and secondary schools, with the exception of the EADSNE (2005) study, which specifically explores inclusion in a secondary context, and the Armstrong scenario (2012), which describes a school with a co-located primary school. In this scenario primary and secondary staff work closely together, and pupils visit and use facilities in the other school. Armstrong claims this lessens difficulties of transition, as children are familiar with the secondary school. The authors of the EADSNE study recognise that approaches to inclusion that are effective in primary schools can also contribute to effective inclusion at secondary school.

The descriptions of inclusive practice (and discussion of the changes needed at the level of current practice) are located at an organisational level (such as curriculum, pedagogy and grouping) and at a stakeholder level (teacher role, parent role, peers and the students themselves). Some of the authors also acknowledge the external conditions that need to be met in order for inclusion to be successful. I discuss the descriptions of inclusive schools below using these levels as headings, along with sub-headings of common themes that emerge from each study, based on the points in figure 2.4. I acknowledge that, like any classification system, some headings could be interchangeable (for example, curriculum could appear in the external factors if it is a national curriculum).

### ***(i) School organisational factors***

#### ***Content of learning***

The first theme is that of the content of learning, with associated consideration of curriculum and pedagogy. Several of the papers describe a curriculum based on an agreed national framework (Burnett & Carrington, 2006; Norwich, 2007). There is variation in the level of stakeholder and community input. For example, the three scenarios produced by the POSG all make reference to curriculum, ranging from a nationally prescribed curriculum (scenario 1) to a situation where there is a wealth of diverse curricula, all shaped by the learners, families and stakeholders involved (scenario 2). Some authors argue that any curriculum should be standard for all students (EASDNE, 2005), however, Thomas et al (1998) note that differentiation could be used to make the curriculum more inclusive, differentiating at the level of outcomes, materials or activity. This leads to notions of personalised learning, recognising that ALL students will need curriculum adaptation in some form (EASDNE, 2005). Personalised learning for Wedell (2005b) means a match between the purposes of learning and the needs of the pupil. The extreme of this is described in scenario two by the POSG, where children and young people identify their own learning needs, participate in the development of their own learning plans and access a variety of learning paths. Armstrong describes how the school works in “a democratic, person-centred way with the strengths that children have” (p. 111).

Burnett & Carrington (2006) state that the curriculum focus should be on development of the whole child rather than narrow subject definitions (with some focus on literacy, numeracy and technology). Other additions to the curriculum should be a curriculum that addresses wider social and personal needs (Mittler, 2008). The EADSNE study states that inclusion works best when pupils are taught how to learn and how to solve problems. This is echoed by Armstrong’s emphasis on “children internalising and mastering ‘thinking skills’” (p. 109), in addition to developing self-study and self-awareness. Scenario one of the POSG covers all of these aspects, describing a curriculum containing “cognitive, meta-cognitive and social and citizenship aspects” (Norwich, 2007, p. 76). Armstrong sees a definitive role for an outdoor curriculum, beyond school sports.

Burnett & Carrington (2006) outline that in year 9 the holistic curriculum they describe splits into tracks, at which point an academic and vocational

pathway model takes over. The notion of separate tracks is not described by any of the other studies; the individual learning pathways described above negate the need for these. Scenario 1 by the POSG deals with the academic/vocational divide by ensuring these are blended for 14-16 year olds. Burnett & Carrington see the need for another track, for children with severe disabilities, ensuring they become as “independent as possible” (p. 5). The only other scenario that specifically mentions children with severe disabilities is Scenario 1 of the POSG which states that children with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not follow the national common curriculum, but instead have an “adapted functional version of the national framework” (p. 76).

Pedagogy is discussed by Thomas et al and in the POSG scenarios described by Norwich. These accounts vary on discussion of a need for a specialised pedagogy for children with special educational needs. Wedell and Thomas et al claim none is needed, whereas the “inclusive citizen” scenario describes the national prescribing of “pedagogic adaptations for areas of disability” (Norwich, 2007, p. 76). Other aspects of pedagogy that are discussed within the POSG scenarios are the extent to which pedagogy should be learner determined or teacher focused, or alternatively outcomes orientated. A pre-requisite for inclusion is that teachers are introduced to “appropriate pedagogical skills” (EADSNE, 2005, p. 29).

Learning and teaching should have a cooperative basis (EADSNE); “for inclusion to succeed, staff have to be able to work together and support each other” (Thomas et al, 1998, p. 192). Cooperative teaching of a class should involve teachers, teaching assistants and other professionals (EADSNE). Learning should be collaborative between pupils, and the teachers’ role is to support this collaborative learning (Wedell, 2005b), the EASDNE (2005) study terms this “cooperative learning”. The cooperative learning should be planned for and carefully structured (Thomas et al, 1998), and can include peer tutoring. (This aspect is discussed in more detail in the “peers’ role” subsection below.) Cooperative learning is something that arises from the “positive educational practice framework” (p. 111) that is the foundation to Armstrong’s school. Armstrong claims this approach helps children learn to work together, “with positive outcomes” (p. 111).

### ***Location of learning***

As previously discussed the EASDNE research posits that it is the subject specialism model and organisational strategies of secondary schools that result in “serious issues for student inclusion at the secondary level” (p. 8). The EASDNE research project uncovered one model that appeared to deal with this issue, that of a “home area system”, where students stay in their own area which consists of a small number of class rooms and a small group of teachers who deliver all subjects as a group. The benefits of this model are that it provides a stable and consistent environment, a sense of belonging, and enhances teacher cooperation.

The reverse of this is the approach suggested by Wedell, who notes the potential for learning to occur beyond the classroom and school. Armstrong’s school does not seem to have traditional classrooms, but rather “different learning spaces [that] blend into each other in subtle ways” (p. 109). He describes informal, flexible spaces for group work, a main school space, and smaller class spaces. One of the POSG scenarios describes how learning can take place in various sites, with “diverse learning facilitators and modalities of learning” (Norwich, 2007, p. 78). Concrete examples of this variety are home and work related settings, and the use of ICT. (A few of the other studies make reference to the use of ICT, but this is as a pedagogic tool in the case of scenario 1 by the POSG, or as a social tool, in Burnett and Carrington’s future school.) Armstrong describes the role the outdoors plays in personal development and curriculum opportunities.

Another aspect of the location of learning is the consideration of where children with disabilities are taught. This is explored to some extent in discussions of withdrawal and pupil grouping below. The question of location of learning also has a provision element, where the types of schools that exist in the future state are considered. This is discussed in the “external conditions” subsection below.

### ***Grouping***

Some of the authors describe how pupil grouping should occur within an inclusive school, including consideration of the use of pupil withdrawal as a tool. This ranges from Thomas et al’s assertion stressing the importance of the placement of all students with others in their year group, to Wedell’s view that withdrawal should simply be seen as a type of flexible grouping. Thomas et al note that there is little evidence that withdrawal is beneficial. Two of the

POSG scenarios mention withdrawal, in scenario 3 the withdrawal of children with disabilities is practised in order to provide learning support but this is in keeping with learner preferences. Scenario 1 on the other hand suggests that individuals and small groups be occasionally withdrawn from class, but make it clear this is for all children, not just those with disabilities. The EASDNE (2005) describe a “cooperative teaching” model, involving cooperative teaching by the learning support assistant, teacher, teacher colleague, or any other professional. This approach, they contend, will mean pupils with SEN do not have to be withdrawn; rather, support is provided in-classroom.

Thomas et al contend that ways should be found to enable students of different abilities to work together, and that curricular inclusion can be achieved by changing the arrangement of groups. The EADSNE advocate heterogeneous grouping, noting that the propensity of secondary schools to stream their pupils contributes to the marginalisation of students with SEN. Wedell makes a case for pupil grouping that is flexible, to match learner needs and curriculum demands, that larger or smaller groupings each have a role to play, and that withdrawal takes place in this context of flexible grouping. Each of the scenarios designed by the POSG make some mention of different pupil groupings, including a specified proportion of time spent in mixed-ability groups, but also ability and cross-aged grouping, and, in scenario 3 the use of grouping by learner interests.

### ***Multi-agency services***

This is placed in the school organisation section due to the emphasis some authors place on locating the services within schools. Armstrong describes a key role in school for an educational psychologist (EP), dedicating a fifth of his 5 page scenario to a discussion on the role of the EP. The EP plays a large role in collaboration and consultation, and is in school for 80% of the week. The school learning support coordinator and the EP have strong relationships with external support which they can call upon to support students. Mittler and Wedell both describe a vision of an integrated and inclusive children’s service, with schools as a focal point for support and services for all children and families in an area local to the school. Mittler gives explicit detail: the multiagency teams and support staff should include teachers who have been trained as counsellors, a named social worker and a nurse. The inclusion of the latter two professionals, he argues, is no different from the arrangements that have allowed educational psychologists and speech and language

therapists to work in schools (although I believe that EPs and SLTs are not as easily accessible as he implies, see Armstrong, 2012, Miller, 2001 and Barnard, Broach, Prior, & Potter, 2002). Thomas et al (1998) also say inclusive schools need access to an array of services. In their discussion on cooperative teaching the EADSNE reference to “other professionals” (p. 17) and “professionals from outside school” (p. 6). To enable their cooperative teaching approach to be effective they note the need for collaboration between teachers, other educational support staff and other professionals. There is little discussion of the location of specialist services in the POSG scenarios, one describes how extended schools maintain additional provision for children with disabilities.

### ***(ii) Stakeholder role and responsibility***

The second aspect I wish to discuss is that of the role and responsibility of the various stakeholders. I break these down below according to the type of stakeholder, but they cover the areas of “partnership and relationships”, “workforce skills” and “user behaviour” in Figure 2.4.

#### ***Teachers’ role***

Each of the studies makes some mention of the teacher’s role in the inclusive school. This was mainly in terms of the requirements for teacher training and continuing professional development. There was brief discussion about the role of the teacher in an inclusive school that did not relate to notions of training. Wedell describes the teacher as a supporter or facilitator of learning, one who should view tasks from the perspective of the learner and then be able to adjust and modify the content of learning if required. This is a view supported by Burnett and Carrington who see teachers as the key people in helping the child meet their learning goals. They recognise that the teacher’s role changes as the pupils age and become independent learners. They did see the teacher as maintaining a key role for students with the severest disabilities, teachers should “develop...appropriate learning opportunities and goals to enable [the child with disabilities] to continue to develop, improve and achieve” (Burnett and Carrington, 2006, p. 7). Why they see only children with severe disabilities needing this is unclear.

Wedell, Armstrong and the EADSNE outline how teachers have a responsibility in implementing effective teaching. Wedell does not provide detail of what this looks like. The EADSNE define this as “monitoring, assessment, evaluation and high expectations” (EADSNE, p. 22), noting that this approach benefits all

students, particularly those with special educational needs. Armstrong sees individual assessments by an educational psychologist as being of use only if they help a teacher teach more effectively. Burnett and Carrington also view the teacher as someone who supports the assessment of the achievement of the child's learning goals. An effective teacher according to the EADSNE is one who contributes to decreasing the gap between students with and without disabilities. The notion of teacher effectiveness is picked up in the scenarios created by the POSG as they considered issues of quality assurance systems, although not described in detail.

Additionally the teacher's role is to create a sense of belonging (EADSNE), to be a line manager of support staff (Thomas et al) and to be a "significant adult" for pupils with severe disability. The EADSNE study highlights teacher attitudes and experience as key prerequisites for inclusion; teachers need to have a willingness to include all children. The role of the "learning support coordinator" in Armstrong's ideal school results in "teachers are confident in their flexible and adaptive approach to the teaching of all children in their class" (p. 113).

In order to enable teachers to meet these roles there is a perceived need for enhanced teacher training and professional development, an element that is described in most of these images of future schools. The fact that it is a theme discussed across each image of future school gives legitimacy to the EADSNE study raising insufficient teacher training as a "specific problem area" (EADSNE, 2005, p. 10) in implementing inclusion, particularly in the secondary sector. Burnett and Carrington give the most detailed description of "significant changes to teacher training" (2006, p. 7). They envisage an increased focus on all trainee teachers gaining a full understanding of human development, a belief echoed by both Wedell and Armstrong, who focus on need for understanding of child and adolescent development and psychology. Burnett and Carrington recognise that development can take "various individual forms" (p. 7) and teachers need to be aware of this.

As well as being introduced to "appropriate pedagogical skills" (EADSNE, 2005, p. 29) trainee teachers should also have an in-depth knowledge of learning (Burnett and Carrington, Wedell), including what determines learning at different ages (Wedell). They should also be aware of what constitutes learning in "different circumstances" (Wedell, 2005b, p. 8). Burnett and Carrington extend this to trainee teachers having an understanding of "the

possible impact that disability can have on the learning of some individuals and also how they can help alleviate this” (2006, p. 7). Mittler terms this “disability awareness” (2008, p. 8).

Mittler sees a need for joint, multi-disciplinary training, with input from parents and people who are disabled. Burnett and Carrington include both these aspects in their description of initial teacher training, saying trainee teachers should “spend considerable time working with and alongside those from other professions to share knowledge, approaches and techniques” (2006, p. 7), and that there should be input in training from people with disabilities.

A final aspect of teacher training, which only Burnett and Carrington describe, is an extended time in school on placement gaining “a detailed knowledge of the curriculum framework” (p. 7). This cumulates in an extended placement for a whole term in the school they are going to work at “to develop their knowledge of the local aspects and opportunities for learning” (p. 7) that are particular to that school.

The POSG makes no specific reference to teacher training, but scenario 1 notes how teachers and teaching assistants are trained to national standards, and are deployed flexibly to meet learning needs. Teachers are well prepared for co-teaching, working with mixed ability groups. Scenario 2 describes how the “teaching” workforce is drawn from different backgrounds and professions, and that there are diverse quality assurance systems for workforce training.

Due to the nature of the Thomas et al study, they mention training that should be implemented before an “inclusion project” like the one they are describing is started. They see the need for staff to be prepared for the introduction of inclusion, with preparatory training and reading.

Mittler envisages a new approach to both teacher training and professional development, one which sees CPD as a priority, rather than the current low status these areas hold. He believes all practitioners who work with children should have “fully funded professional development pathways” (p. 8) whatever their level. CPD should become a requirement for promotion and professional registration for teachers, and one that should be seen as a right, rather than something to be negotiated and self-funded. Some of his recommendations have since been realised, for example, the need for Special Educational Needs Coordinators to be trained and accredited is now mandatory (“The Education

(Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (No. 1387) ", 2009). Burnett and Carrington extend this model to one that involves the undertaking of action research by teachers at their local university.

Training should be on-going (Thomas et al, Burnett and Carrington, Armstrong), and this training should include teaching on the "practicalities of making inclusion work" (Thomas et al, 1998, p. 196). Burnett and Carrington envisage a system where in order to maintain their registration there is a professional expectation that all teachers keep up to date with developments in learning and disability. Staff development and support are seen as a key part of the learning support coordinator's role in Armstrong's system.

Other aspects of professional development for teachers could include teachers having time to reflect on different teaching strategies (EADSNE) and informal training through the homeroom and co-teaching approaches used (EADSNE). Burnett and Carrington suggest that all teachers have a role in "developing and supporting future teachers and other professionals" (2006, p. 7). Key staff, such as the educational psychologist and learning support coordinator, in Armstrong's school spend one day a week in university, both to enhance their own learning, but also to make connections with teacher trainees.

### ***Pupils' role***

The role of the pupil within the models of inclusive schools is varied. Both Wedell and Armstrong acknowledge that the learner should be seen as an active participant in learning, rather than passive. The extended version of Wedell's article (2005a) gives some detail of what is needed for this to occur: the development of a different relationship between teachers and pupils; the potential of ICT (Information Communication Technology) in allowing learners to access knowledge independently; and the necessity of ensuring learner motivation. Rather than presenting a list of ways the pupil can be involved however, he returns to what teachers, parents and teacher trainers should do to cater for this. I contend that these approaches simply place the pupil as passive again. Armstrong describes how the structures and ethos of the school contribute to children becoming "choice-makers", "meaning makers in their own learning" (p. 112), and the development of autonomy and sense of personal responsibility. These structures include students having ownership of spaces in the school, and teaching sessions involving time for students to be asked for their "views, perceptions and understanding" (p. 112).

The EADSNE report found that a “greater emphasis on giving the ownership for learning to students is a successful approach” (p. 26), illustrating this with concrete examples of this, such as pupils choosing what time to start their day and allowing students to be active managers of their own learning process. Burnett and Carrington’s model describes a school where pupils’ input into their learning increases with their “age and ability to input” (Burnett & Carrington, 2006, p. 5). Success in their school is judged against targets personally set by the learner. Mittler also sees pupils as having an active role in their own learning, independently accessing this learning. The three scenarios the POSG outline each have the pupil in a different role, in each scenario there is some degree of learner participation in identifying learning needs or desired learning experiences. This ranges from being consulted about individual learning experiences in scenario 1, to having some scope to specify content and learning orientation, in scenario 3, or being part of team that determines the curriculum content (scenario 2). Two of the scenarios also describe the role of the child in identifying their own learning needs and defining their own learning plans. In the future school described in scenario 3 pupils are given as much autonomy and responsibility for own learning as possible.

### ***Parents’ role***

Each of the studies mentions the role of parents, albeit briefly in the case of Thomas et al, Armstrong, and the EADSNE report. Only one of Thomas et al’s final recommendations refers to the role of parents, and this is simply that they should have direct contact with the child’s school. In a discussion on the importance of a homeroom and team teaching approach the EADSNE mentioned that the teams should be expected to cooperate with parents. Parents are not seen as part of the team. They also describe how schools should communicate class rules to parents. Parents had no role in the creation and management of these rules. Armstrong sees them as being part of the team that identifies a child’s needs, and that works out interventions to meet those needs. The other studies outline the role of the parents in more depth. Several of the studies describe where parents can be involved – two of the POSG see a role for parents in determining the curriculum, at a general level, and also in terms of a learning plan for their child. Burnett and Carrington also view parents as being part of the team that negotiate learning plans, including being consulted on “the most appropriate pathway for [their child] into the adult world” (Burnett & Carrington, 2006, p. 6).

Other aspects of parental participation are demonstrated in the POSG scenarios, whereby parents have recourse to other parties if they are unsatisfied with the educational provision for their child. In the first and third scenario this involves the rights of all parents to undergo disagreement resolution if they are dissatisfied with provision (this is not just for parents of children with special educational needs or disabilities). Scenario one then evolves to parents having the right to refer their case to a tribunal if the disagreement resolution fails. Scenario two is different in that parents form one of the “user groups” that are themselves responsible for curriculum planning and school provision.

Mittler is aware that despite recent policy commitments to listen to parental voice, (similar to those described above), there still exists a gulf between home and school. For his 2040 school he notes the need “to find new ways of supporting teachers and parents to develop much closer working partnerships” (Mittler, 2008 p. 7). He suggests practical ways of achieving this: teachers visit families in their homes annually; a specific job in the school of “home-school liaison teacher”; having a greater focus on parental involvement as part of teachers’ initial teacher training and professional development.

A future inclusive school is one where parents’ expertise is recognised, acknowledged and utilised by teachers (Wedell, 2005b; Wolfendale, 1997). Mittler (2008) sees a role for parents in training and professional development, on a participatory level (they are part of the audience), and also involving contributions from parents. Burnett and Carrington extend this further, noting the need for all members of the school community to take on “educational leadership roles” (Burnett & Carrington, 2006, p. 10).

Mittler (2008) makes a further suggestion in his description of an inclusive school in the 2040s, one of preparing and equipping pupils for parenthood, which could include preparing them for a participatory role in their future children’s education.

### ***Support staff***

A few of the accounts describe the presence of a support assistant in their descriptions of inclusive schools. Thomas et al are very critical of the current conceptualisation of these members of staff as a “carer” of a “target child” (1998, p. 196). They argue that the emphasis should be on the educational

aspect of their role. They also believe that supporters should be given the flexibility to support anyone who needs it, not simply the child with SEN. Burnett & Carrington view support as being provided for the children with the most significant disabilities, with technology offering the opportunity for disabled students to access similar opportunities and experiences as their peers. The EADSNE note how “at times a student with SEN needs specific help that cannot be given by the teacher during the daily classroom routine”, adding that at these times “other teachers and support personnel come on to the scene” (EADSNE, 2005, pp. 16-17).

Thomas et al believe school staff should work together, envisaging that support could be achieved with a team teaching model. Co-teaching with learning support assistants is an approach outlined in the POSG scenario 1. Scenario 2 describes how there are a wide range of learning support depending on the ethos of the school it is implemented in. Wedell in the extended version of his article gives a concrete example of how the support teacher and class teacher could cooperate: “the teacher... take[s the] time to focus on the particular learning needs of those pupils who need additional support while the teaching assistant, or another teacher in a team-teaching context, support a larger grouping of the remaining pupils within the teachers’ objectives for the session” (Wedell, 2005a, p. 31).

### ***Peers’ role***

Most of the pictures of inclusive schools discuss some element of peer involvement in learning. In an extended version of his paper Wedell (2005a) discusses the importance of collaborative learning, describing peer support from same aged pupils, older pupils, and peer counselling, including “pupils taking responsibility for peers” (p. 28). Collaborative learning and peer tutoring are also described as being used in the first of the 3 POSG scenarios. Cooperative learning is one of the key policy recommendations for creating inclusive secondary schools in the EADSNE report, stating that “students who help each other... benefit from learning together” (EADSNE, 2005, p. 6), these benefits occur at a social and cognitive level. In the examples of what this could look like they note cooperative learning is often reciprocal, and opportunities should occur for both the “more able” and “less able” (p. 18) students to play the role of the tutor. They add that “there are no indications that the more able students suffer from such situations in terms of lacking new challenges or opportunities” (p. 18). Burnett and Carrington extend the

peer group, when describing that pupils receive peer feedback on projects they include “peers in other countries” (Burnett & Carrington, 2006, p. 8).

Thomas et al describe how schools should take positive action to promote social relationships. One of these “positive actions” is providing “systems for facilitating peer cooperation within the school” (Thomas et al., 1998, p. 194). These can include peer tutoring, buddy systems and cooperative learning. Thomas et al are the only authors to offer a proviso, stating that peer-tutoring approaches need to be well thought out and organised, rather than simply adopting an *ad hoc* approach. The first of the POSG scenarios outline how the 1% of learners with Profound and multiple disabilities that are placed in separate settings (see below) are to have learning and social participation with less significantly disabled peers and non-disabled students. The other two scenarios do not mention peers directly, but do acknowledge there is the need for social integration during and outside of curriculum time.

Burnett and Carrington are unusual as they are the only authors who make mention of peers in terms of the peers supporting the children with the most severe difficulties. What form of support this takes is unspecified. They also make reference to the role of technology in enabling children with disabilities to interact with peers, both in terms of allowing physical access to a peer group and online interactions.

### ***(iii) External conditions***

#### ***Types of school***

Many of the descriptions of inclusive schools make mention of different types of schools that exist. Most common is the notion of a neighbourhood school, but in each of the visions that describe this there is some element of an alternative. One of the scenarios created by the POSG describes how all children attend their local neighbourhood school, and that no special schools exist. They do however state that “about 1 per cent with profound and multiple disabilities” (Norwich, 2007, p. 77) are mainly in self-contained groups in these schools. It is stated that these children do participate as much as possible with other groups. (On reflection this seems a disproportionately large amount, considering that traditionally the figure for the proportion of children in special schools is approximately 1% (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006), and children with PMLD account for only part of this. Personal correspondence with one of the

collators of the study, B Norwich (4<sup>th</sup> December, 2012) highlighted that this point may have been erroneously reported, and a smaller percentage meant.) Thomas et al make it clear that “neighbourhood schools” are an important part of school choice, stating that “families should be able to choose a well-supported and accessible place at a school in their home neighbourhood” (Thomas et al., 1998, p. 197). The use of the word “choose” implies there are other schools to choose between; however, the authors discuss the importance of being educated in a neighbourhood school in terms of relationship building. They do note that, in the inclusion project they studied, the children who attended a special school that was closed did not end up attending their local school, but rather a mainstream school that was local to the special school that had closed. I have already discussed the ambiguity of Burnett and Carrington’s future scenario; as a reader I am unsure if they are describing a neighbourhood school for all disabled children in a community, or all children in a community. However, as their theoretical discussion preceding their description of their future school is based on the premise of “an inclusive philosophy” it can be assumed that the school they describe is for ALL local children. Armstrong makes no mention of whether his ideal school is a neighbourhood school. He does state that in his scenario special schools have almost disappeared from the UK, but there is provision of local specialist services in addition to the school. The school is committed to meeting the needs of all who attend, whatever their need.

Mittler uses Socratic questioning in order to cause the reader to question why children rarely move from special schools to their “local school” (Mittler, 2008, p. 5), and if new specialist special schools will be judged by the number of children they relocate to the child’s local mainstream school. His vision is that “the local school is at the heart of all services for local children” (p. 7).

The “extended choice and diversity” scenario portrays an educational landscape which involves a plethora of types of settings: special schools, inclusive schools, co-located schools, disability specialised schools and so on. The scenario describes how this has resulted in “children with similar kinds and degrees of disabilities learn[ing] in distinct settings” (Norwich, 2007, p. 79). The final POSG scenario describes an educational context of state maintained and non-state schools, involving diverse partnerships between educational organisations and providers. Within the context of regulated choice, this diversity of provision for students with disabilities gives “a limited

legitimacy” (Norwich, p. 81) to separate special schools/centres, and any that do exist have to meet national conditions such as a minimum degree of participation with non-disabled.

Wedell makes no mention of local or neighbourhood schools, nor does he mention the existence of special schools. He does state that “learning can also be provided in a variety of school and college locations” (Wedell, 2005b, p. 9). The EADSNE project acknowledges that the inclusion of children with SEN in the mainstream classrooms in secondary school is currently affected by “local and regional provision” (EADSNE, 2005, p. 2) of other types of school.

### ***Funding and resourcing***

Wedell and Mittler both describe the flaws in the current system, whereby funding for pupils on statements draws resources away from other children with SEN. Mittler questions the legitimacy of a system whereby local authorities are expected to fund placements at residential schools “at the expense of many other local children” (p. 5). He also notes how resources go to those who are prepared to fight for them, which creates an inequitable system.

The EADSNE makes the recommendation that the government need to provide flexible funding arrangements in order to facilitate inclusion. Thomas et al go as far to suggest that the resources provided for any “inclusion project” should be “delivered not merely to project students but also to other students in the host school” (Thomas et al., 1998, p. 196).

Burnett and Carrington and the POSG describe concrete examples of how issues of funding and resourcing would be implemented in practice. Each of the three POSG scenarios describe where funding comes from and who is entitled to it. In each scenario there is discussion of additional funding for students with special educational needs or disabilities. In scenario 1 and 3 this is one of a number of student groups who are entitled to “additional compensatory resources” (Norwich, 2007, p. 77). In scenario 3, the additional resourcing provided for disability is “adequate” (p. 81). Scenario 1 is state funded, using a “comprehensive resource allocation model...with prescribed formulae” (p. 77); Scenario 3 is funded by both state and external organisations and schools are expected to raise funds to match what the state provides. Scenario 2 has additional resources coming from family income, voluntary contributions and a very limited use of state funded vouchers. In

this scenario tax incentives are given to individuals and organisations who donate to organisations which then fund and provide services for children with disabilities.

Burnett and Carrington describe a locally funded model, whereby the wider community surrounding the school is responsible for accessing and distributing funds, in accordance with a community agreed set of procedures. They argue that this is more inclusive, as it forces communities to “take responsibility for providing support to those individuals and settings which require more assistance as part of their agreed inclusive community values and beliefs” (p. 8).

Armstrong describes how prior to the creation of his future school successive governments committed to long term investment in and renewal of the education system. This has resulted in “realistic resources” to facilitate high quality provision and teaching, and inclusion.

#### ***Other external factors***

Other external factors are mentioned in varying degrees by the different models, they are not consistently mentioned by each of the authors. These include raising standards and accountability (Mittler, Wedell), the identification of special educational needs (POSG, Armsrong), leadership (Burnett and Carrington, Thomas et al, Armstrong) and wider culture, politic and society (Armstrong). In some cases the themes are only discussed in the contextualisation of the study – the describing of the situation as it currently exists, rather than in the descriptions of the future inclusive schools. They are also given as barriers to inclusion, rather than facilitators of it. Due to these reasons I have chosen not to discuss them in detail.

## **Section 2.09 Futures in Special Education**

This final section reports on two explorations of the future of special schools. One is a policy document describing the future role of special schools in Northern Ireland (Department of Education and Training Inspectorate, 2006), the second is a journal article which explores what the future for special schools and inclusion could be (Norwich, 2008b).

### **2.09(a) Process, methods and outcomes**

Neither of these reports claimed to use a futures studies methodology. Norwich’s study considers teachers’ and administrators’ views of the future role of special school, based on their responses to attempts to resolve a

placement dilemma. This was one small facet of a much larger international project reported by Norwich (2008a) in his book “Dilemmas of difference, inclusion and disability”. Data were generated through exploratory semi-structured interviews, whereby a set of educational “dilemmas” were stated, and participants were asked to rate their “degree of recognition of the dilemma and degree of resolution [of the dilemma]” (pp. 63, 64), followed by an interview discussion of the themes. The dilemma that has the most pertinence to this part of my literature review is the location dilemma. (For a further explanation of what constitutes a dilemma please see Chapter 8.)

The aims of the DETI study were to provide recommendations on how special schools may enable effective support, to inform a review of special educational needs and inclusion, and to “contribute positively to current educational debate on future collaborative arrangements in education in Northern Ireland” (p. i). The information for the report was gathered through the use of a questionnaire sent to all 49 special schools in Northern Ireland, in addition to focus groups of head teachers and deputy head teachers of special schools during two special school conferences. Inspection reports and previous surveys were also referred to.

The DETI study reported current trends, such as despite the pupil population in schools in Northern Ireland falling, the number of statemented pupils is increasing. Predictions were also made: “it is anticipated that, over time, special schools will cater for pupils with more complex needs or learning difficulties” (p. 9).

### **2.09(b) A future for special schools**

Each study foresaw a continued role for special schools and some form of special education system in the future. Norwich’s study found support for a “reduced but...persistent role for special schools” (p. 141), in some cases this was voiced as a “reluctant future for special schools” (p. 139). The DETI report also sees a continued role for special schools, perhaps unsurprisingly as it is based on a survey completed by special school head teachers. Special schools were seen in both studies as existing as part of a “continuum of provision” (DETI, 2006, p. 3; Norwich, 2008b, p. 141). This continuum was seen as necessary to “cater effectively for a diversity of need” (DETI, p. 3). Norwich critiques this view, suggesting it is too simplistic, and focuses purely on the placement of a child with SEN when other factors also need to be considered.

The DETI report suggests that special schools are needed to provide a range of interventions for children with special educational needs, prepare “individual intervention plans” (p. 11), and to play a major supporting role in the assessment of needs. This suggests a deficit view of the child with SEN – they are in need of an intervention that specialist knowledge can provide. Specialist knowledge is a theme that emerges from Norwich’s study; it was the provision of specialist professionals that acted as a justification for having special schools. The DETI report envisaged special schools utilising this specialist knowledge to enable them to develop as centres of expertise and excellence.

Norwich found several other justifications for the continuation of special schools that were shared by each participating country; 1/ some children with certain characteristics needed separate provision, 2/ special schools provide a safe environment, 3/ some parents want special schools and 4/ special schools were a more economic use of resources. (Point 4 was mentioned only by a few participants). Point one is reflected in the DETI report – special school staff raised concerns about the “suitability of mainstream schools to meet the needs of pupils who experience more severe learning and behavioural difficulties and who require higher degrees of adult support” (p. 10). This was made in reference to pupils with severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural or complex medical difficulties, or pupils with significant ASD. None of the other points Norwich mentions are found in the DETI report. The DETI report suggests that special schools have a role to play in raising pupil achievement, and acknowledge that they “support mainstream schools by sharing resources, promoting teacher to teacher contact, and encouraging and guiding multi-disciplinary working” (p. 10).

In addition to setting out the role for special schools, the DETI report sets out recommendations that require special schools to examine and improve their own practice, demonstrating an acknowledgement that special schools do need to develop in a range of areas. Just as there is a perceived need for teachers in inclusive schools to develop knowledge and understanding (as described above), the DETI report recommends that special schools should “develop further their levels of knowledge, skills and resources in particular areas” (p. 12). The presented vision of collaborative arrangements between special and mainstream schools “should be characterised by...high quality, specialised training, available to teaching and non-teaching staff in both school sectors”

(p. 12). There is also a perceived need for a “specialist advisory service to support special schools” (p. 13). In addition to this that despite the specialist provision that special schools offer, they also have to be further “developed to ensure that they can meet the needs of the pupils enrolled” (p. 13).

The potential or otherwise for a continued role for special schools in an “inclusive” setting was also described in the reviews of inclusive schools in section 2.08 above.

## **Section 2.10 Critique of futures studies**

There are dangers inherent in studies that aim to examine the future. In Milojevic’s (2002) list of philosophical assumptions for futurists she notes our visions of preferred futures are shaped by our values, and humanity is not always motivated by the “same values, aspirations and projects” (p. 11). This is apparent in the ongoing debate between advocates of inclusion and those who are against it (Brantlinger, 1997; Warnock & Norwich, 2010). It is also apparent in debates about the pictures of possible futures presented by some of the projects above.

A clear, if acerbic, example of this can be found in a newsletter article written by a German teacher, Knut Mertens (1999), entitled “*Revolution by stealth*”, that was heavily critical of the report published by the government of North-Rhine-Westphalia. (I have previously referred to this report in this chapter, it is the German study cited by Van Aalst (2001)). Mertens described the report as containing a “wealth of empty phrases and meaningless platitudes” (p. 9) authored by “ideologues”, “‘progressive’ advisors”, with links to the Marxist movement. As the title of the article indicates, he believes the aim of the report is to subvert the current education system. Since the “child-centred” approach he believes to be the heart of this movement has been lauded in teacher training institutes he claims international comparative results have fallen, teacher qualification requirements have fallen, and more experienced teachers are being “trampled underfoot”. It must be noted at this point that this critique is from an article published by an organisation that “favours the approach [of] a strong focus on direct instruction, including phonics, drill, and rote learning, in the early years to establish a solid base of literacy and numeracy on which to build students’ education in the higher grades” (Society for Quality Education, no date) and dismisses child centred learning as a

dangerous fad. This makes us aware that one person, or group's, notion of a preferable future for education is unlikely to be shared by all.

### **Section 2.11 Summary of part two of the literature review**

In this part of the review I have explored the history of futures studies, and have examined examples of futures studies projects in education. This has included an examination of futures of inclusion and of special schools. Not all the studies examined used a futures studies methodology, but they all presented an image of the future, whether through a list of recommendations or a narrative account of a future state. The processes, methods and outcomes of each report were described and compared, in addition to the findings and recommendations made. The chapter finished with a brief critique of futures studies, which is further explored in chapters 6-10.

Another way to approach this topic would have been to look at examples of best practices of inclusion in other countries. There are inherent difficulties here – one issue is that what is reported is not always the case. Mary Warnock reflects:

“While our committee was sitting, in the 1970s, we were constantly told of the wonders of the Norwegian system of Integration. Every school, we heard, accepted all local children, whatever their abilities or disabilities. That was where they all belonged. When we went to Norway to see for ourselves, it took me some time to notice that, though it was true that every classroom had its share of Downs Syndrome children, or others who for various reasons were slow learners, we never saw a really severely disabled child. When I asked how this could be, there was an embarrassed silence, and at last someone said that they were at hospital schools. When I pressed to see such a school, I was told that, since our visit was taking place under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, not of Health, we could not go into any hospital” (Warnock, 2006, p. 5).

Another approach would have been to look in more depth at recommendations other researchers and commentators have made on how to make schools more inclusive. (For example Ainscow et al., 2006; Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth et al., 2000; Daniels & Garner, 1999; Moran & Abbott, 2006; UNESCO, 2005). There would be a danger that this approach would result in a large proportion of this thesis being purely descriptive, the section that I have included above that compares visions of inclusive schools highlights many of the themes that run through much of the work on inclusion. Analysing this work would not

have answered the question of how we can make secondary schools in particular more inclusive, or what the barriers to secondary education are. I acknowledge that the ideas contained within other descriptions of inclusive schools I have read will have permeated into my own thoughts on inclusion and the development of the future school vignette.

This thesis seeks to produce and develop theoretical ideas about future schooling and creative ways of resolving differentiation dilemmas for the ultimate purpose of stirring debate about potential inclusive educational policy. In order to meet this aim I question:

- *What could future general schools for diversity (of learning needs) look like?*
- *How can we include more children with SEN in general secondary schools?*
- *What kind of education system would work best for diverse learning needs from age 11?*
- *How do we overcome/circumvent barriers such as those raised in part 1 of this thesis in order to include more children with SEN?*

## **Section 2.12 Chapter summary**

This two part literature review has explored many themes. It has examined concepts of diversity and inclusion, and tried to explore the phenomenon of over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools. This study reveals that although the pattern is mentioned in some policy documents, this is a rare occurrence. Even rarer is any explanation of the pattern. Where explanations are given these are based on speculations, rather than empirical studies. There is some literature that explores why inclusion in a secondary school context is more difficult than in a primary school one. It has been argued that increasing inclusion for one group of students could lead to inclusion in a wider sense of all groups. This is still a debated topic, and the dangers of simple assimilation and subsequent loss of group identity have been alluded to.

The literature review also describes the history and some examples of futures studies, with a particular focus on futures studies with a focus on education, inclusion and special educational needs. A gap has been perceived on the imagining of alternative educational systems for pupils with special educational needs as they are currently constructed. Whilst futures work is

beginning to have a role in development of English education policy, as shown in projects such as Beyond Current Horizons, students with special educational needs are rarely (if ever) alluded to in these scenarios.

This literature review covers the work that has previously been carried out in relation to my research questions and the themes surrounding them, highlighting the gaps that currently exist, it defines key terms, and considers work that examines and imagines educational futures. Themes that emerged from the fieldwork will be further reviewed and discussed in light of current literature in Chapter 5, the discussion of the findings arising from the data. The gaps highlighted here have led to the development of the research questions and aim of this study, as outlined above.

From this point the thesis splits into two parts. Part 1 (Chapters 3-5) seeks to explore and explain the phenomenon of over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools. Part 2 (Chapters 6-8) uses futures thinking tools to create, refine and evaluate one image of a future school which overcomes the problems and barriers raised in Part 1 of the study. Both parts will be drawn together in Chapter 9.

# Part 1: An empirical investigation

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## Chapter 3. Methodology to explore the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools

### Section 3.01 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of the research design considerations for Part One of the thesis, an exploration of why more students with special educational needs go to special school at the age of secondary transfer. It incorporates a discussion of the paradigmatic orientation of the study and relates this to the research aims, research questions, and the tools used. The research design is laid out in detail, with a description, explanation and justification of the data collection tools, the sample involved, and how the data were analysed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of validity, reliability and ethics along with a discussion of the strengths and potential limitations of the design.

### Section 3.02 Philosophical location of the study

According to Thomas (2007), knowledge about education and schooling can be sought in different ways: by asking very precise questions, and experimenting to find the answers, like a physical scientist; by infiltrating ourselves into educational cultures to observe in detail what happens, like anthropologists; by listening to accounts and narratives of the people with whom we are concerned, like historians; or by being eclectic and doing all of the above, depending on the questions posed. This section is a description of my view of knowledge as the methodological choices I made and the ultimate inferences I drew from my data are impacted by my philosophy and belief system regarding the nature of knowledge (University of Southampton, no date).

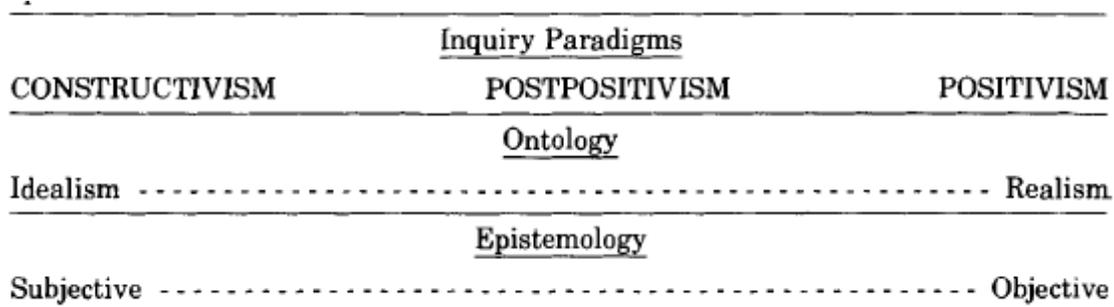


Figure 3.1: Spectrum of inquiry paradigms (Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle, 1991, p. 173)

A number of writers (Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1991; Newman & Benz, 1998; Onwuegbuzie, 2000) describe the various aspects of inquiry paradigms as lying along a continuum. This is rather than viewing them existing as dichotomies or binaries, or “oppositional perspectives” (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 17). (Examples of the supposed dichotomies are idealistic or realistic, subjective or objective, qualitative or quantitative, constructivist or positivist). In the following discussion I use Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle’s (1991) representation of this continuum (figure 3.1) to locate my own ontological and epistemological position. This positioning has important influences on the way I approached the methodology, method choices, data analysis and reporting of conclusions, as I illustrate below.

Figure 3.1 is based on Moon et al’s supposition that there is a spectrum of ways people see the world, and what they view as real. Moon et al take what they view as the three main paradigms, or philosophical orientations (constructivism, post-positivism and positivism), and place them on an ontological and epistemological framework. The nature of reality, or ontology (“what is”, Gray, 2004), can be held to be either a “realistic” one – in that there is a single reality out there (“external”, Bryman, 2008), that can be fully known, or an “idealistic” one – reality is made up of what the observer thinks is there, it is fashioned by the observer (Bryman, 2008). I lie somewhere between these two points. I believe there is a reality out there that can be measured, that there is more to the world than what is in my mind, but that my constructs, and the constructs of those around me, those involved in what I observe, shape this reality. Pawson and Tilley (1997) explain this “middle ground” thus:

“burglars are real, so are prisons, and so are the programs [*sic*] which seek to reduce burglary and rehabilitate prisoners and so too are the successes or failures of such initiatives. We do not accept that such components of the criminal justice system take their meaning narratively according to political rhetoric and legal discourse which surrounds the key players [as idealists might suggest]...[However] we do not assume that the examples mentioned above correspond to some elemental self-explanatory level of social reality which can be grasped, measured and evaluated in some self-evident way...[Reality also] involve[s] the interplay of individual and institution and of structure and agency” (p. xii-xiii).

Moon et al (1991) use the term “critical realism” as an ontology, one that lies between the poles of realism and idealism, and place it in the centre of the

continuum. (It should be noted that others use the term critical realism as a paradigm or philosophy in itself; Trochim (2006) for example describes it as a branch of post-positivism). Holding a critical realist ontology, according to Moon et al, implies there is a reality out there, independent of us (Bates & Jenkins, 2007), but we have trouble measuring it because of our human limitations. We can understand the phenomenon and causes to some extent, but not perfectly. Bryman (2008) goes further, arguing that we cannot measure the phenomenon at all from a critical realist perspective, but only its effects: “social phenomena are produced by mechanisms that are real, but that are not directly accessible to observation and are discernible only through their effects” (p. 590).

Moon et al’s (1991) diagram also depicts epistemology, “our perceived relationship with the knowledge we are un/dis/covering (*sic*)” (University of Southampton, no date), what is regarded as appropriate knowledge about the social world (Bryman, 2008) or simply “what it means to know” (Gray, 2004). The epistemological continuum on Moon et al’s (1991) diagram runs from a subjective pole to an objective pole. A subjective epistemology holds that the observer influences the study of the observed, the reality. An objective epistemology holds that the observer and observed are separate, the observer does not (or should not) influence that which is observed, and should remain unbiased and value-free. I would always strive to be unbiased in my reporting and analysis, but the very use of the word striving here implies a struggle, and it is not as simple as just “being objective”. I am human, with human concerns, limitations and experiences, and am bound to have these filter into my work, the slant I take on things, and the conclusions I draw. Again, this fits in the centre of Moon et al’s continuum, they describe it as “modified objectivism” (also in Guba, 1990), showing the importance of striving to remain objective (Pawson & Tilley, 1997), but acknowledging that this is not possible due to the nature of the observer’s influence. Checks therefore need to be put in place, acknowledging and reporting potential biases, and using systematic, clearly reported methods of enquiry.

As previously mentioned, although critical realism is seen by Moon et al as an ontological position, others see it as a paradigm, “a philosophy of science and...a meta-theory...that embraces ontological and epistemological elements” (Burnett, 2007, p. 2). Burnett offers several key tenets of critical realism: reality exists independently of our knowledge of it, therefore our knowledge is

fallible; knowledge is transient and relative to the context in which it is produced; individuals can reproduce and transform social structures as well as being formed by them, and *vice versa*; human actions may be associated with unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences; social structures are real things that have causal powers which may or may not be activated; and finally offers a transformative potential, acting as a mediating force for social praxis. One goal of research for the critical realist is “not to identify generalisable laws (positivism) or to identify the lived experience or beliefs of social actors (interpretivism); it is to develop deeper levels of explanation and understanding” (McEvoy & Richards, 2006, p. 69). Another goal is highlighted by the use of the adjective “critical”, demonstrating the emancipatory potential of this type of social research (Robson, 2002).

The discussion of philosophical orientations is a difficult one. Grix (2002) notes the “lack of clarity and constancy of the social science lexicon has led to a minefield of misused, abused and misunderstood terms and phrases with which students must contend” (p. 176). Moon et al (1991) mention this confusion themselves in their footnote to their diagram of a continuum, saying that despite its apparent simplicity it was problematic, complex and difficult to create. Crotty (1998) discusses the different and even contradictory use of key terms, and Avramidis and Smith (1999) highlight that due to the fact that “different labels are used in different texts, the task of identifying paradigms becomes even more perplexing” (p. 27). I have already mentioned above that the term “critical realism” can be defined as an ontological stance, or as a philosophical assumption in its own right. Finally, Daly (2008) reports that in political research reports the terms are “too often (it seems)... treated as unpleasant hurdles to be quickly vaulted in order to get on with the ‘business’ of political analysis” (p. 57). The same could be said of educational research.

Grix (2002) states the importance of identifying researcher assumptions at 3 levels:

- to understand the interrelationship of the key components of research (including methodology and methods);
- to avoid confusion when discussing theoretical debates and approaches to social phenomena;
- to be able to recognise others’, and defend our own, positions.

Thus, an understanding of the nature of knowledge, and my perception of it, will aid my justification, choice and use of a certain methodology and methods

(Crotty, 1998). It sets the context for methodological processes as described below, and will clarify issues of research design and help me recognise which designs will work best (Gray, 2004).

What impact does the above discussion have on my research? I “approach the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that [I] then examine in specific ways (methodology, analysis)” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). I am seeking an explanation for a phenomenon (the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools), a state of affairs that actually exists, and can be demonstrated by numerical representation (as shown by the graphs in chapter 1). The phenomenon can be explained by many factors, and may be influenced by society, culture and belief systems. Different people will have different views on why and how this phenomenon occurs (anecdotally, this is verified, nearly every time I tell someone about my research project, they think they know why). To get near any explanation of this phenomenon I need to get as many opinions as possible, from those who have experience of the phenomenon. However, no matter how many explanations I obtain I will not have arrived at the whole truth. My theory will be contingent. I also need to make clear the steps I have undertaken in my research and use checks to ensure the authenticity of reporting, and to declare any bias I have that may influence my findings. By doing this the reader can weigh up the conclusions I have raised according to their own ontological and epistemological stance, and decide what value my conclusions hold for them.

### **Section 3.03            Research aims and questions**

This section lays out the aims of my research and my research questions, as framed by the literature and the preceding discussion. As discussed in Chapter 1, the research questions for this study are a continuation of a previous project, my Masters dissertation (Black, 2009). That work described the situation as it exists, and has existed for some years – that secondary age pupils are over-represented in the special school population, and as a cohort of children ages throughout their time at school more students leave the mainstream for special school. Having described the situation as it currently exists, this part of the thesis is an attempt to discover both how and why it appears as it does; I move beyond the presentation and description of the situation, to an exploration of why it occurs. I would ask the reader to keep in mind that the ultimate purpose of this first part of my research project is to

inform the development of the model of a future school I present in the second part of this thesis. My original research questions informed my choice of methodology and methods. The questions did evolve and were refined as my fieldwork developed, and I make mention of this where appropriate in the following chapters.

This study is an empirical enquiry which aimed to explore why there are more pupils of secondary age in special schools, than pupils of primary age, and why the population of a special school rises as a cohort ages. The research questions that arise from this aim, and that have evolved over the study are:

- *What reasons are most commonly given by stakeholders as to why there are more pupils of secondary age in special schools than those of primary age?*
- *Are there differences in reasons suggested by different stakeholder groups?*

### **3.03(a) Explaining the phenomenon of over-representation – the place of theory**

My previous study (Black, 2009) identified and quantitatively described the phenomenon of over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools in England, based on an analysis of special school population government data. The project that is the focus of this thesis is concerned with explanation generation, trying to discover the reasons for the situation as it exists, the over-representation of secondary aged pupils, seeking to explain it. Identification, quantitative description and explanation generation are three possible aims of research according to Crabtree & Miller (1992). They differentiate three types of explanation generation – interpretive, statistical, and deductive, and exemplify them by listing possible research questions associated with each type. They claim “interpretive explanation generation”, which “seeks to discover relationships, associations and patterns based on personal experience of the phenomena under question” (p. 7), is concerned with “what” and “how” questions. Crabtree & Miller go on to say that any “why” questions, (why does it work, why did something occur) are questions answered by “statistical explanation generation”. I would argue, however, that the “why” questions are not limited to statistical analysis. I am seeking reasons why the phenomenon occurs, and propose that this can be discovered in a qualitative manner (see Maxwell, 2004a, 2004b).

As the previous chapter highlighted, literature that discusses the phenomenon of secondary age pupil over-representation in special schools is sparse, and what little exists is not based on empirical study. There was no existing theory to test, this was an unexplored phenomenon. This implies the need for an inductive approach. However, I do have my own pre-conceived ideas and theoretically based notions informed by my beliefs in wider topics and concepts regarding inclusion, the social model of disability, and my own experience in schools, which could be used to frame and test deductive explanations. Rather than build hypotheses around these I have strived to remain open to what the data says, but at the same time will use the wider concepts to discuss and illuminate the findings. In this sense I believe I move back and forth between inductive and deductive reasoning, having an on-going dialogue between theoretical concerns and empirical evidence (Esterberg, 2002).

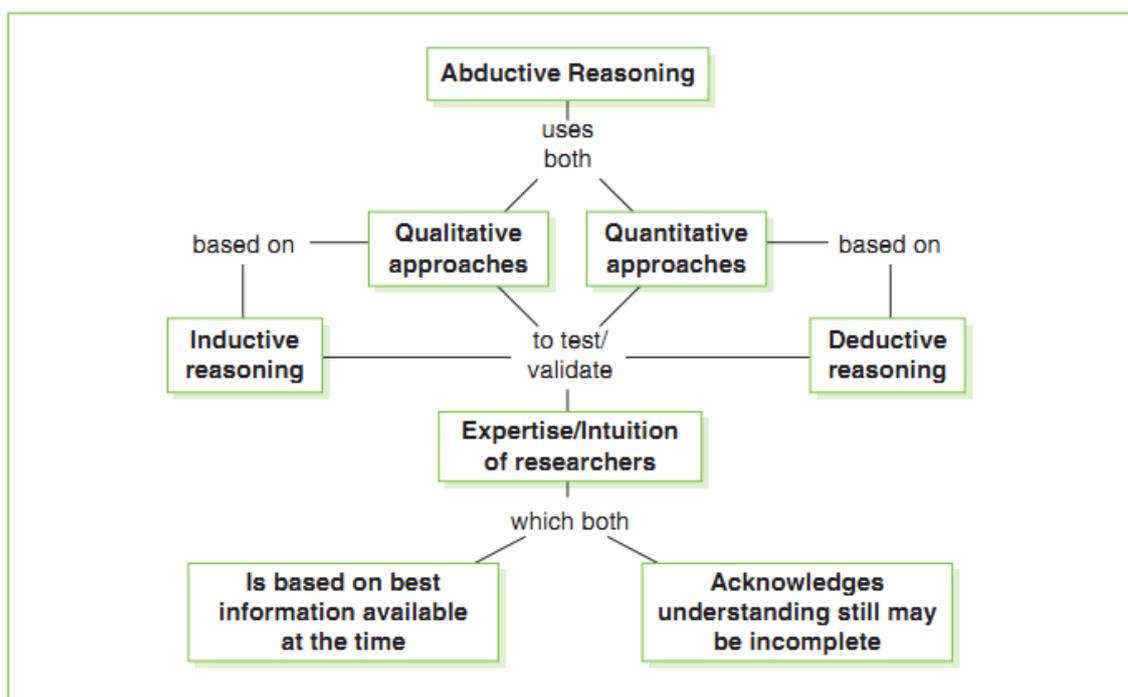


Figure 3.2: Abductive reasoning (Wheeldon & Ahlberg, 2011, p. 117)

There are various ways others have used to express a “middle ground” between the apparent dichotomy of deductive and inductive reasoning. Layder (1998) uses his concept of **adaptive theory**, the theory adapts to and is shaped by incoming data, which at the same time are filtered through, or adapted by some existing theory. Wheeldon & Ahlberg (2011) depict **abductive reasoning** (see fig 3.2), a process that values both deductive and inductive approaches. Instead of discussing the location of theory they

position the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, illustrating how different factors inform reasoning. I would argue that it does not necessarily follow that inductive = qualitative and deductive = quantitative approaches. McEvoy and Richards (2006) discuss **retroduction** as a critical realist logic, analysing events (or I would posit, phenomena) with respect to what may have, must have, or could have caused them (Olsen & Morgan, 2005), and to pose mechanisms and models to account for the observed phenomenon.

I use aspects of each of these “middle grounds”. My design sought to analyse and develop an explanation of the phenomenon of over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools with respect to what may have or could have caused this phenomenon. This explanation could be seen as a theory as I pose mechanisms to account for the phenomenon. This theory is shaped by the data that emerged, which itself was shaped by my existing ideas, theories and values (and those of the participants). Thus both inductive and deductive reasoning were used, as were qualitative and quantitative approaches.

### **Section 3.04            Methods and tools used**

After the consideration of the factors which influence the research design I now come to the practical discussion of the tools and techniques used. In this section I take each of my research questions and outline the method choice associated with each. The methods used evolved from the research questions: “what is most fundamental is the research question - research methods should *follow* research questions in a way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). Further, McEvoy and Richards (2006) assert that the choice of method for a critical realist should be dictated by the nature of the research problem and the questions posed.

As can be seen in Table 3.1 my research questions required both a qualitative and quantitative exploration. The literature terms this as a mixed methods approach. A mixed method design is one in which both quantitative and qualitative methods and analyses are used within one study (as opposed to mixed model designs which according to Mertens and McLaughlin, (2004) are studies that form part of a large research study, which asks several research questions, each answered with a different methodological approach). A further discussion of the utility of mixed methods design is made in the discussion of strengths and weaknesses of this study below.

As can be seen from the table, the opportunity to ask open ended questions of a range of stakeholders was needed, along with using a Likert-type scale. This lends itself to a survey approach. To obtain accurate comparisons between stakeholder groups and develop descriptions of frequency of mentions I used quantitative methods. The open-endedness of qualitative approaches allows themes to emerge that may not have been anticipated in advance of the fieldwork (Gillham, 2000; McEvoy & Richards, 2006).

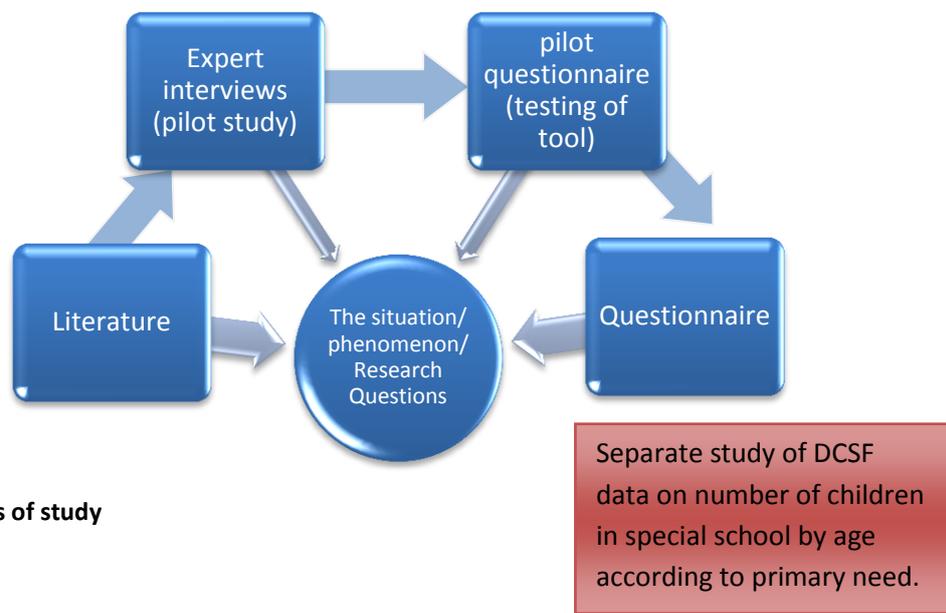
<b>Research question</b>	<b>Qualitative aspects</b>	<b>Quantitative aspects</b>	<b>Instruments used</b>
<b>What reasons are most commonly given by stakeholders as to why there are more pupils of secondary age in special schools than those of primary age?</b>	An opportunity for people involved in placement decisions to state their beliefs and experience as to what the reasons are.	Of all the reasons given, which are the ones that most frequently occur?	Open ended questions – why, in your experience (describe experience), what are the reasons Likert-type scale
<b>Are there differences in reasons suggested by different stakeholder groups?</b>	Open ended questions asked of a range of stake holders to describe success/failure of remembered cases.	Differences in frequency of terms, mean positioning on a Likert-type scale of pre-determined reasons	Open ended questions, asked to a range of stakeholders, Likert-type scale Cross-tabulation

**Table 3.1 Qualitative and quantitative aspects of the research questions.**

To answer the research questions and meet the aims of this project, I sought to survey a number of people who had experience of children moving from mainstream to special schools. In order to obtain a full picture from a range of perspectives, and not to privilege one voice, this needed to be carried out with participants in a variety of stakeholder roles. For purposes of triangulation and statistical data analysis, the survey included both open (such as “describe a case”) and closed questions (such as role) and a Likert-type rating scale of possible reasons. Of all the survey tools a semi-structured survey in the form of an electronic questionnaire was selected as the most appropriate tool as it could be distributed to, and self-administered by, a wider range of participants in a short time frame.

To ensure that the items measured by the rating scale was not constrained by the paucity of suggestions given in the literature to explain the over-representation of secondary aged children in special school, a pilot study was carried out. This was to elucidate reasons beyond those reported in the literature. The pilot study took the form of semi-structured interviews to obtain a breadth of suggestions as to why the situation may exist as it does.

All these sources were analysed independently, then brought together for a collective illumination of the situation. Figure 3.3 is a representation of the methods I used and how they help explain the phenomenon and/or answer the research questions. The arrows represent how data from each source informed other tools (for example, the pilot questionnaire was informed by the literature and expert interviews). The thicker the arrow the greater the role in informing that aspect of the study.



**Figure 3.3 Stages of study**

Figure 3.3 also alludes to a separate investigation I carried out as part of the background work to this study. Data provided by the DCSF on the population of children in special schools according to age and need was explored. This investigation is reported in appendix 1 as it has little bearing on the research questions asked, but does explore the population of children in special schools according to area of primary need as well as age.

Table 3.2 outlines details about the data collection, showing details of methods, participant type, participant number and data collection and analysis methods. Discussion in the next part of the chapter will make reference to and elaborate on this table. I discuss the expert interviews and the questionnaire as separate tools, and report on the selection of the sample, the response rates and the data collection methods of each tool. I also discuss

how the analysis of the expert interviews informed the development of the rating scale.

Stage	Method, participant type	Number	Participant breakdown	Data collection and analysis
<b>Expert Interviews (Pilot) May-June 2010</b>	“Expert” semi-structured interviews (LA/ school staff with experience of transition)	6	Educational psychologist Secondary SENCo Primary SENCo Advisory teacher School advisor Head of SEN monitoring	Face to face, taped and transcribed, or via email  Data driven coding, on NVivo™
<b>Questionnaire September-November 2010</b>	On-line questionnaires Key stakeholders: parents, LA staff, school head teachers/ SENCos in primary, secondary and special schools	102	Parents= 40 (+ 1 grandparent)  LA based = 30  School based = 31 (Primary=9, secondary=15, special school= 7)	LimeSurvey™ tool Qualitative and quantitative data collated. 1/ quantitative rating scale, means, modes and standard deviations 2/ collation and categorisation of “4 reasons” question 3/ Data driven coding, on NVivo™ for remaining case study open questions. (Individually per stakeholder role) 4/ Combine case study stakeholder role findings 5/ Combine general findings with “four reasons”

**Table 3.2 Data gathering and sample size.**

## **Section 3.05 Data collection**

### **3.05(a) Expert interviews – the pilot study**

This was a pilot study in the sense the primary reason for carrying it out was to elucidate reasons that explain why there are more pupils of secondary age than primary school age in special schools. Responses were analysed as discussed in the analysis section, and used to inform the creation of the items measured by the Likert-type rating scale which appeared in the final questionnaire.

#### ***(i) Sample selection***

The pilot study involved six professionals who have been involved in placement and statutory assessment decisions, such as local authority SEN advisors, educational psychologists and special educational needs coordinators in schools. The sample and selection of these 6 participants was opportunistic, based on university networks and links with these professionals (see table 3.2 for participant details). Participants were informed where I obtained their names/contact details from; the aims of the research were made clear,

consent forms provided and read and signed by participants prior to commencement of the interview (see appendix 2 for the consent form, appendix 3 for the invitation email and appendix 4 for briefing email).

***(ii) Data collection***

The pilot study took the form of 6 semi-structured interviews. Their preferred form of communication/participation was used (electronic mail, face to face, or telephone). One interview was carried out face to face, the remainder occurred via e-mail. The questions were based around two themes – the first asked the participant to outline cases of children leaving mainstream education at the age of primary-secondary transfer, and others leaving after usual transfer age. The second theme asked participants to comment on why there is over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools. (A copy of the questions asked in the face to face interview and of the emailed interview schedule are included in appendices 5 and 6 respectively.) The face to face interview was audio-recorded digitally, then transcribed onto a word processor. The email responses were already on a Word™ document. These were checked for any names of schools or people (if these were found they would have been removed or replaced with a pseudonym, but this action was not required). A debrief was carried out after each interview which involved me explaining my research and findings up until that point (see the penultimate paragraph in appendix 6 for the debrief statement).

***(iii) Analysis of pilot study (for purposes of informing questionnaire)***

Thematic analysis was carried out using the computer programme NVivo™; codes were created, named and grouped as appropriate. Following this, illustrative statements from each of the themes were isolated and used as the basis for items on the rating scale. The statements were transformed into a sentence that could be rated by participants according to how much they felt it explained the phenomenon of over-representation. For example, one of the experts stated: “one of the things that I will see, that I see some children in a special school more valued than I see children in a mainstream school. I think they are more included in their culture and the climate in their school because they are valued and they can contribute” (educational psychologist). This view was tested by transforming it into the rating scale item “children are more likely to be included in the culture and climate of special school because they are valued and they can contribute”.

The semi-structured interviews generated rich data that could have been used to inform the research questions directly. Future research could involve comparing these data with the themes generated from the questionnaire as a brief look reveals that there are common themes.

### **3.05(b) The questionnaire**

The questionnaire, which included open and closed questions, was electronic, using the LimeSurvey™ tool for questionnaire design and online hosting of the questionnaire, as well as data capture. It was tested prior to its use in a pilot run.

#### ***(i) Piloting the questionnaire***

The survey was piloted before implementation with a range of people working or hoping to work in the field of education and inclusion, with a family friend whose child moved from mainstream to special provision at age 10, and with people who were in no way affiliated with the field. This was to act as a test of the questionnaire. The response rate was 50%, 10 out of the 20 people I contacted responded to the pilot and completed the questionnaire fully. Feedback, where provided, was considered and implemented if appropriate, and technical and formatting issues were resolved at this stage (such as misspellings, and survey logic errors causing questions to be repeated). An example of a change made was based on feedback I received from the family friend who was “excited by it”, but was frustrated there was not enough room in some of the comment boxes for the case study questions. I placed larger boxes for responses to this question and also added an “any other comments” box as a follow up question to this section of the questionnaire. Basic data analysis of responses to the pilot study was carried out as a trial to test the efficacy of the LimeSurvey™ data analysis package. These responses were not used to generate results and explanations of the phenomenon being explored as the participants did not meet the sample selection criteria of the final tool.

#### ***(ii) Sample selection***

Participants were stakeholders involved in placement decisions - professionals involved in placement and statutory assessment decisions at a local authority and school level as well as parents of children with SEN. I used both representative and opportunistic/snowball sampling, targeting a range of participants from each stakeholder category, and in certain randomly selected geographical areas.

Trochim (2006) lays out four key groups to distinguish between when carrying out logical sampling: the theoretical population, the accessible population, the sampling frame and the sample. The theoretical group is the population you hope to generalise to at the end of the study, the people in the perfect world you would contact to get their views. In this study, this is all the people involved in school placement decisions for pupils with special educational needs aged 9-11 in all of England, and includes all members of each stakeholder group. The accessible population is those you can realistically access under the constraints of time and financial limitations. It is also those you can gain contact details for, or another way of getting the questionnaire to them. In this age of modern communication the accessible population is large, as email addresses for most professionals involved are available on local authority websites, and snowballing sampling can occur through Parent Partnership links as well as through online forums (parents/disability/special needs forums, for example mumsnet.com and talkaboutautism.org.uk).

I chose to omit a key stakeholder group partly because of issues around accessibility. I decided not to collect the views of the children who are involved in deciding their placement for a number of reasons. They are a relatively inaccessible population, who need to be approached through gatekeepers – usually parents. Also, in the pilot interviews carried out with professionals not once was the child's view of where to go to school or their influence in the decision making process mentioned. The questionnaire itself would have to be substantially reworded, raising validity questions when making comparisons to the other stakeholder opinion. This of course has a knock on effect to any generalisations I make at the end of the study – I am omitting the views of a key stakeholder, who may have their own perspective on why the situation exists as it does.

Trochim's third sample group, the sampling frame, was not a list of names from which to make a selection in this study, but rather a description of the procedure used, and the sources accessed, in order to give rise to the final sample. Oppenheim (1992) describes "cluster sampling" as making use of the fact populations are structured in some way to select a representative sample. One way the education system in England is structured is by local authority, which in turn can be grouped by type (for example those that are County Councils, those that are Unitary and so on). Randomly selecting 20 local authorities will in turn ensure random selection of at least 20 educational

psychologists and SEN officers who work in the selected local authorities. The selection of local authorities will also allow for the random allocation of schools within those authorities. This gives some structure to the sample and avoids unintentional bias that may occur if the researcher distributes the questionnaire in another way (for example, the questionnaire might only be sent to local authorities that are geographically close to the researcher which could result in a homogenous sample). It also allows for comparison of different stakeholder viewpoints within each local authority (LA) if the sample is restricted to certain local authorities. (Although this was an aim of the study at its conception due to the necessity of snowballing and opportunistic sampling there were responses from people outside of these LAs.)

To ensure a diverse sample of LA types I randomly selected LAs from the 4 types (County Council, London Borough, Metropolitan, and Unitary) in a ratio that was representative of the number of each type of LA (4 County Council: 4 London Borough: 5 Metropolitan: 7 Unitary). This in itself was a selection of the educational psychologists, inclusion officers and school advisors (or equivalent) of that LA. Schools were also allocated randomly from the LA lists. I used both a random list generator (to create lists of the LAs/schools that were not arranged in an alphabetical pattern) and a random number generator to choose LAs from these lists. (A detailed description of the sampling frame process used can be found in Appendix 7.) At this point probability sampling ceased as not all eligible respondents can be identified within a local area, thus I reverted to snowball sampling (Fink, 2003) to gain responses from parents, with associated problems of selection bias. I contacted the local authorities' Parent Partnership department and asked them to pass details on. I also posted a link to the questionnaire and a brief description of the research on a variety of parent and disability forums.

I set out with a target of attracting a minimum sample of 60 participants, made up of an equal number of LA staff, school staff and parents (a minimum of 20 of each). This allows for qualitative analysis of the open ended responses, along with enough responses for valid statistical analysis of the rating scale response. The response rate to the pilot questionnaire was 50% (10 returned out of 20 sent out) therefore the final questionnaire should be sent to at least 120 people. I "oversampled" (Fink, 2003), sending it to 540 email addresses (LA staff – 256, school staff – 173, parent partnerships and disability groups 111). Once mail delivery failure had been excluded from this

total (153 mail delivery failures: 75 LA staff, 36 school staff, 15 parent representatives) the survey was successfully sent to 414 potential participants. (One advantage of using an electronic communication system is that the sender is notified of any mail delivery failure due to incorrect addresses, also organisations can set up automatic replies if intended recipient is on leave). Over-sampling was justifiable as the survey was delivered via email/internet the financial costs are limited. The use of an electronic questionnaire also allowed me to send reminder emails, which I did on two occasions, sending the link to stakeholder groups or LAs that preliminary analysis showed were under-represented. On the last round of sampling I added a sentence to the explanatory email asking for reasons for non-response (see appendix 9). The final response rate was 25% - I received 102 fully completed questionnaires from 414 potential participants. A discussion of given reasons for non-response occurs later in this chapter.

***(iii) Data collection: format and contents***

The questionnaire was split into 4 sections. The first section simply asked for the respondent to select their role. Dependent on which role they selected, survey logic was set up that automatically directed them to questions pertinent to their role in the following sections. The questions asked of each stakeholder group were all similar, the only exceptions to this were the additional question asked of secondary school staff who were asked to describe two cases rather than just one, and a question that allowed parents to leave contact details if they would like to be contacted for follow-up interviews.

The second part of the survey asked participants to think about and describe a case they had been involved in where a child transfers from a mainstream primary setting to a special setting during Year 6, or at the transfer between Year 6 and 7. Various details about the case were collected, such as the gender of child, the nature of need, and the LA where the case occurred. The main question was a free entry text box that asked them to outline their experience. It listed some prompts, for example “when did you begin to think about where your child would attend secondary school?” (on the parental questions), “Who was involved in the decision making process regarding placement post-primary? To what extent?” and “under what conditions would a secondary placement have been successful for this child?” Data were also

collected about whether other schools were visited, and what types of school they were (mainstream, special or independent).

As previously mentioned secondary staff were asked to describe two case studies, one “where a child with special educational needs attended a mainstream primary school, then transferred to mainstream secondary, but the secondary placement was unsuccessful” and another “where you have considered a child who was due to transfer into your school whose needs you thought would be better met in a special school”. This latter case required them to outline “why do you think the child's special educational needs could not be met in your school?”

The third section described the over-representation phenomenon: “the special school population in England is made up of nearly 75,000 students. Two thirds (66%) of these students are aged 11-16”. All participants were asked to respond to this statement in two ways. The first asked them to give 4 reasons why the situation may exist as it does: “can you give up to four reasons why you believe there are twice as many secondary aged pupils in special schools than those of primary age?” The final question in this section was the rating scale, which listed 27 statements that “MAY explain why there are twice as many secondary aged pupils than those of primary age in special schools”. Participants were asked to consider to what extent they are possible explanations of the number of secondary aged children in special schools. It was a seven point rating scale; participants selected their response by ticking a box containing the rating value. The scale ranged from 0 (does NOT explain situation at all) to 6 (is a KEY explanation of the situation). There was also an option to select "no answer" if unsure about any factor.

The fourth and final section of the questionnaire consisted of a free entry text box where participants could discuss any themes or issues arising in this survey that they wished to comment on. All questions in the survey were optional; the entire survey could be accessed without the need to respond to each question. The order in which the questions appeared was the result of conscious design decisions – for example after the phenomenon was described I sought the initial responses of the sample to the situation, rather than possibly affecting participants’ opinions with the suggestions to explain the situation that followed in the rating scale. (There was evidence this was not entirely successful as one participant appears to have copied and pasted

reasons directly from the rating scale into the four reasons boxes.) Please see appendix 10 for a copy of the questionnaire.

### **Section 3.06      Data analysis**

This section is a description of the various data analysis procedures I undertook with the collected data. Three different cycles of data gathering and analysis were used (see table 3.2 for an overview). As can be seen a vast *data corpus* (all data collected for research project, Braun & Clarke (2006)) was generated from responses to the questionnaire. To make analysis more manageable, these were broken down into distinct data sets, which were initially analysed independently of each other in the first stage of data reduction. The data sets consisted of each participant's responses to a question/set of questions on the questionnaire. Data were transferred from the LimeSurvey™ database to an Excel™ spreadsheet and “cleaned” (those who only completed the first question were removed, as were blank entries for entire survey).

#### **3.06(a)      Demographic data and descriptive and inferential analysis**

The first data to be analysed were the demographic data, particularly the role the participant played in placement decisions. (Although data was collected on the name of the LA involved in the cases being described, alongside the primary need of the case study child this is now superfluous to the research questions as they stand). As reported in table 3.2 there were 41 parents (included one grandmother of a child with SEN), 30 local authority staff (12 EPs, 8 SEN advisors or inspectors, 5 SEN placement officers, a social worker, a speech and language therapist, 2 team leaders of support services and one specialist teacher), and 31 school staff (15 secondary school SENCos, 7 primary school SENCos and 1 primary head teacher, 6 special school head teachers, 1 special school deputy head/outreach officer and one primary school “inclusion practitioner”). 30 of the 102 responses were outside the sampled local authorities, but this is to be expected with the employment of snowball sampling. (It may also be explained by the participant currently working or living in a sampled local authority, but referring to a case that took place in another local authority.) The data that was gathered on the primary need of the case study child was to answer an original research aim that was exploring the characteristics of a child who left mainstream at or before transfer. This data is redundant to the aims and research questions as they currently stand.

The quantitative data underwent descriptive and inferential numeric analysis and comparisons, the data from the LimeSurvey™ spreadsheet was entered on to SPSS™ which was used to calculate the mean rating, standard deviation, the modal values and frequencies of ratings for each statement on the 7 point rating scale. The next stage involved transforming the seven point rating scale into a 3 point scale. Points 0 and 1 became “low explanatory factor”, points 2-4 became “medium explanatory factor” and points 5 and 6 became “high explanatory factor”. A cross-tabulation was run using a multi-variable chi-squared test (or Fisher’s Exact Probability where parametric assumptions are broken) to test for relationships between roles and levels of agreement on the rating scale.

### **3.06(b) Thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis was used for each of the separate open-ended qualitative questions described above. Data was transposed onto a word processing document from the LimeSurvey™ database. Each qualitative analysis was carried out using the computer package NVivo™, after familiarisation and initial coding (stages 1 and 2 of table 3.3) had occurred by hand. Each stage was coded afresh, with categories grounded in the data gathered by the stage tool. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning.

At this stage my approach was data driven, that is the codes are *a posteriori* and come from the data (the responses to questions). I did not use a full “grounded theory” methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1968) being aware that “often what studies describe as grounded theory is limited primarily to the utilisation of the... analytical procedures and not the development of any substantive theory” (Priest, Roberts, & Woods, 2002, p. 32). Rather, I use the analytical framework suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) as well as some use of Flick’s (2006) advice on thematic coding of qualitative data. I then identified common themes and ideas and those which rarely occurred (Namey, Guest, Thairu, & Johnson, 2007), analysing frequencies of themes according to which were suggested by the different participant groups in the questionnaire. (Bryman (2008) notes in his justification of a mixed methods approach that there is implicit quantification in identifying themes, as it is a search for repetitions.) I have reported my procedures in table 3.3.

Description of the process	Steps used
<b>1. Familiarizing yourself with your data</b>	
<b>Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.</b>	Collated all data into one document per question, per stakeholder group. Read and re-read, beginning to note patterns. (Coding units were each individual stakeholders response to each question).
<b>2. Generating initial codes:</b>	
<b>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.</b>	Flick's (2006) "basic questions" (p. 300) for each participants response: <b>What</b> is the issue or phenomenon, <b>who, where</b> and <b>when</b> , as well as "intensity words" and generic memos. (Appendix 12 gives an example of this process). Transferred documents to NVivo™. Began NVivo™ facilitated coding. Did not consciously repeat codes at this stage. Each comment got fresh code, usually <i>in vivo</i> . Multiple codes per item in some cases Key word search -word could appear in original response, or any of additional columns. (Repeat check – any missing data/items not coded. Coded these.) Began grouping initial themes/codes into clusters.
<b>3. Searching for themes:</b>	
<b>Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</b>	Clustered each code into coding families that they related to. Gather related free nodes into tree nodes, tree nodes given titles, and related categories placed as subheadings beneath them using 'children' nodes, sub-categories under the broad headings. Repeated for each questionnaire question.
<b>4. Reviewing themes:</b>	
<b>Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.</b>	Browse coding incidences, ensuring they correspond to codes and tree node titles. Check titles and subheadings relate to research question Note any repeated or contentious themes – any subheadings appear in more than one category? Compare both data sets (those for four reasons question and case study question). If any themes in one set but not in others search for corresponding themes/codes. Additional: search and compare themes raised by Likert-type scale and qualitative analysis – do results triangulate?
<b>5. Defining and naming themes:</b>	
<b>Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.</b>	Themes – the overarching category/explanatory factor, such as "Within child factors" Sub-themes – a sub category of the main theme – "the child's ability to" was a sub theme of "within child factors" Some of the larger sub themes can be further subdivided in constituent factors – "cope/manage" was a constituent factor of "the child's ability to" Diagrams created to illustrate themes, sub themes and constituent factors. Additional: frequencies generated – total and according to stakeholder sub-group. Diagrams arranged from most coding incidents to least
<b>6. Producing the report:</b>	
<b>Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of analysis.</b>	Begin to write data analysis chapter. Report frequency of themes, with qualitative illustration, any interesting sub-group differences,  The discussion chapter refers to general literature on the themes generated.

Table 3.3 Phases of thematic analysis (based on Braun and Clarke, (2006, p. 87)

### **3.06(c) Merging of sources**

At the end of stage 3 above I had three distinct sets of analysis – the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the rating scale items, a set of tree nodes and children nodes for the question that asked respondents to give four reasons for the over-representation phenomenon and a set of tree nodes and children nodes for the case study questions. Each set of analysis also included a breakdown of responses for stakeholder type. In order to merge these separate data sets into a cohesive report I compared the tree nodes and children nodes of the qualitative data as described in step 4 of table 3.3 (“reviewing the themes”). This aided the refinement of the themes, checking for inconsistencies, and merging the themes into similar categories. The whole process was an iterative one, with different stages being analysed and re-analysed in light of new findings.

The data analysis contained in chapter 4 reports on the data sets jointly. However, where there are differences in findings between the different data sets these are reported also. An example of the processes described above is the explanatory factor of government policy focus. This had not become part of any major theme in the initial analysis as it had only two coding instances in the four reason question and no codes in the case study question. It was however rated as a strong explanatory factor in the Likert-type scale. This discrepancy led me to carry out a key term search for the word “government” and “policy” in the qualitative data sets. This revealed no additional comments in the four reasons original data, but did create two additional coding incidents in the case study question. The discrepancy between the qualitative data and the rating scales for this theme is still immense, so I have commented on this in the analysis chapter.

### **Section 3.07 Ethics:**

The ethical implications of this study are considered under two headings – my responsibilities to participants, and my responsibility towards the community of educational researchers, educational professionals, policy makers, and the general public (British Educational Research Association, 2011).

#### **3.07(a) Responsibilities to participants**

I informed potential participants of the purposes of my research prior to any data collection. This was done through introductory emails that accompanied the link to the electronic questionnaire, on the questionnaire itself, and on

invitations to partake in the expert interviews. (See appendices 3, 4, 8 and 10). My contact details were provided on emails and questionnaires. Participants are not named in the thesis; they are referred to by stakeholder type only. Any references to real people or organisations named in an interview or questionnaire by the participant or researcher were omitted from any direct quotations used, and were removed by the researcher during the collation of responses to the questionnaire. The data were (and will continue to be) processed, secured (and disposed of) subject to the provisions laid out in the Data Protection Act 1998, as described in appendix 11 (ethical approval form). The final research report (a condensed version of the thesis findings) will be forwarded to all parties who participated and requested a copy; this right to request was made clear in emails and discussion at the beginning of interviews.

Member checking of the questionnaire could not occur due to the condition of anonymity. Respondents were not required to give their name or to leave contact details. (An exception to this was an additional question on the questionnaire that asked parents if they would consent to be interviewed. The interviews took place, but have not been analysed or reported on in this thesis. The contact details were used expressly for this purpose, no further contact has been made.) An issue was raised concerning issues of anonymity by some participants both in the questionnaire and in some answers to the non-response email sent out. These were based on the requirement to name the local authority in the questionnaire. Concerns ranged from the possibility I could identify specific schools and children from the LA name and case history information, to comparing responses by LAs to statistics publically available on the number of pupils with SEN in special schools and naming these LAs in my thesis. A primary SENCo filled in the questionnaire but opted not to give the name of the LA stating they would “prefer not to say in view of some comments”. These incidents were forwarded to and discussed with my supervisors. None of the fears listed have been realised in the implementation of this thesis. I have considered these further in my discussion of strengths and weakness below.

As discussion of entitlement issues relating to school placement or the statutory assessment process occurred during the questionnaire it may be that some parents seek advice and/or an opinion on their particular case. This did not occur, but if it had happened, advice should not be given by the

researcher, due to my limited expertise in this matter. I could however advise the parent to contact the SEN advisor of the local authority, or the Parent Partnership Service.

### **3.07(b) Responsibilities to the wider community**

I strive to conduct research to the highest standard, and avoid falsification, exaggeration, or distortional reporting of findings. As discussed previously in this chapter, I am fallible, and my own biases and viewpoints may affect my analysis and reported findings. I hope that through my transparent reporting of analysis, and recognition and declaration of my world views, that the effect of this on my findings will be limited.

Finally, opportunities for dissemination of this research should be considered. I have already made it clear that my research findings will be made available to participants. As it has implications for educational and inclusion policy I have a responsibility to disseminate findings to policy makers, the research community, and educational practitioners in an accessible way. This has already been carried out to some extent: I have presented my findings to focus groups as part of the evaluation of my future school vignette. The findings from the Masters dissertation that described the over-representation patterns (Black, 2009) were reported in the monthly SENCo newsletter *SENCo Update* (Black, 2010) and a report of the data analysis of this thesis was reported in a SEN Policy Options Steering Group policy paper (Black, 2012).

Thus far I have only critiqued my research in terms of a discussion of ethics. In the next section of this chapter I discuss the strengths and limitations of this study and the methodological approach I have taken, and a consideration of issues of reliability and validity. I also discuss the other avenues I had planned for my research, and why these were omitted.

### **Section 3.08 Strengths and limitations**

Crotty (1998) notes the problems addressed by social science are complex, and the use of either quantitative or qualitative methods by themselves are inadequate to address this complexity (Mertens & McLaughlin (2004) argue this even more so for education and field of special educational needs). To overcome this complexity the tradition of mixed methods research has evolved, combining both qualitative and quantitative forms. Guba (1990), terms this “critical multiplism”, a form of “elaborated triangulation”, on the basis that the “findings of an inquiry should be based on as many sources... as possible” (p.

21). The term ‘sources’ in this quotation includes data, investigators, theories and methods.

**(i) Mixed methods research**

There exist many typologies of mixed methods research (see Creswell, 2003; Creswell, Plano Clark, Guttman, & Hanson, 2003; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Rather than use these typologies to give a precise nomenclature of my approach I use the set of discussion points Bryman (2008) draws out in his chapter on mixed methods to identify key aspects of my approach and what they add to the strengths of the thesis (in table 3.4).

<b>Instrument development</b>	Qualitative assertions made by experts were tested through the development of a quantitative rating scale. Without the qualitative interviews the rating scale would have been restricted to ideas emerging from the literature (which is limited).
<b>Corroborates findings</b>	Corroboration took the form of triangulation of data sources (each separate question was considered a separate data source) and within method methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978).
<b>Completeness</b>	This study provides a more comprehensive account of the phenomenon as it involves a sample of different groups of stakeholders. Also the use of the different tools highlighted gaps in some findings.
<b>Illustration (and simplification)</b>	The analysis chapter sets out themes and sub-themes according to frequency of codes. It illustrates these with qualitative quotes from stakeholder responses. The level of agreement with rating scale items is described both qualitatively, but then contextualised with descriptive statistics.

**Table 3.4: Purpose of mixed methods research, their use in this thesis (adapted from Bryman, 2008)**

Esterberg (2002) notes that “research designs that includes multiple research strategies tend to be the strongest ones” (p. 37) as they use the strengths of each type, and overcome the weakness of others (see also Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). There is however the danger that the study will also use the weaknesses of each type, and that these weaknesses combine to give a weak piece of work.

The use of triangulation as a form of mixed methods approach is critiqued for being assumed to increase the validity of claims. Fielding & Fielding (1986) argue that this is not the case, that although multiple data sources or methods may add depth to findings they do not add accuracy. I make no claim that my use of multi-methods adds to accuracy, but rather it allows for a fuller exploration of the reasons for the over-representation of secondary

aged pupils in special schools. Without the use of the different stakeholder groups and the different methods certain contributory themes may have been missed. (For example the role of government policy would not have been considered as a major contributory factor if only the open-ended stakeholder questions had been used).

Another issue is one of researcher expertise (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The researcher needs to be familiar with and confident in the design, application and interpretation of a range of different research approaches. The quality of the research produced is affected by the researcher's capability and experience not only in one method, but in a range of them. A limitation to this study may be my lack of familiarity with the methods used. Another limitation related to the researcher is that the analysis is often more time consuming than single methods study, which holds the risk of the researcher becoming fatigued.

***(ii) Reasons for non-response***

A non-response request was made to ascertain reasons why some people chose not to fill in the questionnaire, in order to make the researcher aware of any problems, and aid the reflection and evaluation of the survey tool. In the final round of emails targeted at the stakeholders under-represented in the demographics of my survey to this point I included this statement: "if you have looked at the questionnaire and decided not to complete it, it would be helpful to get an idea of why you chose not to do so. This can be done through a simple email to myself. Answers will be treated anonymously."

I received 22 responses to this request which I sent with the last round of questionnaires. None of the reasons given were from parents. One set of reasons related to the non-availability of the participant, due to issues such as being on long term sick or the "busyness" of the respondent (due to LA budget reviews, OfSTED, or the Christmas period). A questionnaire will always have an element of non-availability of a sample, and the open-ended nature of some of the questions may have exacerbated this. This was confirmed by someone who considered it to be "too long winded for an EP".

On a practical level, at least one person could not immediately access the initial link (I was aware of this and resolved it in follow up emails) and one stated simply they had missed the deadline (I had extended the deadline 3 times to overcome similar issues). A Parent Partnership officer said they had

already sent out surveys to parents using their service and did not want to confuse parents by sending a new unrelated one out. 8 of the respondents considered they did not work in the field, or were not best placed to answer the questions posed. 7 of these non-respondents passed the link on to other colleagues they felt could more adequately respond.

As previously discussed some of the replies highlighted perceived ethical issues with the questionnaire, particularly the naming of the LA. One person felt the questions were “inappropriate”, and another stated that the naming of the LA and giving the case study of a child “causes professional, ethical and confidentiality difficulties for me”. Three separate people commented on ethical issues arising from some of the questions asked, despite the reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality in the email containing the link to the questionnaire and on the introductory page to the questionnaire itself. To overcome this I could have made it clear why LA information was being requested (to compare responses from different LA stakeholders and users, and to compare types of LA, to ensure fair sampling had taken place). I could also have declared my specific research aims on the questionnaire/introductory email. This analysis looks at just a few of reasons given and cannot be generalised to the whole members of the sample who chose not to respond.

This has not tackled the issue of why the non-response rate is so high, nor why there are so many partially completed questionnaires (58 accessed the survey but did not begin to fill it in, or were not recorded by LimeSurvey™ software, and a further 33.7% (n=139) began to fill in the questionnaire to some degree, but gave no usable data beyond selecting their role. In order to improve this I could have set up a page to appear if someone closed down the survey without completing the whole thing, giving space for them to fill in why they did not wish to continue. I could also give each potential participant an activation voucher so I could trace who had (and had not) accessed and completed the survey. There would be no issues of anonymity as these codes are codes kept on a separate database, and not linked to answers. The LimeSurvey™ platform has proved unreliable in how it has recorded the status of some surveys, recording them as complete when no responses were filled in, or as incomplete when all questions had been answered. This could have been caused in part by people opening the survey for a cursory look, or my supervisors and I checking the link worked.

### ***(iii) Other general strengths and weaknesses***

At the data analysis point, each stage of data collection was coded afresh, with categories arising from the data gathered by the stage tool. From the perspective of an analyst there are advantages and disadvantages to this approach. My strength and skill as a researcher will evolve and grow, new and previously undiscovered themes may emerge, however, the analysis I performed in the pilot study may not be as rigorous as those I finished with. To overcome this I could consider recoding the pilot study, the first study I did, to see if anything new emerges that can be added to the data.

I have placed emphasis on gaining multiple perspectives, from a range of stakeholders. If I focused solely on one type of stakeholder, for example parents only, I would have received a much narrower view, and context specific understandings. It is in response to this that I added research question 2, to explore the different reasons given by different stakeholders as context may effect reasons given, and also to find the commonalities between each one.

A key weakness is that the research does not involve pupil voice – how can it be transformative, as Burnett (2007) states is one of the key tenets of critical realism if I avoid the voice of the people the process “happens to”? I could have developed a questionnaire for children who had been in the position of transferring to special school from mainstream at secondary age. As part of this study I had wanted to follow a number of case study children who had left/where leaving mainstream school at transfer age, either those who had already left and were in special school, or tracking those in year 5/6 whose transition review indicated that they might leave mainstream before the age of transfer. This data collection cycle would have involved interviews of all stakeholders in the case, including the children themselves, as well as documentary analysis of statements and Individual Education Plans and assessment data to see if there were any generalisable patterns in those students who leave mainstream at transfer. However, gaining access to this sample was problematic. In order to have access to the select group of children eligible to participate in the case study an intermediary needed to be involved. I contacted a number of professionals who were unwilling to put me in contact with any such cases due to client privilege. I contacted a number of special schools who did agree to raise the possibility with parents, parents were informed of the opportunity, but no one responded. Finally, I tried

contacting parents/carers and professionals directly through on-line forums and advertising in professional magazines. I placed an article outlining the research and asking for participants on the forums and in the magazine. Again, no response was achieved. The parents who left their contact details on the questionnaire could have been asked to contribute to a case study, but due to time limitations impinged by necessity to complete my PhD I felt unable to undertake this commitment at this stage. All this results in the lack of access to holistic picture that a case study of a child/children going through transition would have given me.

According to Esterberg (2002) a good researcher should “have the ability to remain open to what the field setting or research site has to offer” (p. 29). One question I started with that I have consequently omitted was to explore the characteristics of the students who enter special school from mainstream at/around the age of transfer. I envisaged this as a representation of what primary SEN label the children had, and what type of SEN label was most likely to transfer around this age. Although I did gather data on the nature of need, this is difficult to present as reliable due to the nature of the sampling methods used. The use of convenience sampling for one group of stakeholders, as was necessary, meant that although I had asked local authorities to distribute questionnaire to parents, I could not rely on this happening (see reasons for non-response section), so I sent emails to mailing list holders and posted a link on forums on certain disabilities. In the field of special educational needs it is recognised that some parent sub-groups have a disproportionately strong voice when attempting to influence policy and provision, (Gray, 2010; Lewis, 2010; Martin, 2000; Riddell, Brown, & Duffield, 1994) and, I would argue, therefore willing to participate in research, There is a chance therefore that particular needs or SEN labels are over-represented in the survey responses. The question evolved to the “are these patterns the same for each category of SEN”, which gives a descriptive account of population numbers, according to primary need, but cannot be said to explore the particular characteristic of the children. There is not room to discuss the main findings of area within the thesis itself, but it is reported in appendix 1.

A final problem that could be raised is one of accessibility. The questionnaire was electronic, which reduces the sample as not all potential participants have access to on-line facilities. A second issue is it presents a difficulty for those

who cannot access it due to small font sizes and issues surrounding participants who may have English as an additional language.

### **Section 3.09      Summary**

This chapter has described the development of a survey tool, designed to elucidate the reasons for the phenomenon of the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools, the sampling strategy followed and the mixed method data analysis procedures used. I approach the study as a critical realist, being aware of the importance of gathering responses from a variety of stakeholder groups, as each will have their own viewpoint on the phenomenon. I also acknowledge the place of theory in the study, both in informing my analysis indirectly, and in emerging from it.

The next chapter is the presentation and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative findings. These will be interpreted and discussed in chapter 5, and the research questions will be answered.

## Chapter 4. Presentation and analysis of findings: Why does the situation exist as it does?

### Section 4.01 Introduction

In this chapter I present the findings from the data analysis, including the triangulation of findings from the different instruments used. I present the themes and illustrative statistical analysis (where appropriate) that have arisen after using the methods described in Chapter 3. As I have used mixed methods, qualitatively generated codes are presented quantitatively in terms of the number of times mentioned and illustrated with direct qualitative quotations from the responses. I have not separated quantitative and qualitative findings into stand-alone sections, but attempt to show how each type of analysis corroborated findings, brought new factors to light and illuminated the research questions. Interpretation and discussion of the findings take place in the chapter that follows this one. Each research question is addressed in separate sections. Details of sample size and response rates were discussed in Chapter 3.

This part of the thesis was an empirical enquiry into the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools. To answer Research Question 1 (reasons commonly given to explain over-representation) I used findings from the questionnaire. Research Question 2 is based on comparisons of responses to questions in the questionnaire according to stakeholder type. Where appropriate I illustrate the points made for Research Questions 1 and 2 with descriptive statistics gained from the Likert-type scale respondents completed as part of the questionnaire (see appendix 13).

Role in transfer	
EP	Educational psychologist
SENAI	Special educational needs Advisor/Inspector (or equivalent)
SENCo	Special educational needs Coordinator
SENPO	Special educational needs Officer/ Placement Officer (or equivalent)
Other acronyms used	
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
LA	Local authority
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education
SEN	Special Educational Need
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulty

Table 4.1: abbreviations used

For ease of reading throughout this chapter I have abbreviated some phrases that are referred to repeatedly, mostly in terms of job roles. Table 4.1 lists the

common acronyms used throughout this chapter. The questionnaire asked people to select their role in the process of transfer; the abbreviations correspond to the role outlined on the survey (see appendix 10 for a copy of the questionnaire).

## **Section 4.02      Research Question 1**

*What reasons are most commonly given by stakeholders as to why there are more pupils of secondary age in special school than those of primary age?*

I have grouped together the findings into several key themes identified through thematic coding of the responses to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire. The key themes that arose from the analysis were reasons related to:

- School level factors
- Within child factors
- Resources
- Stakeholder choice
- Parental preference
- An outcome of processes

Lesser factors, but still meriting a mention are exosystemic factors, relationships and chronosystemic (time related) factors. Each of these factors will be defined, contextualised and illustrated by data throughout this chapter. I must make it clear at this juncture that the themes are complex, multifaceted and often interlinked. Also, as some of the statements were made about particular cases the comments should not be taken as being generalisable to all children with SEN, or all schools, or all parents, or all professionals.

I undertook cross checking of the data using triangulation between questions by asking two separate questions in the survey. One asked the participant to outline a case they knew well where transfer from mainstream to special school had happened. (A number of people outlined a case where the child had remained in mainstream after secondary transfer.) I also included any comments made in the “any other comments” question in the analysis of the case study question. The second question asked for participants to list four reasons why they believe there are more children of secondary age in special schools. I coded each question’s set of responses separately, generating the codes from the data, and only once all data had been coded did I look across

all the sources for common themes. I report the findings separately in Table 4.2 in order of frequency of times mentioned.

<b>Case study question: Total coding incidents 1236</b>	<b>4 reasons question: total coding incidents 550</b>
School level factors, 316 codes (25.6%)	School level factors 269 codes, 48.9%
Within child factors, 245 codes (19.8%)	Chronosystemic factors, 55 codes, 10.0%
Voice choice factors 144 codes (11.7%)	Outcome of processes 46 codes, 8.3%
Resourcing issues, 126 codes (10.2%)	Within child factors, 45 codes, 8.2%
Parental preference, 98 codes, (7.9 %)	Relationships, 39 codes, 7.1%
Outcome of processes, 69 codes, (5.6%)	Resources, 34 codes, 6.2%
Exosystemic factors, 65 codes, (5.3%%)	Parental preference, 29 codes, 5.3%
Relationships, 50 codes, (4.1%)	Exosystemic factors, 16 codes, 2.9%
Outcomes of mainstream, 39 codes, (3.2%)	Voice-choice, 12 codes, 2.2%
The peer group, 33 codes (2.7%)	
Remaining 4% include discussions of appropriateness of placement, chronosystemic factors and safety. All values less than or equal to 2%	The peer group, 5 codes, 0.9%

**Table 4.2: themes arising from coding of two sources, in order of number of times coded**

Table 4.2 shows that the same themes do appear in both sets of responses, however they appear in different orders. (For example chronosystemic factors are mentioned more times when respondents are asked to give four reasons than are identified throughout the case study questions). School organisation is consistently the biggest factor seen to contribute to the patterns, accounting for more than half the responses in the question where participants were asked to give four reasons why the patterns exist.

Figure 4.1 charts the themes as a proportion of all codes when category totals from both sources are combined. I will use the themes as laid out in this chart as the subheadings in the remainder of this section of the chapter, in order from the theme with the greatest proportion of references to that with the least. Each theme is divided into its constituent sub-themes, again presented in order from the subthemes with most references to least. I begin with a discussion and further exploration of the codes that make up school level factors.

Each theme is illustrated with quotations from peoples' responses to the questionnaire. I have sought to give a selection of quotations, from a range of the stakeholder groups. (The nuances of responses given by different groups of stakeholders are reported in the sections related to Research Question 2).

To further illustrate the themes I make reference to the results from the Likert-type rating scale where appropriate.

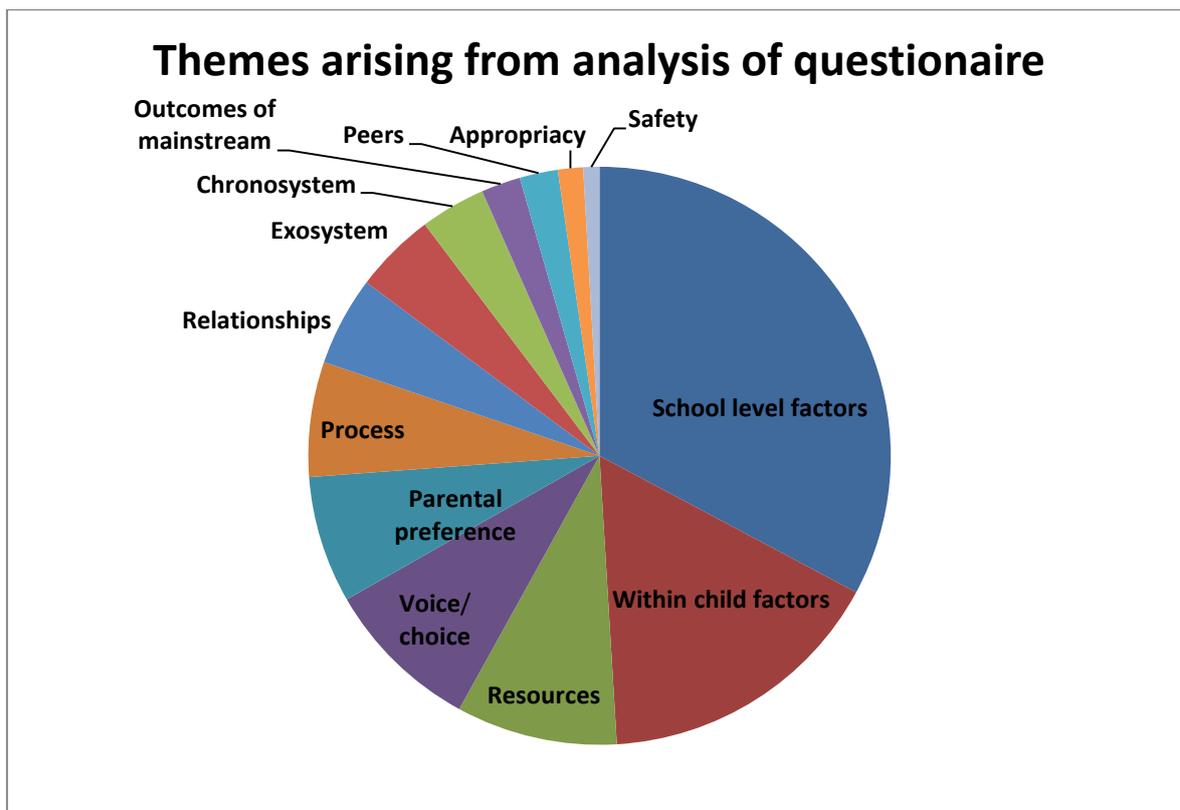


Figure 4.1: Total themes when sources are combined (Source 1: case study questions, source 2, 4 reasons question).

#### 4.02(a) School level factors

Factors related to the institutions of schools were collectively seen as the biggest contributor to the patterns of pupil placement. These embraced a range of areas around schools as institutions, their organisation, ethos, curricular emphasis and the attitude and experience of staff. The following response illustrates the range of school level factors believed to contribute to parents choosing a special school, I have placed these in bold:

“The main reasons for parents wanting a special (MLD) school placement for secondary provision were (in no particular order): **size of the school, size of the classes**, appropriacy of **curriculum, staff specialised** in the needs of their child, **staffs level of understanding** of the range of needs of children, **ethos and "feel" of the school, focus on personal and life skills, negative experience of mainstream school settings** on their child i.e. bullying, isolation, lack of progress academically, **perceived lack of support from previous mainstream school** and the extreme of breakdown of relationships between school and parents as a consequence of different views of the needs of the child” (Special school head teacher, emphasis added).

The range of answers were often framed around descriptions of a particular type of setting (“secondary schools are too big”), a comparison between primary and secondary schools (“pupils have to encounter many more teachers throughout the day in a secondary school, instead of one or two in primary school”), and, as in the example above, the differences between secondary school and special school settings. This main theme can be further broken down into several key areas, which can themselves be separated further, as illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.

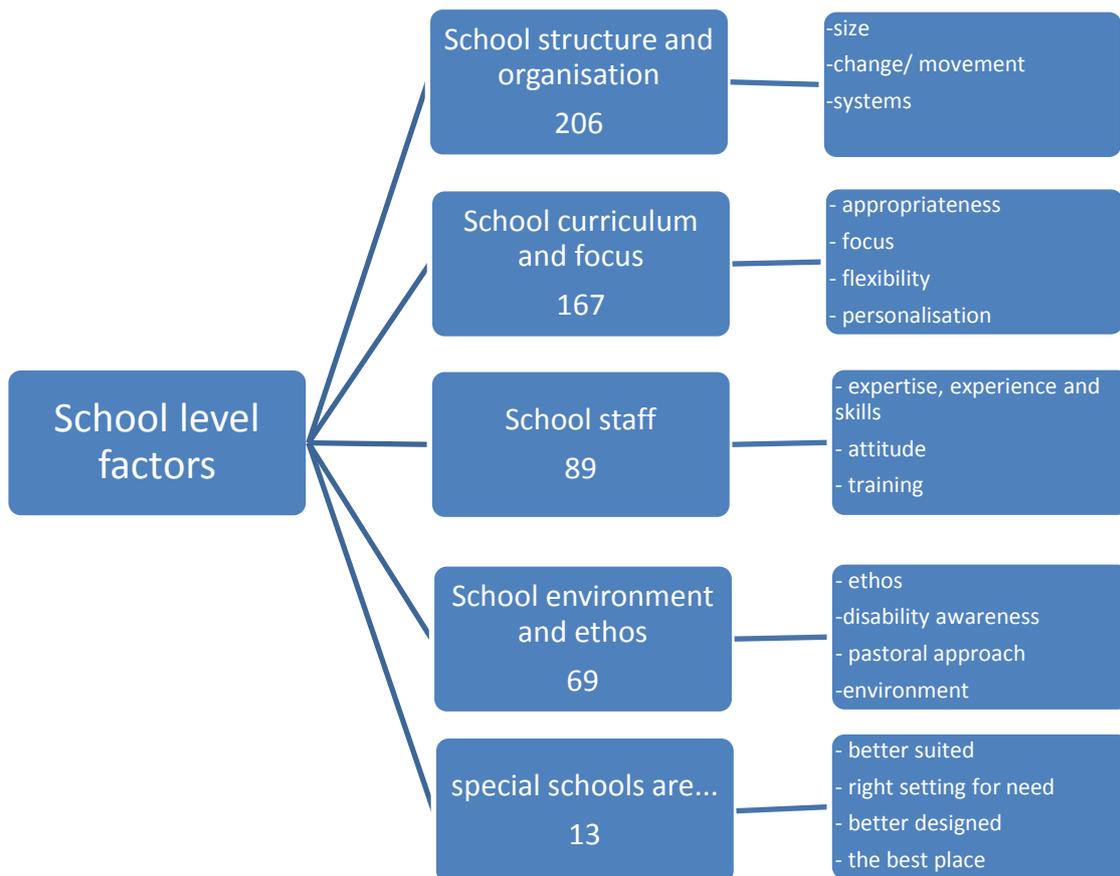


Figure 4.2: A breakdown of the subthemes and factors of the “School level factors” theme.

**(i) School structure and organisation**

“During my visits to the secondary schools, I realised that my son would find it difficult to cope with the...organisation of a large mainstream secondary school” (parent).

Primary schools were seen to be more able to meet needs because of “their size/structure/relationships between staff/parents/children, flexibility of the day/timetable” (EP). Secondary schools were seen as being “too fast, too rushed, too large for vulnerable learners” (SENAI). Special schools were perceived to offer a “smaller, safer environment, reduced curriculum load,

greater emphasis on social emotional and personal development, greater expertise of all staff, (not just key support staff)” (EP).

**Size** of school was the organisational factor that was mentioned most often, in both question analyses. It accounted for 7% of all codes; no single code received more mentions. It is interesting to note the qualifiers that accompany a discussion of size – secondary schools are “too big” or “now so big”, children with special needs cannot cope with the “huge size and numbers”. The size of the school makes them “too impersonal”, “difficult to access” and “easy to get lost”. The child with special educational needs would find it “difficult to cope with the size”. Smaller special schools engender a feeling of safety, and are more able to prioritise the needs of a child with special educational needs. The size of secondary schools means there is a greater likelihood of children with special educational needs getting “lost in the masses”. It may also mean it is harder to “protect their special needs students from bullying/disabled hate crime”. In some situations where the child did transfer from mainstream primary to mainstream secondary they “struggle...mostly with the transfer from a smaller school environment to a large school environment”.

Size of school is also a factor that most respondents rate highly as an explanation of why there are twice as many students of secondary age in special schools. On the Likert-type scale question that asked respondents to rate how much the statement “primary schools are smaller in size” explains the phenomenon, the modal value, selected by 41 out of the 99 who responded to this question, was the highest point of the scale, that is, “it explains it very much”. The mean score it received was 4.6 (out of 6, s.d. 1.74).

The **flexibility/inflexibility of school systems** is another aspect of school structure and organisation mentioned. One educational psychologist phrased it thus: “[the] current attitude [of secondary mainstream schools] is 'this is how we do it and the child fits into it' which is the opposite attitude to the primary school”. This notion of flexibility is also raised in the Likert-type scale question, with 52 out of 96 respondents selecting from the “explains the phenomenon very much” end of the scale in response to the statement “In secondary schools the expectation is the child should change to fit system”. (52 people selected either 5 or 6, mode 6, mean 4.22, s.d 1.8).

Some parents perceive there is a lack of flexibility in secondary mainstream schools, and this perception remains after visiting the schools in question: –

“limited confidence in mainstream's ability to be flexible based on high level of research and school visits”, and after looking “at all the available options including the local mainstream schools, and the local special schools...parents were not confident that a mainstream school would be able to provide him with the flexibility that he needed.” The systems of secondary schools themselves “were confusing”. However, as one EP states: “it is very difficult to generalise about this picture. Within any LA there are secondary schools who are v[ery] inclusive and flexible and others who are not.” Also, some primary schools were experienced as inflexible “any suggestions for how they could be more inclusive were met with reasons why they couldn't be” (parent). This area of flexibility/inflexibility of school systems ties in with the discussion of curriculum personalisation that occurs later in this chapter.

Basic factors that are taken for granted as being part of secondary school life, such as timetables, having different classes and teachers and movement around a school also act as barriers to the inclusion of some children with special educational needs. I classify this as **change and movement**. In secondary schools “students hav[e] to move between teachers, classrooms and sites”, whereas “primary children tend to only have one teacher for the year and do not have to move around classrooms a great deal”. This is said to cause the children to feel unhappy, and makes it difficult for them to cope: “as pupils in secondary schools meet so many different teachers it can be very difficult for some pupils to cope with different teaching styles, different expectations”. This variety of teaching styles and expectations means it is “impossible to ensure consistency of provision”. The actual movement from class to class can be daunting as there is “no mass movement around primary schools”. The physical act of moving around schools can itself be difficult for students with certain types of needs.

The changes made to timetable for a nurture group or specialised unit in a mainstream secondary school are talked about as a way to make secondary schools more inclusive “50% of their timetable [is] taught in the same group room, with the same set of teachers (i.e. very much like their experience in the primary class)” (primary SENCo).

Having the consistency of one class teacher is seen to be a big reason why there are more children of secondary age in special schools as shown by the rating scale question “in secondary school the child has to switch between lots of different adults all day without the security of a class teacher” – 70 out of

97 participants selecting from the top end of the scale (mean 4.92, s.d. 1.3, mode 6). This was the statement with the third highest mean.

**(ii) School curriculum and focus**

Multiple issues around the school curriculum and special educational needs are highlighted in this educational psychologist's report of a child who transferred from mainstream primary to a special secondary school:

“difficulties already experienced in **curriculum demands** in Year 6 and the increased number of staff involved in Year 6 for **core subjects**, knowledge of support systems and facilities in secondary schools, **pace and volume of secondary curriculum**, size and complexity of secondary school. [Inclusion in the mainstream would have needed] greater flexibility of provision i.e. a unit within a secondary school at least initially during transition. It [the special school] offered a smaller, safer environment, **reduced curriculum load, greater emphasis on social emotional and personal development**, greater expertise of all staff, (not just key support staff)” (emphasis added).

Curricular demands, mode of delivery and curriculum access were raised as barriers. There was a perceived need for a more flexible curriculum, with greater differentiation, and perhaps even an alternative curricular focus.

The **demands of the curriculum** were seen to increase in secondary schools, as work becomes “harder” and more “intense”, the curriculum itself expands, along with increased expectations being placed on the students. It becomes more “achievement/accreditation focused” with “the onus being placed on academic achievement rather than using a holistic approach” (parent). The notion of a difference in demands of assessment type and focus was not raised by anyone in the qualitative responses, and when asked to rate the statement “pupils with emerging difficulties in learning are given a chance to progress in primary school; by secondary age assessments have become firmer about what is needed”. 38 selected it as a high explanatory factor, and 43 as a medium explanatory factor (mean= 3.62, s.d. 1.78, mode= 5, n=98).

**Access to the curriculum** was regarded as a struggle for some students with special educational needs; they were felt to be unable to access the curriculum due to their ability. This is also reflected in the rating scale statement “children working below attainment level 2 cannot easily access Key Stage 3 curriculum”, 57 out of 97 respondents selected values 5 or 6 on the scale (agree) resulting in a mean of 4.27 (s.d. 1.82) and a modal value of 6. Despite

some schools investing “a lot of support... to ensure that the pupil could access the mainstream curriculum” curricular access could not be guaranteed, the support was not enough. One student was unable to access the curriculum as they spent so much time in the school’s learning support base, and thus missed out on teaching and learning opportunities. Whose choice this was is unclear.

The mode of **curriculum delivery** used in secondary schools was seen as another difficulty – being “subject led”, much more “rigid”, a perceived change of pedagogy, with not as much multi-sensory teaching and taught at a “quick pace”. Children who have “coped with one teacher and one room may struggle with a high school model of curriculum delivery”, where “topic work [using a] cross curricular model [is] not possible”. This could be in part due to “subject teachers [being] more interested in teaching their "subject" than developing inclusive provision” (EP). One parent located the problem with the curriculum delivery model used in primary school, citing “noisy group learning in primary classes instead of quiet disciplined individual study” and “the elimination of rote learning for early basics such as times tables” as reasons why there are more pupils of secondary age in special schools.

There was a recognised need for a more **flexible, differentiated, personalised curriculum**. One secondary SENCo phrased it thus: “the secondary curriculum needs to be personalised to meet individual needs rather than the expectation that the child will fit the curriculum!” A more flexible curriculum needed developed “especially for the pupils with additional or special learning needs”. There was however a perceived difficulty in differentiating the existing curriculum to an appropriate level in the secondary context, some students would have needed “a significantly differentiated curriculum”, and there were “concerns as to how realistic/manageable this was for mainstream secondary staff” to do in a “meaningful and relevant way”. This point is also reflected in the rating scale, when asked to rate the statement “the Key Stage Three curriculum (Year7-9) is inflexible, and insufficiently differentiated” half of the 91 responses were either 5 or 6 (mean 4.19, s.d. 1.63, mode 6).

Primary schools were seen to be better at providing this more flexible, personalised curriculum, as they “are more willing to be creative in the curriculum”, “can offer a more personalised programme”, “are more skilled in differentiating the curriculum for students’ needs” and have a “greater

emphasis on social emotional and personal development”. One LA placement officer outlines the importance of personalised provision:

“[the] child attended a primary mainstream school which had excellent personalised provision and was very able to make specific arrangements for individual pupils with a good knowledge of SEN [...] Parents were not confident that a mainstream [secondary] school would be able to provide him with the flexibility that he needed [...] [A] mainstream placement would have been more of a possibility if the most favoured secondary school could have articulated to the parents a more comprehensive description of how a personalised programme would be set up in the mainstream school, involving a description of the personal and pastoral support that could be offered and how this would fit in with the differentiation of the curriculum” (LA placement officer, case study question).

There was a sense that the children with special educational needs who left mainstream at transfer required an **alternative curriculum** not only in terms of being “significantly differentiated”, but a completely different curriculum offer. Mainstream schools were seen as being unable to offer this alternative as the curriculum was driven by National Curriculum targets, and a lack of students (in terms of numbers) who would benefit from this alternative curriculum made it unviable.

The most concrete example of this alternative curriculum discussed was a **social/independence/life skills** model. Parents were often faced with a choice in provision: “parents have to choose whether their children get an academic education or a life-skills based education. If you have an academic child with SEN, you have to send them to mainstream as their academic needs are rarely met in a special school. The downside to this is that their social and life skills needs are rarely met in mainstream!” (Parent, “other comments” question). Another parent discussed how they sought a suitable placement that would offer an academic curriculum as well as teaching life and social skills – “fourteen [schools] wrote back and said that they could not meet his needs - either because they did not offer a suitable academic curriculum or because they could not manage his behaviour” (parent, case study question). It was not only parents who reported this – a secondary SENCo reported how their school declined a place for a child with SEN as it was unable to offer a curriculum focused on life-skills that this particular pupil needed.

The purpose of school as preparation for adult life and the need for a curriculum focus that reflects this was mentioned. One parent suggested that “by the time a child is statemented they need significant intervention to have any hope of an independent adult life”. Contrary to this however another parent commented how “secondary schools are transition into adult life therefore mainstream schools are geared towards this”, suggesting special schools have a different focus. Parents begin to recognise that exams “are not important anymore”; instead they want their child to have life skills. A special school head teacher discusses how parents “recognise that their child needs social, self help, independence skills and communication skills more than a purely academic curriculum”. This is discussed again below in the parental concern and chronosystem sections.

### ***(iii) School staff***

Factors related to school staff revolved around their expertise, experience and skills, (or lack of these), and also their attitude. The availability of specialist staff in various locations was also mentioned.

There was a feeling that there was “less **understanding of SEN** amongst the secondary teaching staff population” (LA speech and language therapist). A number of possible reasons for this were given – the number of teachers in a secondary school who all have to understand the child’s need, a lack of training for the staff in secondary schools, and the option of “defaulting to the SENCo for help and advice rather than learning about it yourself” (EP). The sheer size of the school makes it difficult for teachers to “be aware of the appropriate strategies for individual pupils with SEN” (EP), resulting in “not enough individual notice [being] taken of the child (LA SENAI). Parents lack confidence that there will be understanding of their child in secondary school. There was acknowledgement of a general lack of awareness and understanding by teachers, but without acknowledgement of in which particular school type, with comments such as “non-specialist staff lack the depth of knowledge and understanding needed”. Autistic Spectrum Disorder was mentioned as a particular need where understanding was lacking. One successful secondary mainstream placement was discussed by a SENAI: “the secondary school had a good understanding of the needs of pupils with ASD and could also reassure [the] mother”. Understanding could also be related to tolerance – one parent thought secondary schools were “less tolerant” of young people with SEN than special schools or primary schools.

**Secondary school staff attitude** towards children with special educational needs was seen as another barrier. A primary SENCo felt that many secondary school teachers do not see themselves as teachers of SEN children, and a secondary SENCo described facing “daily battles with colleagues who do still consider that it is not their job but that of SENCo to ‘deal’ with the ‘unteachable’ ” (emphasis respondent’s own). This point was also explored by the rating scale question in the statement “some secondary school teachers have negative attitudes implying that pupils with complex SEN belong somewhere else”. The modal value was 5 on the rating scale, 25 people selected this value. The mean was 4.03 (s.d. 1.52, n=98). To ensure a successful placement for children with special educational needs it was felt that schools, and by implication, school staff, should be “willing to work with all the needs and teach at NC level 1 and below” (primary SENCo). This attitude of unwillingness could be based on **previous experience** – “the staff in secondary schools...have the perception that these children can't cope with mainstream as they have experience of students with SEN in mainstream and seen the level of failure the child has experienced and the level of disruption to the other children's learning (secondary SENCo). Conversely though, the experience of dealing with children with SEN can improve provision – as one primary SENCo reports “at the time of the child's transfer the [primary] school had 9 children with an ASD diagnosis, so were very well versed in how to meet this particular child's needs”. Secondary school staff were believed to have “little experience of differentiating to this level [P-levels]” (secondary SENCo).

The attitude of the senior leadership team and the SENCo in secondary schools was mentioned rarely in open ended responses. The attitude of these staff were explored through the rating scale. The statement “head teachers in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs” was selected as being a high explanatory factor (value 5 or 6) by 46 out of 96 participants, both values were the modal average (mean 3.95, s.d 1.77). The statement “Special Needs Coordinators in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs” was one of only 5 statements to have a mode of 3 or less. Of 98 participants 22 thought this was not an explanatory factor, 44 thought it was a medium explanatory factor, and 32 thought it was a high explanatory factor (mean 3.43, s.d. 3.43).

When asked to comment on what would have made a secondary mainstream placement successful some answered that all staff needed greater **expertise** in special educational needs, not just the key support staff. Sometimes schools themselves admit they have not enough expertise in a particular disability, one parent “spoke to SENCOs at the secondary schools who said that they did not have adequate expertise in dealing with my son's needs”, the school this parent eventually chose was one where “all of the staff had specialist training in high functioning autism”. In order to become more inclusive it was felt that secondary staff should undergo additional training to acquire a greater set of skills. One parent felt the need to train staff – to “up-skill them” so they could cope with their child. Schools that were successful were ones that undertook additional whole school training from specialist outreach teachers. Three primary schools that were said to be inclusive were described as having undergone specific training from LA outreach providers. None of the secondary schools described in the case study questions mentioned additional training. There was also a need for schools to have access to the expertise of specialist staff and support, which is discussed further in the resources section below. The problem was located by some in primary provision: “mainstream teachers in primary lack expertise to spot SEN early on” (parent), another parent suggested that ASD symptoms are not recognised by teachers in primary schools. Another parent said “conditions [are] not recognised when [the child is] younger as the symptoms are attributed to bad behaviour rather than special educational needs”.

Existing **staff/teacher training** arrangements were thought to be a limiting factor for inclusion. It was suggested that Initial Teacher Training for secondary school staff was mainly subject focused, and very different from primary teacher training. Secondary staff also lacked “low level/primary level experience” that may help them differentiate for pupils working at low levels. It was felt there was insufficient training in SEN; teachers are not trained to deal with learning difficulties, which results in non-specialist staff lacking “the depth of knowledge and understanding needed [to include children with SEN]” (secondary SENCO). The cost implications of training mean that staff and schools were “reluctant to gain the professional development qualities need[ed] to successfully include children at this phase of their education” (EP). Training of staff in a specific need was seen as a prerequisite for a successful placement in a mainstream school, such as in a case of a child who’s “[complex] epilepsy was having such an impact on his

learning” (EP). Training was not seen as enough, this EP also recognised the need for the mainstream staff to have experience in dealing with this particular need.

One special school deputy head teacher claims that special schools were chosen by parents because they have “staff specialised in the needs of their child [and these staff have a] level of understanding of the range of needs of children”. Some parents confirm this, one reporting the placement “school was chosen because it had specialist help on site for boys like our son, they knew what they were doing - it was the norm in that place and not a specialism in a mainstream setting which would have made him different”. Special schools provide “an environment where everyone has an understanding that all...are there for a reason” (parent). This notion of environment leads into the next sub-theme.

#### ***(iv) Environment and ethos***

The next key area under the theme of school level factors is that of school environment and ethos. Ethos accounts for 3.6% of the total codes, and environment accounts for 1.5%. Both words are used *verbatim* in places in response to the questions. I have also coded statements under the heading of ethos where reference is made to the culture and attitude of the schools being described, for example “the school is committed to inclusion” is coded as ethos.

The word environment is used to describe the different school settings, often with adjectives. Primary schools are seen as having “nurturing”, “supportive”, “secure”, “safe” and “small” environments, whereas secondary schools are described as “busy, crowded”, “more complex, larger” and “unsympathetic” ones. Special school environments are compared to the mainstream equivalent, as “safer”, “more caring, nurturing” and “more cushioned”. One parent also notes that special schools offer a “specialist environment”.

The child’s experience of and reaction to a mainstream primary school environment may also affect parental choice of school - “if a small, supportive mainstream primary learning environment has been unbearable for a child it would take a lot of reassurance to convince parent and child that mainstream Secondary would actually be better” (parent, other comments question).

The concept of environment relates back to school flexibility, and the needs of the child – “it becomes increasingly difficult to adapt the...environment to meet

individual needs in a meaningful and relevant way”, however some schools did adapt the environment for the individual. It was suggested that some children simply need a different environment to their peers, as one special school head teacher critiques:

“It is important not to talk about "type" of school but look at the needs of the child and find the environment that best can provide for those needs i.e. if a child needs a distraction free, low noise environment then a mainstream classroom cannot provide that, whereas if a student needs access to firm boundaries, high academic expectations, regimented days then perhaps a grammar school would best suit. Inclusion is about finding out the learning styles and needs of a student then finding the environment that can provide for that the best.”

Some primary schools were said to be very inclusive, with an “ethos of 'every' child does matter”. However, there were examples of primary schools not being inclusive. One special school head teacher stated that “parents that visit special school value the ethos [...] that is individualised around the child”. An educational psychologist posited that secondary school inclusion would have been successful if the school was “prepared to take on more welcoming and positive approach”.

School choice can be based on the “ethos and "feel" of the school”. One local authority school advisor said that the parents and child in the case they described chose the mainstream secondary school because of its ethos, amongst other things.

Ethos and environment can be circumvented by a particular individual’s response to including a child with special educational needs - “there are also particular individuals in schools who will drive forward particular responses despite the surrounding ethos” (EP, other comments question).

Several of the rating scale questions related to factors regarding ethos and environment. The two statements that attained the highest mean of all statements were related to environment. “The special school environment has more adaptations for children with unusual needs” was the statement that attracted the most agreement as being a contributory factor, 59 participants selected “very much”, a further 20 selected the value just beside this on the scale (mean 5.26, s.d 1.16). 58 out of the 98 selected “very much” when asked to rate how much the fact that “special schools provide a more protective

environment than secondary schools” explained the phenomenon, a further 17 selected rating point 5 (mean value of agreement, 5.05 out of 6, s.d 1.49).

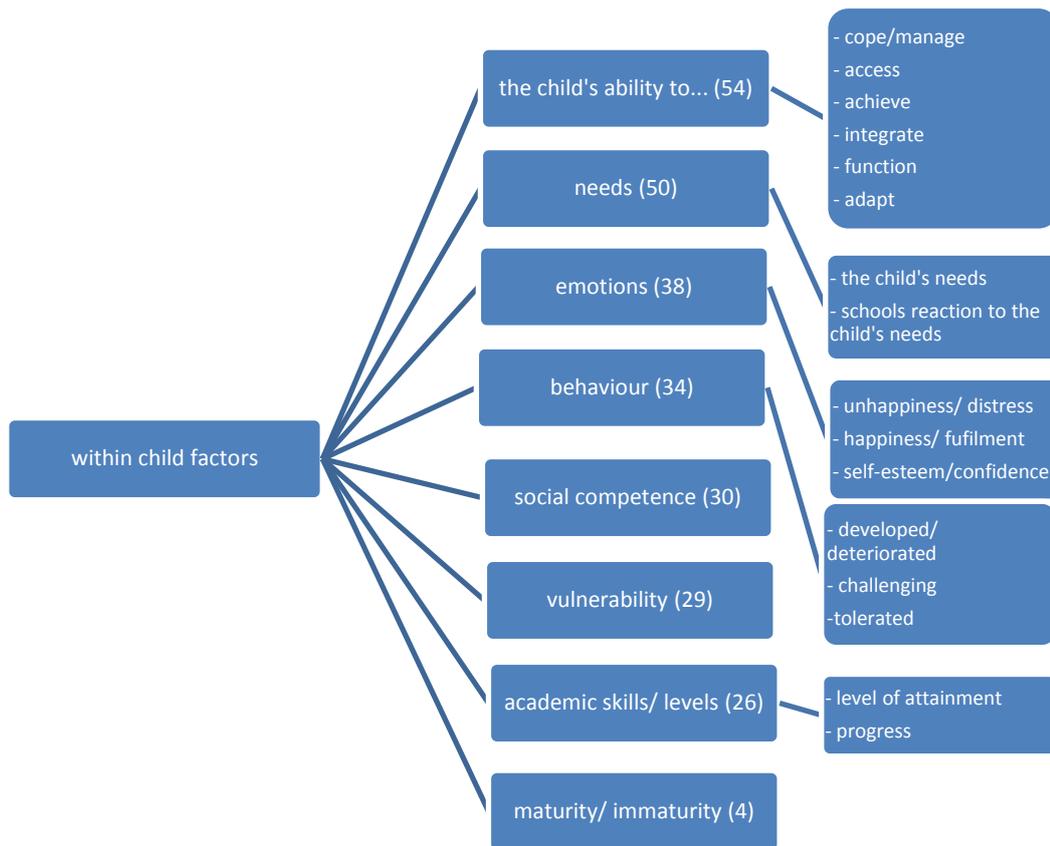
Of the statements regarding ethos, “children are more likely to be included in the culture and climate of special school because they are valued and they can contribute” had 57 people mark the agreement end of the scale (value 5 or 6), a mean of 4.56 (s.d 1.67). “The culture and climate of most secondary schools make them less inclusive”. The mode for this statement was 6, with just under a third of participants selecting “very much”. (Mean 4.1 out of 6, s.d 1.76.)

#### **(v) Special schools**

Special schools were chosen as being “**better-suited**” to the child, they “fit [the child with SEN] perfectly” and are “appropriate to [the child’s] SEN”. One parent felt that “too many children are left floundering in mainstream schools when they would be so much better cared for in a specialist environment”. Another “believe[d] that had my son been forced to go to mainstream he would have become angry and disengaged and have felt a failure”, implying that this would not have happened in a special school. Special schools provide a “right setting for their needs” and allow children to “thrive”. Needs are “met” and “fulfilled” in special schools, especially “social and physical” needs. Some special schools are “specifically designed” to meet the needs of the children who attend them, and “are well resourced, with motivated staff” (special school head teacher).

#### **4.02(b) Within child factors**

The second largest theme, within child factors, which accounts for 15% of responses, are those that frame the problem and barriers to accessing mainstream within the child. The child’s ability in a range of areas is called into question, such as their ability to cope and manage in a mainstream environment, their ability to access the curriculum, and their ability to achieve. Closely related to their ability to cope is their vulnerability within a mainstream environment. The complexity of the child’s needs, low attainment levels and academic skills, immaturity, behavioural, emotional and social “limitations” are felt to be other reasons why mainstream secondary schools are inappropriate for students with SEN. Figure 4.3 lays out the theme of within child factors broken down into these subthemes.



**Figure 4.3: A breakdown of the subthemes and factors of the “within child factors” theme**

**(i) “The child’s ability to...”**

“The child’s ability” was a phrase that was used throughout the responses, particularly in the case study descriptions. It spanned ability in a range of areas, not purely academic. The most common reference to the child’s ability was in terms of the child’s ability to **“cope” or “manage”**, which had 27 specific references. There were “concerns” from parents and teaching staff about the child with SEN’s “ability to cope within the secondary school setting” (EP), or that the child “would not cope well with a physically large environment or with the social demands of being in a secondary school” (LA SENPO). In some cases there was evidence that the child was not coping – one parent reported how in year 5 and 6 their daughter “hated school throughout year 5 and 6 and refused to go a lot of the time, so I started looking at special schools as she obviously wasn't coping in the mainstream”. One secondary SENCo described in detail the evidence that pointed to the child with SEN they were describing not coping:

“[He] found it difficult to cope with mainstream secondary and [his] behaviour began to deteriorate to the point where he refused to attend school and was threatening to kill himself if parents made him come.

Factors implying lack of placement success - increasing amount of time spent out of lessons in LS base with little access to teaching and learning - followed by violent behaviour - not towards people in school but throwing furniture - mental health deterioration and eventual school refusal.”

The child’s ability to **access** the mainstream school was questioned. Access was not discussed in terms of physical access, but with particular reference to the curriculum, 3 of the 6 references to the child’s ability (or inability) to access were curriculum related. This supposed inability to access was based on low attainment levels, the child not being able to read, and even when support was provided it was not enough to enable access. Next, the child’s ability to **achieve** was called into question, one special school head teacher pointed out that “mainstream teachers are under huge pressure to get pupils to achieve, something that most SEN pupils (*sic*) struggle to do in the same way as peers”. The children with SEN were seen as being more likely to achieve in a special school: “[the] best place set up to help her achieve her potential was the special school” (parent). One secondary SENCo described how they would recommend a place at their school for a child with special educational needs, and: “only felt able to support special school placement where the pupil would be distressed by the mainstream experience and would do better amongst pupils of a similar cognitive level”.

Ability to **integrate** or “fit” into the mainstream was an issue in some of the cases described – there are “many children who just cannot fit into mainstream” (parent), one set of parents who had a child with Down’s Syndrome “felt that their daughter would not cope or be able to integrate well in a secondary mainstream school” (special school head teacher). Three people commented that the child with SEN they were describing in the case studies “could not **function**” in a mainstream setting, that parents worried that the mainstream would “be too much for them”. The ability of a child with special educational needs to **adapt** to a changing situation was also raised; the three cases that made this point were related to a child who had an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. It “would have been very difficult to get him to adapt to a large comp[rehensive school]” due to “[the] child's rigidity of thought/action” (primary head teacher). Other comments prefaced with “the child’s ability to” regarded ability to **learn** (special school head teacher), their “ability to make **sense** of the curriculum” (SENPO), their ability “to do the

work” set (parent), their ability to “self-organise” (special school head teacher) and finally “ability to interact with peers” (special school head teacher).

**(ii) The child's needs**

This section can be broken down into two parts – the role the **child's needs** play in mediating a placement decision, but also the perceived **response schools make to the child's needs**. (This latter section could appear in the school factor section, but I have chosen to place it here as the needs the schools respond to are located within the child).

Ten of the cases discussed the complexity of the child's needs as being a barrier to accessing secondary mainstream, 6 of these were cases of children with multiple co-morbid/co-existing conditions. One child's medical condition and related needs worsened as he aged. There was a sense, in two separately reported cases, that needs should be “appropriate for the mainstream”: “this child's needs were never suggested as being appropriate for a mainstream classroom” (SENPO), “I can think of lots of examples of pupils in special schools that, due to their significant needs, would not be appropriate in a mainstream setting” (secondary SENCo).

Placements were sought that “best met the child/young person's needs” (LA specialist teacher), and special schools were occasionally described as “the only way” to meet the child's needs. Needs were seen to be “met more fully” in a special school, one special school was believed by parents to be “more conducive to the learning and behavioural needs of the child” (special school head teacher). Some parents reported that secondary schools advised parents that they would be “unsuitable for [child's] needs” (parent), indeed two secondary school SENCos report how they could not fully meet or accommodate the case study child's needs. One secondary SENCo described their concern “that we attempt to place students into secondary settings which in reality mean isolating the child because of their need”. A secondary mainstream placement is suggested in some local authority areas based on the “premise that children should be educated in mainstream provision if their needs can be met in this way” (EP), and in the case this EP described it was felt the child with SEN's “needs could be met in mainstream if appropriate support was in place”. One special school head teacher argues that placement decisions should be made by identifying the child's needs then “finding the environment that can provide for [those needs] the best”.

When asked to rate the statement “it is harder to include children with unusual or atypical needs” as a reason for the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools” 26 out of 97 selected “very much”. On closer inspection it can be seen that the results are fairly evenly spread along the scale, the mean value is 3.73 (s.d. 1.99), 19 selected it as a low explanatory factor, 35 as a medium explanatory factor, and 43 as a high explanatory factor.

### ***(iii) Emotions***

The child with SEN’s emotions and self-perception were seen as key contributory factors to placement choice. “I genuinely believe that had my son been forced to go to mainstream he would have become angry and disengaged and have felt a failure” (parent). Pupils were reported as being unhappy, with low self-esteem in the mainstream setting, and both these problems were seen to be resolved in the special schools setting.

Some children were described as “**unhappy**” or “distressed” in their mainstream setting. Words like “really unhappy”, “detested” and “hated” were used in a few cases to describe children’s feelings about attending their mainstream primary school, and in one case of a child who attended mainstream secondary until year 9. One parent thought that children with SEN who are “left floundering in mainstream schools [...] may then go truant because they are so unhappy”. One secondary SENCo described a case where a pupil with SEN in Year 8 was “becoming more distressed by having to attend secondary school”. Another secondary SENCo describes how they “only felt able to support special school placement where the pupil would be distressed by the mainstream experience”. Distress and unhappiness was manifest in the following situation of a child in secondary school who “found it difficult to cope with mainstream secondary and behaviour began to deteriorate to the point where he refused to attend school and was threatening to kill himself if parents made him come” (secondary SENCo). Some children were seen to have “emotional needs” which would have required “support” in a mainstream placement, or would have made the child “vulnerable” in a mainstream setting. One child was described by the primary school as “struggling socially and emotionally” (EP).

They were seen as more likely to be **happy and fulfilled** in a special school setting – several parents and professionals describe cases where the child appears to be happier in a special school, rather than the mainstream: “he has

settled into boarding very well due to the care and attention he is given and is thriving in the school” (parent), “he is now happier and less vulnerable now that he is in specialist provision” (secondary SENCo), “the child is happier and therefore able to learn and achieve” (special school head teacher). One parent captures this fully in the following description: “my daughter’s confidence, self-esteem, social skills and overall happiness had been [met/achieved] through this special needs school. In my daughter’s words she’s with her own kind and with people who understand and don’t judge!” A number of parents had happiness as a goal of placement choice, one parent “was very focused on her wish for her daughter to be happy at school” (EP), in another case it was the child who was “very unhappy about the idea of attending [mainstream secondary]” (parent), and thus a special school placement was sought.

**Self-esteem and confidence** is another area of the child’s emotions that may affect placement choice. In two cases self-esteem of the child being described was seen to fall in a secondary mainstream setting. A further four cases (all described by parents) describe how confidence and self-esteem have risen since the child began to attend a special school. One parent suggested that “had my son been forced to go to mainstream he would have become angry and disengaged and have felt a failure. Where he is able to be 'normal' and be himself...he has started to feel ok about himself, for the first time since early primary”.

#### *(iv) Behaviour*

The child with special educational needs’ behaviour was mentioned as a contributory factor in both the case study question and the question that asked for four reasons why secondary aged pupils are over-represented in special schools. Behaviour was described as challenging, there was a sense of it deteriorating over time, and pupil safety was affected. It was also suggested that bad behaviour was tolerated in some contexts, but not in others.

Descriptions of behaviour ranged from it being an “issue”, “disruptive” to “very challenging”, “aggressive” and even “violent”. The word **challenging** was used in seven cases to describe the behaviour of children with special educational needs, and the challenge of behaviour is alluded to in comments such as “my son was excluded from school in Year 5 due to violent meltdowns in class” (parent), “placement became unsupportable in year 6 due to emotional and behavioural problems” (parent) and “violent, aggressive to adults and pupils” (secondary SENCo). This challenging behaviour resulted in disciplinary

exclusion or expulsion in a few cases. There was a belief that “mainstream school cannot manage challenging behaviour” (parent), particularly as some children became “more difficult to manage as they grow and become physically stronger” (secondary SENCo).

Behavioural issues in some cases were seen to **deteriorate or develop** over time, with phrases such as “more challenging”, “worse”, “deteriorated so significantly”, “more extreme”, and “increased signs of aggression” to describe behaviour. This could be seen as resulting from children becoming more aware of the differences between themselves and their peers: “children become more aware of diff[erence]s as they get older and therefore may then develop behaviour issues as well” (primary SENCo). Alternatively, it could be an outcome of increased pressure of work: as “the work got harder through school so her behaviour got worse” (parent); or being placed in “remedial class where he was bored rigid” (parent).

One local authority SENAI felt that a contributory factor to the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools was that “behaviours have been **tolerated** historically in primary [school]”, implying that they may not be tolerated in secondary school to the same extent. The sense of a difference in school response to behaviour was examined through the rating scale statement “Primary schools are more able to absorb immature behaviour”. The mean response to this question was 4.02 (s.d. 1.65), 47 of 99 selected the higher values (5 or 6), 43 selected the middle values (2, 3, 4).

A secondary SENCo viewed tolerance in a different way – “increased signs of aggression” could be seen as a result of “pupils with significant SEN, [being] frustrated in school [...] are unable to express themselves in ways that are deemed 'appropriate'” (emphasis respondent’s own). That is, the aggression is simply a behavioural output that is deemed inappropriate, and therefore not tolerated, in secondary school. Safety was at times affected by the behaviour of the child with SEN. Safety is discussed as a separate theme related to placement decisions below.

#### ***(v) Social***

The child’s **social competence and skills** were questioned by some respondents. There were reports of the child being socially isolated in the mainstream – this is discussed further in the relationships section below. Various case studies described the children the case was based on as being

“socially immature”, “socially naive”, “lack[ing] in social confidence”, “socially vulnerable”, having “social difficulties”, “struggling socially” or not being able to cope with the “social demands” of mainstream. Levels of social difficulties were heightened by the onset of puberty, meaning “problems with social skills and developing relationships are more problematic in the secondary school years” (parent).

There was a sense that the child’s level of social competence would prevent them from accessing mainstream schools: “everyone agreed that [the] child could not access mainstream both academically and socially” (primary SENCo), “the gap between her and her peers was so great both academically and socially that it was felt that she would not find happiness or fulfilment in the mainstream school” (secondary SENCo). Placement choice was occasionally based on schools that offered social skills support and teaching. One parent describes how their choice between a special school and a mainstream school with a unit was based on the special school’s offer of a “structured social skills programme”, which was not offered by the unit. Primary schools were seen as being “more geared towards the social and emotional needs of children with SEN” (EP). The “social gaps” could cause the child to be “ridiculed in secondary” (special school head teacher), rather than accepted as they were in primary schools. As reported above it was felt that mainstream secondary schools did not have enough “emphasis on social emotional and personal development” (EP).

#### ***(vi) Vulnerability***

Vulnerability was a word that was used regularly (it was used in 30 responses) to describe the child with special educational needs, both in the case study questions, and in the question that asked for four reasons why there was an over-representation of secondary students in special schools. “Vulnerable learners”, “physically vulnerable”, “social vulnerability”, “socially naive or vulnerable” are some examples of how the terms were used. There was a sense that this vulnerability was caused by or exacerbated by the school level factors as discussed previously, particularly size. The children were vulnerable to bullying, or following the (negative) examples of peers. There was a sense that parents do not think their vulnerable child will be able to cope in the mainstream setting. Vulnerability was often seen as an extension of the child’s needs, something that was inherent to the child, for example “[primary school] staff concerns regarding vulnerability and cognitive needs

[...] the child's needs and vulnerability were evident from an early age” (primary SENCo). Special schools were seen to reduce the child’s vulnerability: “he is now happier and less vulnerable now that he is in specialist provision” (secondary SENCo).

**(vii) Academic**

The academic skills and levels of attainment of the child with special educational needs were seen as another contributory factor to placement.

**Level of attainment** were reported to be “so low”, “below average” or “below that expected for peers”. One concrete example reported was of a “Year 5 pupil [who] was struggling to keep up with a combined Y1/2 group”. Some people quantified this, for example the child had: “less than 1<sup>st</sup> percentile cognitive skills”, “[a] reading and writing age of 6 years 7 months”, or was “operating at P levels” or “NC level 1 and below”. One SENPO stated that the “child's learning levels were [the] most significant influence on placement”. Contrary to this however were three separate cases where a parent described their child with SEN as having “average and above cognitive ability”. In one case the child “was assessed by an educational psychologist to have an IQ of 130 and he reached National Curriculum Level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1”. Another case describes the child as having the academic potential to go to university.

Another contributory factor was the child’s **progress in learning** (or lack of it). This ranged from making “no progress” to “not mak[ing] sufficient progress”, and in one case “stalled progress and regression”. Progress was linked with support, one secondary SENCo described how a child with SEN in their secondary school “was supported intensively and more than his 15 hour statement suggested but he still did not make sufficient progress”. In another case a primary SENCo describes how “reduced support resulted in a visible lack of progress...a second statement request was submitted at the end of Y5 showing clear evidence of stalled progress and regression when support was limited”. A parent reported how “no specialist support was offered despite our persistent requests as it was included in her statement”, and as a result “her self-esteem dropped dramatically, and she made no progress in her learning”. Another factor that impinged on academic progress was the child with SEN’s refusal to work, which was reported in two cases.

The above factors were raised in the case study questions, rather than the question that asked for four reasons why the situation exists as it does.

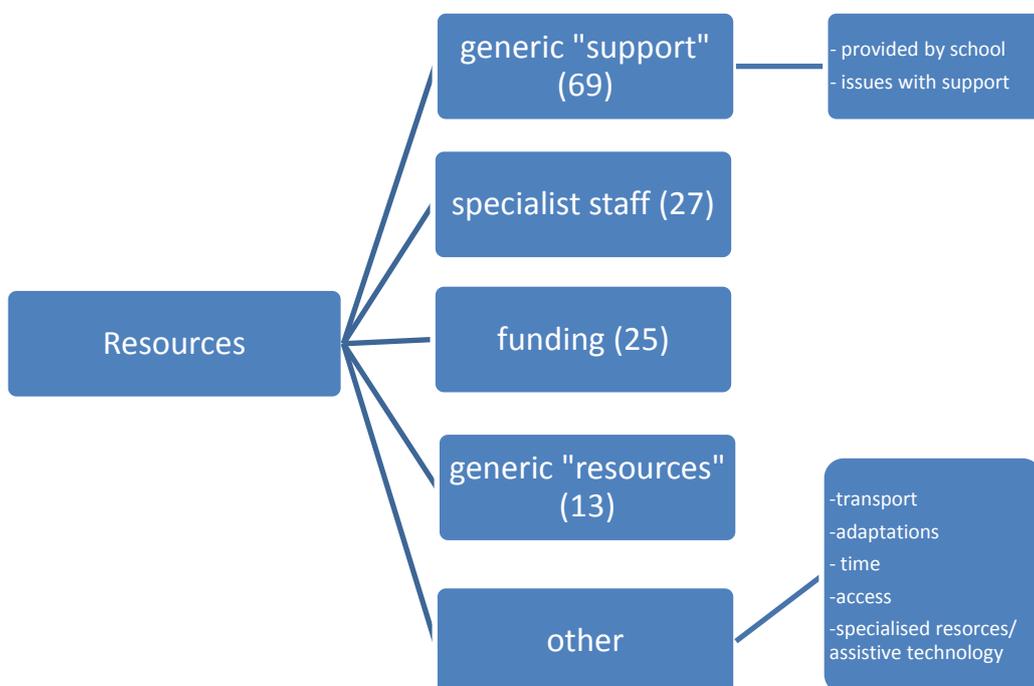
Where levels of attainment and progress are discussed in this question they

are related to the gap between the child with SEN and their peers, for example the “gap between child and peers widens as children get older as rate of progress [is] not [the] same” (primary SENCo). These statements are discussed further in the “chronosystem factors” theme below.

**(viii) Maturity/immaturity**

The child’s level of maturity was another contributory factor that could be seen as existing within the child. Only a few participants discussed this. Three of the cases described the child as being immature or in one case demonstrating “significant behaviours more associated with a much younger child” (EP). (It was recognised in this case that this immaturity was “consistent with a looked after history”.) Another case described a child who “was an extremely immature and vulnerable young lady who would be easily persuaded to behave inappropriately”, and as a result the annual statement review “warn[ed] that a specialist placement would be the only way of meeting this young lady's needs and of safe guarding her due to immaturity and lack of awareness of danger” (“inclusion practitioner”). One secondary SENCo posited that “the maturity of the child [would] have an effect on the people making emotional decisions about a child’s future”.

**4.02(c) Resources**



**Figure 4.4: A breakdown of the subthemes and factors of the “resources” theme**

Reference to resources, or the lack of them in mainstream schools, was the third most mentioned theme. Resourcing here includes funding and the

requirement of some children for more support than they would receive in the mainstream (for example one to one, full time support). A need for access to specialist support from external agencies and therapists that is not met in mainstream was also mentioned. A breakdown of the category of resources can be seen in figure 4.5. The generic terms of “support” and “resources” were used without further descriptions of meanings in the responses, and I use them as direct code names.

**(i) “Support”**

Support was seen as a resource that could facilitate inclusion if there was enough of it. As one EP suggested “I believe that [the child] could potentially have been successfully supported in a mainstream high school with a high level of support”. Others thought flexible and appropriate support would make a mainstream placement feasible. Primary schools were seen by some as more able to offer regular 1:1 support, whereas secondary schools were limited: “the pupil had attended a mainstream primary unit which provided a high level of personal 1:1 support, particularly at unstructured times of the day. At secondary level we did not have the resources available to continue support at the level of the Primary school” (secondary SENCo).

Twelve cases described that the child with SEN would have needed more support than was being offered. This included “full time 1:1 support”, “social and emotional support”, dyslexia support, learning support assistants, “a scribe”, a “multi-sensory programme”, “dedicated support”, “specialist support” and support “at unstructured times of the day”. In three of the thirteen cases where a secondary SENCo described the transfer of a children from mainstream secondary school to a special school it was commented that problems occurred in spite of the support the school had put in place. One reports: “despite having fulltime in-class support, literacy intervention, a 1:1 mentor, behavioural input, EP support, CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] support, his behaviour deteriorated so significantly that the school became worried about the health and safety aspect of him and others”.

There were other issues raised by the provision of support, one case described how the child in question was reluctant to accept the support offered by the secondary school, two people discussed issues of over-reliance on support, and the chance of this stopping the child developing independence skills, and one report of the fear the child “would stand out like a sore thumb” (parent) with the required support in place.

### ***(ii) Specialist staff***

The availability of “specialist staff” or “specialist support” was seen as a key contributory factor to choosing special schools – secondary schools were thought to have “lack of access to professionals” such as speech and language therapists, or occupational therapists. A member of LA staff commented that there was a “perception that other services [are] more accessible for special school students” (LA SENAI). Teaching assistants were also considered to be specialist staff, and again it was seen that secondary schools did not offer as much 1:1 teaching assistant support that primary schools or special schools do. Specialist support also includes teachers who are specialised in an area of need, and secondary placement would have been considered in some places if an “autism specialist”, “primary specialist” or “specialist to follow a multi-sensory learning programme” was available.

The special school placements that were described in the case studies had a range of on-site specialist staff, such as “physio[therapy], O[ccupational] T[herapy], school nurse and welfare”, “on-site therapy” was another advantage of a special school in one case. Successful primary placements had “good access to outside agency support” (EP). However, a parent describes not being able to access these agencies in a mainstream primary “OT and speech and language therapy have been on a waiting list for 4 years, it isn't going to happen in a mainstream school”, whereas in the special school their child transferred to has “OT and speech therapy on site”. They also have “staff specialised in the needs of the child”.

One SENPO thought that the trend of parents choosing mainstream primary school for their child meant that the child did not receive the specialist support they may have needed, causing the gap between them and their peers to widen to the point where a special school placement is needed.

### ***(iii) Funding***

Issues related to funding were only mentioned 5 times in the “give four reasons for over-representation” question, but were alluded to more in the case study questions. Funding was seen by some as a driver of placement decisions by the local authorities. (However, as this is often stating that LAs select a mainstream school placement to save money, it does not explain the over-representation of secondary children in special schools. This is discussed further in Chapter 6). Funding was seen as necessary to enable access to the

mainstream, and there were issues of funding arriving late or not being provided and the secondary school having to self-fund provision.

Both a local authority social worker and a parent stated that over-representation could be explained by “financial reasons” or funding issues. Two separate secondary SENCoS gave more detail, one claiming that “funding differences between primary and secondary sector in SEN” explained the over-representation of secondary students. The other SENCo claimed it was caused by (a presumable lack in) “appropriate levels of funding”, and the cost implications of training staff. In the case study question a parent described how the cost of paying fees for a special school was the same for the LA “as the cost of a teaching assistant full time” to support a mainstream placement. One SENAI commented that “there is little acceptance that actually to educate pupils with SEND is more costly”.

One secondary school SENCo describes how a mainstream placement failed as “it was very difficult to put in place enough support for this child as the statement was only issued in April and funding only arrived in the summer term”. They felt that the child would have found success in the mainstream if “the child's needs had been identified much earlier at primary school and a statement issued along with the appropriate funding”. The same SENCo also described how they had felt unable to accept a child with SEN into their school as they had a lack of funding to provide learning assistant support.

A local authority SENAI felt that placement in a secondary school would have been successful if “funding to meet [the child’s] needs could be put in place through the use of external agencies into school”. One secondary SENCo describes how they achieved success in keeping a child with SEN in mainstream by “spending a lot of resources on him without funding attached [from the LA]”.

#### ***(iv) Generic resources***

“Resources” was used as a general explanatory term, particularly in the reasons for over-representation question. One secondary school SENCo felt primary schools had better resources, another that there was a lack of resources in secondary schools. A SENPO thought over-representation was due a “strain on secondary SEN resources” caused by the sheer number of pupils with SEN present in a secondary school (as a result of them having more pupils generally). Another secondary SENCo felt inclusion would have

been successful “had we had the resources; [such as] a small group/nurture group, primary specialist teacher, a teaching assistant and the know-how”. One parent believed that resources were misappropriated in a secondary school, surmising that schools made a bid for resources (in terms of allocated statement hours), receive them, do not use them for the child they were allocated to, and then move the child to a special school.

The effect of resources on the over-representation of secondary aged children was a statement on the rating scale “secondary schools do not have enough resources to adapt to some children's unusual or atypical needs”. Responses to this were spread evenly over the scale, between 10 and 21 respondents selecting each point on the scale, (mean 3.44, s.d. 2.05).

***(v) Other specific resourcing issues***

Other factors regarding resources were also discussed by some respondents, but as each was only mentioned by a few they have not been categorised separately. These include time (less time in secondary schools to “catch up”, special schools are “able to apportion more time per pupil”), the use of assistive technology (not used in certain LA placements according to one parent), a lack of quiet places in mainstream secondary, issues around the physical access to a school and staffing levels (not enough staff in secondary schools to deal with needs). Transport was a further resourcing issue, but it was related again to parents feeling removal of transport acted against choice of special school, so is inconsequential to this research question.

It was felt that successful placement in mainstream could be achieved through the provision of resources. One SENAI discussed how the needs of one pupil were successfully met in the mainstream through the provision of a range of resources: “the school was able to adapt the learning environment for the pupil so they provided a laptop, access to support for written assignments, homework club and other dyslexic pupils’ positive experiences”. Another describes how “works were undertaken so that most of the school was physically accessible and curriculum access was provided by timetabling where this was not possible. Some specialised equipment (height adjustable tables) was already in place. Further equipment was purchased and in place when the pupil started school”.

#### 4.02(d) Voice/choice

The fourth largest factor for placement in a special school was as a result of the choice of stakeholders, primarily of parents, but affected at times by professional recommendations and requests. Placement decisions made by teams involving school staff, local authority staff and parents was mentioned less often, as was the involvement of child voice and preference. Figure 4.4 set these out in the order they will be discussed, ranging from most codes to least codes.

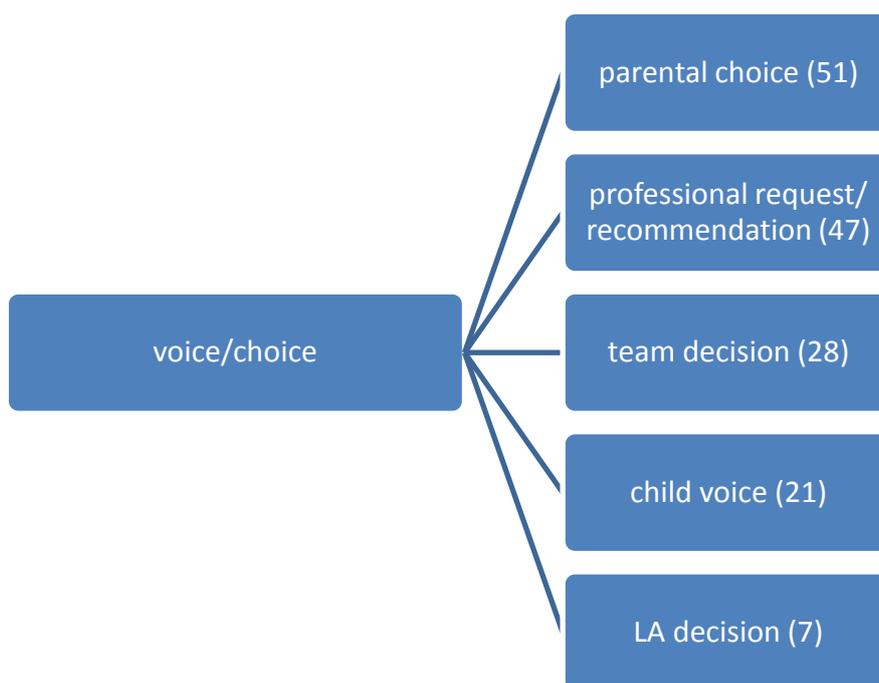


Figure 4.5: A breakdown of the subthemes and factors of the “voice/choice factors” theme

##### (i) Parental choice

The biggest voice in making placement decisions was that of the parents. In the cases described 39 sets of parents were said to have made the final placement choice, with a further 2 who agreed with the choice suggested to them. This accounts for approximately two fifths of all the cases. In the four reasons questions however, only 3 people said placement was down to parent choice (compared to a further 9 who suggested parents were influenced by stakeholder advice). “Parental choice”, “parental preference”, “mum’s wishes”, “parent wanted”, “parental request” are phrases that were repeatedly used in the case descriptions when describing who made the final placement decision. In one case of a pupil being in mainstream secondary and transferring this choice was said to be the result of a “huge parental push for special” (secondary SENCo). Of the three people who suggested parental choice as the reason for the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools,

one EP says it is a “result of parental request at secondary”, and a parent points to the reason behind the choice “parents may prefer the greater levels of support in a special school”.

In some cases there was a sense of parental uncertainty about the best place to send their child. One case is described where “the parents initially wanted a mainstream placement but then went to look at all the available options including the local mainstream schools, and the local special schools. Parents were not confident that a mainstream school would be able to provide him with the flexibility that he needed. They were happier with the more personal approach of the special school for learning difficulties [...]Parental choice was eventually an important factor in the final placement” (SENPO). Another case is outlined where a secondary school SENCo “made case to LA backed by [an] ed[ucational] psych[ologist] that he needed specialist provision”. The parents agreed and the LA accepted the recommendations, however, “parents changed [their] mind after viewing special schools” and the pupil still attends the mainstream secondary school. Two of the cases are of parents who selected a mainstream placement for their child, in one of these cases “placement at any other school was not considered an option by the parents” (primary SENCo).

In four cases parental choice of a special school was achieved through the tribunal process, with the parents appealing for a placement in special school against the placement decision made by the local authority. A further 4 cases describes the parents having to “fight” the local authority placement decision (local authority advising mainstream, parents “fighting for” special school). The tribunals, appeals and “fights” all resulted in the parents’ preferred option being selected. In one case the parents fought for a placement in an out-of-borough residential special school as opposed to the LA choice of a local day special school.

Parental choice for mainstream placement was seen to have a negative effect in some cases – the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools was seen by one SENPO to be caused by “parent preference for child to remain in mainstream at primary level meaning that they do not get specialist support they may need and the gap widens [so] much that special is necessary at secondary”.

The role of parental concern, their thoughts, feelings and motivations behind placement choice, and the role of parental acceptance in placement choice are discussed further in the “parental preference” theme below.

***(ii) Professional request/recommendation***

Placement decisions were often mediated through the recommendations of professionals at a school or local authority level. A manager of a support service describes how professionals recommend specialist provision, and parents often follow this professional advice. Words like “recommendation”, “advised”, “requested”, “suggested”, or “on the advice of” were used to describe the role the professional played. This professional advice can come from “the primary school”, “the school”, the “LA”, “medical staff”, or simply “professionals”. One SENPO acknowledged that this advice to parents is “powerful”.

These professional recommendations ranged from their insistence on a special school placement: “we received a letter stating that our son had not received the place we had hoped for in the unit as they had decided at the meeting that he would be unable to cope and had felt he would be much better off at a small special school” (parent), to the more subtle examples of “secondary schools sometimes give a negative impression when the parents visit so that they are put off” (EP). A parent describes this latter process in greater detail “some schools choose not to meet the needs of disabled students; they actively discourage them [the parents] from choosing that school”. “Real life” examples of this were made clear in the case studies:

“My son stayed at mainstream until it was decided that he would not manage in secondary mainstream, I had scanned [the] internet and visited numerous secondary schools in my attempt to retain him in mainstream, I did not find one. Schools that, at first seemed to be welcoming became rather negative if they thought that I was perhaps going to request a place. Indeed I did request a secondary school place at a mainstream streamed school and this was deemed unable to meet needs at my son's year 6 transition [meeting]” (parent).

Sometimes professionals “pass on concerns” about the child’s ability to cope in the mainstream to parents by “noting to parents that their child won't cope in mainstream at secondary”, (reported by two different LA SENPOs). A primary “inclusion practitioner” (“helping the schools during their federating process”) details how “we had been very open in annual statement reviews, warning that

a specialist placement would be the only way of meeting this young lady's needs and of safe guarding her”.

In the question that asked secondary school SENCoS to outline a case where a pupil with SEN had come to their secondary school, then transferred to a special school there were examples of the SENCo making a “case to LA backed by [the] ED Psych” that the child needed specialist provision. Another secondary SENCo reports how “it was up to the LEA having read our reports if he would be statemented and then referred to the SILC [Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre]”. In one case a SENCo reports how the head of year arranged the transfer of a child with special educational needs with the local authority without discussion with the SENCo. This case however did involve a “huge parental push for special”.

Two parents report how when they attended their child’s annual review in primary school the professionals involved (the primary SENCo in both cases) agreed with the parents’ choice to send their child to a special school. The notion of parents being persuaded by professional opinion was explored in the rating scale. This had the third lowest mean of the 27 statements (2.91, s.d. 1.88), and a mode of 3.

### ***(iii) Team decision***

In many of the cases the final placement choice was reported as the result of a team decision, with a range of parties discussing and agreeing on the final placement choice. These “teams” included a range of school based and external staff, parents and on occasions the child with SEN. Where described these decisions were said to take place in annual review or transition review meetings, in a Children and Families multi-agency meeting, or over the course of a number of meetings.

In each of the 28 cases where a team decision was made, **parents** were listed as being a member of that team. All cases mentioned or alluded to the involvement of a **representative of the school**, 10 made specific reference to the primary school SENCo, 6 to the involvement of the child’s class teacher. In two cases a representative for the local mainstream secondary school was involved in the placement decision prior to secondary transfer, in two cases representatives from special school attended. In one case the child’s learning support teacher also contributed to the decision. Only seven of the cases describe the involvement of the **child or young person** in the team decision.

Only one of the 28 cases makes **no** reference to a **local authority representative** being part of the team that made the placement decision, saying only the SENCo, parent and National Autistic Society contacts made the decision where to send the child. 18 of the cases say an educational psychologist was part of the team. 8 describe how a member of staff from specialist teaching or support services in the LA were involved, and 5 say it was a LA officer or SEN advisor who contributed. In one case an education welfare officer was involved.

Other agencies or professionals were involved in a number of the cases. These included **health services** such as doctors or paediatricians (3), clinical psychologists or representatives from Child and Adult Mental Health services (3), speech and language therapists (2) and occupational therapists (2). In two cases the **Parent Partnership** service was involved. In one case National Autistic Society contacts attended.

One parent describes how despite seeking input from other professionals only the parent, the child and the local authority ASD team contributed to the placement decision:

“at [the] Year 5 statement review meeting I brought up the subject of transfer - the EP who attended thought he was in Y4 and was dismissive. [The] school made no suggestions as to [the] next school and I had to seek the support of the (fabulous) ASD support team at the LA. My son was heavily involved in the decision making process and supported by me and the ASD team in this with no input from school (they were asked to contribute to the process).”

#### ***(iv) Child voice***

Some of the cases described demonstrate an element of child involvement in the decision making process. As seen in the previous section, 7 of the 28 “teams” that made placement decisions involved the child with SEN as a member of that team. Other cases of the child being actively involved in the decision making process are described below.

In one case the transition review had named the provision as a mainstream secondary school, with “additionally resourced provision” for moderate learning difficulties. However, “after [the child] had a couple of visits to this school she said that she didn’t like it”. Following this visits were arranged to a special school which went well. The parent “then made representations to the local authority and a new proposed statement was issued naming the MLD

special school for Year 7". The EP who reported this case concluded that in this "particular situation the greatest weight was undoubtedly given to both [the parent and the child's] own wishes and I did not feel there was sufficient reason for me to present a strong alternative case to the local authority". A further 5 cases described the child visiting the secondary provision; in 3 of these cases the child visited a range of school types.

In 13 of the cases the child's view played a big part in informing parental choice. A number of cases outline the role the child played in the transition meetings: "the young person contributed largely to the decision about schooling - she knew what she needed and made it clear with help", the student was involved "when he felt able to communicate his wishes" (secondary SENCo), the child "expressed his wish to attend the school" (parent) and was "heavily involved in the decision making process" (parent). One child and their parent wanted placement in specialist provision "as this would reduce possible risk of exclusion" (EP).

In two cases the child's voice was ignored – one where the child "did not want any school" (primary head teacher), and another where following a transfer from middle school to upper "my son did not want to attend this school at all". In the latter case the LA advised the child be kept in the local school, which the parent agreed to.

#### ***(v) LA decision***

The local authority was reported to be the body that made the placement decisions in seven of the case studies. This was the work of the SEN panel – one parent describes this panel thus: "a meeting was held and I'm told the teachers from the units and special schools are there along with his education case worker (who did the statement) and the children's applications and abilities are discussed". The decision followed reviews of the child's statement, or reading of reports and assessments. An EP reports how the placement decision was the choice of two LAs, as the child was on one LA Looked After Children register, yet was placed in a school in another LA. It was suggested in the pilot interviews that the statistics could be a result of LAs simply accepting parental preference for a special school placement rather than going through the time consuming and costly tribunal process. This statement was tested by the rating scale and was the statement that had the lowest level of agreement, with a mean on the rating scale of 2.30 (s.d. 1.95), and one of only

two statements with a mode of 0. 15 out of 90 selected from the high end of the scale, 36 selected the lowest values (“not at all” and 1).

#### **4.02(e) Process**

The special educational needs identification and statementing processes were thought to explain the population patterns, particularly the view that as children grow older, it is easier to diagnose as needs become more apparent, or conditions are noticed that were missed earlier in their school career. The importance of a transition plan between primary and secondary school was also highlighted, transition being seen by a few as a natural break to move children to a special school setting.

##### ***(i) Identification of need and the statementing process***

A quarter of respondents gave issues related to the **timing of identification** as one of the four reasons why there were more secondary aged pupils in special schools. This could be for a number of reasons. Firstly it could be due to the needs becoming more apparent and pronounced over time (discussed further in the chronosystem section), or to a lack of early recognition of needs, resulting in late identification. Four cases were described where identification of the child’s primary need was not made until quite late in the primary school career, with a further 3 cases where identification of need, followed by statementing was not made until secondary school. One Secondary SENCo described the failure of a mainstream placement involving a child who had had no statement on entering secondary school. They concluded that “if the child’s needs had been identified much earlier at primary school and a statement issued along with the appropriate funding then there is no reason why this child shouldn’t have been successful in secondary school”. A parent reinforces this point: “[I] believe he could have done well at mainstream if he had decent early intervention, particularly in the early years”.

The **use of the graduated approach to supporting needs** was felt to be responsible for the over-representation of older children in special school. One parent suggested that as “action plans [are] rarely put in place before year 2 so [the] statementing process [is] delayed while policies are followed through in [the] required order”. A special school head teacher gave more detail of the lack of success of early intervention strategies: “[the] timeline of early intervention reaches [the] point of realisation it was not effective and [the] child is statemented then”. The needs worsen, so “by the time a child is statemented they need significant intervention to have any hope of an

independent adult life” (parent). One primary SENCo took advantage of the “any other comments” question to discuss the weakness of the current system – “the SEN criteria for each stage of the C[ode] O[f] P[ractice] is so low that many children with difficulties are not identified sufficiently early. In [named LA] it is ridiculous that year 6 children must be at level 1 to be statemented. How far behind does a child have to be?????” (*sic*). One secondary SENCo felt that “statementing occurs much later due to the politics of LA”, and a primary SENCo believed the “system discourages early identification in many ways as so much evidence over a long period of time is needed”. One secondary SENCo phrases it succinctly: “the process is too slow”. It is recognised by one special school head teacher that statementing is a lengthy and complex process, and a primary SENCo describes a case where statementing was rushed and this affected time for transition planning.

These thoughts are reflected in the Likert-type scale “it takes a long time to go through the statementing process, the child may be at the end of Key Stage 2 before the best placement is decided” and “the amount of data and evidence required for a special school placement can take a long time to gather”. Both these statements were rated similarly, both statements had a modal value of 6, 42 out of 97 selected the first statement as being a strong explanatory factor (selecting 5 or 6 on the scale), and 40 out of 98 selected the second statement as being a strong explanatory factor. The mean however placed level of agreement at the half way point (mean score was 3.62, s.d. 2.15 for the first statement and 3.5, s.d. 2.16 for the second), showing opinion was varied on these as explanatory factors.

Other issues related to the identification of needs that could contribute to the over-representation are that “disruptive children get all the attention, whilst the quiet SEN ones are not noticed and left to fail with no support” (parent), or a lack of experts to carry out prompt and early identification of needs: “primary staff lack expertise” and “those who do have expertise do not visit schools regularly enough” (parent). (It is interesting to note that each of the reasons in this paragraph thus far come from the same respondent). Finally, one EP suggested that over-representation occurs as “some issues come to light more at secondary level as primary schools don't want to be seen to have not done anything during the child's time there”.

### ***(ii) Transition***

The transition process from Key Stage 2 to 3 was felt by some to play a part in the over-representation of secondary aged pupils. Preparing for transition was felt to be a “**natural**” time to reconsider and reassess the child’s needs, as illustrated in the following case: “it was recommended that X should continue to attend his current mainstream primary school and transfer to specialist provision at secondary transfer in September 2011” after the statement had been issued (SENPO). A special school head teacher recognised that “transition is a difficult time for all children and to cope with the huge size and numbers [of secondary school] for SEN children is one barrier too many.”

A LA SENAI thought it may be due to the fact that transition between the Key Stages was not always well **managed**. A SENAI felt “primary secondary transition has to be better managed” to reduce over-representation of secondary aged students in special school. This is illustrated in one of the case studies that parents described - the parent reports how “I received no help in selecting schools, no transition plan was put in place”. Several professional staff outline how transition and inclusion in a mainstream school can and has been successful with the implementation of careful planning, and one secondary SENCo confirms this: “I do a great deal of work with pupils and parents to prepare for transfer and ensure this is successful”. One SENAI felt that more pupils could be successful in the mainstream if “the secondary school would welcome being involved in the transition plan being arranged”.

A social worker who responded to the survey draws attention to another issue related to processes that may cause mainstream secondary placements to appear to fail around transfer. “There can sometimes [be] a delay in the records going from the primary to the secondary school. When the records do go to the secondary school there can be a delay in the time it takes the secondary school to get to grips. Parents often assume that the school will have an immediate full understanding of their child”.

### ***(iii) Other factors related to processes***

A primary SENCo was concerned that had the pupil she was describing not been awarded a statement and consequently not been placed in a special school then “within a short period the KS3 school staff would have been expressing serious concerns and wondering why such a vulnerable individual had slipped through the net”. One secondary SENCo validated this claim when describing a child with SEN who had transferred to their school:

“Difficulties had already been experienced in Primary School. [The] child had no statement of SEN on transfer. This had been turned down in Year 6. She also did not have a diagnosis of ASD. [It] very quickly became clear that this child needed far more help than we had been led to believe”.

Some parents felt that the actual choosing of and applying for a placement was a very difficult and frustrating process – the “actual process in securing his place was frustrating”. “As a parent I found the whole process of choosing and applying for a secondary school extremely difficult. This is partly because it is such an emotionally draining thing to do; you have to describe your child's difficulties over and over to different people [...] and feel desperate to make 'the right decision' for your child's future”. Another describes attending “endless meetings and assessments and visits to colleges which offer inadequate support”.

#### **4.02(f) Parental preference**

Parental concern for their child and how the child would cope in a secondary school environment was seen as another contributory factor, fuelled in some cases by the child's or the parents' previous experience of the mainstream (this factor is discussed further in the “outcomes of mainstream” section below). A number of parents undertook in depth research to find the best school for their child and their needs, and some parents saw special schools as the best place for their child. Factors such as these affected the parents' ultimate choice of special school provision for their child.

##### ***(i) Parental concern***

The largest contributory factor to this theme was parental concern. This had 22 references in the four reasons question, descriptors ranged from parental “anxiety”, “fears”, “worry”, “lack of confidence” and “frightened”. This parental concern was thought to be based on a range of factors. Several were based on **concerns about the secondary school** itself and its ability to meet needs: “high level of parental anxiety (usually justified) about the ability of the secondary to meet their child” (EP); staff attitude to children with SEN - “many high school teachers do not see themselves as teachers of SEN children- this comes across to parents” (primary SENCo); their emphasis on academic achievement - “emphasis on academic subjects/levels worry parents” (SENAI); the structures of secondary schools - “parents prefer a smaller school as they fear a larger school is too impersonal” (special school deputy head); and the school's understanding - “lack of parental confidence in secondary school

understanding” (LA SENAI). There are **concerns about bullying and interpersonal relationships** in secondary school “concerns about bullying (parental views)” (SENPO), “parents usually start to see breakdown in friendships” (special school head teacher). **Parents themselves are “frightened of secondary schools”** (primary SENCo), and **distrustful** of the mainstream secondary: “parents do not trust main stream will give their children the best chance of an independent adult life, they feel they will be written off” (parent). Parents also have **concern about their child’s ability to cope**: “parents’ realisation that their child will not cope” (parent), “parental concern that their children will not cope with secondary school environment” (SENPO), and “worry about how their child will cope in a mainstream setting, especially when they see their child as being socially naive or vulnerable” (SENPO). One participant commented that these **concerns can be reinforced**: “medical staff can reinforce concerns about secondary mainstream schools and can give powerful advice to parents” (SENPO).

This concern is mediated through the **parents’ own experience of secondary schools**, as two participants commented “parents...think of secondary schools still being like they were when they were there and can't see them meeting the needs of children with S[evere] L[earning] D[ifficulties]” (special school deputy head), “parents own experience of secondary school puts them off sending in vulnerable SEN children” (special school head teacher).

Parental anxiety and concern were also discussed in eight of the case studies, related to the child’s ability to cope: “parental concerns related to the child’s ability to cope in a large, mainstream secondary increased during Year 5” (primary SENCo); “the ever widening attainment gap between her and her peers” (secondary SENCo); and a worry that the child would begin to school refuse (parent), or “become the victim of bullying” (parent) if placed in mainstream.

Parental concern is reflected in the Likert-type scale statement “parents believe their child will “never make it” in secondary school”. This gained a mean score of 4.24 (n=95, s.d. 1.77), and just under a third of participants rated this as a key explanation of the situation (value 6), over half selected value 5 or 6.

### ***(ii) Preference for special school***

In some cases **parents believed special school was the “best place” for their child**: “parents were convinced that the school that the child ended up attending was the BEST one for his needs not just able to meet them” (SENPO, emphasis respondent’s own). In some cases this was decided after a visit: “parents visited several schools and decided that the safest and best place set up to help her achieve her potential was the special school” (“inclusion practitioner”). These previous examples were reported by stakeholders other than parents, but a few parents did confirm this:

“I started to look at secondary school in year 4 and discovered that (in my opinion) the local mainstream pd [Physically Disability] school in our area would not be able to provide the high physical needs that my son has to maintain his transferring and independence. I looked further afield and went to visit [named residential special school for Physical Disabilities]. In my opinion the school was fantastic for my son and would fulfil all his needs and more as it was a school designed for the physically disabled”.

Parents were seen to be “keen to have their [child] transferred to special school” (secondary SENCo), parents may have not be “sure where to send [the child] but thought the special school might be best” (special school deputy head teacher). A number of reasons are given for the choice of special school by parents at transfer; these echo the reasons described throughout this chapter. One secondary school SENCo said how their school includes pupils with SEN with “a considerable degree of success”. Despite this, they note “it was often parents who wanted the security of special school at transfer”.

The choices were occasionally mediated by other professionals as the following example shows: “careful consideration of all possible schools in the area led to this particular school being selected by the parents (with staff support) as best able to meet their child's needs” (primary SENCo). In a small number of cases the choice was made by professionals, but parents reflect that this was the best choice: “we received a letter stating that our son had not received the place we had hoped for in the unit as they had decided at the meeting that he would be unable to cope and had felt he would be much better off at a small special school we had not seen or been told about. [...] we went to visit the school and were extremely pleased with the whole place and very grateful he was given a place at a school we feel will fit him perfectly and is suited to all his needs”.

**Parents liked what special schools had to offer**, after visits it was reported that they “liked what they saw” (special school deputy head, secondary SENCo), were “extremely pleased with the whole place”, thought it was “ideal” (parent) and “fantastic” (parent). A special school head teacher reports that “parents that visit the special school value the ethos and support on offer that is individualised around the child”, a SENPO confirms this, describing a case where school choice was made because the parents were “happier with the more personal approach of the special school for learning difficulties”.

***(iii) Limited confidence in secondary mainstream schools***

One SENAI makes repeated reference to lack of parental confidence in the mainstream in the case they describe: “strong parental feeling mainstream placement 'likely to fail', limited confidence in mainstream's ability to be flexible[...]parent had very strong, largely negative, views about the local mainstream secondary special class provision”. They suggest a wider range of provision needs to be made in order for parents to have greater confidence. A SENPO also drew attention to parental choice being affected by a lack of confidence in the mainstream: “parents were not confident that a mainstream school would be able to provide him with the flexibility that he needed”.

***(iv) Other aspects of parental preference/voice***

The over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools was seen by some as a result of parental choice in a range of matters, not simply a choice of special school. A local authority social worker thought the over-representation was due to “parents who do not/are not able to speak up for their child”. Whether this affected placements by parents not arguing when their child was placed in special schools, or the notion that parents did not argue against a mainstream placement resulting in placement failure is unclear. A grandmother of a child with SEN felt the opposite was true, that over-representation was due to “parents object[ing] and fight[ing] against the decision to move from mainstream”. How this affects over-representation is unclear. A parent noted that over-representation could be caused by parental concern being ignored while the child is in primary school: “children's problems are overlooked in the primary years and parents who highlight them [are] ostracised or made to feel like troublemakers”.

***(v) Parental planning***

A final aspect affecting parental preference is parents **planning for the future** in selecting special school provision. This was mentioned by two respondents

in the 4 reasons question: “parents by secondary age are often starting to be more realistic in future outcomes for their child and recognise that their child needs social, self help, independence skills and communication skills more than a purely academic curriculum” (special school head teacher), and “parents look at the long term needs of their children and some special schools will offer post 16 provision” (SENPO).

#### **4.02(g) Relationships**

Relationships on a number of levels influenced placement choice. For example, relationships between parents and school affected decisions, positive relationships meant advice from the school was acted on, parents wanted to be able to contribute to the school’s understanding of their child and sometimes relationships with mainstream staff break down. There was mention of the relationships of the child with special educational needs with peers; bullying by peers in a secondary context was seen by some as inevitable, and the development and adjustment of friendships that occur as children age held the risk of some students being isolated. Friendship and acceptance were viewed as key requirements of schooling, and some felt these could only be provided in a special school.

##### ***(i) Between child with special educational needs and their peers***

**Bullying** was seen as a risk in mainstream schools, which increased in secondary school, and was given as a reason why special school placements were sought. Bullying was coded 21 times. This was related to the relative age of the children involved – younger children were felt not to bully children with SEN as much as secondary aged peers. Primary pupils are “more accepting of SEN” and they accept “social gaps”, whereas in secondary schools “social gaps” would be “ridiculed”, teenagers are felt to be less accepting and “less considerate” of pupils with SEN and they “become more intolerant of differences as they get older” (parent). Bullying is therefore “less of a problem” in primary school, whereas secondary school children “make life miserable for those who are [different]” (parent). There was a concern in one of the case studies that the child with SEN would be “an easy target for older children” (“inclusion practitioner”). Two of the cases have parents outlining how they had concerns that their child would “become the victim of bullying” or “would mostly certainly suffer a lot of bullying” in the secondary setting, which is one of the reasons they opted for a special school setting. Three cases describe the

actual bullying of a child in a mainstream setting, one of these occurred in a junior school.

The rise of bullying was ascribed in part to school level factors. Schools were seen to have “an inadequate anti-bullying policy” (parent) and “rampant bullying” was down to “ineffectual discipline” (parent). School size also was seen to play a part: “secondary schools are now so big they cannot protect their special needs students from bullying/disabled hate crime” (parent). In one case it was felt bullying could be prevented by “a great deal of adult supervision”, however, another case outlines how it was felt that “despite having one to one support he may become the victim of bullying”. One parent whose daughter was bullied in a secondary mainstream placement says this occurred “in the bottom set for ALL subjects, which led to...persistent bullying in the classroom by socially maladapted pupils”.

**Friendship and acceptance by peers** was another aspect of peer relationships, it had 12 references. Again there was seen to be a difference in the acceptance and support of a child by primary school peers than by secondary school peers: there is a “lack of peer group support in later primary years/secondary provision” (parent). This is affirmed by an EP who states it is: “possibly easier to meet needs at foundation stage and then the child is settled and included and accepted by peers as well as staff. Ensuring such acceptance in a larger secondary school with peers who are unfamiliar with the pupil can be challenging”. Younger children were seen to be “kinder” and “more accepting” of children with SEN. In secondary school “needs are more noticeable” so the child with SEN “can feel left out” (parent). One secondary SENCo related this to the onset of adolescence in the peer group: “when pupils hit adolescence they become extremely conscious of themselves and their friends. Pupils with significant difficulties are more likely to be shunned at this stage. [The child with SEN is] no longer invited to parties etc”. A special school head teacher gives more detail “secondary aged students tend to have friendship groups based upon similar interests etc. This often side lines students with additional needs”. They continue that this is not necessarily only seen in secondary schools: “parents usually start to see breakdown in friendships...from year 5 if not before”. This is a difficult problem to overcome as “you cannot legislate for how other children will choose their friends” (secondary SENCo). A real life example of this is given in one of the case studies: “[the child became] increasingly socially isolated. Peers who had

associated with her in the earlier years at primary had more or less abandoned her as they approached the teenage years” (secondary SENCo). This point is reflected in the Likert-type scale question that asked participants to rate to what extent “the secondary aged peer group are less considerate of those who are unusual”. The mean response to this question was 4.1 (n=98, s.d=1.91). Just over half of the participants selected value 5 or 6 – the two points at the higher end of the scale.

Special schools were thought to provide the social acceptance that was missing in secondary schools: “SEN children feel safer and have a better social life with like-minded other SEN children” (parent), “in my daughters words she's with her own kind and with people who understand and don't judge!”(parent). A child who was bullied and socially isolated in their previous secondary mainstream now not only “has a peer group” but is “well liked and popular” (special school head teacher). One of the ways one special school head teacher defines “inclusion” in their school is “parents say[ing] that it's the first time their child has had a proper friend”.

In two cases there was felt to be a risk of **peers negatively influencing** the child with SEN and this was given as a reason for not choosing a secondary mainstream placement. In one case the “individual was thought to be vulnerable to more 'streetwise' students and fears that student would be easily led by peers and get into dangerous situations/trouble” (EP). In another case the child was “an extremely immature and vulnerable young lady who would be easily persuaded to behave inappropriately” (“inclusion practitioner”).

One child with SEN was “**unable to interact** with other pupils” in her secondary school setting. Another case was described in these terms: “at primary school he was seen to play with much younger children and did not relate well to children of his own age” (SENPO). A special school deputy head teacher also described this problem “he was born in August and had friends in the younger age group”. Again, puberty has an effect in pupils with SEN relating to their peers: “the difficulties with puberty in secondary school-aged children means that problems with social skills and developing relationships are more problematic in the secondary school years” (parent).

In another case a parent described how due to the secondary school their child attended using setting by ability in year 8; “she was put in the bottom set for ALL subjects, which lead to her being separated from her friends and

peer group, and to persistent bullying in the classroom by socially maladapted pupils”. Even when moved to a special school the child was still “socially ostracised”, and it was only when she moved to a school specialising in speech and language therapy did she start “having a fulfilling social life”.

There are other factors related to peers that are not related to relationships between the child with SEN and their peers. These are discussed further in the peers theme below (and have been discussed in some extent in the within child factors theme above).

***(ii) Relationships between school and parents of a child with SEN***

School-parent relationships are a factor mentioned in the four reasons questions by three participants, and also referred to several times in the case studies. Over-representation was seen to occur as it seems secondary schools are in contact less with parents: one LA SENAI thought “secondary school communication structures do not perhaps give parents the same level of confidence as primary schools”, a primary SENCo confirmed this: “parents [are] frightened of secondary schools and lack of contact”. A secondary SENCo thought this was down to the differences in school organisation: “primary schools have a smaller population; [therefore] it is easier to make lasting relationships to parents”.

The case studies described how relationships between parents and schools can sometimes break down. One special school head teacher, in a list of reasons how “negative experiences of mainstream school settings” affects placement choice described the role relationships with the school play: “perceived lack of support from previous mainstream school and the extreme of breakdown of relationships between school and parents as a consequence of different views of the needs of the child”. One parent reported how because their child “could not keep up with the class at mainstream”, “the teacher moaned at me and so did the head [teacher]”. In another case the relationship between the primary school and parent “worked well [un]til the head [teacher] changed, replaced by one who was not sympathetic to the SEN cause” (parent).

The power of positive relationships can also affect placement choice. A secondary SENCo when describing a mainstream placement that failed in their school did note how “the school accompanied parents to various alternative schools to support them in making decisions as, because of our initial positive

approach to the parents, a trusting relationship was established". In another case a parent said their child's primary school was "very very supportive", and outlines how the class teacher supported the appeal for the child's place in a special school by writing a letter to support the appeal. Another primary school supported the parent in making a choice of school, as described by a parent's account: "I feel we were extremely lucky to have the support of an experienced SENCo, and am also grateful to the head teacher of the Primary, since he allowed the SENCo all the time necessary to accompany us on multiple visits to secondary schools. I know many friends who have not had this support from other schools".

There were some cases where successful transfers to secondary schools were described. Some of these were chosen because the parent "felt very welcome when she looked around and the SENCo gave her a lot of time and she felt the SENCo cared" (LA SENAI). The provision of information from the school to the parent was seen as another vital component in the success of mainstream placement. A SENPO suggested that a "mainstream placement would have been more of a possibility if the most favoured secondary school could have articulated to the parents a more comprehensive description of how a personalised programme would be set up in the mainstream school". A parent felt confident in the residential special school their son had moved to post transition as "any queries that I have had I have rung the school and they have solved things straight away".

In one case it was felt that a relationship with a member of staff outside the boundaries of school influenced the placement of a child in a school's ASD unit, rather than the mainstream: "my son became friendly with another boy with an ASD whose mum was a member of staff at the unit and in turn so did I. I feel that once we had his statement this friendship was probably the most effective influence I had. It seemed to boil down to the old adage 'It's not what you know, but who you know!' Fortunately it worked in our favour" (parent).

### ***(iii) Relationships between staff and pupils with SEN***

Relationships between school staff and the pupil with SEN was another factor in placement choice. Four respondents commented that primary staff know their pupils (and their pupils needs) better as they have the same set of pupils all year, and one respondent continued this thought with secondary staff may only see the pupils once a week and so cannot know the pupils as well. There was also a sense that in primary schools all staff could know all pupils, due to

smaller numbers. One parent felt “secondary staff do not have time to build relationships with pupils”.

An EP illustrates how this difference in settings could be seen to affect the child’s needs: “the child really needs to be able to develop relationships with adults who can get to know his personal and specific needs and he has been able to do this in his current setting. In a mainstream secondary, I would have envisaged him needing to be included in some kind of nurture group or Learning Support Unit to be able to develop the same kind of relationships.”

Primary schools are thought to recognise the importance of consistency of relationships “his year 3 class teacher moved up with him into year 4 in order to ensure his feeling of security, as did his teaching assistants” (primary SENCo). This same primary SENCo outlines how transition to mainstream can be successful if relationships are built upon “extra visits were made to the secondary school, where he was introduced to (and became increasingly familiar with) two key members of staff, who would be there in the September of year 7[...] Staff from the secondary school also came into the primary school during the summer term prior to transition”.

#### **4.02(h) Exosystem**

Exosystemic factors are those that are external, beyond the school, the child and their family, that are seen as contributing to placement decisions. The first is at a local authority level - school choice and provision (or lack of it), which takes many forms: the lack of provision for children with special educational needs made in mainstream, the lack of options for students with ASD, and provision that is either social or academic, not both. A second exosystemic factor is one of wider government policy and its effect on school policies and priorities. It was interesting that in the open-ended case study questions government policy and the inspection regime were rarely mentioned as contributory factors, while league tables and national targets were mentioned by only 6 participants in the open ended questions. However, the Likert-type scale revealed that the majority of participants rated these factors as being a strong explanation for the over-representation of secondary aged students in a special school, government policy was the statement with the fourth highest mean (4.77, s.d. 1.75), and school inspection focus was the 7<sup>th</sup> highest mean (4.54, s.d.1.80). 52 out of 95 rated the statement “government policy focuses too much on academic achievement” as being a very strong

explanation, and 44 out of 99 rated “school inspections focus too much on academic achievement” as a very strong explanation.

***(i) Provision and school choice***

“Provision” and “school choice” were seen as the biggest exosystemic contributors to the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools. Secondary schools were felt to offer poor provision, with a perceived “inability to provide the level of individualised attention that allows pupil to reach potential” (parent), or lack provision for pupils with specific needs such as ASD (EP). It was felt by one EP that “subject teachers are more interested in delivering their subject than inclusive provision”. This sense of a lack of provision in the mainstream was reiterated in the case study descriptions. One parent felt “the local mainstream PD [Physical Disability] school in our area would not be able to provide [for] the high physical needs that my son has to maintain his transferring and independence”, and a SENPO describes how “parents were not confident that a mainstream school would be able to provide him with the flexibility that he needed”. One successful primary school was seen to provide for the child’s needs “his junior school is exceptionally supportive and inclusive and worked hard to provide him with an individualised curriculum and programme of personalised learning” (EP). A primary SENCo defines “needy children” as “those whose needs can be met in mainstream primaries, but where suitable secondary provision is limited”.

In order for children with SEN to be successfully included in mainstream schools it was felt that “a greater flexibility of provision [is needed] at least initially during transition” (EP), a thought echoed by a SENAI “if inclusion is to thrive and meet the needs of all learners primary secondary transition has to be better managed with some secondary schools rethinking provision and approaches”.

In the case studies one EP reports that the special school was chosen because “(within our authority) this was the only setting able to provide the necessary levels of support and differentiation, appropriately skilled staff and a peer group”. The over-representation of older children was felt by another EP to occur because of a “belief” that the child needed more “specialist provision” at this stage. Special schools were seen by some to offer better or more extended provision: “parents consider long term needs of child and opt for special school with post 16 provision” (SENPO). Special schools were also thought to be better set up for the “non academic child” (parent).

Choices were based on **availability of provision**, one parent opted to move house into a different LA as it “became clear that there was no provision for my son at any secondary school in our area” whereas there was special school provision in the LA they moved to. Another parent commented that although school placement choice should be down to parental preference this is rarely the case “especially with the lack of appropriate provision at secondary level. I was aware that apart from the mainstream secondary schools there was no other appropriate specialist provision in [the LA] at secondary level”. One special school head teacher describes the transition process as offering: “sub-optimal choices when it comes to the quality of the school the child moved to”. There was a sense of lack of school choice in finding one that would cater for the child’s particular needs: “I had scanned internet and visited numerous secondary schools in my attempt to retain him in mainstream, I did not find one” (parent). In a case described by the manager of a support service it is noted that “the secondary provision had the only resources to meet that need i.e. additionally resourced provision for Speech and Language”. This lack of school choice was also seen in terms of curriculum offerings: “in the borough there were no appropriate placements - too academic for the local special schools but too difficult for him to access mainstream” (parent). (A number of parents commented on this binary.) Another parent noted “parents have to choose whether their children get an academic education or a life-skills based education”. The over-representation of secondary aged children was felt by two participants to be due to a lack of primary phase special schools (mentioned by a special school head teacher), whereas secondary specialist provision is available (SENAI). This final factor was rated as the second lowest explanatory factor in the Likert-type scale. For the statement “there is less special school provision at pre-school/ primary age” only 22 people selected it as a strong explanation, the modal value selected was “not at all” (24 selected this option). The mean score for this as an explanatory factor was 2.45 (s.d. 2.18, n=91).

Some participants saw a need for a range of provision at the mainstream level – “[this] case illustrates [the] need for [a] wider range of mainstream provision within the LA” beyond “the local mainstream secondary special class provision” which the parent did not want (SENAI). One SENPO describes how they were aiming to provide this: “we are reviewing our mainstream secondary provision to create additionally resourced mainstream schools with effect from

September 2011 to encourage greater inclusion for children with this type of need”.

**Geographical location** placed a limiting factor in some elements of school choice: “because we live on a peninsula the only secondary school (apart from Grammar, which wasn't appropriate) available to our children is a large comprehensive school” (parent). This single secondary school was not appropriate for the child and so special provision was considered. Another parent reported that their town is “geographically isolated and so we only had a choice of 2 mainstream secondary schools, neither of which were particularly suitable for my son, as they both lacked basic autism awareness outside of behaviour issues” and continues that at a second transition aged 14 “with only one choice of school in the town there is no real choice involved”.

Some of the case studies highlighted a **lack of alternatives being offered** to the parents/child with SEN. One case describes how an out of county special school placement was sought: “we were not offered any alternatives and it is only when the mainstream local comprehensive failed so miserably that we had no alternative but seek a safer out of county placement for our daughter” (parent). The converse of this is the belief of one special school head teacher that parents are not being given a choice other than special school for their child. One parent reported they did not know about the option of having their child placed in a “unit” attached to a mainstream school, they were only aware of a choice between special or mainstream. They thought this option was a way that mainstream could be made more accessible to children with autism.

There was a sense in some cases that school and local authority staff **were not aware of the range of options available** to children with SEN, as one parent reported that: “I received little advice on how to find out about such schools [...] My son's teachers and therapists were not able to give advice on such schools as they seemed unaware of what was available outside the local area”. Another stated “our LA couldn't tell us which schools were accessible for a wheelchair user which meant lots of leg work for us”.

#### *(ii) External judgements and targets*

**League table, curriculum levels and exam results targets** were commented on by 6 participants in the four reasons question. There was a “pressure” on schools and senior management to “meet league table targets” (EP, SENAI). This in turn forces schools to focus on an “intense and accreditation focused

curriculum” (SENAI), schools are so driven by national curriculum targets that they cannot “provide an alternative curriculum better suited to MLD/SLD pupils” (secondary SENCo). There was also a feeling that this pressure of targets meant “secondary schools don’t want pupils that will drag their...targets down” (special school head teacher). One parent even felt that secondary schools took on students with SEN, claimed additional resources for them, but when it came to exam time “they move the children to special school to make the stat[istic]s better for themselves”.

Individual Education Plan targets are not seen as a priority by schools, as one parent reports in response to the case study question: “he cannot look after himself, and school do not seem to [be] prepared to help him achieve his social and independence targets, because they are not judged on them!” When asked for any additional comments one secondary SENCo replied, “head teachers and governors need to value the inclusion of children rather than the focus on examination results”. They continue: “**OFSTED**’s lesson judgments are not inclusive or personalised they are one set fit for all missing the important point we are dealing with individuals not a factory of baked beans!”

### *(iii) Government policy*

Closely related to the previous section is one of government policy. One parent simply wrote that the “inclusion agenda” was a reason for the over-representation of secondary aged students in the special school. One LA SENAI recognised that government policy has an impact and will continue to have an impact on the inclusion of children with complex needs in a mainstream setting. They note “if inclusion is to thrive and meet the needs of all learners primary secondary transition has to be better managed with some secondary schools rethinking provision and approaches” but add the proviso – “whether the direction of current government travel will support this is at present open to debate”. One EP states that “government policy focuses too much on academic achievement” as one of their four reasons (it should be noted that all four reasons this participant gave were copied and pasted from the list on the Likert-type scale). Wider government policy also restricts schools and LA ability to offer a broader provision in mainstream schools as one SENAI suggests “[it is] difficult to see how in the current climate how LA can develop a wider range of provision and develop parental confidence”.

#### **4.02(i) Chronosystem**

Chronosystemic factors are those related to the effect of time, for example, when the child ages and develops, their difficulties increase or become more apparent and are exacerbated by the onset of adolescence and puberty. Difficulties also arise as peers develop and become more selective in their friendship groups and less tolerant.

##### ***(i) Gap widens***

There was a sense of the “gap” between the child with SEN and their peers widening over time; this was stated by 19 people in the 4 reasons question. It is this sense of it widening over time that means it appears in the chronosystem section. This gap could be of attainment: “the gap in attainment broadens as children with Learning Difficulties grow up” (EP); or of need: “gap between the needs of children with SEN (in many areas) and their peers widens” (EP). The gap is recognised as a “difference” which gets “greater” (deputy headteacher, special school), or more “obvious” “as [the rate] of progress not same” (primary SENCo), or “challenges for the pupils become greater by comparison to others” (EP). The over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools could be due to the fact that “in primary [there is] less of a gap between able and challenged children” (parent). “As children mature they find it increasingly hard to keep up with their peers” (SENPO) meaning these “pupils fall further and further behind” (special school head teacher). This difference implies that the “child needs a different curriculum” (special school deputy head). The words “gap” and “widens” are used together 10 times in the responses. The sense of a widening gap was reinforced in the case studies, one secondary SENCo reports “as the child progressed through the school into year 8 parents and [the] school were concerned about the ever widening attainment gap between her and her peers”.

There is a sense of peers without SEN becoming more aware and less accepting of “gaps” as they age: “children become more intolerant of differences as they get older and make life miserable for those who are [different]” (parent), the “culture of primary is caring and inclusive and social gaps are accepted by children, but can be ridiculed in secondary” (special school head teacher). This is discussed further in the peers theme.

***(ii) Difficulties become more apparent***

As time passes the child with SEN's difficulties become more apparent. As one EP suggested "some issues come to light more at secondary level"; another expanded on this "needs become clearer (better understood and obvious) throughout a child's time in the primary phase". Needs become "more noticeable", "obvious" and "defined"; they "emerge more fully" in Key Stage 3. "It can take time to realise how complex a child's needs are going to be" (parent). One parent attributed this to processes – "conditions [are] not recognised when younger because people always think it's bad behaviour without going any further".

The nature of these difficulties that occur or become more apparent were elaborated in the case studies. The child became "more challenging", their anxiety increased, self-awareness of differences to peers developed and caused problems. One case was reported by a secondary SENCo where time passing was very much a factor of placement decisions, and they made multiple references to it in their account:

**"The pupil managed to remain in mainstream secondary until Year 9. The parents had expressed a wish that this young person should experience mainstream secondary education for as long as possible...It had always been realised that he might not be able to continue beyond Key Stage 3 in the mainstream setting and it became apparent at the beginning of Year 9 that he was beginning to struggle to maintain social relationships with his peers as their level of maturity had increased at a much greater rate than his....There had always been questions regarding how long this young person would be able to access mainstream successfully. The parents were very supportive and were keen for their child to have an opportunity to experience mainstream for as long as was practically possible"** (emphasis added).

***(iii) Related to ageing/puberty/adolescence***

One explanatory factor for these difficulties developing later was the notion that they were caused or exacerbated by ageing and/or puberty. There were 16 references to ageing, puberty or adolescence and their effect on the child with SEN.

One secondary SENCo simply stated "hormonal changes" to explain the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools. It was felt in one specific case that inclusion would have been achievable in a secondary

mainstream if the child was “helped to understand the changes involved in puberty and the dangers of becoming pregnant”.

There were a number of age related factors that did not specifically mention puberty or adolescence, but were related to a sense of behaviour changing as the child aged, and this was seen to explain the over-representation of the older children in special schools. Older pupils are seen as “more challenging”, they are more likely to be “frustrated and lash out”, and “teenagers are more physical”. In these examples it is unclear whether it is the pupil with SEN who become more challenging and physical, or their peers causing safety implications for the child with SEN. However, a number of secondary SENCOs felt it was the ageing of the pupil with SEN that caused the issues: “pupils who may have significant emotional and behavioural difficulties can be much more difficult to manage as they grow and become physically stronger”, “behaviours become more extreme as a pupil gets older – bigger”. As the child with SEN “matures” they become “more vulnerable” and “find it increasingly hard to keep up with their peers” (SENPO).

A secondary SENCO was clear that these changes were related to puberty: “puberty (pupils with significant SEN, who are frustrated in school, can show increased signs of aggression because they are unable to express themselves in ways that are deemed 'appropriate')”. One parent felt “when they become teenagers with behavioural difficulties they are scary, whereas younger children can be more easily subdued”. This concept was explored in the rating scale, statement “when children are young there is a greater tolerance for immature behaviours”. This statement had the 8<sup>th</sup> highest level of agreement, 48 out of 100 participants selected it as a high explanatory factor compared to 4 who selected it as a low explanatory factor (mean 4.32, s.d. 1.46, n=100).

One parent thought there were difficulties for secondary schools as “pupils need more sensitive handling which secondary school mainstream find harder as they reach adolescence”. Whether this is in terms of physical “handling” (such as physiotherapy/toileting) or emotional “handling” is unclear.

Puberty can also affect the child with SEN’s emotions, and exacerbates certain difficulties: “puberty hits and they feel even worse about themselves” (parent) and the “onset of puberty exacerbating some needs/difficulties - particularly with regard to mental health issues” (SENPO).

Another problem associated with puberty is that of developing relationships with peers, as one parent reports: “the difficulties with puberty in secondary school-aged children means that problems with social skills and developing relationships are more problematic in the secondary school years”.

Adolescence also has an effect on the social choices of the peer-group: “when pupils hit adolescence they become extremely conscious of themselves and their friends. Pupils with significant difficulties are more likely to be shunned at this stage”.

#### ***(iv) Gradual realisation***

A final chronosystemic factor is one that says the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools is a result of the time taken to fully accept and realise an alternative provision is necessary. “There is a gradual acceptance that the difference is getting greater and that the child needs a different curriculum” (special school head teacher), and “it can take time to realise how complex a child's needs are going to be” (parent). Exactly whose acceptance or realisation is unclear in these quotations, but in the remaining 4 instances where this occurs it is the parents who come to terms with the situation over time. In the four reasons for over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools two parents stated this could be due to parents coming to terms with their child’s difficulties, or a realisation that their child will not cope in the mainstream. This realisation is based on a changing of priorities for the child: “parents by secondary age are often starting to be more realistic in future outcomes for their child and recognise that their child needs social, self help, independence skills and communication skills more than a purely academic curriculum” (special school head teacher), and “exams are not important anymore you want them to have life skills” (parent).

This factor was also explored through the Likert-type scale – participants were asked to rate “it takes time for parents to come to accept that their children might not fit in with the traditional mainstream curriculum”. It was rated as the fourth lowest explanatory factor, with a mean of 3.4 (out of 6, s.d = 1.68). The modal value selected was 3 – the mid range of the scale, selected by 24 of 98.

#### **4.02(j) Peers**

“Peers” was a category in its own right, as there were aspects related to peers that were not necessarily related to relationships. The differences that emerged between a child with special educational needs and their peers were

seen to become more pronounced as they aged, and the gap between them widen academically. Some observed that the gap was noticed by the child with special needs and by their peers, leading to low self-esteem and making the child stand out as different. It was also noted that some students with special educational needs could not be included in mainstream schools as they caused disruption to their peers and their learning.

***(i) Difference to peers***

There was a sense of the child with SEN realising they were different to their peers and this realisation affecting their ability and enjoyment of school. A primary SENCo thought “individuals recognise their limitations compared with their peers towards the end of KS2 and this sometimes results in behaviour and self-esteem issues” which could lead to placement in a special school. A second primary SENCo echoes this thought: “children become more aware of [their] diff[erences] as they get older and therefore may then develop behaviour issues”. These differences are also recognised by peers who don’t have SEN, who may then “shun” the child who is different. It becomes “harder for the SEN child to blend in with peer group” (parent).

The case studies reported differences between the case study children and their peers in terms of achievement ability and attainment (4 references), levels of independence, of maturity, of failure (1 mention each) and of emotional and physical differences (1 mention each). Differences were also mentioned in the sense of a gap between the child and their peers, and a gap that widened over time.

***(ii) Disrupting the learning of peers***

One possible reason for the over-representation of the secondary aged pupil in special school was attributed to the effect they have on the learning of their peers. Two separate secondary SENCos described how they chose not to accept a child with SEN as it was felt their behaviour would “have affected the learning of other students”. Another SENCo describes how a pupil they now have “has major impact on the learning of other SEN students” and this is one of the reasons they feel the current placement is unsuitable. A special school head teacher describes why secondary school staff have concerns: “they have experience of students with SEN in mainstream and [have] seen...the level of disruption to the other children's learning”.

A primary school SENCo reports how “the child's needs and vulnerability were evident from an early age. However, an attempt to procure a Statement

between Years 4 & 5 was unsuccessful on the grounds that the junior school was “meeting the child's needs.” This was being achieved with considerable support; over and above that offered to peers and, sometimes, to the detriment of those peers”.

***(iii) Provision of an appropriate peer group***

It was thought that placement in a mainstream school could have been successful if an “appropriate peer group” could be provided, one that “would enable the student to develop socially and emotionally” (EP). One specific case discussed the limitations of not having a “deaf peer group in some schools” (SENAI). One LA SENAI described an inclusive primary school setting which was successful due to its use of peer modelling through “other dyslexic pupils’ positive experiences”.

Special school placement would have been required in some cases where “a more level intellectual playing field mean that the child is happier and therefore able to learn and achieve” (special school head teacher). One secondary SENCo reports how they would only feel able to support a special school placement if it was felt the pupil would “do better amongst pupils of a similar cognitive level”.

**4.02(k) Outcomes of mainstream**

The notion that placement in a special school was the result of issues caused in or by the mainstream school itself was coded 37 times. As one parent notes “if a small, supportive mainstream primary learning environment has been unbearable for a child it would take a lot of reassurance to convince parent and child that mainstream secondary would actually be better”. These issues included the child’s or parents’ negative experience of mainstream, the child being excluded, or self-excluding from the mainstream.

Some descriptions of **problems in mainstream** primary school include the child having an “awful time”, “being beaten up every day”, bullied, socially isolated, unhappy resulting them “hating school” or “not coping”, and “mental health deterioration”. Parents felt mainstream schools could not offer what the child needed, or were “failing the child”. There were difficulties with schools not implementing the statementing procedure, or not providing the support the child needed or was entitled to. One parent reported how “education hasn't been education. Simply fire-fighting and classroom management. Learning didn't happen much”. There was a case of parents

basing their decision on their previous experience of a mainstream with an older child – “parents already had a child at the school who had taken some time to settle”. One special school head teacher describes the problems in detail: one of the “main reasons for parents wanting a special (MLD) school placement for secondary provision... [is their] negative experience of mainstream school settings on their child i.e. bullying, isolation, lack of progress academically, perceived lack of support from previous mainstream school and the extreme of breakdown of relationships between school and parents as a consequence of different views of the needs of the child”.

Another issue is one of **placement failure**, as one parent described “it is only when the mainstream local comprehensive failed so miserably that we had no alternative but [to] seek a safer out of county placement for our daughter”. A comparable issue is one of the perceptions of staff and parents being influenced by their experience of previous placement failure: “the staff in secondary schools and parents have the perception that these children can't cope with mainstream as they have experience of students with SEN in mainstream and seen the level of failure the child has experienced” (special school head teacher). There were two cases of a parent taking their child out of mainstream primary because of issues as outlined above, five of the child refusing to attend the school and four of the child not attending lessons in the school. A further two parents discussed the potential of their child to school refuse as the child was so unhappy. Four cases described how the placement decision was made due to the **possibility of the child being excluded in the disciplinary sense**: “if he had been placed in a mainstream setting - he would have been expelled” (parent). In all cases this potential outcome was seen to be resulting from the child not coping in the mainstream environment.

There was discussion in four of the cases of attempts to include a child in mainstream school resulting in their being “excluded” (not in a disciplinary sense) – one parent stating that “**inclusion causes exclusion in mainstream**”. A number of people felt that “inclusion is fine if it works for the child. However there must be choice so that if it isn't working, the child can be placed elsewhere and not made to fit in the wrong place”. A special school head teacher reports how “mainstreaming is and has never been inclusion. A SEN child educated in a corridor with an unqualified 1:1 is the epitome of exclusion”.

#### **4.02(l) Appropriateness**

The mainstream was felt to be an inappropriate setting because of the challenges it presented to the child with SEN: it was felt they “could not cope with the rigours of school life” (secondary SENCo). Some examples of this include one child who “[became] more distressed by having to attend secondary school where the systems in place were confusing and the numbers of people he had to interact with were overwhelming” (secondary SENCo), and another for whom “the move from a small nurturing environment to a full mainstream lesson, despite support, overwhelmed the boy and he was in a constant state of anxiety unable to read others and mediate his behaviour appropriately” (secondary SENCo). There is a repeated use of phrases such as “overwhelmed”, “constant state of anxiety”, “more distressed”. In some cases the conclusion that mainstream was inappropriate was reached prior to the child attending mainstream secondary; two parents reported that “it became clear” or “it was decided” that mainstream would “be too challenging” or the child “would not manage”. As previously discussed placement in a mainstream school can create a risk of disciplinary exclusion and school refusing or can cause the child to be “excluded through inclusion”.

Factors that were mentioned less often were those related to the appropriateness of placement in special schools, the suitability of the school for the child, the ability of the school to meet the child’s needs, and simply that mainstream is too challenging for the child. Despite these factors not emerging further in the thematic analysis, the adapted and protective environment of special schools was placed highly on the Likert-type scale. These factors were rated highly by 59 out of 98 participants in explaining the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools. They were the items with the highest means.

#### **4.02(m) Safety**

The safety of the child within a mainstream environment was another factor considered, and, to a lesser extent, the safety of other children was perceived to be put at risk by the inclusion of some children with special educational needs in a mainstream school.

Special school placements were chosen as they were seen to be “safer” and “more secure”. Some children with special needs were reported to “feel safer in a school with like-minded peers” (parent), and need “the safe feeling they

get from a small school” (parent). Safety was threatened by a number of factors: the potential of being led by peers into dangerous situations; in terms of self-harm when not coping; the safety of a child with special educational needs in practical settings; and the impracticality of supervising a child at all times on a school site. The effect of behaviour on safety issues was implied by some respondents – “behaviour becomes more difficult to manage as they age/become physically stronger” (secondary school SENCo), “pupils [are] more likely to be frustrated and lash out in secondary school” (parent), and “safety – teenagers are more physical” (parent).

A final factor related to safety and its effect on placement decision was the school’s responsibility for safety of others – “as a large comprehensive mainstream school, the head teacher and school generally must have the health and safety of the majority at the forefront” (secondary school SENCo). This safety could be threatened by the child with SEN “becom[ing] aggressive towards others” (parent). One case was described where a child with special educational needs’ “behaviour deteriorated so significantly [in a secondary school] that the school became worried about the health and safety aspect of him and others” (secondary school SENCo, the same one that made the health and safety comment above).

### **Section 4.03            Research question 2**

*Are there differences in reasons suggested by different stakeholder groups?*

There are commonalities, as well as disparities and differences in priority, between the themes described above depending on the role of the stakeholder who responded to the questions. To illustrate this in this section I present the themes in the same order as above and describe quantitatively how the different stakeholder groups discussed these themes. This was measured in three ways. Firstly, the codes generated from the open-ended responses were categorised by role. These roles were parent (n=41), local authority staff (n=30), and school staff (n=31). (In places there is an interesting disparity in responses provided by the 15 secondary school staff, hence these are reported separately in some instances.) Each theme is discussed as a percentage of the total comments of each stakeholder type. For example, the theme of processes accounted for 52 of the 653 comments made by parents. This represents 8% of all comments made by this stakeholder group.

Secondly, each theme was analysed according to a comparison of the percentage responses to what would be expected if stakeholders responded in the same ratio as they participated (a stratified population). I report this for the main themes, and where appropriate, some of the sub-themes that make up the main theme. An example is the expected distribution of responses to the theme of “processes” would be parents = 40.2%, school staff = 30.4% and LA staff = 29.4%. The actual distribution was parents = 45.2%, school staff = 38.3% and LA = 16.5%. This example shows the LA are significantly less likely than expected to discuss processes as a contributory factor to the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools. (I must make it clear that although I use the word significant it should not be assumed this is a claim about statistical significance as certain statistical assumptions have not been met. In the cases described below significant means that either 10% more or 10% less commented than the expected number).

Finally, the results of the rating scale questions were analysed by stakeholder group, using a cross-tabulation of responses according to role (parent, school and local authority). The seven point rating scale was transformed into a 3 point scale. Points 0 and 1 became “low explanatory factor”, points 2-4 became “medium explanatory factor” and points 5 and 6 became “high explanatory factor”. A cross-tabulation was run using a multi-variable chi-squared test to test for relationships between roles and level of agreement on the rating scale. I report results for each scale item related to the theme, stating if they are significant, and, if significant, reporting the Pearson’s chi-squared associated probability (or Fisher’s Exact Probability when parametric assumptions are not met), and Cramer’s V for degrees of association. As I have not made any hypotheses about the strength of relationship my reporting of the Cramer’s V correlation co-efficient is just to show there is a relationship between stakeholder role and level of agreement. None of the correlation co-efficient exceed 0.4 – they are small. A larger sample would be needed if the relationships were to be properly tested and generalisations made from the data. Appendix 14 gives a table of all the cross-tabulation results for each item (including the value of the measure of association, the degrees of freedom and the probability value) and demonstrates whether parametric assumptions have been met.

#### **4.03(a) School level factors**

##### ***(i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group***

School level factors had the most comments from most of the stakeholder groups (38% of comments made by LA staff were about school factors, as were 33% of the comments made by parents, and 31% of comments made by primary and special school staff). The exception was secondary staff, 23% of all comments made by secondary staff were related to this theme, compared with 25% of their comments which related to the within-child theme, which was their most commented on theme.

##### ***(ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions***

The school level factors showed values in the expected proportions, demonstrating that all stakeholders equally thought this as a contributory factor (37% of the school level factors were made by parents, 35% by LA staff and 28% by school staff). On closer examination of some of the many sub-themes that made up this theme (see above) there is some variation according to stakeholder role.

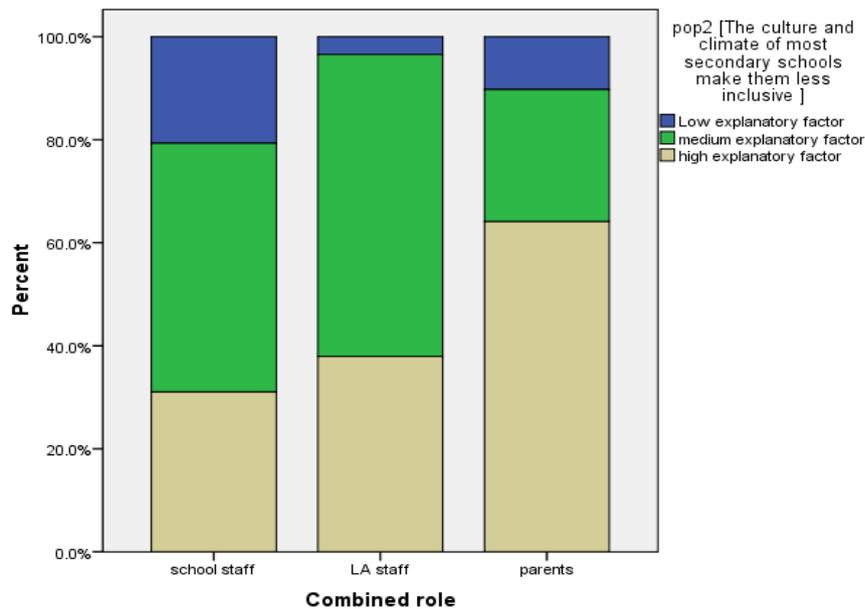
School organisation and structure was commented on by fewer parents than expected (30%), by more LA staff than expected (38%), but in expected rates from school staff. Environment and ethos was commented on the expected ratios, with the exception of secondary school staff. Only 4% of comments related to environment and ethos were made by secondary school staff, compared to the expected 14.7%. Contributory factors relating to school staff (experience, expertise and attitude) were commented on slightly less than expected by secondary school staff (5% lower than expected comments) and slightly more than expected by primary and special staff (5% higher than expected proportion of comments). The sub theme of curriculum focus was commented on in the expected ratios.

##### ***(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items***

Many of the rating scale items were related to the theme of school level factors (13 of the 27 statements). Some of these statements showed agreement in the level of explanatory factors between the stakeholder groups; others had one group demonstrating a different pattern from the other groups.

The two statements relating to the environment of schools had high levels of agreement from all stakeholder groups. "Special schools provide a more protective environment than secondary schools" was rated as a high

explanatory factor by 85% of parents, 77% of school staff and 66% of LA staff and only between 0 and 2 participants in each group rated it as a low explanatory factor. “The special school environment has more adaptations for children with unusual needs” was also rated as a high explanatory factor by all stakeholder groups (90% of parents, 83% of school staff and 64% of LA staff). Two LA staff members were the only ones who counted it as a low explanatory factor.

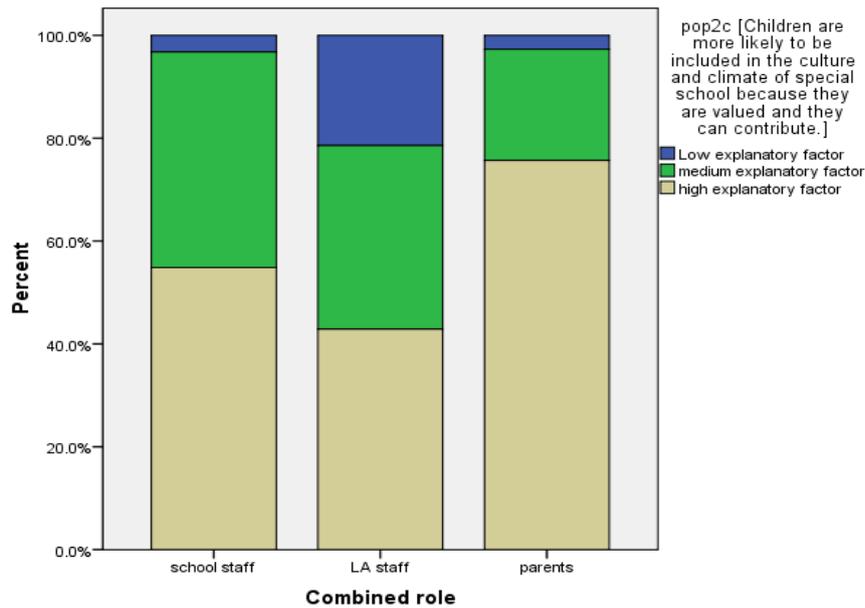


**Figure 4.6: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

Statements relating to the ethos of schools were selected as “highly explanatory” by more parents compared to the other two groups. For the statement “the culture and climate of most secondary schools make them less inclusive” 64% of parents selected “high explanatory factor”, compared to 31% of school staff and 38% of LA staff (see Fig 4.6). 21% of school staff selected “low explanatory factor”. There is a demonstrated association between parents selecting the “high explanatory factor” - Fisher’s Exact Probability (as a third of the cells have expected count <5)  $p=0.010$ , Cramer’s  $V=0.295$ , 6.7% of the variation can be explained by role.

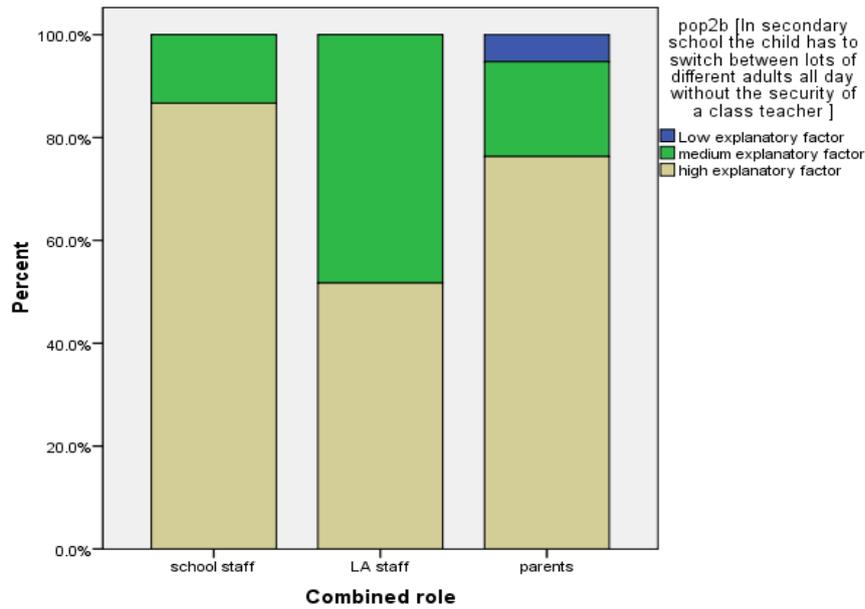
“Children are more likely to be included in the culture and climate of special school because they are valued and can contribute” was selected as a high explanatory factor by 76% of parents, compared to 55% of school staff and 43% of LA staff (see fig. 4.7). 21% of LA staff thought this was a low explanatory factor, and there is an association between role and explanation,

7% of variation in rating can be explained by role. (Fisher's Exact Probability,  $p= 0.014$ , Cramer's  $V=0.265$ .)



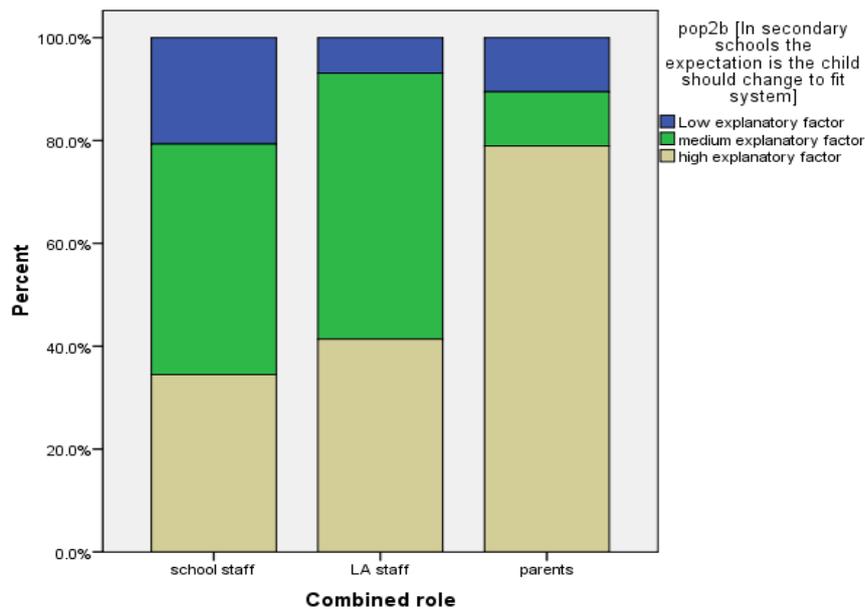
**Figure 4.7: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

There were two scale items relating to the structure and organisation of schools. “In secondary school the child has to switch between lots of different adults all day without the security of a class teacher.” This statement was rated highly by parents (72%) and school staff (87%), but was more evenly spread between high and medium explanatory factors by LA staff (48% of LA staff thought it was a medium explanatory factor, and 52% thought it was a high explanatory factor, see fig 4.8.) Fisher's Exact Probability was 0.006, showing there is a less than 0.01 chance that the pattern is due to sampling error. (Cramer's  $V$  is 0.269, 7.2% of the variation can be explained by job role.) The second scale item relating to this theme (“primary schools are smaller in size”) had between 21 and 22 people in each stakeholder group selecting high explanatory factor. Nine parents selected “low explanatory factor” in their rating of this statement compared to one member of school staff and one member of LA staff, however Fisher's Exact Probability was greater than 0.05.



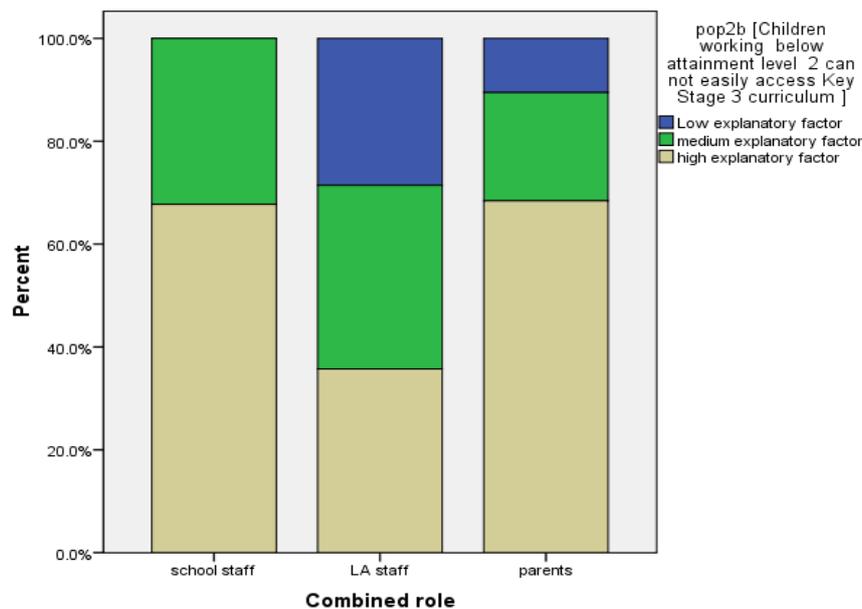
**Figure 4.8: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

The notion of school flexibility was explored in the statement “in secondary schools the expectation is the child should change to fit the system”. 79% of parents rated this as being a high explanatory factor, compared to 35% of school staff and 41% of LA staff (see fig. 4.9). This had one of the highest measures of association between role and level of explanation Fisher’s Exact Probability= 0.000, Cramer’s V was 0.320, meaning 10.2% of the variation in level of explanatory factor could be explained by role.



**Figure 4.9: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

Several of the rating scale items related to curriculum and focus. For the first, “children working below attainment level 2 cannot easily access Key Stage 3 curriculum”, a majority of parents and school staff rated this as a high explanatory factor (68% of each group rated this as a highly explanatory factor), whereas LA staff were spread evenly across each of the levels (28% rated it as a low explanatory factor, 36% rated it as a medium explanatory factor and a further 36% rated it as a high explanatory factor, see fig 4.10). (Fisher’s Exact Probability  $p=0.004$ , Cramer’s  $V=0.276$ , 7.6% of variation in ratings explained by role.)

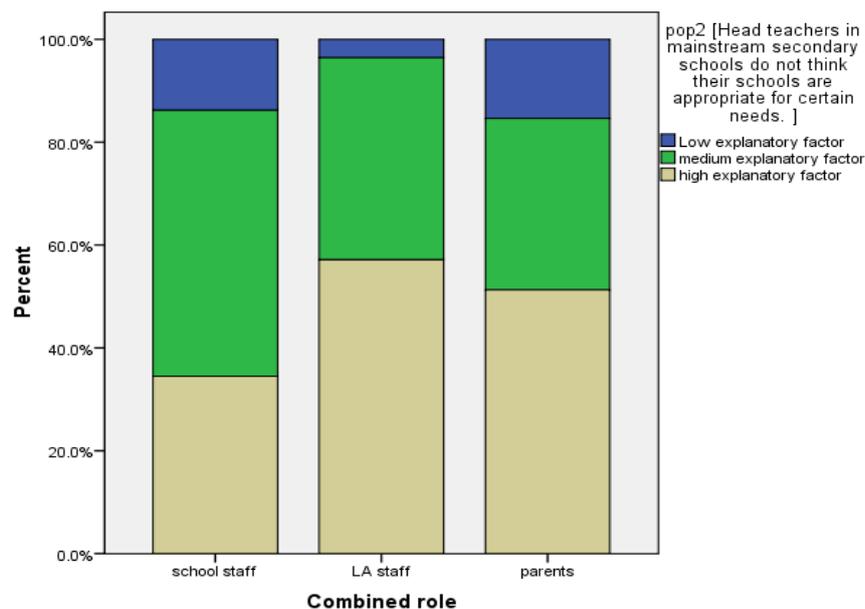


**Figure 4.10: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

“The Key Stage 3 curriculum is inflexible and insufficiently differentiated” appeared to have more parents selecting it as a high explanatory factor than other groups (37% of LA staff, 48% of school staff and 60% of parents.) This could be down to sample size, as between 1 and 4 of each stakeholder group selected it as a low explanatory factor, and between 12-14 considered it a medium explanatory factor. Fisher’s Exact Probability confirms this; a Fisher’s Exact Probability of 0.295 is gained showing a high chance any pattern could be affected by the nature of the sample. The same pattern emerges for the statement “pupils with emerging difficulties in learning are given a chance to progress in primary school; by secondary age assessments have become firmer about what is needed”. This appeared to show that more parents selected this as a high explanatory factor (53% compared with 36% of school staff and 24% of LA staff). On closer inspection however a similar

NUMBER of each stakeholder group selected it as a low explanatory factor (6 school staff, 6 LA staff and 5 parents) and a medium explanatory factor (14 school staff, 16 LA staff, and 13 parents). The high number of parents could be a reflection simply of this group being over-represented. This is reflected in the high associated probability  $p=0.208$ , showing it was likely to have occurred by chance.

The final three Likert-type scale items relating to the school theme explore the potential of staff attitude to affect the over-representation of secondary aged students. The first statement: “some secondary school teachers have negative attitudes implying that pupils with complex SEN belong somewhere else” had all groups evenly spread between medium and high explanatory factor, between 46% and 57% of each group felt it was a medium explanatory factor, and between 39% and 49% thought it was a high explanatory factor. There was no association between job role and level of agreement. In contrast to the other attitude statements (see below), only 1 secondary SENCo rated this as a low explanatory factor.



**Figure 4.11: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

“Head teachers in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs” - figure 4.11 appears to suggest less school staff believe this is a highly contributory factor than do LA or school staff (35% compared to 57% and 50% respectively, however, Fisher’s Exact Probability ( $p=0.248$ ) shows this pattern could be a result of chance. Of the 15 secondary school staff, 4 thought it was a low explanatory factor, 6 thought it was

medium and 5 thought it was high. No other school staff role selected low explanatory factor for this statement. For the final statement, “SENCOs in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs”, no clear pattern emerged ; results were spread along the scale (see fig 4.12). This is reflected in the Pearson’s chi-squared value (6.895,  $p=0.142$ ) and Cramer’s V (0.188). (When separated by school staff roles 7 out of 15 secondary SENCOs selected this as a low explanatory factor, compared to 1 of 6 special school head teachers and 2 of 6 primary school staff.)

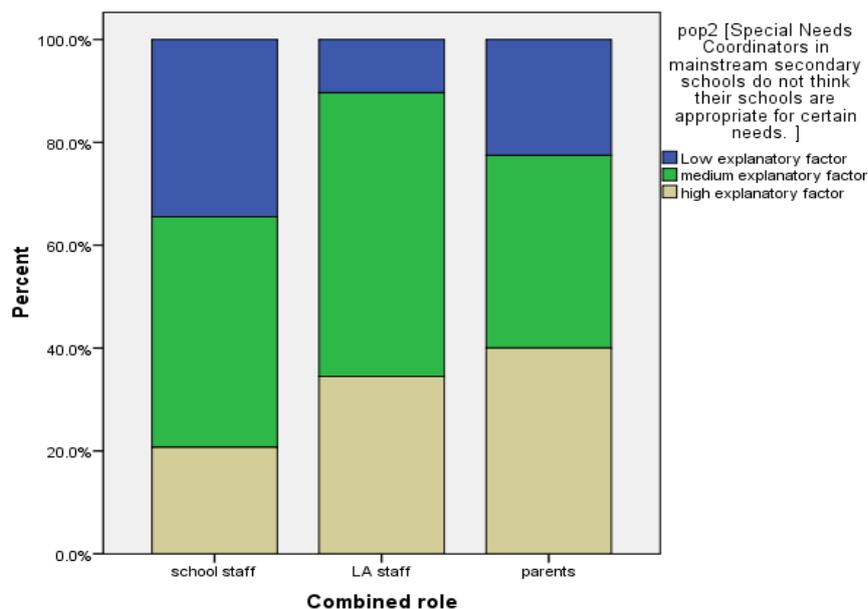


Figure 4.12: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected

#### 4.03(b) Within child factors

##### (i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group

This was the theme that accounted for most comments made by secondary staff (25%), and was the second most commented on theme for the remaining stakeholder groups (it made up 18% of primary and special school staff comments, 16% of LA staff comments and 11% of parent comments).

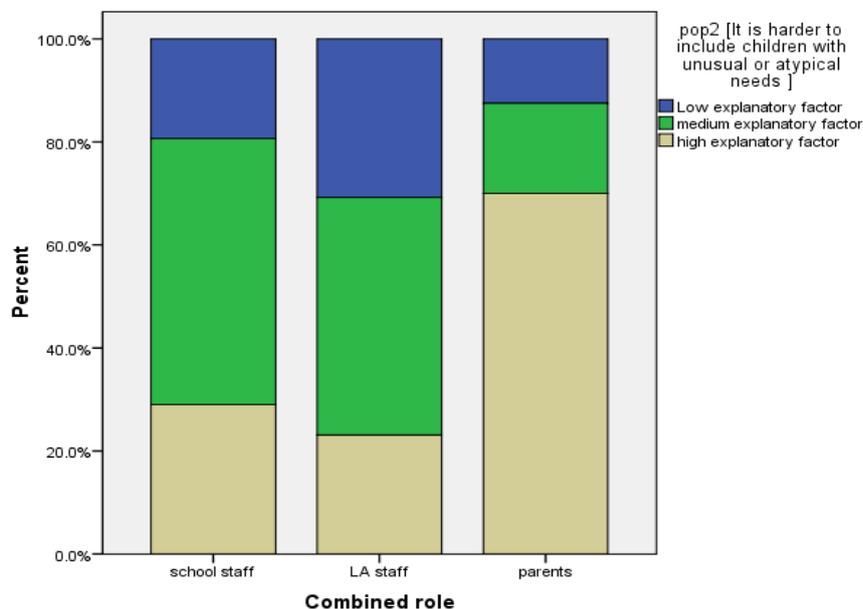
##### (ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions

When coding responses were totalled and compared by stakeholder group, parents made comments related to within child factors significantly less than would be expected (25.5% rather than the expected 40.2%), and school staff commented on it as a factor significantly more than expected (45.2% compared to the expected 30.4%). When schools are divided by type, secondary SENCOs accounted for more than half of the total comments from school staff, and made 27.6% of the comments, rather than the expected

14.7%. The discussion of within child reasons by secondary staff occurred mostly in the case study questions. For the sub theme of “the child’s ability” half of all comments (27 out of 54) were made by school staff. Of these 27, 15 were made by secondary school staff. (Other subthemes within the theme of within child factors do not have enough codes to draw any significant conclusions relating to proportions of comments by role.)

***(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items***

Two of the rating scale items related to the within child factor theme. The figures for the statement “primary schools are more able to absorb immature behaviour” appear to show that more parents selected this as a high explanatory factor (62% compared to 39% of school staff and 38% of LA staff). This pattern could have happened due to sample errors as seen in the Fisher’s Exact Probability value of 0.153. The second statement “it is harder to include children with unusual or atypical needs” was selected by a large proportion of parents as a high explanatory factor compared to the other stakeholder groups (70% compared to 29% of school staff and 23% of LA staff). This is demonstrated in figure 4.13, and IS significant (Pearson’s chi-squared = 19.549, p=0.001). Cramer’s V has a relatively high value of 0.317, that is, there is a 10.0% association between job role and level of agreement.



**Figure 4.13: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

#### **4.03(c) Resources**

##### ***(i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group***

The resources theme appeared as the third most commented on theme by school staff (accounting for 9.7% of all comments made by this group) and parents (9.2% of all comments made by parents). It was the fourth most commented on item for the LA staff, with 7.8% (voice and choice was their third category). However when schools are separated by type 13% of comments made by secondary staff refer to it, compared to only 6% of primary and special school staff. Resources becomes primary and special school staff's 7<sup>th</sup> most commented on item (of 13), below school factors, within child factors, process, parental preference, voice and choice and relationships.

##### ***(ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions***

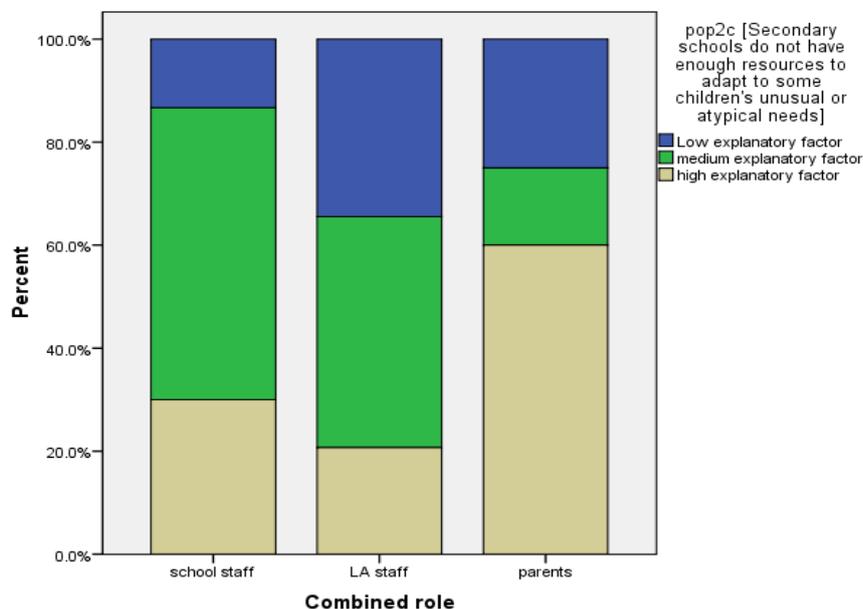
The resources category appears to be distributed in the ratios expected, 37.5% of the 160 responses are given by parents, 36.9% by school staff, and 25.6% by LA staff. On closer inspection, secondary school staff account for a larger than expected percentage (26.3%). In the four reasons questions half of the 34 comments made suggesting a lack of resources is the reason for over-representation of secondary aged children in special school are given by parents, and 32% of the comments are made by secondary school staff. Neither primary nor special school staff mention resources as a contributory factor in the four reasons question. On analysis of the case study questions these are spread as would be expected, with the exception again of secondary staff who account for 24.6% of the total codes rather than the expected 14.7%. Thus it can be concluded that secondary staff and parents are more likely to comment on resources as a contributory factor than either LA, primary or special school staff.

One sub theme in this category could meaningfully be measured and compared, that was "generic support". Of the 69 comments made, school staff made the most reference to support or the lack of it – 36 of the comments were made by school staff rather than the expected 21. Of these 36, 21 were made by secondary school staff. Parents commented on support less than expected – with 15 comments rather than the expected 28.

##### ***(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items***

One scale item referred to resources: "secondary schools do not have enough resources to adapt to some children's unusual or atypical needs". When a

cross-tabulation was run on the results of the statement 60% of parents rated it as a high explanatory factor, compared to 30% of school staff and 21% of LA staff. This IS significant, there 9.7% of the variation can be explained by role. (Pearson’s chi-square = 19.288, p=0.001, Cramer’s V = 0.312.)



**Figure 4.14: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

As there was significant difference in proportions according to school type (see above) I broke down the school category. This revealed that 9 school staff selected high explanatory – 8 secondary SENCOs and 1 special school head teacher, 15 school staff selected medium explanatory – 6 secondary SENCOs, 2 special school head teachers and 7 primary SENCOs, and 4 selected low explanatory factor – 1 secondary SENCO and 3 special school head teachers. Thus more secondary staff selected high explanatory factors (however this could be attributed to sample size difference – 15 secondary SENCOs responded to this rating scale question compared to 6 special school head teachers and 7 primary school staff).

#### **4.03(d) Voice/choice**

##### ***(i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group***

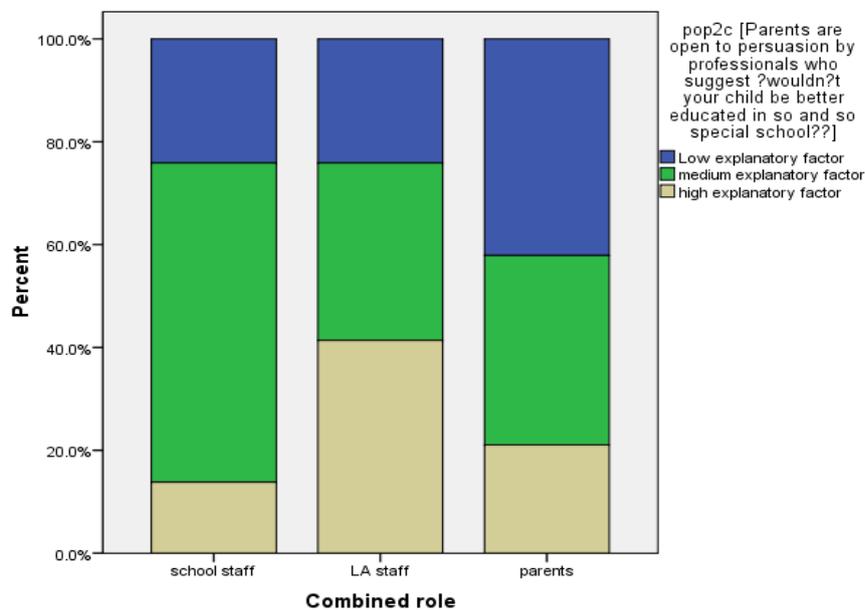
Voice and choice was the third most commented on theme by LA staff, accounting for 10.8% of their total comments. It was fourth in the list for school staff (8.9%). When schools are looked at secondary schools have it as their fourth factor (9.4%), whereas primary and special school staff have it as their fifth factor (8.0%). It is the sixth most commented on theme by parents, with 7.0% of all comments made by parents.

**(ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions**

The over-representation of secondary aged students being a result of the choice of stakeholders followed expected patterns of distribution with the exception of parents. They made significantly fewer comments on it than expected (they accounted for 29.5% of the 156 codes, rather than the expected 40.2%). No member of school staff listed voice/choice as one of the 4 reasons why there is an over-representation of secondary aged pupils; they did however make reference to this theme in the case studies. Of the 12 reasons related to voice and choice given in the four reason questions 10 of these were put forward by LA staff.

For the sub theme of “parental choice/preference” parents commented less than the expected ratio and the LA more than expected (12 parents rather than the expected 21, and 21 LA staff compared to the expected 15). Comments were in the expected regions for the sub-theme of “professional request, recommendation”. The decision being a result of child voice and choice was commented on more by parents and LA staff than schools (9, 9 and 3 comments respectively). Parents commented less that it was a result of a team decision than did other stakeholder groups.

**(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items**



**Figure 4.15: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

The low total comments made by parents and high number of comments made by LA staff are reflected in the Likert-type scale, the statement “parents are

open to persuasion by professionals who suggest ‘wouldn’t your child be better educated in so and so special school?’” was rated as a HIGH explanatory factor by LA staff, and a LOW explanatory factor by parents (parent 42.1% low explanatory factor, LA 41.4% high explanatory factor, see fig 4.15), there is a small association between role and rating level, as Pearson’s chi-squared significance,  $p=0.034$ , Cramer’s  $V$  0.233. 5.4% of rating level variation can be explained by job role.

Another item on the Likert-type scale asked participants to rate “local authorities see tribunal cases are time consuming and costly so accept parental preference for special school placement”. The majority of school and local authority staff selected this as being a medium explanatory factor (57% and 56% respectively), however 60% of parents rated it as a low explanatory factor (see fig 4.16). Pearson’s chi squared probability was  $p=0.022$ , Cramer’s  $V = 0.252$ , showing that 6.4% of the variation in rating can be explained by role.

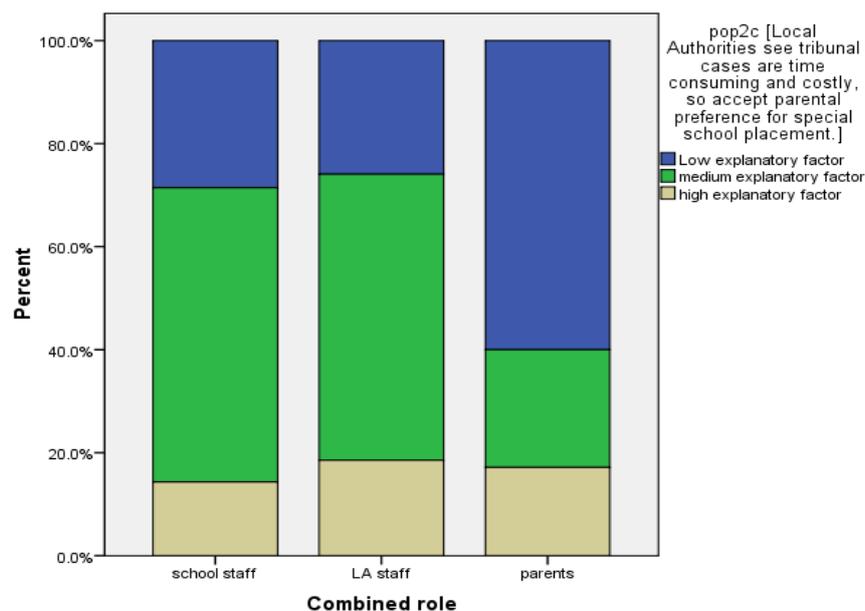


Figure 4.16: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected

#### 4.03(e) Parental preference

##### (i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group

Closely related to the theme of voice and choice is one of parental preference. This was the fourth most commented on factor by parents, 8.4% of their comments related to this theme. LA staff have it as their fifth most commented on theme, representing 7.4% of their comments. School staff have it as their sixth most commented on statement, at 5.5%, but this hides a considerable discrepancy between secondary school staff and those in primary

and special schools. Primary and special school staff hold it as their fourth most commented on theme, with 8.5% of comments, but secondary staff have it as their fourth least commented upon item, representing 2.9% of total comments.

**(ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions**

The comments for this theme were distributed according to expectations across stakeholder groups, 43.3% of the codes were given by parents, 30.7% by LA staff and 26% of school staff. As previously seen secondary school staff could be seen to make reference to parental preference less often than expected, with 7.1% of the total comments being made by secondary school staff rather than the expected 14.7%.

**(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items**

Figure 4.7 appears to show equal distribution between stakeholder groups on the statement “parents believe their child will never make it in secondary school”, with 45% of school staff, 55% of LA staff and 60% of parents selecting it as a highly explanatory factor. However, ratings across the scale for parents are more equally distributed than for the other two groups. Fisher’s Exact Probability suggests this is not due to chance ( $p=0.033$ ), Cramer’s  $V=0.237$ , accounting for a small amount of the variation (5.6%).

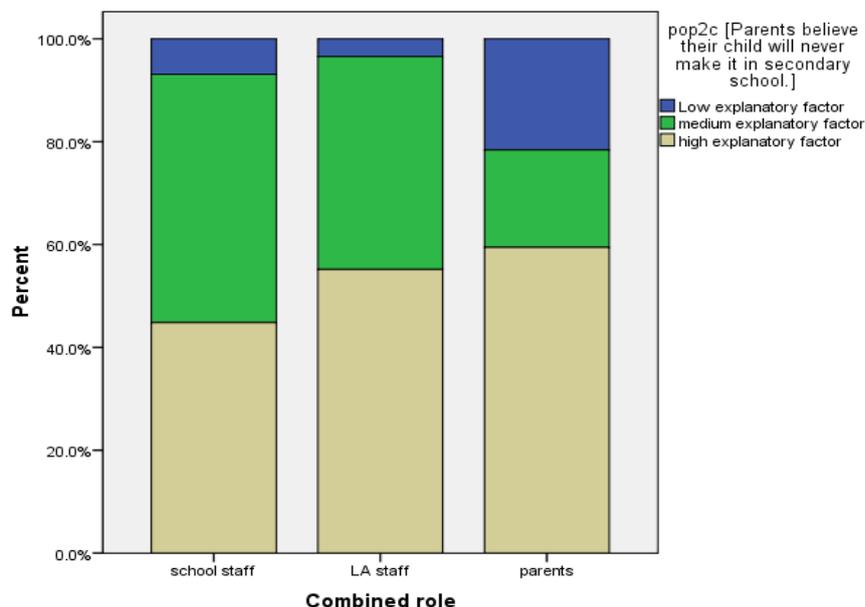


Figure 4.17: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected

#### 4.03(f) Processes

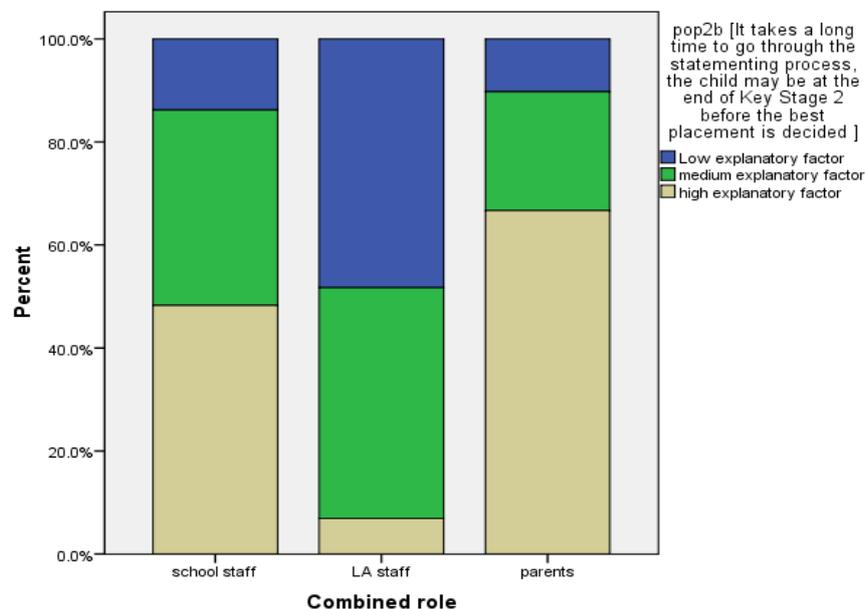
##### *(i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group*

Process was the fifth largest contributory theme for parents and school staff (8.0% and 7.3% respectively). Special school and primary staff have it as their third most commented on factor, accounting for 9.1% of total comments (secondary staff make 5.6% of their comments on this factor). However, for LA staff it is the eighth most commented on item, making only 3.6% of their total references to this theme.

##### *(ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions*

Over-representation of pupils being a result of processes was commented on in the ratios expected by all stakeholder groups, except for local authority staff. Total comments made by LA staff in reference to processes accounted for 16.5% of the 115 comments rather than the expected 29.4%. Just over half of the 4 reasons comments related to process were made by parents, compared to only 13% made by LA staff, and of the 69 coding incidents related to processes made in the case study question 18.8% were made by LA staff and 26.1% by primary and special school staff rather than the 29.4% and 15.7% expected.

##### *(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items*



**Figure 4.18: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

This low representation by LA staff is also reflected in the Likert-type scale. A number of the items in this scale were related to processes, and of these items

a cross-tabulation shows that LA rated them as a “low explanatory factor” whereas the majority of the other stakeholder groups rated them as highly explanatory. The first: “it takes a long time to go through the statementing process; the child may be at the end of Key Stage 2 before the best placement is decided” (fig 4.18) was rated thus: low explanatory factor by 48.3% of LA staff, high explanatory factor by 66.7% of parents and 48.3% of school staff (Pearson’s chi-squared = 28.499, p=0.000, Cramer’s V= 0.383).

“The amount of data and evidence required for a special school placement can take a long time to gather” was rated by 55.2% of LA staff as a low explanatory factor, whereas school staff and parents rated it as a high explanatory factor (50.0%, and 61.5% respectively). (Pearson’s chi-squared = 29.326, p=0.000, Cramer’s V=0.387, fig 4.19). Both these statements had some of the highest Cramer’s Values – that is the highest degree of association between role and level of agreement (14.7% and 15.0% respectively of variation in rating scale frequencies can be explained by role).

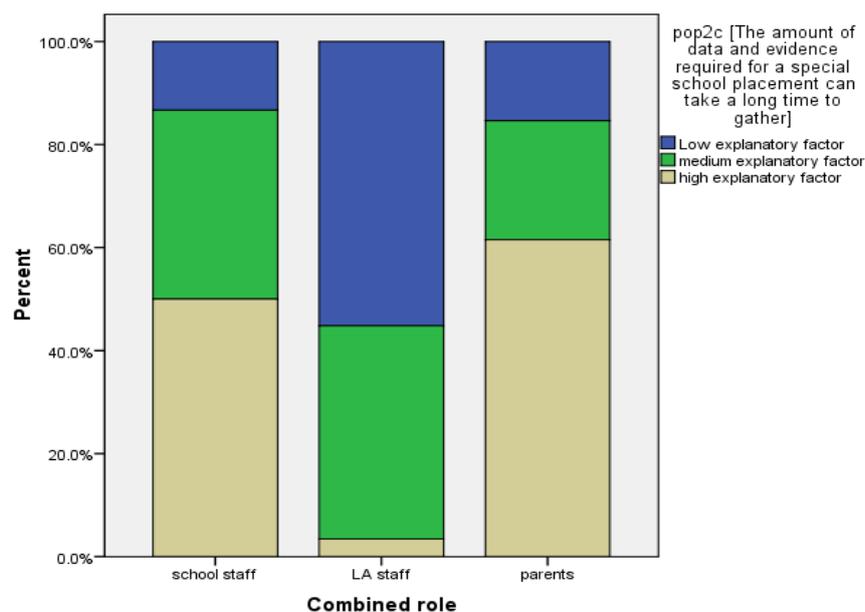


Figure 4.19: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected

#### 4.03(g) Relationships

##### (i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group

Relationships as a theme accounted for 5.8% of parents’ comments, 5.0% of school staff comments and 4.0% of LA comments. When schools are divided by type, primary and special schools make more comments – 7.0% of their comments relate to relationships, whereas 3.1% of comments made by secondary staff relate to relationships.

**(ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions**

Coding incidents in the relationships themes were distributed as expected among the stakeholder types. The exception to this was in the case studies where more primary and special staff made reference to relationships than would be the expected ratio.

**(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items**

In the rating scale that asked people to respond to the statement “the secondary aged peer group are less considerate of those that are unusual”, the one aspect of relationships measured in the scale, the majority of parents rated it highly, school staff were evenly split between a “high explanatory factor” and a “medium explanatory factor”, and the majority of LA staff rated it as a medium explanatory factor. (77.5% of parents, 46.7% school staff, “high explanatory factor”, Pearson’s chi-squared  $p= 0.000$ , Cramer’s  $V= 0.355$ , 12.6% of variation can be explained by role, see fig 4.20). There is no difference in results when split by school type.

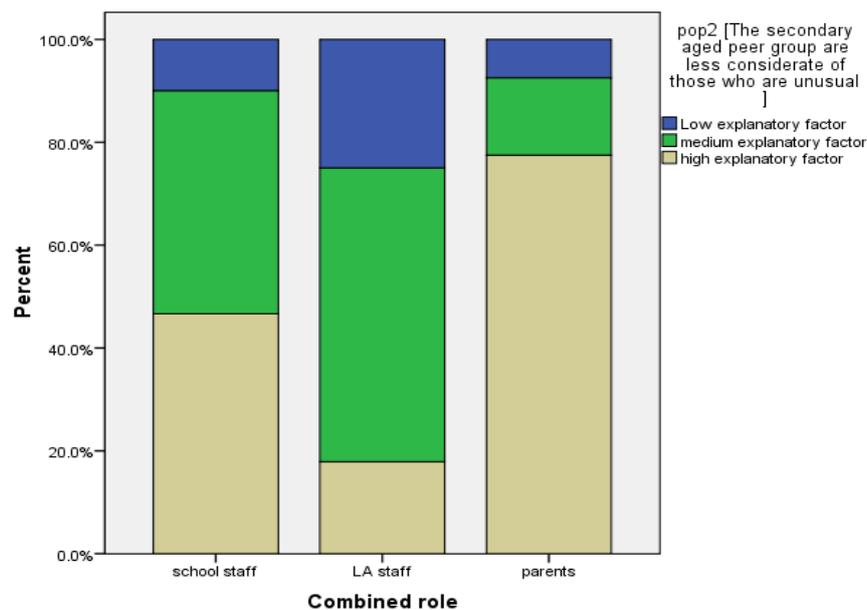


Figure 4.20: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected

**4.03(h) Exosystem**

**(i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group**

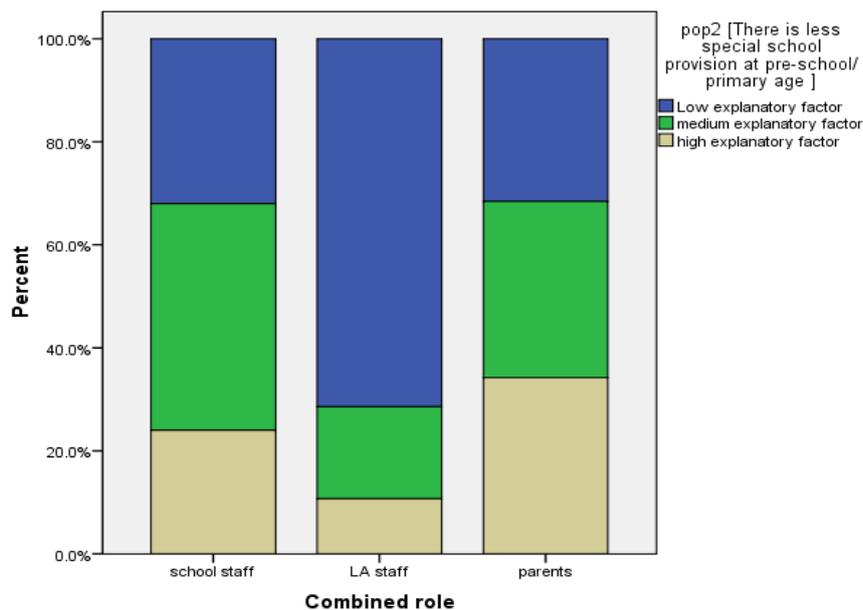
Exosystemic factors account for 6.1% of comments made by parents, 4.0% of comments made by LA staff and 3.3% of comments made by school staff (with no disparity according to school type).

**(ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions**

This theme had expected levels of agreement from all stakeholder groups, with the exception of parents who accounted for 49.4% of the comments, rather than the expected 40.2%. This arises mostly from the analysis of case study questions, where more than half of the comments were made by parents. When the subtheme of provision is examined this pattern is repeated.

**(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items**

The rating scale question that asked participants to rate how much of an explanatory factor for over-representation the statement “there is less special school provision at pre-school/primary age” had fairly even distribution along the scale for parents and school staff (see fig. 4.21). However, 71.4 % of LA staff rated it as a “low explanatory factor”, this IS significant. (Pearson’s chi-squared  $p=0.009$ , Cramer’s  $V= 0.273$ , explaining 7.5% of the variation).



**Figure 4.21: 100% stacked bar chart comparing role and level of explanation selected**

Notions of government and inspection focus did not arise often in the open ended question, but where the rating scale was used each stakeholder group rated this as a high explanatory factor. The statement “government policy focuses too much on academic achievement” had 75% of school staff, 68.4% of parents and 65.8%, of LA staff rate as “high explanatory factor”. The larger percentage of school staff was a result in this instance that could have happened by chance (Fisher’s Exact Probability=0.509). The second statement

“school inspections focus too much on academic achievement” had the majority of each group rate it as “high explanatory” (school staff high 73.3%, LA high, 65.2%, parents high 52.5%). Again, any pattern could have happened by chance, Fisher’s Exact Probability was 0.471.

#### **4.03(i) Chronosystem**

##### ***(i) Proportion of comments made by each stakeholder group***

All stakeholder groups discussed this theme in similar proportions – it accounted for 4.1% of parents comments, 3.5% of school staff comments and 3.2% of LA staff comments.

##### ***(ii) Similarity or difference to expected proportions***

Chronosystemic, or time-bound, factors were commented on by all stakeholder groups, in expected ratios.

##### ***(iii) Patterns of association between stakeholder group and level of agreement on rating scale items***

“When children are young there is a greater tolerance for immature behaviours” appears to have a greater level of parental agreement with higher explanatory factors. However, there is a possibility this pattern occurs as a result of chance (Fisher’s Exact Probability= 0.066). “It takes time for parents to come to accept that their children might not fit in with the traditional mainstream curriculum”. This shows the majority of each stakeholder group accepting it as a medium explanatory factor (49% of parents, 61% of school staff and 71% of LA staff. Any association between group type and level of agreement with a factor is down to chance (Pearson’s chi-squared = 0.319).

The remaining 4 categories each have less than 40 coding incidents, and thus it is inappropriate to discuss any variance according to stakeholder role as being significant, as a difference of 18% between the expected proportion and the actual proportion accounts for 7 comments. Therefore I will report differences in the actual numbers, rather than percentages in the next 4 headings.

#### **4.03(j) Outcomes of mainstream**

2.9% of all parents’ comments were related to this theme, compared to 2.5% of all comments made by school staff and 1.0% of comments made by LA staff. When school staff are split by school type it rises to 3.2% of comments made by primary and special school staff and falls to 1.9% of comments made by secondary school staff.

The expected distribution of the 39 responses to this question was 15 parents, 12 by LA staff and 12 by school staff. The actual responses were in the expected regions for parents and school staff (19 and 15 respectively), but lower than expected by LA staff (5 comments).

#### **4.03(k) Peers**

The proportion of total comments relating to peers was highest for schools, accounting for 3.6% of all comments. When split by school type it becomes the sixth most commented on item by secondary school staff, accounting for 4.7% of all comments made by this group, compared to 2.5% of special school and primary staff. LA staff and parents comment on it less, codes on this theme account for 1.5% and 1.2% respectively.

The expected distribution of the 38 responses to this question was 15 parents, 11 by LA staff and 12 by school staff. The actual response varied, fewer parents commented on this feature than would be expected (8), and more school staff (22). On closer analysis the majority of responses from schools were from secondary SENCOs who made 15 of the 38 comments, rather than the expected 6.

#### **4.03(l) Appropriateness**

This was commented on in similar proportions by all stakeholder types, accounting for between 0.7 and 2.2% of total comments. Secondary staff referred to it more than any other group, it accounted for 2.2% of their total comments, followed by parents (1.7%). Special and primary school staff commented on it least – with 0.7% of their comments relating to this theme, followed by LA staff with 1% of total comments.

In the 25 comments made about appropriateness of placement, 11 parents made reference to this, in line with expectations, 5 LA staff (2 less than expected), and 9 school staff (1 more than expected). When the school staff group was broken down 3 more secondary staff commented on this as a factor than would have been expected.

#### **4.03(m) Safety**

This was the least referred to theme by all stakeholders, accounting for between no comments (primary and special school staff) to 1.6% of comments (secondary school staff). LA staff and parents dedicated a similar amount of comments to safety with 1.0% and 0.9% respectively.

No special school or primary school staff made reference to safety as an issue in the 16 coded instances made in the case study questions. The remaining responses were divided equally between parents, LA staff and secondary school staff (6, 5 and 5 respectively). It could be argued this demonstrates an over-representation of secondary staff to this code (only 2 of the 16 instances should have been made by secondary staff) but the numbers involved are so small this conclusion would not be valid.

#### **Section 4.04      Summary**

I have presented the results of the data analysis undertaken in exploring the reasons for over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools. Some key themes have emerged from the analysis, each made up of various sub-themes. There are a variety of reasons given by stakeholders to explain why there are more pupils of secondary age in special school than those of primary age. The biggest contributory factors are school level factors. Most stakeholders recognise this as a major contributory influence on the phenomenon of over-representation; it accounts for a third of most groups' responses. (Secondary school staff place it on an equal footing with within child factors, each accounting for approximately a quarter of their total comments.) Within child factors is the next largest reason, again there is a level of agreement between stakeholder groups.

Different stakeholder groups do attach primacy to different reasons and barriers, reflected in the amount of comments they make and in the rating scale. **Secondary school staff** made substantially more comments relating to the within child theme, particularly notions of ability, than the expected ratio. They also made more references to the resources theme, including the support sub-theme. They referred more often to the peers theme than any other group. **Primary and special school staff** made slightly more references to staff expertise and attitude in the secondary school. They also commented slightly more than expected on the relationships theme. **Local authority staff** made significantly more comments on notions of parental choice and preference (a sub-theme of the "voice choice" theme), and slightly more than expected relating to the organisation and structure of schools. **Parents** commented more than the expected ratio on exosystemic factors, particularly provision, and on outcomes of mainstream.

**Secondary school staff** made substantially fewer comments than the expected ratios on the role of the environment and ethos of schools, and slightly less than expected on the role of staff. They also made slightly fewer comments on the role of parental preference. **Primary and special school staff** made slightly fewer comments on resources than the other groups. **Local authority staff** made substantially fewer comments on the effect of processes on the situation, as well as on the outcomes of mainstream. **Parents** made substantially fewer comments on support, within child issues, the organisation and structure of schools and voice and choice.

There was agreement by stakeholder groups on the role of the subtheme of curriculum as reasons for the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools – they all commented on this in the expected ratios. There was also agreement in emphasis on the effect of the chronosystem. The rating scale also shows agreement in the rating of statements about school environment and size, government and inspection policy focus, tolerance of behaviours mediated by age, the attitude of secondary school staff, the ability of primary schools to absorb immature behaviour and the time taken for parents to accept the needs of the child.

In the next chapter I aim to discuss the implications of the themes that have arisen from this analysis, explain how or why they occur or affect inclusion, and relate this back to the literature. The themes will be discussed again in chapter 7 as I explain how I generated my vignette of a future school based on these themes.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

### Section 5.01 Introduction

This chapter explores and critically examines the themes that are thought by stakeholders to contribute to the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools as described in the analysis contained in the previous chapter. It discusses the implications these themes and findings have for models of disability and notions of integration and inclusion. I make reference to the literature already explored in the first part of the literature review (Chapter 3), and introduce other literature that is relevant to the topics raised.

### Section 5.02 Answers to the research questions

The most basic level of discussion is based upon a response to the research questions this thesis sets out to answer (see chapter 3). The first, what reasons are most commonly given by stakeholders as to why there are more pupils of secondary age in special school than those of primary age, are set out in Table 5.1. School level factors are the most frequently mentioned factors, accounting for nearly a third of all codes, and when combined with within child factors both themes account for just under half of the total codes.

Theme	Percentage of comments
School level factors	32.1%
Within child factors	15.8%
Resources	8.7%
Voice/choice	8.5%
Parental preference	6.9%
Process	6.3%
Relationships	4.9%
Exosystem	4.4%
Chronosystem	3.5%
Outcomes of mainstream	2.1%
Peers	2.1%
Appropriateness	1.4%
Safety	0.9%

Table 5.1: Percentage of comments related to themes emerging from analysis

The next research question asked if there are differences in the reasons for the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools suggested by the different stakeholder groups. It was found that the same themes were discussed to some extent by all stakeholders (with the exception of the safety theme – no special school or primary school staff made any reference to safety). There was variation by stakeholder group in the number of references

and the associated level of priority, (as seen in appendix 15), and discussed in chapter 4. The most striking examples are the variation in the within child theme, and the processes theme. These analyses are discussed in the sections below, along with reference to the literature, to support and further illustrate the key conclusions and theoretical implications reached.

### **Section 5.03 Contrast in stakeholder group opinion**

Although the stakeholders believed that each of the themes contributed in some way to the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools, there is a need to explain the variation and contrast in the emphasis that different stakeholders place on different themes. One conclusion is that stakeholders seem less likely to place emphasis on an area they are responsible for. Secondary staff make less mention of staff attitude, and the ethos and environment of secondary schools compared to other school types. Local authority staff place less emphasis on the effect of processes, such as the length of time to gain a statement. In both of these examples it could be argued that these are areas that professionals are responsible for and can affect, leading them to downplay their influence. This is consistent with the notion of “self-serving” or “defensive attribution” bias in attribution theory, where an individual attributes their own, or with-in group, successes internally, and failures externally (Hogg, 2000). These biases could be used by stakeholders to avoid public embarrassment or gain public approval, and thus maintain or increase the esteem in which the individual is held by others (Bradley, 1978). It could also be seen as a way of preserving self-image, the stakeholder invests time and energy in their job, and value their competence, so denying responsibility for a situation or externalising its cause is likely to occur (Hughes, 1992). This is an unexplored avenue in identification bias/placement decisions in SEN, and is one that validates the critical realist approach adopted for this thesis. Critical realism acknowledges that the accounts of participants though important, may be partial and incomplete (Potter & López, 2005). On the other hand it could equally be argued that this stakeholder group are more familiar with these themes, and therefore have a more accurate perception of the influence these themes have on the over-representation phenomenon.

Neither of these possible explanations account for the lack of comments from primary and special school staff on the impact of resourcing, or the fewer comments from parents on the support subtheme, the within child theme, the

voice/choice theme and the organisation of schools subtheme. The smaller number of comments on resourcing by these stakeholders can perhaps be explained because primary and special schools do not have the same competition and vying for resources that secondary schools could be seen to face within and between departments. The fewer comments from parents on the voice and choice theme could be a reflection of professionals seeing the importance of voice and choice in placement decisions, but parents not reiterating this importance.

Just as there were examples of groups not commenting on themes as frequently as other groups, there were also cases of some stakeholder groups reporting more frequently on some themes than on others. These could be predicated on actual “lived” experience of the various themes, at the “coal face” as it were. Thus secondary staff relate the situation to notions of ability, resources, support and comparison to peers as they see and experience these factors every day. Primary school and special school staff perhaps perceive a difference to secondary schools in the way they are organised and can engender relationships. Parents are very aware of provision (or lack of) in terms of placement as they seek a placement for their child and experience and live with the outcomes of mainstream. Local authority staff are aware of the role parental choice plays (or should play) in mediating a placement for their child. This awareness and experience can perhaps explain why these stakeholder groups rated these factors more highly than other groups.

These explanations are only suppositions, and need further exploration before firm conclusions can be reached. The variation in responses does demonstrate the importance of consulting a variety of stakeholder groups who are involved in the placement decision. It also reaffirms the paradigmatic, ontological and epistemological assumptions of critical realism, acknowledging the effect of participant subjectivity and constructions of reality.

#### **Section 5.04      Relevance of other over-representation studies**

This section seeks to examine the reasons for over-representation given by stakeholders, by comparing them with conclusions raised in other studies about the over-representation of other diverse groups in the special education system. As discussed in the literature review there are difficulties drawing parallels between some authors over-arching conclusions about the over-representation of minority groups and the over-representation of older children

and boys in the system. This section attempts to explore the extent to which the general conclusions of disproportionality studies can extend to disproportionality of age. It takes the explanatory factors that Dyson & Gallannaugh (2008) and Lindsay et al (2006) suggest account for the disproportionality of certain ethnic groups in the special education system, and applies them to the over-representation of older children in the special school in light of the findings of this thesis.

#### **5.04(a) Difference in incidences of disability in the different groups**

The over-representation of older children in special schools could be framed in this way: the incidence of disability is higher in older children than in the younger population. This study has not explored issues relating specifically to the incidence and prevalence of types of special educational needs and disability. It has however revealed there are a number of time-related elements that could contribute to rates of identification, diagnosis and statementing. Although these are not directly related to the concept of the incidence of disability (the number of new people “becoming” disabled) there is a difference caused by ageing on the extent of the difficulties. The study has confirmed the belief that the gap between the child with SEN and their peers widens over time, the difficulties that the child experiences become more apparent to themselves and to others, and with puberty emerging, this exacerbates the problems further. There is also the time-bound effect of parents realising their child is different and not going to succeed in the mainstream. This however was the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest rated explanatory factor on the rating scale, achieving a mean value of 3.4 out of 6.

Another theme that could relate to incidence of disabilities is that of “processes”, specifically late diagnosis, identification and statementing. There was a sense from the survey that the graduated approach to provision for children with special educational needs used in England prevents early identification and statementing, which in turn means “the process of ascertaining most appropriate placement can be protracted” (Pirrie et al., 2006, p. 6). This was explored in the rating scale item “it takes a long time to go through the statementing process; the child may be at the end of Key Stage 2 before the best placement is decided” and “the amount of data and evidence required for a special school placement can take a long time to gather”. These both had a relatively low mean which showed that a number of people felt they were not explanatory. However, these were factors that were given a large

number of low ratings by LA staff (a similar number of LA staff rated it as a low explanatory factor as parents rated it a high explanatory factor). When LA staff are removed from the calculation of the mean value the mean rises from 3.62 (s.d. 2.15) to 4.37 (s.d. 1.92) for the statement relating to length of time for the statementing process and from 3.50 (s.d. 2.16) to 4.25 (s.d. 1.93) for the statement relating to the gathering of evidence. This evidences the belief of stakeholders other than LA staff that the effect of processes on the timing of identification and statementing could cause older children to be more likely to be statemented with a particular need. This in turn affects the incidence of disability.

#### **5.04(b) Inappropriate interpretation of difference as disability**

The Lindsay et al. (2006) study relates this explanation to ethnic bias that arises in the identification and assessment of SEN, bias that underpins teachers' perceptions of conduct and achievement. The child from the ethnic minority is perceived as "different", and these differences are construed as special educational needs. "Difference" is a topic raised throughout the questionnaire responses and the generated themes, as reflected especially in the within child theme and the peers theme. There is a perceived need for the child with SEN to experience a different curriculum, with a different focus. Again, there is discussion of difference from peers, and is related to age as differences become more apparent as the children and their peers grow up. An attainment gap and a gap in needs become greater and more obvious as pupils age. This difference from peers was believed by some to imply that a different curriculum is needed. It is also reflected in the peers theme: the child with SEN is different from their peers in terms of achievement, ability and attainment, levels of independence, of maturity, of failure and of emotional and physical differences. The "intolerance" of difference is not just from school staff, but also from peers, as pointed out in the relationships theme, which in turn leads to bullying. The child's own self-awareness of difference to their peers also becomes a factor in placement decisions.

It could be argued that each of the within child factors point to a difference argument – the child's ability in the range of areas discussed could be compared to the "normal" child's ability, child's needs, child's social competence and so on which are all different to some norm. Sikes, Lawson, and Parker (2007) describe how historically difference to a norm resulted in some groups of children being "identified as uneducable, as

representing a ‘problem’ for schools and/or as having ‘special educational needs’” (p. 356, emphasis original.) This could also explain why it is not just the number of children in special schools that increases with age, but also how proportionally more older children are identified as having special education needs than younger children (Audit Commission, 2002; Dockrell et al., 2002; Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2008). Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) hold this as one of the forms of disproportionality in special education.

Disproportionality of certain groups is not caused simply by the existence of a difference itself, but by the “inappropriate interpretation of” and response to this difference (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2008, p. 42). An example of this could be seen to be indicated by the rating scale items that asked participants to rate how much of an explanatory factor the attitudes of various members of staff in a secondary school context had when they implied that pupils with complex SEN belong somewhere else. Here, 48% of participants felt that head teachers’ negative attitude were a high explanatory factor, 45% felt that secondary school staff’s negative attitude was a high explanatory factor and 33% felt that secondary SENCo’s negative attitude was a high explanatory factor. (There were no significant correlations between stakeholder role and rating level). To illustrate this one secondary SENCo described “daily battles with colleagues who do still consider that it is not their job but that of SENCo to ‘deal’ with the ‘unteachable’” (emphasis respondent’s own). This notion of a group of children deemed “unteachable” implies that there are those who are “teachable”. The “unteachable” then become labelled as having special educational needs. The within child factors had a sub theme of the child’s needs, and schools’ responses to those needs, schools claiming they could not meet those particular, different needs. Are these legitimate reactions to the differences in terms of needs between pupils, or are they inappropriate responses to these differences?

#### **5.04(c) Mediated by achievement/lack of achievement**

Another subtheme that emerges from the responses to the questionnaire is the sense that the child with SEN cannot achieve academically. One within child subtheme is the child’s ability to achieve - “mainstream teachers are under huge pressure to get pupils to achieve, something that most SEN pupils struggle to do in the same way as peers”. There is also a recognition that the curriculum in secondary schools becomes more achievement and accreditation focused than the primary school curriculum. Due to this underachievement,

students with SEN are considered to be better placed in special schools. Although government policy focus and its application through OfSTED was not discussed in the qualitative responses, the impact of a policy focus on academic achievement was rated highly on the Likert-type scale, achieving the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> highest mean, with the majority of each stakeholder group reporting them as a high explanatory factor.

#### **5.04(d) Reflects deeper social division and inequalities**

Mittler (2008) argues that “inequalities affecting people with special needs and disabilities are merely one manifestation of much deeper and more pervasive inequalities in our education system and in society as a whole” (p. 6). One reason for some over-representation in special education are related to the wider socio-economic environment and also health care inequalities (Lindsay et al., 2006). Confirmation of the impact of wider social divisions and inequalities did not arise directly from the study, but perhaps the over-representation of older children could be linked to issues of youth justice, crime pertaining to age, the disciplinary exclusion of older children. Further work needs to be carried out on the statistics of population in special schools to explore patterns by age and socio-economic status before conclusions on this can be reached. There are links between socio-economic status and resourcing and advocacy for special educational needs (Corbett, 1997; Corbett & Norwich, 1997).

Other areas of social division and inequalities could be seen to be reflected in society’s attitudes to different special educational needs and disabilities. There is a possibility that the patterns of over-representation are mediated through the nature of the primary need (see study in appendix 1). This small study demonstrates that when the special school population is broken down by age and area of primary need, some follow pattern of a year by year increase and others do not. This could indicate the acceptance and non-acceptance by society of some forms of disability. This could also be a reflection of the prevalence of some advocacy groups for children with certain types of disability (P. Farrell, 2001; Riddell et al., 1994).

#### **5.04(e) Systemic factors**

Systemic factors are one of the six main areas that Lindsay et al discuss in their literature review of over-representation studies (it was not mentioned directly by Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008)). Systemic factors include factors

around school organisation, teacher attitudes and expectations, curriculum organisation and so on (see table 2.1, Chapter 2 for a full list). The systemic factor of school organisation account for the largest proportion of responses to the questionnaire, and are clearly evidenced, with issues such as staff experience and expertise, school organisation, curriculum and resourcing factors being mentioned frequently, especially when comparing secondary schools to primary school or special school contexts.

#### **5.04(f) Lack of parental and school support**

Lindsay et al's (2006) reporting of findings from some studies suggest that parental support of some ethnic minority children is lower compared to that of their white peers. There was no sense in the survey that as pupils aged, their parents became less supportive of them in the same way. However, another of Lindsay et al's findings was that some studies found that students reported a lack of school support for students from ethnic minorities. They did not explore this finding further in their review. A perceived lack of support from school to both the child with special educational needs and/or their parents was highlighted by the questionnaire (see chapter 3). Again, whether the lessening of support is directly related to the ageing of the pupil, or to differences in arrangements between primary school and secondary school is unclear.

#### **5.04(g) How relevant are current explanations of over-representation?**

Explanations of over-representation of ethnic minority pupils do go some way to understanding the over-representation of older students in special schools. There are still however some conceptual gaps that need to be explored further before these specific accounts of disproportionality can be fitted to all types of disproportionality evidenced in the special school and special education system. The notion of systemic factors being the cause of over-representation of some ethnic minorities in the special education system is clearly also an explanatory factor for the over-representation of secondary aged children in this system.

### **Section 5.05 Limitations of current conceptions of inclusion, integration and disability in explaining themes**

When the table of themes arising from the data (Table 5.1) is considered it is evident that the themes cover a range of areas, with a range of different "locations". For example, 15.8% of all comments were ones that could be said

to be located within the child. Exosystemic comments could be said to be located outside of the school and outside of the child, but are still seen to have an effect on the inclusion or otherwise of the child with SEN. School level factors are ones located in the systems and organisations of different school types. The variety and range of themes that emerge have implications for a variety of models, conceptualisations and theories that are thought to underpin notions of inclusion, special educational needs and disability.

#### **5.05(a) No one model of disability covers all points**

When the various themes that arise from the analysis are superimposed onto the different models of disability that inform thinking about special educational needs it is clear that no one model or conceptualisation is sufficient in itself to cover all points. Nor can it be said that one group of stakeholders holds entirely to one model or conceptualisation while another group holds to another view.

##### ***(i) Psycho-medical model***

A psycho-medical model sees difficulties in learning arising from deficits in the neurological, genetic, or psychological make-up of the child, (Skidmore, 2004). This approach leads to adoption of medical categories of disability and learning difficulties (Terzi, 2005). This can be seen in the responses to the questionnaire, as parents sought placements in schools specialising in dyslexia or autism, or schools that offered therapeutic interventions and had specialist staff available. One parent outlines why they opted for a particular special school:

“it offered a tailored waking-day curriculum with on-site therapy [which] included a therapy team of speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists and a psychiatrist. They offered social skills support and independence skills taught throughout the day, with supported activities after school”.

An extension to the psycho-medical model is a deficit model, where pupils with special educational needs are defined by their individual pathology and within child deficits (Runswick-Cole, 2011). In this model children with SEN are seen as different to, or working below, a norm. This is evidenced in the within child conceptualisations, the child’s difference to peers, the recognition of and impact caused by the “gap” between the child with SEN and their peers.

***(ii) Charity model***

Garner (2009) adds to this definition of the medical model - the person with disabilities is seen to be more in need of “care and ‘protection’ than education” (p. 27, original emphasis). This is more commonly acknowledged as a charity discourse, where the placing children in special school is an act of benevolence with the aim of saving children from the trauma of mainstream (Runswick-Cole, 2008) and is reflected in the results of the questionnaire by the repeated use of the word “vulnerable”, and the theme of “safety” that emerges. Children with special educational needs “need the safe feeling they get from a small school”, special schools are more “nurturing”, secondary schools “cannot protect their special needs students from bullying/disabled hate crime”. The Likert-type scale item “special schools provide a more protective environment than secondary schools” was the item with the second highest mean. Another statement that was rated highly relates to this discourse, “parents believe their child will never make it in secondary school”, implying that they need a special environment where they will “make it”.

***(iii) Organisational model***

An organisational model sees the difficulties in learning arising from deficiencies in the way schools are currently organised (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Dyson & Millward, 2000; Skidmore, 2004). This study has illustrated that the ways in which secondary schools are organised does create barriers to some children with special educational needs, indeed, school structures and organisation is one of the largest sub-themes generated. It is secondary school organisation that is cited as an explanatory factor in the few reports that do mention the over-representation of older children in special schools or the special education system (Audit Commission, 2002; Dockrell et al., 2002), or in discussions of why pupils with SEN find secondary schools so difficult (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2005; Plimley & Bowen, 2006; Row, 2005). An example from the responses to the questionnaire describes how “as pupils in secondary schools meet so many different teachers it can be very difficult for some pupils to cope with different teaching styles, different expectations”. The organisational model would recognise this as a difficulty arising from school organisation, and seek to restructure schools so this problem was circumvented, rather than the need to remove or exclude the child.

#### ***(iv) Sociological model***

The proponents of a sociological model view special education as society's way of reinforcing and reproducing existing social inequalities, permitting the delivery of curriculum to a majority by removing disruptive children (Skidmore, 2004). "It is society that fails to accommodate and include [children with SEN] in the way it would those who are normal" (Norwich, 2009, p. 22). Special needs in education are regarded as social constructions, resulting in the use of categories and labels as a way to separate and segregate children (Terzi, 2005). One parent gave a clear example of this: "I believe there are many children still being failed by the same system by poor teaching, low expectation and social engineering by politically motivated school staff". The sense that some staff in secondary schools imply that children with SEN belong "somewhere else" is another illustration of this model in practice.

In this study I found that secondary staff made as many comments relating to within child factors as they did about school organisation factors, rather than the 33:11 (3:1) ratio of comments from parents, 2:1 of LA staff and 31:18 of primary and special school staff. It could be argued that their conceptualisation of the problem within the child points to a justification of them removing the child who is different. This perspective is also described in the discussion of the explanations of over-representation above. The over-representation is caused by an inappropriate interpretation of difference as disability, and a product of teacher/school bias. An example from my findings is a primary SENCo who reports that they have come across "secondary colleagues [who] don't see it as their role to teach pupils with SEN", and parents who report "some schools choose not to meet the needs of disabled students, they actively discourage them from choosing that school".

#### **5.05(b) The need for a combined model**

As can be seen above my findings point to aspects of each model of disability and SEN. Terzi (2005), Skidmore (2004) and Norwich (1993) note the limitations of these models if taken individually. Terzi locates the limitation in the dualism of the accounts – the psycho-medical and deficit models focus solely on individual factors that contribute to notions of disability, whereas the sociological and organisational models focus solely on the contribution of social factors. One side of the binary claims difficulties are caused by factors within the child, the other side that difficulties are caused by the limitations of schools, and by organisational barriers, an inability or unwillingness to cater

for the diversity of children's learning (Terzi, 2005). This duality of approaches and debates about causes "does not capture the complexity of the matter" (Terzi, p. 457), and leads to accounts and conceptualisations that are "partial and limited" (p. 457), and contain "significant blind spots" (Skidmore, 2004, p. 21). McEvoy and Richards (2006) make similar assertions in their critique of positivistic and interpretivist approaches. They argue that the critical realist approach overcomes these "blind-spots" by viewing the world as a "multi-dimensional, open system [in which] effects arise due to the interaction between social structures, mechanisms and human agency" (p. 70). Therefore, there is a need for accounts that accommodate factors in both the individual and the social organisation (Norwich, 1993). If only one perspective is used, the influence of the other becomes overshadowed and unrecognised. Another issue related to using the models singularly is that this is not reflected in real cases. For example, Runswick-Cole (2008) found that parents engage with different models of disability at different times, and the models they use are fragmented and complex.

Skidmore (2004) contests that each of the models and conceptualisations have both strengths and weaknesses. The organisational model focuses only on the internal organisation of the place called school, ignoring the impact of macro-level forces, (such as educational policy, and officially sanctioned support of certain ways of working). It also assumes that school is a global entity, ignoring the interactional level where learning takes place. The psycho-medical model on the other hand relies on value-laden judgements about behavioural or cognitive norms, and ignores the variety (in attainment for example) of some children with a particular diagnosis (Skidmore). It also promotes a negative, deficit based conceptualisation of disability (Garner, 2009). According to Skidmore (2004) the sociological model on one hand is based on an abstract hypothetical argument, with no link to empirical work, but is also viewed as too simplistic, viewing special education as an automatic process of sorting and ignoring the inequalities inherent in educational and economic policy.

These arguments can be illustrated through one of the themes emerging from my findings. My use of the term "within child" could be seen to imply a deficit based model, or a medical one, locating the problem within the child. This in itself elucidates the limitations of advocating one model over another. The category refers to reasons given by respondents that located the problem

within the child at a deficit level. The characteristics, ability, needs, emotions and/or behaviour of the child are what make a mainstream placement untenable. “The child’s ability” was a frequent sentence starter, and not necessarily related to academic ability. Rather than reflecting the child’s ability the comments were more likely to reflect an inability. If the child was able to do these things they would be included in the secondary mainstream. Thus it can be concluded that there is a notional level of these abilities that can be catered for in a mainstream school, and whoever falls below these abilities will not be successful, and so should be removed – pointing to the tenets of the sociological model. Is this notional level set to current notions of behavioural and/or achievement standards? If so, if these standards are lowered, schools can become more inclusive, an approach advocated by supporters of the organisational model. According to the responses to the survey some mainstream secondary schools are not helping the child to access, achieve and function, and thus could be redesigned to ensure a child with SEN becomes able to achieve, function and learn. There were some suggestions in the responses that pointed to ways we could do this, the child could access the school if the school personalised learning, promoted a different focus and provided support.

Dilemmas are raised here, in the example of the child who becomes physically aggressive and throws chairs, should this be accepted, despite its effect on others? Or wait until harm is done to another person? Or is the aggression a symptom, rather than an impairment, and it is the duty of educators to seek out the cause of the symptom and rectify it? Despite these dilemmas it is clear that the “within child” conceptualisation I use contains elements of the psycho-medical model, the sociological model and the organisational model, rather than evidencing a single model.

I posit that there is a need for an extended model of disability and special educational needs that accounts for these broad, multi-level, multifactor themes. This is no small task. I attempted to plot the findings in a simple diagram and became lost in a myriad of complexity – no simplistic diagram or continuum can demonstrate all the factors that may lead to secondary age over-representation in a special school. There are however existing models that begin to consider how we identify and build up a holistic picture of disability and special educational needs.

***(i) Terzi's capability approach***

One such model is Terzi's (2005, 2007) development of the capability approach, which states that disability is related to both impairments and to social arrangements, and acknowledges the relationship is a complex one. Whether impairments do or do not result in disability depends on the possible overcoming of the impairment and on the specific design of the physical and social environment. The provision of resources and appropriate design of the environment to overcome impairment are matters of justice. Intervention should be based on examining and considering what the full sets of capabilities a particular person can choose from are, evaluating the impact of any impairment on those set of capabilities. There is also a need to consider the interface between the individual and the environment in assessing any circumstantial elements may lead impairments to become disabilities and what effect this has on the sets of capabilities. This model also acknowledges the important role of alternative functioning – doing things a different way (such as a deaf person learning to lip read). A further definition and exploration of capabilities is discussed in the section on levels of integration below.

In the findings of my study there was a sense that placement decisions were made on evidence of the widening gap between the child with SEN and their peers (in this example I will refer to the widening gap in academic attainment, however, chapter 4 outlines that this is not the only area a gap appears). Some children were described as having low levels of attainment, measured by national curriculum levels, IQ tests or reading and writing ages. Terzi's model would ask practitioners to examine what the child's capabilities and strengths are and what affect their impairments have on those capabilities. However, she also sees the need to ascertain whether the inability/impairment is due to the current context of secondary schools. There is a consensus in the questionnaire that the government focuses too much on academic achievement, this then puts pressure on schools and teachers to focus on academic achievement: "mainstream teachers are under huge pressure to get children to achieve" (special school head teacher). This is judged and measured by individual measures of attainment. This demonstrates the potential of environmental factors to determine placement decisions. The final part of the capability approach looks for alternative ways of functioning – how can children with SEN demonstrate their strengths academically, but also on the part of the school – are there alternative ways to assess attainment?

Terzi's model has parallels with the "*International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth*" (ICF-CY, World Health Organisation, 2007). This model offers a dimensional conceptualisation of disability, recognising it is a multi-faceted phenomenon (Simeonsson, Simeonsson, & Hollenweger, 2008). It acts as a taxonomy to document the nature and severity of a functional limitation (Florian et al., 2006), but encompasses and differentiates between four levels or "domains" that influence this. As well as measuring the impact of body structures and body function it also looks at the extent of activity and participation and also contextual environmental factors. Environmental factors can be measured as facilitators of or barriers to participation. Thus, it acknowledges all aspects that affect an impairment. An additional advantage to this model of classification is that it allows for the identification of the individuals strengths in the various domains, as well as their weaknesses (Bickenbach, 2010).

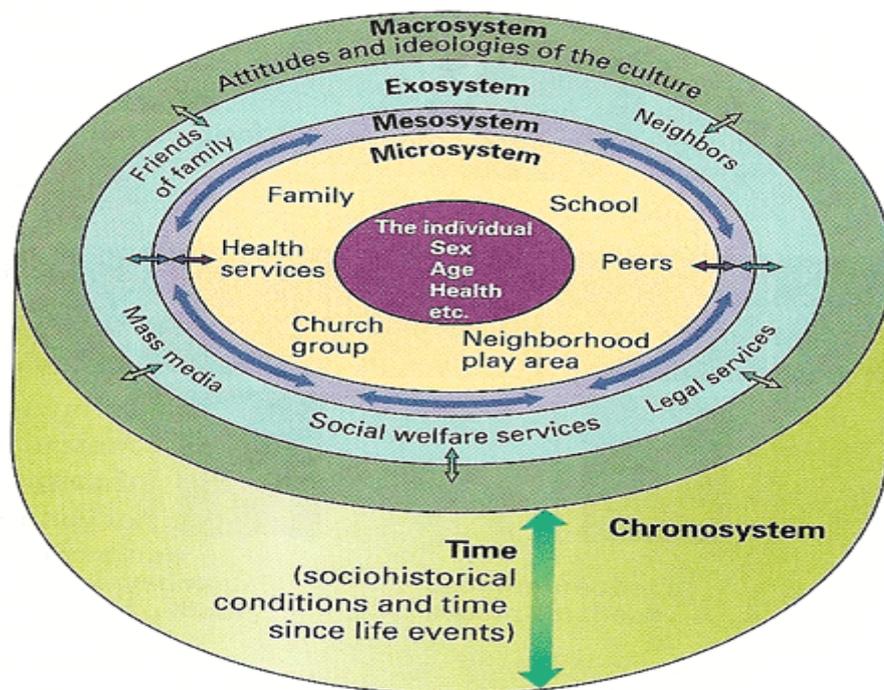
The relevance of these two approaches to this study is the acknowledgement of the need of a multi-dimensional approach, recognising that a host of factors can contribute to the phenomenon of over-representation of older children in special schools. Both Terzi and the ICF-CY's approach are geared towards the individual child, whereas I am attempting to gain an understanding of the situation from a wider perspective. There was not enough holistic description of individual cases that would allow me to frame these models around one particular child.

***(ii) Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development***

Another existing theoretical model that does appear to account for each of the themes is Bronfenbrenner's (1979) notion of child development. He plots the factors that influence child development nesting inside each other "like a set of Russian dolls" (p. 3), the factors influencing every level. Bronfenbrenner did not himself plot a diagram of this nested structure, but others have. Figure 5.1 shows Santrock's (2007) pictorial representation of the model.

Bronfenbrenner's model theorises that experiences in another setting, where the individual at the centre (the child with special educational needs) does not have a role, influence what the individual experiences in their immediate context, (for example, the exosystem influences the microsystem). Norwich (2008) phrases it thus "what takes place at each level [of the education system] is nested within processes and factors at higher levels and nest levels within it" (p. 6). Decisions by those in the exosystem are in turn affected by

the macrosystem of broader culture, for example socio-economic factors, society's values and customs, concepts of need and historical standpoints all contribute to decisions those in power (whether national, regionally or locally) will make. Thus the child with SEN is affected by decisions made by both the local authority and national government, which in turn are influenced by both cultural and society's expectations. This model accounts for the chronosystemic influences, exosystemic factors, the interactions of family, of peers, the classroom, the school, all of which are demonstrated by my findings.



**Figure 5.1: Bronfenbrenner: ecological theory of child development (Santrock, 2007, p. 51)**

The central section of the model is demonstrated by the “within child” theme. The child’s age, ability, difference to peers, their level of competence on a range of measures, their behaviour, emotions and vulnerability all contribute to the decision to place them in a special school. The chronosystem acts at this level, as the child experiences puberty, as difficulties become more apparent or as the child becomes self-aware they are “different”. Level two, the microsystem, contain the areas the child experiences directly. The school is the biggest sphere of influence on the over-representation of older children in special schools, particularly the organizational structures of secondary school. The child may find it difficult to cope with these structures, but alternatively the structures may impede the child. Also present in this level are the family of the child with SEN, their experience of mainstream, their knowledge of the child. The attitudes of peers and school staff to the child

with SEN is also seen as a contributory factor in the survey. The mesosystem is the relationships between the groups in the microsystem, and relationships is another major theme that emerged. These relationships can be between the child in the centre, and the other groups (staff, families or peers) or between different microsystem groups – staff and parents for example. Again, at this level the chronosystem can act – the parents take time to realise their child might need an alternative curriculum, peers realise the child with special educational needs is different to them, friendships begin to break down.

The remaining layers are ones not related specifically to the child with special educational needs but do affect placement decisions. The exosystem of the local authority, the department of education, and bodies that provide teacher training and continued professional development are all evidenced in my findings as having an impact on where a child with SEN is taught. Finally, the macrosystem – society’s attitudes and ideologies also have an effect – children with special educational needs need to be protected and kept safe, the place of parental choice of school in a democracy, notions of professionalism and expertise and consensus about how schools should be organised all affect placement decisions.

Barton (1995) describes how educational issues are complex and contentious, and often involve passionately held beliefs and values. The literature review and the findings from the questionnaire demonstrate this is no less so in the issue of inclusion. Barton continues that the concepts and issues “entail making connections between schools and the wider society of which they are a part. This involves the capacity to range from the micro-contexts of biographical and school life to the wider social and economic conditions and relations in which the former are embedded” (p. 58). The findings from this survey exemplify this comment, and demonstrate that any discussion of inclusion and the development of a future school should include an understanding of all these elements. Thus, any model of the future needs to acknowledge the affect of all levels on the child with SEN, from exosystemic governmental decisions, to difficulties the child experiences.

#### **5.05(c) Barriers to inclusion**

Although much in the domain of research on inclusion refers to barriers to inclusion, to the mainstream and/or to participation (see Ainscow et al., 2006; Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth et al., 2000; Thomas & Vaughan, 2004) there have been few attempts to categorise these barriers systematically. One

attempt was work in a “guide to inclusion” by Kochhar, West, & Taymans (2000). These writers cluster the barriers into three categories, based on the “questions most often asked by teachers about including students in general educational classrooms” (p. 67). The categories are:

- organisational barriers – related to the different ways in which schools and classrooms are structured
- attitudinal barriers – related to the beliefs, motivations and attitudes that different teachers have
- knowledge barriers – related to the differences in the knowledge and skills of various teachers.

While these three categories do describe some of the themes emerging from my findings (staff attitude and perception of staff attitude, the different organisations of schools and staff expertise are all felt to contribute to the situation) the emerging picture from the data is broader. There are inter-personal barriers, communication barriers and process barriers to name but three. The barriers Kochhar et al do list and describe are very narrowly defined, limiting them to barriers at a school based location. My findings show that attitudinal barriers extend beyond schools and teachers, to the attitudes and beliefs of other professionals, parents, peers, and even the children with SEN themselves. The same can be said about knowledge barriers.

***(i) A more useful model: barriers and incentives***

When the themes are explored some could be seen as posing barriers to mainstream secondary school, whereas others could be seen as providing incentives towards a special school placement. Some examples are demonstrated in table 5.2.

Secondary schools “barriers”	Special schools “incentives”
“too big”	“small building, small numbers”
“more complex”	“more cushioned”
“an unsympathetic environment”	“more caring, nurturing environment”
“achievement accreditation focus”	“holistic approach”
	“life-skills based education”
“[the school] did not have adequate expertise in dealing with son's needs”	“staff specialised in needs of their child”
“lack of access to professionals”	“on-site therapy”

**Table 5.2: Responses to questionnaire that discuss barriers to secondary schools and incentives to special schools**

Croll and Moses (2000a) report similar findings in their study exploring local authority decision making regarding special educational needs policy and

provision. While interviewing local authority education officers and head teachers of mainstream and special schools they revealed a view that sees special schools “not just in terms of responding to the deficiencies of the mainstream, or relieving mainstream schools of impossible pressures, but also offering a safe and protective environment” (p. 7). They cite the example of a special school head teacher who described a view of the “limitations of mainstream placement” alongside a view of “the positive qualities of his [special school] as the best environment for some children” (p. 7). This view was expressed by each participant group in the Croll and Moses’ study.

Just as the individual deficit model has its limitations, perhaps there is a comparable danger of seeing the school as being deficient, of failing to meet some ideal as the organisational paradigm suggests: “if we are trying to explain the 'failure' of integration, the larger number of statemented pupils, those segregated in special schools, units, classes and the expansion of exclusion of the 'disruptive', we have to look at the structures, functions and goals of schools and organisations.” (Tomlinson, 1995, pp. 4-5). Thomas and Glenny (2002) suggest that the location of the problem at an institutional level is an extension of the deficit approach.

Rather than looking at what mainstream schools lack, perhaps there should be an examination of what special schools provide that make them an attractive, sought after, alternative provision, perhaps involving an exploration of “the structures, functions and goals” (Tomlinson, 1995, p. 5) of these type of schools. These then could be mapped on to a mainstream (or “general”) school context. This is part of what I aimed to do in my design of a general school of the future in the second part of this thesis.

The analysis of the questionnaire show that participants feel that special schools:

- offer a smaller, safer, more secure environment, engender a feeling of safety and are more caring, nurturing and cushioned
- offer a reduced curriculum load, and are better set up for the non-academic child
- have a greater emphasis on social emotional and personal development, some offer a structured social skills programme
- offer staff with greater expertise, who are specialised in the needs of the children who attend, are appropriately skilled, motivated and have a level of understanding of the range of needs

- provide greater levels of support, with availability of specialist staff and specialist support, they are felt to be the only setting able to provide the necessary levels of support
- provide an environment where everyone has an understanding that all students are there for a reason
- are specifically designed to meet the needs of the children who attend them, they offer a “specialist environment”
- are well resourced
- are able to apportion more time per pupil, and are more able to prioritise the needs of the children who attend
- offer an ethos that is individualised around the child, a more personal approach to learning difficulties
- are “better-suited” to the children who attend, the right setting for needs, the “best place” for some children
- are able to meet and fulfil the child’s needs, especially “social and physical” needs and are more conducive to the learning and behavioural needs of the child
- provide social acceptance, a peer group who are likeminded/similar, the only setting where friendship and acceptance can be provided
- offer better or more extended provision
- offer a more level intellectual playing field, the only setting able to provide the necessary levels differentiation

The children who attend are more likely to achieve, more likely to be happy and fulfilled, experience a reduction in their level of vulnerability and do better amongst pupils of a similar cognitive level. Parents like what special schools have to offer, and are “happier with the more personal approach of the special school for learning difficulties”.

A proviso must be mentioned here – these are comments made by people to justify and explain why a special school placement was chosen for a pupil with special educational needs, and therefore are not without potential bias.

Although I used some of these ideas in the design of the future school it is not to say these pictures of special schools are without contention. They are contestable. I discuss this further below when I problematise both inclusion in mainstream schools and specialist provision in special schools.

The rating scale question demonstrates that factors relating to the positives of special schools have the highest mean ratings of all 27 statements. “The

special school environment has more adaptations for children with unusual needs had a mean value of 5.26 (s.d.1.16). 59 participants selected the highest point of the scale “very much” to rate how much of an explanatory factor it was, and 81% of participants felt it was a high explanatory factor. “Special schools have a more protective environment” had a mean value of 5.05 (s.d. 1.49), 58 people selected the top point of the rating scale, and 77% felt it was a high explanatory factor. These were the top two highest rated statements. The 6<sup>th</sup> highest rated item on the scale was also related to special school provision: “children are more likely to be included in the culture and climate of special schools because they are valued and can contribute” – mean 4.56 (s.d. 1.67), 39 people selected very much, 59% felt it was highly explanatory of the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools.

Each of these factors could be used in the design of a future inclusive school, as they are the incentives that make special schools appealing. If general schools could be designed with these factors in mind, perhaps inclusion of the children who currently leave the mainstream system could be achieved.

#### **5.05(d) Levels of integration**

In this section I discuss the findings in the context of the levels of integration (Department of Education and Science, 1978; Meijer & Pijl, 1994; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1994), as described in the literature review.

At a basic level, architectural/physical integration is where schools are designed or redesigned to make them physically accessible (for example with ramps and lifts enabling access for children with physical difficulties). The most striking issue revealed in the questionnaire was that of size, the sheer physical size of secondary schools is what makes them so difficult for children with special educational needs. Thus, physical integration could be achieved, and secondary schools made more accessible by reducing the physical size of the school. A subsequent reduction in pupil numbers might have to occur to enable this to happen, but this is also advantageous as some participants mentioned the number of pupils in a secondary school was a barrier to participation.

Locational integration is where children with special educational needs share the same site with other pupils. A number of the case studies mentioned the

provision of special educational units or nurture groups in mainstream schools, and transition programmes as alternatives to full inclusion in a mainstream school. (For example, one secondary school SENCo says that “had we had the resources; a small group/nurture group, [a] primary specialist teacher, a TA and the know how he would have performed just as well in mainstream”.) How much this could be considered inclusion is contestable; Thomas, Walker and Webb (1998) argue that if inclusion is provided by a separate unit within the mainstream school this betrays a particular outlook on inclusion. Runswick-Cole (2011) notes that this approach can lead to the exclusion of disabled children from “places, peers and activities in school” (p. 116).

Another aspect of location integration could be seen in the use of setting and streaming in a mainstream context. In two separate cases parents describe how children with SEN attended the mainstream school, but were placed in “the bottom set” or “remedial classes”. One notes how this led to the child “being separated from her friends and peer group...to persistent bullying in the classroom by socially maladapted pupils... her self-esteem dropped dramatically, and she made no progress in her learning” in one case, or the child becoming “bored rigid and beg[inning] to cause problems”. Another parent felt this aspect of locational integration (emotively described as “student[s] being left to rot in bottom sets”) was a result of “schools fail[ing] to assess early enough, fail[ing] to meet needs in tests e.g. reader/quiet space so receive inaccurate data on actual potential of [the child]”. Ainscow, Farrell, and Tweddle (2000) discuss the concerns some staff in a LA had about additional provision within a mainstream school. If the unit had a separate identity and ethos it could simply be seen as a new form of segregated provision. However, the units were felt to offer a “pragmatic” or practical response, allowing parents to overcome fears about the mainstream. The units were also felt to be able to fulfil a transitional role which may then lead to inclusive practice. Preece and Timmins (2004) outline a range of positive factors arising from the creation and use of a “mainstream inclusion centre”, some of which are pertinent to the findings of this study. The centre was seen by the pupils who used it to provide a smaller teaching environment, to provide respite from perceived social and academic pressures of mainstream classes, to learn social skills, and provided a safe environment.

Social integration involves regular social contact and interaction taking place between the child with SEN and their peers. Mainstream schools were selected originally by some children because of the peer group “he wanted to attend a state secondary boys’ school where his friends were going”. However, in the mainstream context difficulties arose, due to separation from peers (as described in the locational integration section above), bullying by peers, and in two cases vulnerability to the inappropriate suggestions of peers. One of the advantages of selecting special schools is the provision of a likeminded, similar peer group, friendship and acceptance (as described above). The relationships theme and the within child theme both outline weakness in the call for social integration, the child with SEN can lack social competence and skills, or their level of these is very different to that of peers. How does simple social integration benefit the child who has social difficulties, who is not seen as able to cope with the social demands with mainstream? What is done about the risk of bullying in these situations? Along with lack of friendship and acceptance? As Thomas et al (1998) point out “physical proximity [with non-disabled peers] carries with it the possibility of making things worse, not better” (p. 47). They go on to argue that social integration does not simply happen, it involves planning and effort.

At the level of curricular integration the child with SEN is included in the same curriculum framework and long term goals as their peers in the mainstream school. Thomas et al state that

“it is through the curriculum that messages are sent...about the values held by the school. If some students are seen to study a different curriculum from others then complex messages are sent about their status in the school... [and] as learners and people” (p. 36).

Where does a discussion of curricular appropriateness, flexibility and personalisation fit into this level of integration? This subtheme had 167 comments, so is not a small aspect. The demands of the secondary school curriculum are felt to be too great for some children with SEN, there was a perceived need for an alternative curriculum offer for these children. Indeed, Thomas et al had similar findings, and seem to contradict themselves, concluding that “it is not an abrogation of the principle of inclusion to suggest that some children should have a different set of curricular experiences or even different curriculum content” (p. 145).

The upper level of integration, that of functional or psychological integration is where all pupils participate in regular classes, are instructed together, “in one room, at the same time, using the same programme” (Meijer & Pijl, 1994, p. 6) and educational equipment and resources. This can be problematised by the same arguments used above. It can also be questioned in the sense of some pupils requiring different educational equipment and resources, for example, the dyslexic child who requires a coloured over-lay to make worksheets readable, and the case from the data of the child who was “very dyslexic and likely to always struggle with basics of reading and writing so looking at Assistive Technology (Voice Recognition software) to do this for him” (parent). It was the adaptations that special schools provided that were rated highest on the rating scale.

The difficulties with both curricular and functional integration is it is felt that some children with SEN need an alternative curriculum offer, that the academic curriculum and focus being foisted upon them have little or no relevance. Conversely however, the special school curriculum offer is felt by some to be inadequate (see below). This perhaps demonstrates the unhelpfulness of binary between academic and social/independence/life skills model – do all children not need a mix of both?

Inclusion according to Farrell (2000) is all children taking “a full and active part in the life of the mainstream school, they should be valued members of the school community and be seen to be integral members of it” (Farrell, 2000, p. 154). The rating scale item of “children are more likely to be included in the culture and climate of special schools because they are valued and can contribute” had the sixth highest mean (4.56, s.d. 1.67). To take a full and active part the child has to be actually at the school, to be valued, to be able to contribute to the school and not seen as an “other”. In a truly inclusive school would a concept of “personalised integration” - all pupils working on a personalised, choice based curriculum - be applicable? If a personalised choice based curriculum was the offer for all children, there would be no sense of an “other” in terms of other curriculum, other location, other activities, other rules. This moves the discussion of inclusion beyond the limitations of assimilation and accommodation to the introduction of the capability approach. Capability is a “space” that contains “the real opportunities and freedoms people have to achieve valued functionings” (Terzi, 2007, p. 98). Thus, an inclusive school is one that gives all children the opportunity to

achieve a range of outcomes, that enhances and widens the set of capabilities that each child can access, whatever their ability or need. The challenge is to design a school that does so.

## **Section 5.06      Problematising “inclusion” and specialist provision**

During the thematic analysis and coding of findings there was a great deal of information coded that did not provide answers to the research question. These remained as free nodes and have not been counted in any of the totals or percentages discussed. I refer to a few of them now, as although they do not answer the research question, they describe the limitations of special schools and “inclusion” in the current context. (I have placed speech marks around the word inclusion to demonstrate that its use, in the examples below, reflect integration rather than full inclusion). I discuss these in terms of the comments that were raised, illustrating with qualitative comments, alongside a theoretical discussion and reference to the literature

### **5.06(a)      Problematising specialist provision:**

I have discussed above how special schools can be seen as offering incentives to being placed there. As noted, problems could be raised with a variety of the suggestions, and indeed were raised within the survey and its analysis.

Special schools were seen to offer a safe, caring, nurturing, cushioned environment. However, one set of parents based their decision to send their child to a mainstream secondary school on their desire for their son “to experience 'real life' as opposed to the cosiness and unrealistic setting of a special school”. These parents were put off the special school they visited as they “felt like it was an institution”.

Another stated benefit of special schools were that they offered a reduced curriculum load, were better set up for the non-academic child, and had a greater emphasis on social, emotional and personal development. This however created problems: “if you have an academic child with SEN, you have to send them to mainstream as their academic needs are rarely met in a special school” (parent). One parent when visiting special schools was told the school did not offer the opportunity for pupils to do GCSEs, and if the child was “was bright enough” to do GCSEs they would be sent to the local comprehensive. Some parents did not consider special schools due to their child being very academically able. This presented a difficulty as some children were “too academically able” for the LA special schools, but it was felt

they would find mainstream schools too difficult to access. Some parents describe protracted searches for suitable placements that involved rejection by secondary schools because they “said that they did not have adequate expertise in dealing with my [child’s] needs”, as well as rejection by the majority of special schools that were approached who “said that they could not meet [the child’s] needs - either because they did not offer a suitable academic curriculum or because they could not manage [the child’s] behaviour”.

There was a sense that special schools are specifically designed to meet the needs of the children who attend them, and as such are the right setting for the child’s needs. However, the specialist provision was occasionally not appropriate to the child’s needs: “we felt the [special] school was unsuitable because although it had started out as a school for Specific Learning Difficulties, the main need for all the children there was behavioural or autistic spectrum” (parent). Some respondents felt there is a lack of special schools that are appropriate for certain types of needs, examples cited were Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Social Emotional and Behavioural Disorder needs.

A number of cases describe how special school placement has not solved all issues. One parent reports that even in special school their child was “socially ostracised”. Children “still struggle” in this context, and despite being “settled” and may “not attend lessons as [they should]” and “prove quite a problem for the school” (in terms of being “non-compliant”). Placement in special schools may still “run into lots of problems”, resulting in the special school seeking advice from the mainstream Autistic Spectrum Condition support service. This later point demonstrates that despite special schools offering staff with expertise and training in the needs of the child, this is not enough in some cases, and external help is sought. This point is demonstrated in the literature review, the study by the DETI (2006) found that special school staff needed further training in special educational needs (see chapter 2).

#### **5.06(b) Problematising “inclusion”:**

The previous chapter described how one explanation of the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools lies in the “outcomes of mainstream”, that is as a result of negative experiences of the mainstream context and placement failure. There is much potential for things to go wrong in the mainstream, even when provision is put in place and

schools attempt to be inclusive. Is inclusion required at all costs even if the child is unhappy, bullied, self-harming or refusing school as in some of the cases described? If it leads to “emotional damage and need for psychiatric support” (special school head teacher)? If it means “the child will develop other problems and won't learn well, and be more of a burden to society in adulthood” (parent). Runswick-Cole (2011) had similar findings, one parent reporting that “inclusion damaged my child” (p. 117). Runswick-Cole contends that “it is possible that the inclusive school that damaged [children with special educational needs] bore little resemblance to the type of education in which school cultures are challenged and diversity is seen as an opportunity rather than a difficulty within a child” (p. 117).

When describing the choice of special school a number of stakeholders note that there is a risk of the child with SEN being “excluded through inclusion”. This “exclusion” takes the form of being excluded from achievement in a high achieving school, being excluded from a peer group as there are “few children with young person's complex needs” attending, being excluded from learning as are “educated in a corridor with an unqualified 1:1 [teacher]”. This is a theme already raised in the literature review, where I outline Rogers’ (2007b) levels of exclusion through inclusion. Rogers asserts that pupils can experience practical, intellectual and emotional exclusion despite attending the mainstream school. Runswick-Cole (2011) links this to educational apartheid - “in ‘inclusive schools’ disabled children are sorted and categorised...and access to the educational and social worlds of their non-disabled peers is denied” (p. 116).

The examples from the data highlight issues with the conception of inclusion in the current context. One parent comments that “inclusion is fine if it works for the child. However there must be choice so that if it isn't working, the child can be placed elsewhere and not made to fit in the wrong place”. The notions of the child having to “fit”, and “working for the child” could be seen to lie with definitions of integration, rather than inclusion. This was reflected on in the literature review and reinforces Booth and Potts’ (1983) assertion that segregation within the mainstream can occur as ordinary schools fail to adapt to the pupils who are being integrated. As one special school head teacher commented in the survey “mainstreaming is and has never been inclusion”. The fact that there is a sense of a need for alternatives to mainstream illustrates that what is construed as inclusive education in the current context

is not actually inclusive. Rather than a call to “end the bias towards inclusion” (HM Government, 2010), Runswick-Cole (2011) asserts there is actually a need to start including, to renew efforts in moving towards equity for all. Part 2 of this thesis is an attempt to begin to do so.

## **Section 5.07            Implications of findings**

I discuss the implications for finding at one level at this stage, considering the connotations they have on this thesis, particularly on Part 2, the development of the future school vignette. Further implications are discussed in Chapter 9 where I state the implications of findings on educational policy (at a school, local and national level), followed by the connotations they have on the theoretical concept of inclusion and finally the implications of the findings for future research.

Part 2 of this thesis seeks to design and evaluate an inclusive school. My findings show that any model of a future school should consider how to overcome barriers to inclusion, but also the need to offer incentives for participation. Special schools are chosen as much for what they offer for children with special educational needs as they are because they are an alternative to mainstream schools. There are implications for design at a range of levels, from the need to cater for individual needs and capabilities at the level of the child right through to a consideration of the changes that need implemented in the political landscape. The need for inclusion to occur at each of the identified levels of integration should be considered, as is an awareness that there may be conflict at and between these different levels.

There were many suggestions made on how secondary schools could become more inclusive. My analysis did not involve a thorough examination of these. However, my familiarity with the sources means it is more than likely that some of the ideas informed the design of the future school. One example which I am extremely aware of was the statement made by a parent in describing how she felt she had to train staff in the secondary school in her son’s needs: “I had to enrol my son at the local secondary school and had to try to up-skill them to cope with him”. This idea manifested itself in the vignette as I describe the role of parents in contributing to staff development. Thus, the study has provided a framework and themes for an inclusive school to be constructed around.

## **Section 5.08      Summary**

Part One of this thesis aimed to conduct an empirical enquiry into why there are more pupils of secondary age in special schools than those of primary age. The findings fill an identified gap in the literature, and problematise an issue that has not been fully explored. The over-representation of secondary age pupils in special schools was believed to be caused by a number of factors, ranging from those located within the child to school, LA and governmental factors, as well as beliefs held by society and changes that take place over time. School level factors did account for a third of the reasons given, the organisation of secondary schools presented barriers to inclusion, while special schools offered incentives to attendance. The study has problematised notions such as models of disability and levels of integration that the special educational needs literature is replete with. The findings of this study cannot be said to be generalisable as not a broad enough sample was achieved. However, the similarity in themes across stakeholder groups implies there may be some facets of generalisability to put forward into models of disability and special educational needs.

“What we need to ensure is that we have a first class education system that is responsive to all learners, and that the educational provision provided will enable each individual to optimise their abilities and to overcome or minimise their learning difficulty or disability” (Peterson, 2009, p. 29). This recognises the need for school and system change to cater for and respond to the diversity of learners, and provide ways for learning capabilities to be met. It extends the conceptualisation of inclusion as discussed in the literature review chapter, seemingly focused on changing the schools, and simply accommodating difference. Inclusion needs to avoid being “reduced to a technical problem of resourcing, management, social groupings and instructional design” (Slee, 1998, pp. 130-131). There needs to be a recognition that learner differences do cause difficulties, these do need to be compensated and catered for, as is evidenced in the large number of reasons locating the over-representation of secondary aged children in a special school at a within child level. One approach to this is the implementation of the capability approach, extending the capabilities of all within the general school environment.

This section concludes the discussion chapter, and also Part One of this thesis. The empirical investigation has exposed many obstacles presented by

the current education system that need to be addressed before inclusion can occur in general schools. Part Two of this thesis presents a vision of a future school that circumvents these problems, along with a description of how the vision was arrived at and evaluated. The ideas that have come to light thus far in the thesis will be used in the picture of the future school and the discussion that follows.

# Part 2: The future school

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## Chapter 6. The creation, development and evaluation of the future school vignette.

### 6.01(a) Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the research design considerations for Part Two of this thesis: the creation, development and evaluation of models of future schools for diversity. There is an exploration of the concept of futures studies and a location of this study within this area. The research procedure is laid out in detail, with a description, explanation and justification of the tools used and the sample involved in evaluating and creating the models. It concludes with a discussion of issues of research quality indicators and ethics.

This second part of my thesis has the primary aim of producing and developing theoretical ideas about future schooling and creative ways of resolving placement dilemmas (such as those identified in part one of study), for the ultimate purpose of stirring debate about potential inclusive educational policy.

In order to meet this aim I question:

- *What could future general schools for diversity (of learning needs) look like?*
- *How can we include more children with SEN in general secondary schools?*
- *What kind of education system would work best for diverse learning needs from age 11?*
- *How do we overcome/circumvent barriers such as those raised in part 1 of this thesis in order to include more children with SEN?*

As can be seen there is a futures thinking element to the aim, leading to the creation of a picture, or vignette, of a future school that successfully includes those children currently located in special schools. There is also an implied need for a developmental and evaluative procedure to be employed. This is the second aim of my study, an exploration and evaluation of the methods used.

## **Section 6.02      The methodology of futures studies**

Future studies is a diverse area, a “fuzzy multi-field” (Marien, 1996, p. 364), “a mosaic of approaches, objectives and methods” (Kuosa, 2011, p. 327). Indeed, in more recent work Marien (2002) argues that it is not a field at all, just “disconnected bits and pieces of widely varying quality” (p. 263), bound in a “methodological fog” (p. 277). Garrett (1993) describes it as a maze, “a labyrinth of disorder” (p. 254). Despite this confusion, it is alternatively argued that it is an academic and professional pursuit (Lombardo, 2006), a discipline in its own right, with its own knowledge base, consisting of its own language, theories, literature, methodologies and tools, as well as networks of practitioners and organisations devoted to the study of the future, and links to social movements and innovations (Slaughter, 1998). Garrett (1993) states that once we acknowledge that differences do exist within futures studies on a philosophical, methodological and focal level, we have the perspective to navigate the “maze”.

To this end, many different typologies have emerged as practitioners try to make some sense of the diverse discipline (Börjeson et al., 2006), such as Slaughter’s model of the core of futures studies (Slaughter, 1996). There has been discussion of the paradigmatic (Mannermaa, 1991), epistemological (Inayatullah, 1990) and ontological orientations of futures studies (Bergman, Karlsson, & Axelsson, 2010). (For a summary of these, see Tapio and Hietanen’s (2002) work, specifically their table comparing 7 different typologies, including their own, p. 613). I would argue there is difficulty locating futures studies epistemologically, as its truth like claims are based on a non-existent, and unobservable future (Bell, 2001). As I am not making any truth claims about the likelihood of the future vignette I have created I will not try to locate myself philosophically in this field. However, I use the work of Marien (2002) and Börjeson et al. (2006) in order to make my method choices and processes clear, and to situate this study within the area of futures studies.

Marien’s (2002) critical account of the “fuzzy multi-field” that is futures studies, categorises “all futures thinking” under 6 categories – his “5Ps and a Q”. These categories are built on a collection of verbs and nouns he has seen used in examples of futures studies, and, as Bell (2002) argues, are categories that would be familiar to most futurists. For my purposes I have listed the six categories, defined them (supplementing Marien’s descriptions with others in

the literature) and given examples of the terminology and techniques used (see table 6.1).

Schultz (1995) adds two further activities within the future process, which cannot easily be categorised in Marien’s list. There is the process of critiquing the impacts of change (impact analysis) used by some futurists, and finally a planning/implementing/achievement phase where futurists consider how to actually get where they desire to go.

Type of future	Definition	Examples
<b>Probable futures</b>	The most likely future of some specified phenomenon, within a given period, and under specific contingencies (Bell, 1998). Developments that are currently in train that are expected to continue (Facer, 2009)	Forecasting, foresight, predicting, extrapolating trends
<b>Possible futures</b>	All the kinds of futures participants can imagine happening, even if they seem outlandish (Voros, 2003). Imaging alternative futures (Schultz, 1995) Emergent, marginal and unexpected developments (Facer, 2009)	Scenario construction, risk analysis, deductive forecasting
<b>Preferable futures</b>	Subjective, based on what participants want to happen (Voros, 2003), what ought we to do (Bell, 2001). Peoples’ hopes, aspirations and dreams (Facer, 2009). Envisioning preferred futures (Schultz, 1995).	Planning, strategising, visioning
<b>Present changes</b>	Identifying present trends Identifying and monitoring change (Shultz, 1995)	Historical analysis, indicators, trend analysis/spotting, emerging issues analysis
<b>Panoramic views</b>	A broad, integrative approach, “deepening the future” (Inayatullah, 2008)	Big picture thinking, environmental scanning, causal layer analysis
<b>Questioning</b>	Dissenting, reformulation and serial futuring	Critiquing, deconstruction, reformulation

Table 6.1: Marien’s (2002) 6 categories of futures thinking, supplemented with other commentators’ definitions

### Section 6.03      **Categorising this study**

At this point I depart from the theoretical discussion, and locate my methods within it, referring back to the research aim and research questions.

### 6.03(a) Location of the study in the “5 p’s and a q” typology

The literature review chapter (Chapter 2) describes a situation of over-representation of older pupils in special schools. This is not a new phenomenon, indeed, it can be seen in Will Swann’s original integration statistics (Swann, 1985). However, criticism of the system is not sufficient for action, it merely presupposes the possibility of better practices (Patomäki, 2006). The **probable** future I would suggest, is a continuation of this pattern, a maintenance of the status quo, and I posit will remain so as long as the school systems in England remain as they are. There are different **possible** futures, some of which have been discussed in the literature review, others which have not yet been imagined. Phrases in my research questions such as “how could we include more”, “overcome” and “circumvent” all indicate a focus on what could be considered by some as a **preferable** future, one that is more equitable for secondary aged children with special educational needs. Finally, the developing and evaluating strand of my research aim indicates a need for use of the **questioning** process. Thus, to avoid a probable future and the inequity rising from it, I have envisaged a preferable future, which has itself been subject to evaluation and refinement by a variety of key stakeholders.

### 6.03(b) Use of the term “scenario”

I have created a picture of a possible future. This can be viewed as a scenario under the definition “a description of a possible future situation... not intended to represent a full description of the future, but rather to highlight central elements of a possible future” (Kosow & Gaßner, 2008, p. 1). However, their definition also includes elements I have not included in the creation of my preferable future, such as an exploration of the path of development and drivers that led to the situation being described. Kosow and Gaßner contrast the notion of scenario with a “conceptual future”, a simple representation of a hypothetical future state of affairs. Hirschorn (1980) in an early classification of scenario types distinguished between “state scenarios” – that describe what the characteristics of the world or context under discussion will be like in a point in the future, but not how this state would be achieved from the present, from “process scenarios” which specify the events that led up to the future state.

Despite having a specific meaning as described above it has been argued that the term scenario itself has a multiplicity of meanings which causes confusion in the implementation and dissemination of futures studies (Garrett, 1993;

Kosow & Gafner, 2008). It can mean either a description of a future state, or a description of the process taken to arrive at that future state (Börjeson et al., 2006). The use of the word scenario when twinned with either “planning” or “development” also causes confusion – the latter is the creation of the narrative and the telling of the story, the former being a complete, comprehensive foresight study (Bishop, Hines, & Collins, 2007). To further complicate matters it is often thought that scenario planning and futures studies are synonymous (Sadar, 2010), although the futures studies literature states they should not be considered so (Durance & Godet, 2010; Godet & Roubelat, 1996). This perceived synonymy is in part due to the notoriety and popularity of the method, and that scenarios are seen “within some businesses, corporations and government institutions... as the only way of exploring the future” (Sadar, 2010, p. 180). Inayatullah (2002) warns that for futures studies to further develop there is a need to look beyond the conception that it is synonymous with scenario planning.

Thus there are risks in using the term scenario for my alternative future. Firstly it implies I have used a specific scenario methodology, a comprehensive and complex approach, which seems to be the perspective taken in many guides and manuals that outline a staged approach to scenario planning (see for example the “*Scenario Planning Manual*” (Wilson, Manger, & Hansen, 2005) or the “*Scenario Planning Toolkit*” (Waverley Management Consultants, 2007)). Mannermaa (1991) and Godet and Roubelat (1996) make it clear there is no such thing as a “scenario method”, and scenarios can be arrived at through a variety of methods of construction “some simplistic, others sophisticated” (Godet & Roubelat, 1996, p. 167). Inayatullah (2008) lists and describes several different ways of creating scenarios: “single variable; double variable; archetypes; organizational; and integrated” (p. 15), demonstrating that no one method of scenario creation should be pre-supposed by default. A further risk is that it could also be taken to mean I am unaware that scenario planning is not the only available method in the futures field. For these reasons I have chosen to use the term vignette rather than scenario as a noun to describe what I have created. The vignette is to be used in much the same way Alexander and Becker (1978) described its use: to give participants in the evaluatory phase of a project something concrete to respond to, rather than trying to respond to abstract concepts. However, I extend it beyond a short description of a person or social situation to a detailed concrete description of a future school and educational context.

### 6.03(c) Types of alternative futures

The preferable future I have created can be further defined according to its purpose and key characteristics. Borjensen et al (2006) give a visual representation of their understanding of different types based on the questions the researcher asks (see fig 6.1). (Although related to scenario types I use it to illustrate the purpose of the creation of the vignette.)

My vignette does not seek to be predictive – I am not searching for what will happen, or what is mostly likely to happen. To this end I will not be estimating the likelihood of an event occurring. Nor does it seek to be explorative (*sic.* see Börjeson et al., 2006), looking at specific developments or drivers and asking “what would happen if x happened” or “if y did not happen”. Instead, it can be seen to be normative, taking a value perspective, asking “what do we want a future to look like?”. (*What could future secondary schools for diversity (of learning needs) look like? How do we overcome/circumvent barriers such as those raised in part 1 of this study?*) A normative approach is concerned with what should be, rather than what is, arguing for a change in social relations and institutions (Patomäki, 2006). Naismith (2004) describes normative futures as futures that are “radically different from the present” (p. 36).

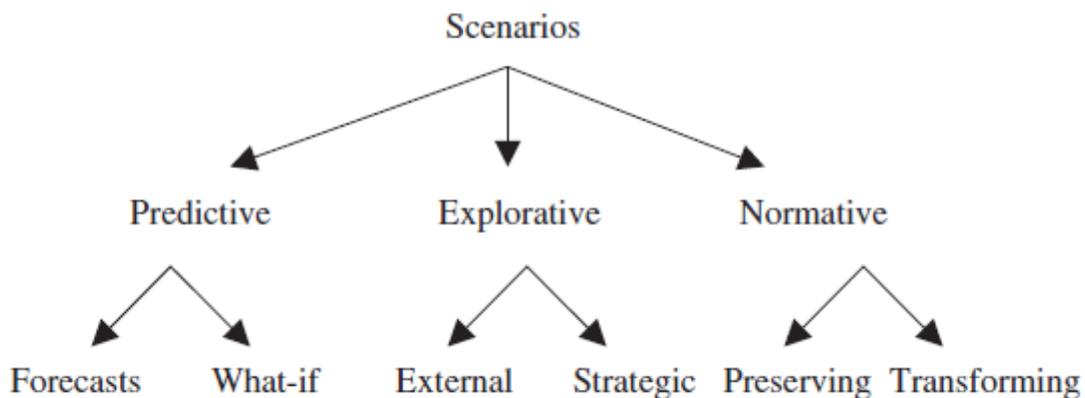


Figure 6.1: Scenario typology (Börjeson et al., 2006)

As Figure 6.1 demonstrates, normative futures can be split into a further two types, “preserving normative futures” and “transforming normative futures”. A preserving approach is one that makes small changes without having to change a bigger system. A transforming one notes there are structural systemic barriers in place that may hinder the preferable future being reached, necessitating a change in the system, or a restructuring of the system (Börjeson et al., 2006). Some notable examples of transformative

scenarios are Martin Luther King's "I had a dream" speech, or the beginning of the constitution of the United States. Cornish (2004) makes clear his belief that the role of futuring is "not to predict the future, but to improve it" (p. 65).

My vignette is typified by being normative – striving to create a school system that includes older children with SEN, and also transformative as it recognises large changes are needed to the current education system in order for this to be achieved.

## **Section 6.04 Description of the study**

### **6.04(a) Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this activity I have undertaken is best summarised by Lamentowicz (2008) in his consideration of the place of the imagination in futures thinking: "in contrast to intuition and wishful thinking we can use our imagination in a conscious manner and to submit it to critical scrutiny of deliberative rationality and by doing so we can devise a topic for a discourse of critical minds" (p. 78). In short, I have consciously imagined and sketched out a vision of the future, had a variety of audiences critique it, and developed the vignette according to this critique, for the ultimate purpose of it stirring debate about potential inclusive educational policy. My aim was not to produce an accurate map of a future world to adapt education systems to, but rather to explore future possibilities and act to influence them.

As such there are 3 main steps to the creation and evaluation elements of this study:

1. Create the vignette
2. Trial the vignette through focus group workshops
3. Refine the vignette as a result of feedback from the workshops

Steps 2 and 3 are repeated for four cycles. An additional and final step is one of exploring and evaluating the processes used, which relates to the secondary aim of this study as described on page 230. This step is an inherent part of empirical research, and is evidenced in the considerations of the strengths and limitations of this study, as well as the discussion of the contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes.

I created a vignette of a preferable future, which is normative and transformative in nature, striving to envisage a school system that includes older children with SEN, and focused on describing this future state, rather than the process of arriving at that future state. To further develop the

vignette I shared it with a number of critical audiences, who trialled it using a “Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats” analysis (SWOT analysis) as an evaluation. As mentioned in the literature review Luisoni, Istance, & Hutmacher (2004) used a SWOT analysis as one tool to evaluate the OECD (2001) future schools scenarios. It was only a very small part of their study (carried out by one focus group), whereas it is one of the main evaluative tools used in my study. In addition to this, two of the focus groups in my study had the opportunity to respond to current barriers to participation in the secondary education system, and two focus groups had the opportunity to design their own vignette. Thematic analysis was carried out by the researcher to explore issues with the use of the futures methodology.

#### **6.04(b) The steps of this study**

As already stated, this study does not follow any particular set methodology as laid out in the futures field. It does however, meet Schultz’s (1995) criteria of an effective futures study – combining rigour and logic with imagination. Table 6.2 sets out the stages of vignette development and evaluation, the steps taken at each stage, and details of who was involved at each stage.

The majority of the focus groups were self-selected in the sense they responded to an invitation that was sent to all conference attendees or research group members (see appendix 16 for copies of the conference abstracts). One focus group was made up of participants who had been invited to attend, and included head teachers, local authority officers and advisors, policy consultants and educational researchers (see appendix 17 for copies of the invitation letter). The conferences and research groups themselves were selected because of their focus on special educational needs in an English context, and in the case of the teachers’ union conference, a specific focus on a “renewal” approach to SEN and inclusion. (The conference was entitled “*Reflection, renewal and reality: SEN and inclusion, policy and practice*”.) The one exception to this was the round table session at the Junior Researchers of the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction conference, which had a focus on educational research, and was an international conference. This could thus be considered a pilot of the evaluation process, however, the contributions made were valuable, and thus had an impact on the development of the vignette.

In addition to this, the final two focus groups created their own vignettes of future schools that circumvented the problems raised in the examination into

reasons for over-representation of students in special schools. They had the choice whether to look solely at a school context, or a national context (this is described further in Chapter 7).

Stage	Steps taken	Involvement by, details
<b>Creation of vignette</b>	Having immersed myself in and analysed the data from part one of the study I began to create a vision of a school that might circumvent the problems raised. Insight of experience and reading, as well as creative ideas arising in my imagination. The process, being an informal, creative sculpting one, is hard to define and describe, but I lay out examples in appendix 18.	Alison Black Both doctoral supervisors
<b>First SWOT analysis and trial of explanatory presentation (pilot)</b>	Explained research findings to focus group. Explained purpose of task. SWOT analysis of the vignette carried out by participants, facilitated by AB, audio recorded.	Self-selected focus group European research conference 30/08/2011, 30 mins No. of participants: 10
<b>First refinement of vignette</b>	Recording of SWOT analysis transcribed. Vignette refined and reconstructed in light of critique received. Refining took place on a conceptual level, as well as correction of basic errors.	Alison Black, doctoral supervisors
<b>Second SWOT analysis</b>	Explained research findings to focus group. Explained purpose of task. SWOT analysis of the vignette carried out by participants, facilitated by AB, audio recorded.	Self-selected focus group UK teacher union SEN and inclusion conference 12/10/11, 55 mins No of participants: 8
<b>Second refinement of vignette</b>	Recording of SWOT analysis transcribed. Vignette refined and reconstructed in light of critique received. Also refined with consideration of final analysis from part 1 of study. Refining took place on a conceptual level, as well as correction of basic errors.	Alison Black, doctoral supervisors
<b>Third SWOT analysis</b>	Explained research findings to focus group. Explained purpose of task. SWOT analysis of the vignette carried out by participants, facilitated by AB and chair, audio recorded.	Self-selected focus group SEND research group, University of Exeter, 15/11/11, 1hr 15mins No of participants: 14
<b>Third refinement of vignette</b>	Recording of SWOT analysis transcribed. Vignette refined and reconstructed in light of critique received. Also refined with consideration of final analysis from part 1 of study. Refining took place on a conceptual level, as well as correction of basic errors.	Alison Black, doctoral supervisors
<b>Fourth SWOT analysis</b>	Explained research findings to focus group. Explained purpose of task. Clarify SWOT analysis procedure. SWOT analysis of the vignette carried out by participants, facilitated by AB and chair, audio-recorded.	Invited focus group Policy Steering Group 6/03/12, time: 2 hrs No of participants: 40
<b>Fourth refinement of vignette</b>	Recording of SWOT analysis transcribed Final refinement of vignette, ready for presentation within this thesis.	Alison Black, doctoral supervisors

**Table 6.2: “Future school for diversity” vignette, development and evaluation**

### **6.04(c) The analysis of the study**

The discussions of the SWOT analysis and the small group tasks were audio-recorded then transcribed into a written format. These were printed out, the responses from each focus group were colour coded and then the transcripts were split into individual responses. These responses from all the groups were sorted by hand into common emerging themes, the results of which can be seen in Chapter 7. (See appendix 23 for a detailed description of this process.) The written records of the SWOT framework were not used in the final analysis, for reasons relating to the validity of the recordings, as discussed in Chapter 7.

As one of my aims is to evaluate the futures thinking methods I have used, responses from the groups that related to this aim were noted by hand during the transcribing and thematic analysis process. This revealed concern for practical issues, such as what constituted a strength or a weakness, and also theoretical concerns such as the place of ideology in the design, and tensions and dilemmas implicit in the description of the future school. These factors are reported and discussed in chapters 7 and 8, as well as informing the limitations to the study below.

## **Section 6.05 Issues of quality, ethics and limitations to the study**

### **6.05(a) Quality of the study**

Although it is difficult to apply the same research quality criteria that is generally applied to social science research to the creation and evaluation of preferable future (Bergman et al., 2010), Kosow and Gaßner (2008) found the standards taken as a basis for evaluating futures studies are often based on the same criteria as those of good research. (For example, the notion of credibility in qualitative social science methodologies are reflected in the criteria of plausibility and consistency as discussed below (Kosow & Gaßner, p. 38).) Kosow and Gaßner then draw from existing futures studies literature to outline criteria which are seen to be central to evaluating the product of the scenario process, regardless of the goal and type of method used. In table 6.3 I outline their identified criteria, supplementing it from the work of Amara (1991) and Selin (2006) and illustrate it with various examples as pertinent to the development of the vignette in my research.

Criteria	Alternative term	Definition	Example/illustration
<b>Plausibility</b>	Believability (Selin, 2006), reasonability (Amara, 1991)	Must be regarded as conceptually feasible, possible developments	“there is no more bullying” may not be considered a plausible state of affairs
<b>Consistency</b>	Internal consistency (Amara, 1991; Selin, 2006)	Images within vignette to be consistent with one another – aspects may not be mutually contradictory	“this school does not use external assessment” but “the government requires all schools to publish data on compulsory external assessment” are contradictory and thus inconsistent
<b>Comprehensiveness and traceability</b>		Detailed enough to be comprehensive, but not complex	
<b>Distinctiveness</b>		Clearly distinguishable from other scenarios, and from the present state	
<b>Transparency</b>	Value explicitness, impact explicitness (Amara, 1991)	Process made clear, reflexiveness	The person who designs the vignettes answers the “what” “why” and “how” questions, and makes values that may influence them explicit
<b>Degrees of integration</b>		Takes into account interactions of development on different levels, interaction of different sectors and themes	Evaluates influence and mediation between organisational, governmental and societal levels As seen in description of national context)
<b>Quality of reception</b>		Readability and clarity for audience	Bullet pointed list, in subheading, limited to two and a half pages
<b>Participants</b>	“authority and reputation” (Selin, 2006, p. 8)	The types of participants, and what they bring to the process	Volunteer sample, with experiential knowledge of field of education/special educational needs (see Table 6.2)
<b>Time and effort involved</b>	Trust in the process (Selin, 2006)	Acknowledge they are work-intensive and time consuming, make clear timeframe and evaluation strategies	

**Table 6.3: Adapted from Kosow and Gaßner (2008)**

Marien (2002) makes clear the importance of questioning, developing and reformulating visions of the future:

“anyone can make a forecast, sketch out a handful of scenarios, argue for what ought to be done, and identify some new trend. It takes special skills however to see the big picture – and to continually reformulate what is seen” (Marien, 2002, p. 272).

Thus, there is a place for refinement of the vignette, a place for questioning the outlooks and assumptions others and I made, by inviting critique, debating the vignette. The plausibility and consistency of the vignette, along with the quality of reception to it, have been tested through the evaluatory structure of the process used. Traceability and transparency are achieved through the

introductory sections to each focus group (see appendix 19), and throughout this thesis. That considerable time and effort has been involved can be seen by the timeframe of the steps of this process. (Time is also acknowledged as a limiting factor to this study – see below). The participants involved in the majority of the focus groups have experiential and theoretical knowledge of the field of special educational needs and inclusion in an English context. I, as the original author of the vignette, also have theoretical and practical understanding of the area being discussed, and have read widely around concepts of inclusion that have contributed to the creation of this vignette (see Chapter 2, and Chapter 4 and 5). The use of focus groups themselves, putting “a group of experts from the relevant fields together and asking them to assess possible futures collectively” overcomes “the subjective biases of any particular analyst” (Patomäki, 2006, pp. 12-13).

“Degrees of integration” was one area of evaluation where the vignette did evolve in order to produce a consistent and achievable vision of a future school. An initial danger when the vignette of a future school was created was that it could be seen as a school for children who cannot cope with normal school – that is a special school in all but name. In order to avoid this there was a need to widen the vision to one that included a changing of the policy context of the education system, so the school would be seen as a norm in itself. This is discussed again in chapter 7.

#### **6.05(b) Limitations to study**

Time was a major factor in limiting this study, as in any study the possibilities that arise if time was unlimited are endless. Time within each of the evaluation focus groups was a limiting factor; in two of the three sessions there was insufficient time to begin planning an alternative future as so much time was spent on the evaluation of the previously created vignette. (This was not due to poor planning, but rather a desire of the facilitator to complete the SWOT analysis to the highest level. In feedback for one of the sessions it was commented that the SWOT analysis felt rushed, despite having 30 minutes dedicated to it.) In two of the sessions the groups started to plan alternative futures, but again, insufficient time was available to complete these vignettes. All other stages in the session were necessary and could not have been omitted, so perhaps a full day could have been set aside with a focus group to complete all three stages. This in itself requires a considerable investment of time and commitment from an audience, which I would be unable to obtain in

the context of a busy conference. If the session was part of a full day workshop the event could also have provided opportunity for participants to critique and evaluate their own designs in the same way that mine were. Time factors also meant it was not feasible to carry out the apparent next step, of “back-casting” – taking the preferable future and mapping out the steps we would need to achieve this future from now. Schultz (1995) sees this as an element in the “planning achievement” phase (p. 76) of futures studies, bridging the gap between this preferred future and the present.

Although I have used expert stakeholders to evaluate the vignette, I have not involved other experts, such as parents of children with special educational needs, or children with or without special educational needs. Although some focus group members had personal experience of segregative educational systems for themselves, or their children, this was not representative of the population as a whole. This limits the study to a professional “we know best” focus, and there is the potential for parents to foresee problems in the system that others would not. A further critique could be that the nature of the conferences and groups I presented the vignette to are likely to be considered sympathetic to the inclusion and diversity project. How would the vignette have fared with a less sympathetic audience? Although I have described an alternative future, it falls into what Marien (2010) would categorise as “the progressive/left/ humanistic/green/utopian alternative to the status quo” and, ignores the “conservative/libertarian visions”, which Marien points out, although ignored by most futurists, are not ignored by the voters in many countries (p. 191).

Another limitation to the study is the impact of the normative stance taken. This normative approach presupposes a common understanding of transcendental values (Ogilvy, 1996). Bell (2001) argues that authors of a range of normative scenarios have implicit values – for example, judging poverty as bad, valuing sufficiency rather than wealth and quantity of output, prioritising a concern for meeting the basic material needs of each person on earth, and the equal opportunity for them to realise their individual potential. However, the authors tend to take them as granted, they fail to justify or defend them as being worthy goals and values (Bell, 2001). The vignette I have created is based on my understanding of inclusion and diversity, and there is an inherent danger in assuming or stating that these are uncontested, problem free concepts. The data collected and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5

show that this is not so, as does the literature review. I acknowledge that the solutions I have posed are subjective, but based on the possible. I have tried to base the vignette not on my values, but rather a possible response to the issues various stakeholders raised.

#### **6.05(c) Ethics**

The foremost ethical issues that arise in this part of the research are related to the participation of volunteers within the evaluation exercise. The purpose of the focus groups was to evaluate a previously created vignette of future schools. It was also to work as a group to create a group vision of what school would be like in the future. As each volunteer had the chance to contribute, and thus had the potential to change the vignette, they are in a sense co-authors of this vignette and have a right to be acknowledged as such. This was facilitated by the provision of a form that participants could sign if they wished to be acknowledged within the text. No one requested this, however all groups are mentioned in the acknowledgement section of this thesis.

Conversely, the right to anonymity and confidentiality was also made explicit, as is the protocol for people contributing to research. Participants were asked to use discretion when discussing specific schools or specific children, and any real names were removed from transcripts of focus group discussions. Despite this, the researcher has little control over confidentiality beyond the focus group – I cannot promise or ensure strict and absolute confidentiality, as I have no control over what participants may disclose when they leave the group.

The nature of the focus group activity was group work and discussion. There was the possibility of participant stress caused by the intensity of interaction in a group setting. Participants were encouraged to feel comfortable within the group setting, it was made clear they were under no obligation to respond or contribute in any way, nor would they be humiliated for having a different opinion/making an “outlandish” suggestion (as far as the researcher could control). “Ground rules” (Edmunds, 2000) were set by the researcher to these ends at the start of each event. (See appendix 20 for these ground rules.) A full consideration of ethical issues is discussed in the ethical certificate submitted for part two of this study (see appendix 21).

Some deeper ethical arguments that relate to the normative/transformational positioning of the vignette created are made by Masini (2006):

“It is not enough to identify those trends that may develop in the future, or to have knowledge on which to base analysis. Nor is it enough to have a vision even if it is rooted in the historical process. What is important is to build with the aid of trends a project that will then bring about the vision” (p. 1165).

Thus, it is the responsibility of the futurist to partake in “futures building”. Is it ethically defensible, she asks, to build a model of a preferable future, and not to seek to transform it into reality, especially as it is a model that circumvents “problems” in the school system? I believe the reflection contained in Chapter 9 of this thesis, where I consider the theoretical and practical implications of the whole study, as well as recommendations for future work, go some way to outlining my part in this “futures building” project I have started. Masini extends her argument – if this vision is based on the values and subjectivity of the researcher (which it is in part, as I have made clear above) – is it right that a future project be based on the researcher’s own culture, disciplinary background, personal experience, cultural and social values and biases, and social character? This is why there is a need for me as the researcher and primary creator of the vignette to outline my values and constructs, as I have done throughout this thesis, and also why there is a need for the vignette to be evaluated and shaped by other people.

## **Section 6.06      Summary**

I have created a vignette, a picture of a preferable future. This preferable future is one that could be categorised as a transformative, normative future, one that requires a change or restructuring of the current education system in order to be achieved. To summarise this chapter I end with a quotation from Dator (1995), with a commentary on how far, or not I can measure my vignette according to his thoughts, and the vital next steps that I hope this vignette will begin.

“The future” cannot be “predicted,” but **“preferred futures” can and should be envisioned, invented, implemented, continuously evaluated, revised, and re-envisioned.** *(As evidenced through the vignette creation process and cycles of evaluation and revision.)* Thus the major task of futures studies is to facilitate individuals and groups in formulating, implementing, and re-envisioning their preferred futures. *(The “next step” – to work with key stakeholders, including children with special educational needs, and their parents, in the re-envisaging of a system where they are included).* To be useful, futures studies needs to

precede, and then be linked to strategic planning, and thence to administration. The identification of the major alternative futures and the **envisioning and creation of preferred futures** then guides subsequent strategic planning activities, which in turn determine day-to-day decision-making by an organization's administrators. *(This has been achieved in part through the dissemination of the vignette with the members of the policy options steering group. There is a need for the vignette to be seen and explored by policy makers on an organisational and governmental level, for conversations to be started, and for strategising to commence to reach a preferred future.)* (Dator, 1995, p. 1, emphasis and italics added).

Researching the future is not easy, nor is imagining a preferable one. One purpose of the vignettes described in the next chapter is to challenge the current status quo, and to allow stakeholders to see that other futures are possible. Whether the future presented is desirable or achievable is still subject to debate, but it is clear, if it is so, major changes are needed to the system as it stands currently.

## **Chapter 7. Analysis of themes, evaluation and final vignette**

### **Section 7.01 Introduction**

This chapter charts the evaluations of the vignette through a discussion of the main themes raised through these evaluations and presents the vignette in its final form. It also raises the various methodological and theoretical issues that emerged during the implementation of the evaluation process itself. An outline of how the vignette was created and refined was discussed in the previous chapter. (The final vignette can be seen in appendix 25, and the previous iterations in appendix 24.)

### **Section 7.02 The evaluations of the vignette: - emerging themes**

The evaluation of the vignette was carried out with four focus groups: a group of international researchers at a European conference on educational research; a group of teacher union members; a university based research group with an interest in special educational needs and disabilities; and a group that included academics, school leaders and local authority staff with an interest in SEN policy.

As previously detailed in the methodology chapter (6), each group had an opportunity to read the vignette (one group received it a week in advance; the other groups had 10 minutes to read it during the sessions). The “Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” (SWOT) matrix was used as a framework for discussion with the whole group and notes made on the matrix (see appendix 22 for examples of both a SWOT analysis framework and a completed matrix). The sessions were also audio-recorded digitally and transcriptions of the recordings were made after the sessions had ended. Two of the groups followed this evaluation by getting into small groups (n=3-7) and designing their own school of the future. The feedback each of the smaller groups gave from this exercise was also audio-recorded digitally and transcriptions made. Comments from each of these various transcripts were separated and then grouped thematically by hand (see appendix 23).

In this section I outline the main themes arising in the evaluation of the vignette from all the groups. I summarise the themes using question headings, organised in order of number of responses regarding the theme. These questions are listed in table 7.1. The questions were not pre-set; rather, they emerged as useful headings of the emerging themes during analysis. With each question I present the section of the vignette related to the theme and the

discussion related to each question from the focus groups. The table that follows each question shows where the theme is discussed in the vignette, with additions and alterations to the original vignette highlighted in yellow. The additions were made as a result of the focus group discussions and hopefully address some of the concerns raised. (The additions and amendments were made following each focus group, rather than *en masse* at the end of the process, as laid out in table 6.2 in the previous chapter.)

Section reference	Discussion question
7.02 (a)	What is the role of the parent in this school?
7.02 (b)	What is learnt?
7.02 (c)	Where does learning take place?
7.02 (d)	What is the best size of school?
7.02 (e)	Who goes to this school?
7.02 (f)	How is the school/system funded?
7.02 (g)	What should be contained in teacher training and CPD?
7.02 (h)	Is there a place for school leadership?
7.02 (i)	What happens after school?
7.02 (j)	Where is specialist support located?
7.02 (k)	What is the external landscape/system like?

**Table 7.1: Section headings for summary of emerging themes**

### **7.02(a) What is the role of the parent in this school?**

The theme with the most comments was related to parents and their role within the future school. All focus groups commented in some way on the role parents would play, or could be expected to play, and all had at least one person raising issues about the role presented, and yet had others saying how the role could be further developed. The role of parents in the vignette was seen on the whole as positive and empowering, but was also raised by some as an area of concern.

Parental participation was seen as a strength, a vital component of school life and empowering for the parents. It provides a forum for creating mutual understanding of where each party is coming from; parents will have an insight into the school, and the school will have deeper insight into the student and home life. Parents are seen as a valuable resource, able to provide deep knowledge of their child, and enhance learning opportunities for staff.

Negatives about parental participation revolved around the different types of parents the school could encounter, and how this variance could affect the child and their curriculum, the support the school and child receives, and the

parents’ motives for attending the school/lessons. The union group discussed how parental participation had in the past led to teachers being “put on capability” (undergoing formal disciplinary procedures), and this could lead teachers to be unwilling to have parents in the classroom.

National Context	<p>Personalised learning plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools are legally responsible for co-formulating and co-reviewing each student’s Personalised Learning Plan on a minimum of a biannual basis, with the student and parent.</li> </ul> <p>Parents/guardians (Key worker for Children in Care)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seen as important partners in students’ learning, recognised as a valuable resource, and are actively involved in formulating and reviewing PLPs.</li> <li>Are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.</li> <li>There is a negotiated school: parent contract outlining rights and responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p>Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School accountability is based on students’ achievement of PLP goals. Schools report these to parents and government.</li> </ul>
Braeburn Community School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear vision based on rights and respect for all – this theme is open for discussion and deliberation by staff, students and parents.</li> <li>School council of staff, students, parents and community representatives who deliberate on and review broad school policy.</li> </ul> <p>The students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with the student, their parents and school staff.</li> </ul> <p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school community (school staff, students, parents) contribute to identifying topics that offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding, dispositions and skills.</li> </ul> <p>Parents: <i>parents are welcomed as experts and learners.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome to participate in their child’s class and to take part in lessons (negotiated with child and staff).</li> <li>An important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions/engage with them.</li> <li>Part of the planning team for their child’s Personalised Learning Plan.</li> </ul>

**Table 7.2: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to role of parents, and modifications made.**

It was acknowledged by some that not all parents will:

- be supportive and engaged,
- have the time/energy/money to come into the school,
- have the same motives for participating in school based activities.

Parents should be able to contribute to school development, to challenge school practice by having a voice that is listened to. It was recognised that there was the possibility that parental motives would have an impact on school policy. However, it was noted that with a change over time, or a change of culture, that a change of mentality could occur. This concept is discussed further in section 7.03 below. Despite this optimism it was pointed out that you cannot change what parents ultimately want for their children.

In order to achieve parental participation it was suggested that a change of mentality on all sides is needed. The purpose and role of parent participation needs to be negotiated, clearly defined and planned for, beyond a uniform parent: school contract. It was suggested that teachers could be trained in how to engage with parents, and the school should build time into the day to engage with parents, in order to find out more about their child. Decisions on where the biannual review should be held could be made (for example, in the family home as well as on school grounds).

Most of the issues discussed were thought to be resolvable through “real” engagement and negotiation between the parents and the school. However, this still leaves the issue of the parents who do not engage with the school unresolved.

#### **7.02(b) What is learnt?**

The flexibility of the curriculum that the school offered was seen as a strength, as was valuing a broader set of outcomes and having a more holistic, personalised approach than the current curriculum and pedagogy. Developing skills such as life skills and communication skills was seen as being of value to future employers. There was a suggestion made by one of the small groups that engaged in planning a school of the future that “curriculum breadth [should be] offered by the school, depth is personally determined [by the child]”.

Difficulty was seen in managing the competing concepts of choice and entitlement. This was one critique levelled at the design, but also a challenge faced by those who tried to design their own school as they tried to decide what is negotiable and what is non-negotiable in terms of entitlement. The vignette of the future school was critiqued in the session with the research group when I illustrated the concept of curriculum choice, saying “the class teacher would say ‘today we are going to do this activity’. Some children will think that is wonderful, some won’t want to do it – they can choose to meet objectives in a different way”. This was then criticised for being objectives based because “as soon as you set objectives you are categorising children – those who have met them, those who have not”.

An issue was raised regarding the flexible nature of the curriculum and its effect on mobile families entering a school mid-year – this was seen as a strength of the current National Curriculum format– in Term 1 all Year 4

pupils will be studying x, Term 2 doing y. Particular problems were raised with subjects like languages, some participants posited that new classes would have to be set up in these subjects for new entrants halfway through a year.

National Context	<p>The education system seeks to provide young people with a broad and balanced range of experiences and areas of knowledge.</p> <p>National Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive, meta-cognitive, personal, social and citizenship learning dimensions are given equal weight.</li> <li>• Focus on knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century life.</li> <li>• Schools are able to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is taught and assessed.</li> <li>• The National Curriculum is a minimum entitlement for all learners.</li> </ul> <p>Personalised Learning Plan (PLP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each student's personalised learning, every student has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).</li> <li>• There is national recognition that there is a spectrum of differing abilities and attainments. Disabilities are diagnosed and recognised, but integrated into PLP holistically in the context of student's needs, strengths and learning goals.</li> <li>• Formative assessment for learning is the norm, across all the learning dimensions.</li> </ul>
Braeburn Community School	<p>The students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with the student, their parents and school staff. (Could include peer mentoring, in-class teacher support, physical resources, out-of-class activities, variability of start/end times).</li> <li>• Class group remains constant throughout the class's time at school, but there are structured opportunities for work with other classes/age groups. Out-of-class opportunities are available to all students, but curriculum coherence is ensured.</li> </ul> <p>Curriculum: <i>personal, flexible and adaptable.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school community (school staff, students, parents) contribute to identifying topics that offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding, dispositions and skills. These are reviewed annually with each cohort.</li> <li>• Focus on personalised learning and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies, meaning students can opt in and out of various activities. Other activities are then provided to ensure the opportunity to cover the curriculum.</li> <li>• Collective decision is made on what resources are needed (i.e. subject experts, external visits). Local community (businesses and organisations) can be involved in teaching programmes/facilitating learning opportunities, if required for a particular topic.</li> <li>• The curriculum provides opportunities for the school and students to contribute to the local community.</li> </ul> <p>Staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject specialist teachers team teach with the class teacher/lead mixed class activities.</li> </ul>

**Table 7.3: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to curriculum content and pedagogy, and modifications made.**

The notion of pupil tracking was raised, that is, having set pathways that children follow throughout their time at school, a format that is used in some

further education colleges in England, and in the German upper secondary education system. Diverse curricular pathways were seen as a way to negate against parents choosing a school based on what was offered by different schools, as they could choose from a variety of avenues within a school. This was one of the few topics where children with special educational needs were mentioned specifically in the discussions: it was felt by some there was a danger of these children getting lost in the sophisticated systems and pathways.

Another difficulty was related to the assessment of the variety of learning outcomes (this was only raised by members of the policy steering group). It was noted that schools are currently skilled in assessing cognitive learning outcomes, but not in the wider dimensions discussed in this model, thus there was a need to develop robust measures for these dimensions.

#### **7.02(c) Where does learning take place?**

The school was seen by some participants to be very building and classroom focused, and clearly premised on a notion of community – small classes, same class, same teacher and the notion of the school as a community. The baseroom was seen as a strength, providing a stable situation for all children (teenagers were named as a specific group who would benefit from this stability), having ownership of and pride in a room and the work displayed, and having the classroom as a focus rather than a curriculum subject focus. One of the disadvantages that was raised was that there are some children who need to “escape” from being with the same pupils all the time, just as there are those who benefit from having the same class group. An extension to this notion was raised by a member of the teacher union group, who made reference to their experience of the Steiner Waldorf educational model “where children go into a class and kindergarten and stay in the same class with the same class teacher until they get to upper school”. They remarked that this had implications on staff and students. Their first comment was that the teacher has to evolve with the class, which may not always occur. The second aspect was that the group of children have to find the right way of working as a social unit, and this can be affected by the pupils changing and developing as people – “of course they are not the same group of children from kindergarten to upper school”. For both these examples the contributor concluded that if it works efficiently “it is brilliant”, but if it does not it is “a problem” and “horrendous”. They then continued this thread, critiquing the

aspect of the class teacher changing every year. If the teacher and class are “not getting on” this is an advantage, and so is a strength. However, a corresponding weakness is the teacher may not “see the need to persevere at the level of human interaction that is the hallmark of a successful process”.

National Context	<p><b>all children are welcome in the community school.</b>          All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary schools.</p>
Braeburn Community School	<p>A small school, both physically and in terms of student numbers (max. 350 pupils on roll).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single storey, with accessibility as a key design feature, surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. (Break and lunch are staggered, for ease of catering logistics and playground supervision).</li> <li>• Provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room, and a quiet room.</li> </ul> <p>The students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with the student, their parents and school staff. (Could include peer mentoring, in-class teacher support, physical resources, out-of-class activities, <b>variability of start/end times</b>).</li> <li>• Class group remains constant throughout the class’s time at school, but there are structured opportunities for work with other classes/age groups. Out-of-class opportunities are available to all students, but curriculum coherence is ensured.</li> </ul> <p>Curriculum: <i>personal, flexible and adaptable</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective decision is made on what resources are needed (i.e. subject experts, external visits). Local community (businesses and organisations) can be involved in teaching programmes/facilitating learning opportunities, if required for a particular topic.</li> </ul> <p>Classrooms: <i>are for students learning, not curriculum subjects</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each class has its own baseroom with specialist facilities in each (i.e. wet areas, science practical areas).</li> <li>• Up to date audio visual systems and adaptive technology (where required) are available in each base.</li> <li>• Pupils have ownership of room displays.</li> </ul>

**Table 7.4: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to the location of learning, and modifications made.**

One of the school planning groups within the larger university based focus group suggested that the school’s pedagogy and curriculum should be based around a project approach with work in and outside of schools, as well as across schools. This ties in with the notion of school clustering, which is discussed in the section about the external educational landscape. It also links with the notion of community and business involvement in the curriculum/learning opportunities. The link with local businesses in the vignette was seen as beneficial in a number of ways:

- providing training/work experience/part time work for students in the school

- liaising with school to provide opportunities for particular children to undertake appropriate work (with a specific mention of children with SEN)
- giving flexibility to employees who were parents to allow them to participate in school.

The teachers' union group noted there were potential difficulties in involving businesses in schools, namely the extent to which they direct the curriculum or any biases they may present in discussing their operations.

One member of the group of international researchers saw the advantage of a flexible timetable in allowing students to spend 2 days a week at work and 3 at school, and increasing the time at work as the child aged.

The policy steering group commented that the vignette was focused on a building called school and queried if that is necessarily the best way to educate. Another member of the same group commented that the school presented flexibility for off-site learning, and flexibility around where and how the personalised programme is completed. Two of the smaller school planning groups suggested that with the use of ICT and social networks a distance learning model could be explored, with geography and transport cost informing the extent of building sited learning. One of these groups pointed out potential weaknesses in this model, firstly children need looking after, and secondly the over-reliance on independent learning could lead to a segregated system.

#### **7.02(d) What is the best size of school?**

National Context	All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary schools.
Braeburn Community School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small school, both physically and in terms of student numbers (max. 350 pupils on roll).</li> </ul>

**Table 7.5: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to school size.**

The notion of school size was one that presented a number of challenges, there were some participants that thought a small size was good, and others that thought larger schools were advantageous. A strong theme that came through all discussions was the notion of there being an optimal size of school – small enough to personalise learning and for all staff to know children, but big enough to benefit from a larger peer group, economies of scale for finance and resources and more opportunities (what kinds of opportunities was not made

clear, but the discussion below on school clustering would suggest these are curricular and resource opportunities).

Some felt that there was a danger of a small school meaning people with disabilities may feel isolated, as they may be the only person to have particular needs. On a practical level, others cited the physical size of older children being a problem in small schools. On the other hand the opportunities for personalised learning and all staff knowing the children in the school was seen as an advantage of small schools.

There were participants who suggested size was not the real problem; in their experience parents would cite size as being a reason they did not want their child to go to mainstream secondary schools, but the participant argued that often primary school were of a similar size. They suggested the problem is more related to the different school organisation, and if you removed the need for children to move around a large school, as my model has by having a baseroom, size would no longer be seen as an issue. Another participant noted there are “minutely small schools are not always the cosy, enabling, supportive schools we would like them to be”.

#### 7.02(e) Who goes to this school?

National Context	<p>Page 2 describes the national context – a picture of the education system throughout England in 2025. All schools in England share the values as described below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- all children are welcome in the community school.</li> </ul> <p>Schools are not permitted to discriminate on basis of learning ability, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, cultural background or faith. All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary schools.</p>
Braeburn Community School	

**Table 7.6: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to who attend this school, and modifications made.**

The vision of this school being community based and open to all children in a neighbourhood was not made explicit until the section on values and purposes of education were added (page 1 of vignette, see appendix 25) following the evaluation by the university research group (the penultimate group). It was reinforced through discussions during the evaluation sessions, and clarified by myself. One focus group member asked “can you define for me the spectrum of children who are in this school?” This was clarified – all children in a community would attend this school. In the discussion with the policy

steering group it was gratifying to hear one participant describe the school as “being predicated on the commissioning of this school, in this area, for all children”.

The importance of the national context and all schools having to be similar were discussed by all groups. There was a concern is that the school will become a special school or a special pathway if surrounded by other “normal” schools. Parents would choose to place their child in this school as it would benefit the child, or choose not to send their child to this school as it was different. I was aware of this issue since I began to design the vignette, and it is why the national context description is outlined first, and after each trial of the vignette extra clarifications were added to show that this school is typical of all schools.

Running parallel to this was some discussion about removing parental choice and preference. If choice was removed, then would it be expected that children will go to the local school (as is the case in most European countries)? “If parents have a right to choose they are probably more discriminatory than anyone else – they discriminate on where they send their child on the basis of who they want them to learn beside” (policy steering school planning group). Another school planning group in the policy steering group suggested that it would not be necessary for parents to have a right to choose schools, but rather they could choose pathways within a school.

It was acknowledged that parents will have an influence on the macro-political issue of school choice and catchment area whatever the legislation. To combat this one group suggested the use of a purposeful lottery, drawing students from certain locales. One of the groups that created a future school wondered what the effect of a private/independent school sector alongside the school depicted in the vignette would be. Another group questioned if schools be allowed to select on the basis of faith, or payment of fees.

The notion of schools not being able to discriminate was seen as a strength. One member of the policy steering group said this was nothing new as was already legislated for under the Equality Act 2010, but this was countered by another pointing out that under schedule 27 of the 1996 Education Act schools today can still discriminate against some pupils. (This makes reference to the caveats to children with SEN being placed in mainstream schools contained in the legislation. The Act states that mainstream schools

should be chosen unless it is incompatible with the needs of the child or the provision of efficient education for other children, or an efficient use of resources.)

**7.02(f) How is the school/system funded?**

“Time and money are threats. Everybody knows it”; “there is a big emphasis on personalisation, every child has a PLP, multi-disciplinary teams on-site, parental advocacy, teachers working in a topic based way, mapping a complex curriculum. This is vastly more expensive than the current system”.

National Context	<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate common levels of funding are set and provided by the state to schools, supplied for specific purposes and reviewed through transparent audit trails.</li> <li>• Additional compensatory resources can be requested by schools through a clear navigable bidding system. They need to provide evidence of the need for the resource and what they have attempted to provide to meet the need thus far.</li> </ul>
Braeburn Community School	

**Table 7.7: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to funding, and modifications made.**

The notion of “adequate levels of funding” within the vignette was questioned and criticised in light of the current economic climate. Bidding for funding had been experienced by some participants and was described as a difficult, “clunky” system. A final issue was one of semantics – “what is adequate”, “if adequate you wouldn’t have to compensate for disadvantage”.

This is one of the few themes with specific mention of “needs”, “disability” and “SEN”. On a generic level how would a school access money for a new intake in order to provide for the different needs that may arise? Then it was questioned how you would bid for resources for children with special educational needs. One member of the teachers’ union wondered if a formula was needed to allocate funding for different specific needs: “what level of funding does a child with MLD need, compared to someone with just a learning difficulty, compared with a child with medical needs plus a learning difficulty?”

Benefits of the vignette were seen in that it removed the current discrepancy between funding at a rural or inner city setting, or an inner London/outer London divide, and the resentment felt by some that inner cities get more than rural communities and yet some rural settings can have far more disadvantage.

One group made the suggestion that to cover funding taxes could be raised. In a related discussion on the role of leadership it was suggested that money could be gained from not having a leadership post and reinvesting the savings in the system. This leads on to the macro-political issue of how public funds are used, and the democratic will for money to be used to finance schools like this one. If all schools were like this it will be an expensive system, and so unlikely to be achieved as the democratic will may not be behind it.

**7.02(g) What should be contained in teacher training and continuing professional development?**

National Context	<p>Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional qualification, post graduate degree, runs over 2 years, resulting in a Master's level qualification along with Qualified Teacher Status.</li> <li>Special educational needs and disability aspects are mandatory for completion of degree, as is an extended school placement module.</li> <li>Working conditions reflect professional status, with adequate non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD.</li> <li>CPD is extended to all staff who work with children in the school context.</li> <li>CPD is an entitlement, a statutory requirement; schools must make provision for it in terms of time and funding. It is personalised to meet needs of the staff member. It includes training in effective collaboration.</li> </ul>
Braeburn Community School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All staff who work in school undertake CPD related to understanding the needs of children and child development.</li> </ul> <p>Parents: <i>parents are welcomed as experts and learners.</i> An important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions/engage with them.</p>

**Table 7.8: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to staff training, and modifications made.**

The teacher training element of the vignette was seen as a real strength, regarding its high quality and continuous nature. A refinement to the model made by three of the eight smaller groups that attempted to design their own school was that the training and CPD should be extended to all people working with students in the school context (parents, classroom assistants, other adults from outside the school). The school should be seen as a place where all are learners. It was suggested there should be required minimum levels of training, resulting in every member of staff being qualified in a set of competences in the knowledge and understanding of child development.

It was believed this training would transform the school into a community, especially with the suggestion that part of professional development itself could be focused on developing more supportive, collaborative relationships with other staff and parents. Professionals should be trained in working directly with parents and in how to engage with them.

One of the groups planning a school of the future said that there was a real need for “proper training”, beyond a tick box exercise for 5 nominal days a year. They suggested staff should be entitled to sabbaticals, with flexibility allowing teachers to come in and out of teaching for academic terms. Another group said there was a need for action research to be undertaken by staff within a school, to ensure that the school system was based on good practice, and outcomes that were of benefit to the school/children. This should then be disseminated to inform practice in the school and beyond.

### 7.02(h) Is there a place for school leadership?

National Context	
Braeburn Community School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear vision based on rights and respect for all – this theme is open for discussion and deliberation by staff, students and parents.</li> <li>• School council of staff, students, <b>parents and community representatives</b> who deliberate on and review broad school policy.</li> </ul>

**Table 7.9: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to school leadership, and modifications made.**

As can be seen in the extract above, this is an area not explicitly touched on in the created vignette. Its absence was only commented on by members of the policy steering group. It was suggested by one participant that leadership was required for marketing, accountability and not losing high expectations. However, another person argued that the apparent lack of leadership was in fact a strength, as leadership is “currently framed within strong notions of school effectiveness and aligned with a national inspectorate”.

The de-structuring and de-layering of the management system was seen as a possibility, with leadership becoming more centralised within the school (rather than a top-down management hierarchy), and a more democratic model. Having a single leader model could be seen as flawed, one member of the teacher union group gave the example of a head teacher listening to students and refining school practice based on this, but questioned “whether the head would be listening after 5 years of being bombarded with all these outside agencies coming in and directing him”. It was also noted that some head teachers may see schools as their domain because responsibility lies ultimately with them, and so they may prioritise and pay attention to government policy rather than that of the community.

It was suggested that another role for school leaders in schools currently is in school self-evaluation and forward planning. Self-evaluation was felt to be necessary to be aware of what the school does well and to plan ahead;

otherwise there was a perceived danger of the school focusing on one area to the detriment of others, or not being supported by the public.

The vignette originally presented to the teacher union described school councils consisting of “staff and students who deliberate on broad policy and review school [but] authority ultimately lies with teachers”. This was seen to be tokenistic, and as one member commented “some governors’ meetings feel like that!” This is why the school council constituency was broadened to include parents and community members, and the appearance of an apparent hierarchy (“authority ultimately lies with teachers”) was removed. A member of the teachers’ union group pondered if schools could be based on the lines of collective responsibility? Not “I” as a teacher, or “I as a school”, but “we” as a community.

### **7.02(i) What happens after school?**

Again, this is a theme that has not been explicitly mentioned or explored in the vignette, other than that the age of schooling is from 5 to 16. The discussion on what happens after school took different forms. Three of the four focus groups touched on “life after school” in some way, with particular contributions from the international researchers and the university research group. The critique took two forms:

- the(almost artificial) “shelter” the school provided
- the recognition of qualification and skills post 16.

A member of the international research group commented that after school the students will face the situation “where not everything is possible, where not everyone is concerned for your needs”. A member of the university research group was against the notion of using formative assessment only as “assessment that is used in real life isn’t formative”. Both these critiques are aimed at the difference between the school environment and “real life” after school. In response to this a member of the international researcher group argued that there should not be a distinction between school and real life, as the students in school are in society and real life now, beyond the school gates.

The assessment argument led on to questioning about how students would access higher education (specifically university) without marks and grades. The policy steering group had similar concerns, not with marks, but ensuring

the learning the school valued was recognised and valued post 16. Once again this pointed to the interface between school and university.

### 7.02(j) Where is specialist support located?

Access to a multi-agency team was seen as a high priority for various members of the policy steering group and one member of the international researchers' group, as "we are hungry for them in schools". A need was seen for opportunities for multi-agency working, and schools having prompt, flexible access to a range of specialist support. It was suggested this could be extended to practitioners who "focus on different parts of a young person's engagement with different parts of the school" such as a learning mentor.

National Context	Multi-disciplinary sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a multi-disciplinary team available on each school site. This includes psychologists, therapists, clinicians, social workers and counsellors. <b>Their operational practices reflect the ethos of the school.</b></li> </ul>
Braeburn Community School	Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School is a multi-agency site with provision for all students' needs.</li> <li>• Team teaching and teacher-as-facilitator role allows for in-class support of learning.</li> <li>• <b>Learning support is available for all students.</b></li> </ul>

**Table 7.10: Excerpt from vignette, showing aspects relevant to the location of specialist support, and modifications made.**

The generic level of support within the school was seen as a real strength, supporting activities in class, enhancing learning opportunities and achievement. However, various issues with the multi-agency availability were raised:

- it could result in a watering down of multiagency teams if there are not enough to go around
- a technocratic medical approach may be followed by some agencies, which could result in the medicalisation of SEN, which is against the apparent ethos of the school
- where would the school access specialist support and expertise regarding low incidence needs?

These problems led to further questions about the existence and whereabouts of a local authority and the possibility of schools clustering and sharing these resources, especially in urban environments. This is discussed in greater depth in the next section.

### 7.02(k) What is the external education landscape/system like?

"Government, state and local authorities are all quite critical [important] in light of the school" (policy steering group member, after designing own school).

This section details the comments made about the macro-political landscape, followed by an examination of the local landscape.

***(i) Aims and purposes of education***

One of the small university research groups highlighted that the aims and purposes of school/education were missing, and the vignette would benefit from their addition. They also noted that although current policy documents do contain aims and purpose statements, such as the National Curriculum, the rhetoric they hold is often not the same as the reality. They suggested ones based around the types of learners the school wished to nurture “curious, confident, positive and motivated”. The teachers’ union group noted that parents were drawn to schools with a particular overt vision as the parents then “know what they are buying into”. They also noted the need for these visions to be flexible and malleable through democratic processes – which relates back to the leadership discussion and the participation of key stakeholders.

***(ii) Competition and publication of results***

A critique of the whole vignette was made by a participant in the teachers’ union group: that until equal value is placed on alternative pathways rather than just “the gold standard of 5 GCSEs” no alternative pathway would be deemed acceptable by stakeholders. Following this point another suggested there should be two separate league tables for schools – an academic one and a vocational one. This was the only participant position in all the focus groups that received an immediate negative response. Following this statement two other participants voiced simultaneously that “I don’t think they should have league tables at all”. Another member of this group noted that in the vignette school and system, the “fatuous value of 5 A-Cs would be kicked into touch”.

Two separate groups in the policy steering group stated that in the school they designed there would be no competition at a local or national level in terms of league tables or academic only measures. Conversely, someone in the teachers’ union group said that she used the “parent participation statistic” to choose a school for her children when she lived in the USA.

On a micro-level one participant suggested there would be the opportunity in this school to develop a less competitive ethos within schools, especially in catchment areas where there might be a focus or emphasis on academic marks.

### ***(iii) Other issues of national context***

Other comments made about the national context were in isolation, in the sense that only one person, or one of the small school planning groups raised them as an issue:

- Education should be compulsory for all children
- Education should be non-party political, so that practice and policy would not change every time an administration changed.

### ***(iv) Local authority***

At a more localised level, the notion of or necessity for a local authority emerged from small group discussion, three separate groups (2 within the policy steering group, one within the university research group) made mention of a local authority, one saying it was “quite critical [important] to the school” but none went into any great detail. “There might be something called a local authority that might be needed”. It was seen to have a purpose in delivering funding, to regulate and monitor disciplinary exclusion from school/ admissions, and to provide outside support. Questions were asked about where the local authority would be based, would they “come into school, be brought in, bought in”? There was a recognised need for a “funding agency” to “commission a school, in this area”, which could be seen as an LA.

### ***(v) Clustering of schools***

The notion of clustering schools was raised by members of the policy steering group with a number of perceived benefits.

- Ability to offer more pathways and diverse ways to gain qualifications and skills.
- Ability to “share” multiagency teams between schools in a hub and spoke model.
- Ability to commission provision for students who have special educational needs in one school.

### ***(vi) Other school types***

A discussion took place in the policy steering group that pointed out the weaknesses of the school if other schools remained unchanged, or if parental/community consultation did not take place. These were framed as weaknesses but could also be considered threats. “This school would be an ideal model, but if schools around it were “normal”/more traditional, it becomes a special school by default”. Another person then pointed out that there is a group of children whose needs **are** being met in the current system. The parents of these students may not want this model; they may prefer the

current academic model. They pointed out that if Braeburn School was introduced without community consultation it would “become a special school as parents choose not to send child there”.

### **7.02(I) “Uncontested” strengths**

Several people prefaced their responses to the SWOT with an indication that their points were examples of a strength of the model. In the majority of cases these stated strengths initiated debate or contestation, either from the respondent themselves or other members of the group. To demonstrate this I give an example: one participant stated a strength was that in the vignette the national context notes that schools are not permitted to discriminate. Another participant argued that this was nothing new under the current Equality Act, prompting another participant to respond that “under schedule 27 of the Education Act schools can discriminate against some pupils”. This discussion led someone to make a case for adding further examples of diversity the schools were not permitted to discriminate against.

However, there were comments that participants listed as strengths where no debate or further discussion ensued, the statement stood as a strength and no one contested its status as a strength. Calling them uncontested is perhaps not appropriate as there are many reasons why they may not have been responded to (perhaps other group members did not hear them, or were considering other points). Also indicative of their potentially contested status is in the isolation of the comments – while some discussions were reiterated across every group these strengths were made by only one (or at most two) member of each group, and there was no common theme across all groups. The assertion that they are strengths would have to be empirically tested. My reason for listing them is to demonstrate that participants did see value in the vignette as it stands.

I have grouped the comments based on who or what they relate to. Three of the comments were made at the level of the child in the model. A member of the international researchers' group saw value in each child having the opportunity to develop at their own pace. The benefit of having a personalised learning plan for every child was commented on by one member of the policy steering group, another appreciated the focus on students and outcomes rather than the specific provision made. Finally, a member of the university based research group noted that potential employers would see the focus on the development of transferable life skills as valuable.

Some of the strengths were at teacher level; one member of the teacher union saw value in the teachers being given adequate planning time, and two different members of the policy steering group commented (on separate occasions) that the teacher training and CPD as described in the vignette was a strength and of high quality.

At a school organisational level a member of the policy steering group commented that the notion of the school being an all-through school “diffuses the issue of secondary transfer”. Finally some of the strengths made reference to the vignette having benefits for wider society, a member of the university research group suggesting that as the children progress through the school and beyond they will affect and influence society by demonstrating more inclusive approach. They felt the ethos of the school will be taken to the outside world, creating a greater recognition of different needs.

#### **7.02(m) The final vignette**

I have presented sections of the vignette that relate to the identified themes and the associated development of the future school. The final vignette in its entirety, and all previous iterations, can be found in appendices 24 and 25. The vignettes contained in appendix 24 are each highlighted to show where something was added to the current vignette, or where something was removed from the current iteration for the next one. A key is given in the appendices to demonstrate this.

### **Section 7.03 Appraisal of the use of the SWOT analysis and focus groups as an evaluatory tool for futures thinking**

In this section I discuss the methodological aspects arising during the various evaluations of the vignette. These are illustrated with comments made by various participants during the various SWOT analyses and feedback from the eight small groups that participated in the vignette creation exercise. Each point is illustrated with quotations from the participants. This section is in response to the research aim that seeks to appraise the process and tools used in the construction and evaluation of the future inclusive school. There are further theoretical issues raised about the vignette itself and its construction, such as the place of idealism, and conundrums and tensions raised. While I make some reference to them in this chapter, they are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 8 as they require a further theoretical and literature based exploration.

### **7.03(a) An idealistic utopia?**

“Very optimistic”...“idealistic”... “on first reading a utopia”...“far too idealistic and optimistic”...“all these wonderful things”...“a very ideological view...we know in reality that isn’t the case”. It can be seen from the selection of quotations above at least one person in each of the four groups commented in some way on the perceived optimism, idealism or utopian nature of some aspect of the vignette. One person in the university research group suggested that the rest of the group were looking at the vignette with “rose tinted glasses”.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, I set out to design a normative, preferable future, and the use of the phrases quoted above enable me to conclude I have achieved that aim. However, I have also set out to design a possible future, and “submit it to critical scrutiny of deliberative rationality” (Lamentowicz, 2008, p. 78) and thus it can be questioned, as one participant in the university research group did, whether the apparent optimism of my design “is a strength or a weakness”. On a practical level some participants commented that as time passed, and they were able to consider, absorb and process the vignette it appeared more achievable “it looks pretty balanced now, but on first reading I referred to it as a utopia” (member of teacher union group), as was also concluded when groups went off to design their own future school vignette “the more we spoke, the more we agreed with both the principles of both school and national context” (policy steering sub-group). The notion of ideology and inclusion is explored further in the next chapter with reference to the literature and to the evaluations of the vignette.

### **7.03(b) Conundrums and consistency**

The evaluations of the vignette and its subsequent analysis highlighted tensions and paradoxes alongside inconsistencies and questions. The specific paradoxes and tensions raised in the evaluation of the vignette were:

- Curriculum entitlement versus student choice of curriculum
- Meeting needs of the individual versus meeting needs of a group
- Baseroom focus versus community learning
- Social learning focus versus children who wish to work independently
- Holistic model of child versus medical model implied by some multi-agency teams
- Parental choice of school versus creating student diversity

- Artificiality of school setting versus preparation for real life.

Issues were raised about:

- Resources and funding – where would this be obtained from? If it is “adequate” why would compensatory funding be needed?
- If schools are based in local communities, inequalities would be perpetuated and a stratified system would remain (such as socio-economic inequalities).
- Parental availability - not all parents are or can be supportive and engaged.
- Parental motives - Can we legislate against/change parental attitudes, choice and motives? Should we? What if parental motives differ from school ethos and policy?
- There will always be students who are difficult to engage – how will the school link with them?
- What about the children whose needs are adequately met in the current system? For example, the children who benefit from changing classes and class groupings.

These tensions, questions and issues of inconsistency are addressed further in chapter 8.

### **7.03(c) Limitations of the evaluation process**

This final section discusses the issues and limitations with the evaluation process itself. It discusses issues raised by the participants themselves, such as the limitations of language, and those I encountered while analysing the findings, such as the limitations of the SWOT process.

#### ***(i) The SWOT analysis process***

The SWOT analysis was used as a framework to encourage participants to consider ALL aspects of the vignette, that is, both positive and negative facets. This worked well in some ways, and as can be seen in the discussion above contributions were not limited simply to highlighting problems with the vignette, nor unquestioning praise and acceptance of the model. As well as being audio recorded, during each discussion comments were summarised and noted by hand either by myself or a chair on the SWOT framework. At the end of the session this written record of the SWOT was to serve to inform vignette development. A number of issues arose causing me to disregard these data, and rely solely on the direct transcripts of the audio-recorded discussions.

Firstly, participants commented that they were unsure if their point was a strength or a weakness, or where they would place it on the framework – one example is “it is very optimistic...I’m not sure if that is a strength or a weakness”. This could be in part due to not being sure what constituted as a strength or opportunity, or as a weakness or a threat, as these could be seen to be quite similar. In the two events, where PowerPoint™ slides were used to define these terms in a visual way (see appendix 22), there was still a lack of clarity.

The placement of the comment appeared at times to be arbitrary – “you’ve not got much in the way of threats, let’s call it a threat”. On another occasion a participant began to make a comment and was interrupted by the chair saying “we need to move on to threats now”. The participant continued with their comment, prefacing it with “maybe it is a threat”.

The person recording the responses on the framework often interpreted the statement while recording it, and chose its location on the framework, if this had not been specified by the participant. What was recorded on the framework did not always correspond with what was said for example, on the framework for the university research group a weakness was listed as “is the age range ‘safe’ – the dynamics of age”. The voice recording that matches to this comment shows that the participant actually said: “age is an artificial distinction, but it may attract some criticism, some might think there are reasons to separate”. This shows that the scribe has attributed meaning to the statement that may not have existed in the participant’s mind.

A final issue is one of crossing boundaries between the terms used – “with almost every strength there is an inherent weakness”, “a lot of these cross different borders, there are possible problems with all of them”. One example that stands out is when someone pointed out that paying attention to the individual was a strength of the model, however, this could also be a challenge, if you are doing this for 20 children. Chermack (2011) acknowledges this in his guide to scenario planning. He says a danger of SWOT analysis can be its forcing items into a false dichotomy when in reality it could be applicable to both categories.

The SWOT framework worked well in framing participants’ thoughts, and encouraging them to think about different aspects of the vignette, and to qualify comments and thoughts with reference to these labels. However, as

can be seen above the written record of these frameworks was unreliable, and this is why I chose not to use the written record of them as part of the analysis. It is also why I have not presented a tally of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as a quantitative evaluation of the vignette.

***(ii) Limitations of language and current constructs***

I have mentioned my limitations as the originator of the vignette – limited by my knowledge and experience of the education system (such as my insistence on an objectives based curriculum having only ever experienced this approach). This was the purpose of opening the vignette to others. They, too, are limited by their understanding and experience – in the example of parental participation – one person in the teachers’ union group saying parental participation in lessons had caused them problems in the past, another saying in her experience of Finnish schools parental participation was accepted and teachers “learnt to deal with it”.

The contributions of participants were framed, even bound, by knowledge experience and language, as recognised by one participant “[there is] theoretically and conceptually a danger in discussing the future in terms of what we have in the present. When we talk about “commissioning”, “governance” and so forth we need to dispense with these notions that pertain to the present”. As Tooley (2000) notes:

“when talking about education...we all carry around so much baggage about the ways in which education is currently organised and delivered in our society. It is very hard to break away from this to think more radically and imaginatively...So if I talk about markets in education, people always put them in the context of schools and teachers and all the rest. And this always raises many objections in people’s minds to markets in education” (p. 21).

The idea of using scenarios and vignettes as a description of a future state is to enable participants to go beyond superficial perceptions and assumptions based on participants’ knowledge of current systems.

This is not just an issue of the terms that we can currently define simply, but also with language and terms that have contested meanings. The literature review in chapter 2 showed that the concepts of diversity and inclusion are broad and hard to define, which is reiterated in some of the focus groups’ discussions – “schools can be called inclusive, but in practice the reverse is the case...how useful is the term?”.

A final effect of the limitation of language is how much of the vignette will be a true reflection of practice and how much is simply empty rhetoric. One of the school planning groups from the university research group reflected this was certainly true of the aims and values cited in current UK education policy and curriculum documents.

#### **Section 7.04      Summary**

The vignette was well received on the whole by all participants and groups. The evaluation process provided multiple opportunities for problematising, rethinking and reframing the vignette. I have mentioned the strengths and weaknesses of both the vignette itself and the methods used as informed by the evaluations throughout this chapter, including the limitations I as a researcher bring.

The vignette could still go through various iterations and refinements, and at every stage more could be added to it. It would be appropriate to undertake the SWOT analysis with other groups, such as with parents and children with and without special educational needs.

The vignette and its iterations are based on creative ways of solving the issues raised in the study of over-representation of secondary aged children in special school. The final vignette describes what a future school for diversity, not only of learning needs but all types of diversity, could look like. I have explored some issues encountered in the design and evaluation of future schooling. This element will be further discussed in the next chapter which unpacks the notions of ideology and dilemmas as raised by the evaluations and analysis above.

## **Chapter 8. Evaluation of the future school vignette**

### **Section 8.01 Introduction**

This chapter relates the analysis and evaluation of the futures vignette back to the research aims and the theoretical literature. It does this in three ways. Firstly it explores the success of the vignette when measured against the original research aims and research questions. It then examines it by comparing it to the definitions and aims of inclusion as described in the literature review. The final section explores larger theoretical issues, such as the place of ideology in the vignette design, and discussion about the conundrums and tensions posed. The vignette is also evaluated throughout the chapter in terms of the criteria that Kosow and Gaßner (2008) use to evaluate scenarios (see table 6.3, p. 241). Each of the issues raised in this discussion contributes to the evaluation of the futures thinking process as a whole as well as an evaluation of the vignette.

An examination of specific issues raised by participants to the future vignette, along with links to some current literature on the themes can be found in appendix 26. I have chosen not to place this examination here as there is a need to explore the wider conceptual, theoretical and evaluatory aspects in this chapter. This appendix also contains conceptual justifications of the choices I have made in altering (or not altering) the vignette in response to the comments made and themes raised.

### **Section 8.02 Answers to the research questions**

#### **8.02(a)**

In the discussion related to part 1 of this thesis (Chapter 5), it was relatively simple to present answers to the research questions based on the findings. However, the questions posed for this part are harder to present clear cut answers to. The questions were:

- *What could future general schools for diversity (of learning needs) look like?*
- *How can we include more children with SEN in general secondary schools?*
- *What kind of education system would work best for diverse learning needs from age 11?*
- *How do we overcome/circumvent barriers such as those raised in part 1 of this thesis in order to include more children with SEN?*

A primary aim of the study was to produce and develop theoretical ideas about future schooling and creative ways of resolving differentiation dilemmas (such as those identified in part one of study). The vignette itself is an answer to these questions and this aim, and the various iterations of the future school vignette based on focus group responses demonstrate the development aspect of the aim.

Secondary aims were to explore and evaluate the methods used in the creation and development of the vignette and to stir debate about potential inclusive educational policy. The sections that follow below attempt to use the analysis from the previous chapter and the focus group discussion to evaluate the vignette in terms of how inclusive the future school described is. This is a complex task, for reasons that are described in the first sub-section, but the remainder of the section shows how some of the “goals of inclusion” described in the literature review could be said to have been met based on evidence from the focus group discussions.

### **Section 8.03 “Measuring” inclusion**

#### **8.03(a) Achieving the presence and participation of all students**

The vignette set out to describe one version of “a future general school for diversity” which includes the children with special educational needs and disabilities who are currently placed in special schools. The achievement of this aim could be evidenced by the fact that only limited discussion within the focus groups involved specific reference to children with special educational needs (or their parents). Reference to this particular group of learners was only made in relation to:

- the danger of pupils with SEN becoming “lost” in a multitude of sophisticated systems and pathways
- the availability of funding to resource provision for some types of needs
- the location of specialist knowledge for low incidence needs
- the potential for children with low incidence needs to feel isolated
- the benefit of businesses liaising with schools to provide work experience opportunities for all children, but specifically those with SEN.

Funding, the location of specialist knowledge and the desire for children with special educational needs to have “a like-minded peer group” were all found in part one of this thesis as reasons why a special school was chosen as a

placement for secondary aged children. However, none of these were seen to be major contributors to the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools (funding for example was only coded 25 times out of 1786 total coding incidents in the analysis of the questionnaire). That is not to say they are not valid fears, but it demonstrates that the vignette has eliminated the larger concerns raised for this group of pupils in part 1, such as the impact of school curriculum and focus, and school environment and ethos.

The danger of pupils becoming lost in the systems and pathways described in the school is associated with the sub-theme of school structure and organisation which is the most coded sub-theme identified in the analysis of part one of this thesis. However, it was the inflexibility of the complex systems in secondary schools that was seen as the barrier to inclusion, the pathways and systems described in the future school vignette are based on a flexible, personal approach, where each child would be supported through the various pathways. The notion of having a range of learner pathways is a feature of most descriptions of future schools, as described in the literature review and appendix 26.

The issues as listed above can be questioned and treated as problematic. For example, to what extent could a school system that promoted inclusion for children with ethnic minorities be critiqued by the argument “there is a potential for the child who is from an ethnic minority to feel isolated”? Likewise, in a segregated system based on gender would the inclusion of girls be opposed based on the availability of funding to resource provision for girls? This could be a reflection of the tendency of individuals not to “express outrage in the face of segregation based on ability in the same way as they do to when addressing legally protected groups” (Fisher, 2007, p. 163). Alternatively it could be a reflection of changing conceptions of equality and justice, which change over time to include different groups (Sikes et al., 2007; Thomas & Glenny, 2002).

The relative paucity of discussion framed around this group of children (those with special educational needs) could be taken to demonstrate the positioning of the school as inclusive in its broadest definition, that is, definitions which do not solely look at the inclusion of one group of children (Ainscow et al., 2006; Armstrong et al. 2011). One of the goals of inclusion – achieving the presence of all students, including those vulnerable to exclusionary pressures

(Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Mittler, 2000), could be said to be achieved for the children currently excluded.

However, the focus group discussions identified a number of additional groups at risk of exclusion or marginalisation from “the curricula, cultures and communities” (Booth, 1999; Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Booth et al., 2000) of this future school. The school risks marginalising some children because of within child characteristics or learning preferences. Specific examples include children who do not want to spend time with other children and become upset if around others for a long time. The school was felt to be very social and community based, however, members of the focus groups commented that not all children react well to this facet of school life. Linked to this is the belief that there are some pupils who need to “get out from being with the same pupils all the time”, just as there are those who benefit from being with the same pupils the whole time. Again, the social, homeroom element of the school may cause problems for this type of student.

One focus group identified “young people who are very difficult to engage” as a group the school needed to consider. No further description of what characterised these pupils was given, but it was felt there would “always” be a group of learners who could be described under that heading. This is a feature of the current system, the empirical study in part 1 of this thesis revealed a group of learners who were felt to be difficult to engage. Two stakeholders who responded to the questionnaire in part 1 of this thesis describe the potential of some children with SEN to become disengaged as a result of the mainstream. This lack of engagement was seen by one of these respondents to be followed by the giving of a label of “Emotional and Behavioural Disorder”. Mittler (2000) also makes reference to this group, a group of children “who virtually exclude themselves from learning and participation in the life of the school, even though they are physically present” (p. 176).

Marginalisation can also result from circumstantial factors. In the education system described in the vignette each school has control over its own curriculum to a certain extent. Thus, when a new pupil joins the school, there is the possibility that the pupil will miss out on key areas or topics of learning, resulting in the need for catch-up classes. This is described in section 7.02b above, where a focus group participant questioned if new classes would need

to be set up for new entrants. If this approach was adopted, the new pupils would be seen as a separate group, with the potential to be marginalised.

Another group at risk of marginalisation are those whose parents are disengaged from their child's education, those who "lack the time, energy, motivation and money" (Mittler, 2008, p. 5) to participate. The role of parents in this future school is a pivotal one, with involvement in their child's learning plan, staff training and school leadership and decision making. There is a danger this could create a new set of children disadvantaged by the system, creating a division into two categories, those whose parents are willing and active members of the school community and those who have parents that are not. The current special education system is seen to be affected by this very situation, resources are being given to those parents who are prepared to fight for them (Mittler, 2008). It is also seen as a possible explanation of the disproportionality of ethnic minorities, one of the reasons that the Lindsay et al (2006) literature review found contributed to the over-representation of some ethnic minority groups in the special education system is the difference in parental support amongst the ethnic groups.

Chapter 2 identified the problem of segregation at a whole school level, how educational policies actively reduce the heterogeneity of the school population. This was seen to be a threat to the proposed model by the focus groups. It was felt that as England has a stratified society, any enforced catchment area would have parents move to the school they wanted. If the school was in a local community some inequalities would be perpetuated as parents who have the means can move house and catchment areas, which could have the potential to create the marginalisation of whole schools.

Bell (2001) cautions designers of preferable futures to consider the consequences of alternative actions taken when creating these futures, reminding that "we need to know...the future consequences of alternative actions...and we need to assess those consequences as being more or less desirable" (2001, p. 72). None of the descriptions of inclusive schools I reviewed in Chapter 2 explore the consequences of inclusive education in terms of the likelihood of these practices to create new groups of children who are marginalised by the proposed system. Future visions and descriptions of inclusive settings should seek to do so.

### **8.03(b) Achieving change at the level of society**

Another goal of inclusion stated in the literature is that it will engender a change in society's values and attitudes (Peters, 2007; Thomas et al., 1998). The potential for the education system described by the vignette to create change at the level of society was a thread that ran through each of the focus groups. This begins at a relational level, expanding understanding between different "groups" in society – for example teachers and parents, and children with SEN and their peers. Most commented on was the potential for a change in relationships between parents and teachers. If parents visit the school during lesson times it provides them with "a better insight", allowing them to make "better judgements" about school practice, and the reciprocal happens, teachers "understand more about the situation from the other side". It was acknowledged however that this would take time to be achieved, and that a "change of mentality" is needed, for "parents [and teachers] to get used to this". It would also enable relationships between children to change, the school would "highlight greater recognition of different needs" resulting in the lessening of bullying. The theme of relationships was identified as contributing to the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools, and thus the recognition that relationships will develop through the vignette is another indication of its success.

At a broader level, another way society was seen to be able to change was a result of the example set by school practice permeating into society, as the children leave the school they would bring the practices, ethos and values they have experienced into the wider world. This would result in "the dilution of segregation", and a chance for the development of an inclusive society.

However, some bastions of the current climate were felt to remain. One focus group member pointed out that "children with multiple and very serious complex impairments may create a sense of fear among the community". This person felt that that would need to be prepared for and dealt with, however, they recognised that if it was, successfully, this would have positive ramifications for society. Another participant cautioned that if an emphasis remained "on "I" as a teacher, or "I" as a school" the system would break down. They suggested that a driving force should be "we as a community. We feel that this is good for our children".

### **8.03(c) Inclusion as a process**

Inclusion can be viewed as an unending process (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). This is exemplified by belief of these authors that their *Index for Inclusion* can still be used “however inclusive a school is thought to be currently” (p. 19). In the focus groups many suggestions were made by participants for how the future school described in the vignette could be built on and extended through the opportunities described. It was seen as something that had the potential to develop continually, to become more and more inclusive and effective for all pupils. One example is the vignette statement “peer teaching, coaching and mentoring is a key part of learning”. There was opportunity seen for this to develop into student leadership of the school. The notion of inclusion being a process and not an end state was also affirmed by the iterations of the vignette given in appendix 24 which could be seen as indicators of the process of inclusion.

### **8.03(d) Can inclusion be measured?**

Lindsay (2007) in a paper reviewing the effectiveness of inclusive education asks “how is ‘inclusion’ to be operationally defined?” (p. 6). I have endeavoured to evaluate the future school vignette against each of the definitions and aims of inclusion set out in chapter 2, but have found it difficult to do so. Questions need to be asked, echoing Lindsay’s concern: to what extent are the goals of inclusion measurable? Can inclusion be quantified? This is an inherent difficulty with abstract concepts such as inclusion (and, Wilson, 2000, argues, terms such as “comprehensive” and “democratic”). Wilson contends that inclusion cannot be measured because no definitions currently exist. What are given as definitions, he claims, describe either values and ideals associated with the term, or descriptions of practice and practical suggestions for teachers on how to “be inclusive”. He sees a need “to give a set of rules whereby we can know what can intelligibly count as [an inclusive school] and what cannot count” (p. 298).

One such device, or set of rules is the “methodological tool to measure inclusion or degree of inclusivity of a child with disability attending school” (p. 16) employed by Timmons and Wagner (2010). These researchers examined responses for items on the Statistics Canada’s 2001 Children’s Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, a survey of children age 5-14 with disabilities. The PALS questionnaire contained more than 200 variables which addressed multiple facets concerning children with disabilities, Timmons and Wagner selected 14 of these variables (or items) that, “when examined together would

best reflect a robust approach to inclusion” (p. 17). The totals from these items were combined to give an “inclusion index” between 0 and 1, which was then sub-divided into categories on a three point scale of “low-inclusion”, “mid-inclusion” and “high-inclusion”. The items they examined went beyond simply using a measure based on student’s regular classroom placement, and considered areas such as the involvement of the child in the extra-curricular life of the school, whether needs and supports were available for the child, and the extent of parental involvement. This was the only tool I was able to find that set out to measure how inclusive a school is, beyond the general measure of “school inclusivity” used by Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, and Gallannaugh (2007) (the proportion of pupils placed at School Action Plus or with a statement within a school), or Carrington and Elkins (2002) subjective categorisation of two schools as “traditional” or “inclusive”.

The Farrell et al (2007) measure is flawed, as both the categorisation of a child as having SEN and also the specification of the severity of the SEN have a subjective element (Dyson, Farrell, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2004; Farrell et al., 2007; Lindsay, 2007). It is unclear at which point Carrington and Elkins (2002) categorised their case study schools as “inclusive” or “traditional”, but their measure seems based on differences in “service delivery models for supporting students with special learning needs” (p. 6). This is based upon literature on inclusion as the authors make clear in the theoretical part of their study, but they do not define how they attributed the labels to each school. Although the quantification of inclusion is measured by a wide range of items in the Timmons and Wagner (2010) “inclusion index” (p. 17), no consideration of themes such as the extent to which the child is a valued member of the school community, and seen as an integral part of the school (Farrell, 2000) is made. Also, the extent to which some of the items are measures of inclusion are questionable, for example the item “during the school year the parent(s) spoke to, visited or corresponded with the child’s teacher” (p. 19) could have received the answer “yes”, which would have resulted in a high point on the inclusion scale but could have been describing communication that involved a complaint or the discussion of a problem or an upcoming disciplinary exclusion.

Thomas and Glenny (2002) caution against any such measure of inclusion, saying it results in the development of yet more “epistemological instruments” (p. 356), the likes of which, they argue, created the segregated system that

currently exists. They warn against the assumption that there is a way to precisely or operationally define inclusion, or a way to demonstrate it is occurring: “demonstration is a misnomer when thinking about inclusion. To be asked to show that inclusion works is like being asked to show that equality works” (p. 366).

It is difficult to judge inclusion or inclusivity of existing institutions, never mind creative representations of what an inclusive institution should look like. This is in part down to the complex and varied definitions of what inclusion is, what its aims are, and who is judging it (as seen in Chapter 2). The discussion above demonstrates that the school and system described in the vignette could be seen as inclusive according to some measures and definitions, but that it also has the potential to create new exclusions.

#### **Section 8.04      Theoretical aspects arising from the evaluation**

This section outlines recurrent themes in the focus group discussion that do not directly impact the evaluation of the vignette as a picture of a future school. They are however of interest as they raise important points about the place of ideology and the notion of inherent tensions and dilemmas within any school or education system.

##### **8.04(a)      “Idealistic and utopian”**

Chapter 7 described the repeated uses of the words idealistic and utopian made by focus group participants in response to the vignette. Idealism and utopia are complex topics, much misunderstood and misrecognised (Allan, 2008). They are words that are “supersaturated with theory and theorisation” (Thomas & Tarr, 1999) with a range of different theoretical understandings and underpinnings. An example of this complexity are the distinctions made in the literature between utopian realism, concrete utopism, and normative holistic visions (Halpin, 2009; Webb, 2009). Also often discussed is the ideology of inclusion (Croll & Moses, 1998, 2000b) and disability (Low, 2006), the attack of the use of idealism by “inclusionists” (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010; Brantlinger, 1997), and the difference between “being idealistic” and being “ideological” (Brantlinger, 1997). The terms span a diverse area, as perusal of any of the listed references will show. This makes the terms difficult to fully analyse, especially as I have not done what Thomas and Tarr (1999) implore: “if informants...employ the term ideological, the use of this descriptor by these informants....should form a principle focus of

scholarly analysis” (p. 17). This is an area where I could have developed this research, asking these participants to elucidate what they meant by the terms used.

The terms "idealistic" and "utopian" both share a common implication of being seen as negative. Utopia has had, and continues to have, pejorative connotations (Webb, 2009), and ideology "convey[s]...a discredit [and] is very often an insult" when used to describe a particular stance (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1994, p. 266). Thomas and Tarr (1999) say ideology is not a neutral descriptor when used to describe a statement or a vision, and I would extend this to utopian also. Milojevic (2003) describes how the term utopian evolved during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to mean "unrealistic, naïve and unfeasible. Being labelled utopian would delegitimise a...project by default" (p. 442). The ideology of pro-inclusionists is often levelled as a critique against them (Thomas & Glenny, 2002), the "pantomime villain" at which we can "catcall and hiss", an enemy of "reason and evidence" (p. 347). Barton (1997) acknowledges that some may find his views on inclusion as "the rantings of a romantic visionary, rather than having any bearing on the realities of everyday life" (p. 239). He himself levels the same critique at "supporters of integration", critiquing their claims on the value of integration as being based on "a romanticism that ignores the inequalities and contradictions that are endemic" in special education, the educational system and society (Barton & Tomlinson, 1984, p. 75). Brantlinger (1997) demonstrates in her critical review of work published by "special education scholars" that the term "ideology [is used] to denigrate the case made by inclusion leaders" (p. 426). This is further reflected in a table where she lists "traditionalists' depictions of supporters of inclusion", part of which I include below to illustrate how ideology is used to critique those who have a vision of inclusion (see table 8.1). It is however also used by "inclusionists" to discredit the assumptions of those that wish to maintain special schools (for example Tomlinson, 1985, 2010). In short, "ideology has become the weapon with which both sides berate each other" (Allan, 2008).

**The dreamer out of touch with reality:**

"attractive platform," "appealing sheen" (Kauffman & Hallahan, 1995, p. ix)

"lofty, idealized goals" (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1995, p. 61)

"clinging to a vision, romantic, insular" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994, p. 304)

"naïve environmentalism" (MacMillan, Semmel, & Gerber, 1994, p. 468)

**Table 8.1: Traditionalists' depictions of supporters of inclusion (from Brantlinger 1997, p. 437)**

It is the understanding of these terms as negative that I have construed them to mean in my interpretation of their use by focus group participants. This could be in part down to my fallibility as a researcher, I am attached to the vignette I have put time and effort into creating, and therefore take any mention of the terms as implied criticisms. I contextualise where they are used below and relate them to the literature in the hope they will be of benefit to further development of the future school vignette.

The comments were occasionally attached to issues of being unrealistic: “[the vignette] assumes all parents are going to be supportive and engaged. [This is] a very ideological view of a parent. We know in reality that isn’t the case”, or the vignette content being achievable: “it is unlikely to be achieved as is such an expensive [proposition]”. This is a critique levelled at other researchers in the educational futures field. One reviewer of Keri Facer’s (2011b) book *“Learning futures: education, technology and social change”* critiques her vision of a school in 2035 by imagining a head teacher asking “What about CRB checks? Tests? Checks on levels of progress? Ofsted?” (Shaw, 2011, p. 30). Similarly, Halsall (2001) questions what would need to be in place to support Joyce, Calhoun & Hopkin’s (1999) suggested requirements for school improvements, that is, the practicalities behind these requirements (such as the entire staff working together for at least half a day a week). Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou (2011) locate the failure of inclusion to enhance educational reform in “the lack of critical engagement with the realities of education and schools” (p. 37), critiquing the “escapism of postmodern writings on inclusion” and the need for the project of inclusion to consider feasibility. Feasibility, or plausibility as Kosow and Gaßner (2008) term it, is a component of evaluating scenarios, ensuring descriptions are “conceptually feasible and..not be regarded as impossible” (Kosow & Gaßner, p. 39). This project differs as I set out to engage with those who experience the realities of education, none of whom described the future school vignette as impossible.

Some participants in the focus groups saw some of the assumptions made by the model as flawed, and threatened by the likelihood of its acceptance by all: “[the vignette] assumes all parents are going to be supportive and engaged; [this is] a very ideological view of a parent. We know in reality that isn’t the case. There are a lot of parents who will become involved; unfortunately there are...an increasing number of parents who are disengaged with their child’s education” and “even the parent school contract [has] someone defining those

rules. Some people will agree with them, some won't; far too idealistic and optimistic". Armstrong et al (2011) maintain that for an inclusion project to be feasible it needs to "gain consensus and support from students and their families, teachers and schools" (p. 37). This will involve a community approach to creating and maintaining the school, the democratic leadership element as discussed in the leadership section in appendix 26. There is also a need to have the future school vignette itself evaluated by a range of parents. This is easier said than done – how do you access the parents who are disengaged?

Others in the focus groups saw the vignette threatened by the current view of educational achievement and standards – "as long as we have the gold standard of 5 GCSEs all these wonderful things are still not good enough", and others pointed out the outcome of this ideal school occurring in isolation "this school would be an ideal model, but if schools around it were "normal"/more traditional, it becomes a special school by default".

On the other hand participants also countered that the future school vignette was not as unrealistic as it may first appear – "the ideal world that Alison is creating...not necessarily ideal...possible world – that Alison is envisioning the fatuous value of 5 A-Cs would be kicked into touch! Looking at this school the fatuous goal post setting will be gone". Another illustrated the feasibility of this from their own experience of changes to the educational system in Finland – "culture really matters – this isn't too different from Finland. The objections we were having about teachers not wanting parents in the classrooms [happened in Finland], but teachers learnt to deal with it. Parents and teachers understand more about [the] situation on either side. Our conception is there are a lot of barriers but in practice they are overcome".

Perhaps this links to Croll and Moses' (2000b) application of the notion of utopian realism to inclusion: "it is idealistic, in that it represents what many people desire but regard as a far distant aspiration, and, at the same time, it also corresponds to observable trends as the overall proportion of pupils in segregated provision declines, even if slowly and unevenly" (p. 9). This ties in with the proposition made by some in the focus groups that as societies' constructions progress and evolve, the vignette will become more achievable, for example: "if you've got a change of mentality and structure by 2025 when parents get used to this, and teachers have been brought up to this, then it [parental participation] would be perceived as a strength".

I am not denying the place of idealism in my vignette, nor am I saying that the participants who said my model contained a certain idealism could be labelled “traditionalists” as Brantlinger (1997) might. Brantlinger does not deny the presence of ideology in her stance (her failing might be that she does not submit these ideologies to the same critical lens she places on “traditionalists” ideologies). Rather she claims an inclusionist’s ideology is different as it is organic, dwelling on emancipatory or transformative ideas for eliminating oppression, taking steps to counteract familiar, taken-for-granted practices, and treats the reality of everyday life as problematic. It is explicit, related to values, educational philosophies, theories of learning, and goals for society. It is accepting – of non-traditional learning theories, practices and research methods, and finally ideology is optimistic about school reform and individual transmutability. This set of tenets could be applied as a further evaluation of the vignette, measuring it by the extent to which it counteracts familiar practices, to which it is seen as organic and ever changing, to which it is emancipatory and transformative. I believe my vignette meets each of these notions of ideology to a certain extent.

#### **8.04(b) Tensions, dilemmas and conundrums**

Many apparent contradictions, tensions and paradoxes were highlighted in the evaluations of the vignette. This should be of no surprise as dilemmas are characteristic of and endemic in education (Clark, Dyson, Millward, & Robson, 1999; Mittler, 2000) and the various goals and objectives of inclusion itself may conflict and produce tensions (Peters, 2007). There are also tensions and paradoxes evident in the creation of scenarios when different aspects of schooling are considered side by side (OECD, 2001). Moves towards inclusion generate dilemmas in schools (Dyson & Millward, 2000) and policy, the dilemma of difference (Artiles, 2003; Minow, 1990; Norwich, 2010) is one key case in point. Even trends in public opinion about schools and education can be paradoxical, one example is described by Hutmacher (2001) where parents are highly critical of schools in general, but much less critical of the school their child goes to. Mittler (2000) suggests that the “deep-seated tensions, contradictions and dilemmas” (p. 173) arise from the unequal and divided education system itself.

The specific paradoxes and tensions raised in the evaluation of the vignette were:

- Curriculum entitlement versus student choice of curriculum

- Meeting needs of the individual versus meeting needs of a group
- Baseroom focus versus community learning
- Social learning focus versus children who wish to work independently
- Holistic model of child versus medical model implied by some multi-agency teams
- Parental choice of school versus creating student diversity
- Artificiality of school setting versus preparation for real life.

These could subsequently be categorised as to what general theoretical dilemmas they contribute to. One such dilemma for example is that of choice and equity. Tensions between student choice and curriculum entitlement could be seen as one aspect of this dilemma, as could the notion of parental choice of school and creating a school with a diverse population. The analysis of the evaluations also identified issues and unanswered questions. Each of these have been discussed above, they include issues surrounding: resources and funding; parental involvement, parental choice; and the new groups of students who have the potential to be marginalised by the system. It could be questioned to what extent the tensions listed above are actually dilemmas, when dilemmas are defined as a “situation where there is a choice of alternatives which is unfavourable” (Norwich, 2008a, p. 3). They are perhaps simply a synonym for “issues” or “questions”.

These tensions and unanswered questions could be seen in two ways. Are they just to be accepted, any moves to the vision of future schools are bound to be partial and compromised, just as attempted realisations of inclusion in practice are (Clarke, Dyson, Millward & Robson, 1999)? On the other hand, they could be used as a springboard to clarify “the most obvious sources of tensions...to eliminate the most glaring contradictions and illuminate pathways to progress” (OECD, 2001, p. 104). Despite the ambiguity behind the term dilemma, I believe the conclusions Norwich draws about dilemmas in education can still be applied – they call to be “resolved”, not “solved”, they require the balancing of tensions and accepting less than ideal ways forward (Norwich, 2007). The dilemmas themselves arise from pursuing values and aims that may be incompatible (Norwich, 2010). A response to the dilemma, Norwich posits, is to seek arrangements that are consistent with both values. He goes on to question whether the values can be combined, or whether one aspect has primacy over another.

Another approach to tensions is that used by Allan (2006, 2008) when discussing tensions that arise when teacher educators are faced with responsibilities that pull them in different directions. These result in “aporias”, or “dual responsibilities which need to be faced without privileging one or the other” (Allan, p. 81). Rather than framing these tensions as I have above with the word “versus” Allan uses the word “and”. Thus “meeting needs of the individual versus meeting needs of a group” becomes “meeting needs of the individual and meeting needs of a group”. Allan (2006) warns against privileging or choosing one element over another, as it is when choice is made that injustice occurs.

Both Norwich and Allan posit that we need to acknowledge the tensions or dilemmas that exist. Conversations need to be had at a school and policy level about these tensions and the implications they will have on any future model of a school. By seeing the strands of the tension side by side perhaps ways of resolving the tensions will become clearer. Egan’s (2008) description of a future education system acknowledges and makes use of the troubles and tensions that become evident, that is, they act as stepping stones in the evolution of schooling. For example, he describes how in (what was then) the future decade 2010-2020 a tension arose between the school becoming a “therapeutic organisation” (p. 108), yet “political paymasters” demanding the improvement of test scores. Egan uses this tension as a device to explain the rise of an educational movement of the future called “Imaginative Education” which he continues to plot through the remainder of his book.

In the methodology chapter (6) I presented several criteria that are seen to be central to the evaluation of scenario-planning methodologies. One of these was “consistency” which Kosow and Gaßner (2008) see as ensuring “aspects [are not] mutually contradictory or even go so far as to exclude each other for reasons of logic and plausibility” (p. 39). Using these criteria the contradictions and tensions listed above could be seen as demonstration of a weak, inconsistent description of a future school. However, another way to view this is to see inconsistencies as a key part of the purpose of using scenarios and vignettes (Kosow & Gaßner, 2008). Scenarios are useful precisely because they “identify gaps, inconsistencies, dilemmas, uncertainties and indeterminacies and to understand complexity” (Greeuw et al., 2000, p. 9).

The role of the vignette was not to be a blueprint for a future school, but to act as a stimulus for discussion. Many of the criticisms and issues raised could all be levelled towards the current education system, they are not unique to the vignette.

## **Section 8.05          Summary**

This Chapter concludes part two of the thesis, the creation, evaluation and development of a vignette of a future school for diversity. Its apparent success in catering for all students, not just those with special educational needs has been reinforced in that the discussions only made rare references to this pupil group. It has exemplified some aims and ideals of inclusion, and negated some of the barriers that are put in place by the traditional model of secondary schooling.

There are still paradoxes and tensions to be resolved, but these are common to any education system in the present. Sceptics may criticise the idealistic nature of the school and education system this vignette describes. I concur that it is idealistic in as far as it is based on a transformative, normative preferable future. It is idealistic in the sense that it treats the currently accepted phenomenon of over-representation of secondary aged children as problematic, and seeks to counteract the familiar, taken-for granted practices that cause this phenomenon to occur. Any promotion of inclusion “involves judgements based on values, and there is no reason to be apologetic about this” (Thomas & Glenny, 2002, p. 366).

Chapter 9 is the conclusion of this thesis, where I draw the empirical study of part one and the current element of the thesis back together. It contains further discussion of the impact of the findings of this thesis in its entirety on policy, practice and theory. The ultimate aim of stirring debate about inclusive practice will be discussed in the conclusion chapter through policy implications and dissemination of research.

## **Chapter 9. Conclusion**

### **Section 9.01 Introduction**

This chapter sets out the implications of this thesis for policy, practice and theory. It outlines what is innovative about this thesis and the contributions made to knowledge, as well as proposing future avenues of research based on the findings. Inherent throughout these discussions are mentions of the strengths and limitations of the thesis itself and the methodological instruments used.

### **Section 9.02 An unexplored phenomenon**

This thesis draws attention to an unexplored phenomenon, the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools, and relates it to discussions of inclusion and diversity. Although this phenomenon is recognised and commented on in some policy documentation and academic writing no empirical work has been carried out to explore why this group of children are over-represented. Just as disproportionality of gender, ethnicity and social class in a segregated system are taken as being indicative of an unequal and exclusionary education system this thesis posits that so too is over-representation of secondary aged children.

Rather than accepting the conjecture contained in some writing that it is the organisation of secondary schools that means pupils with SEN find secondary schools so difficult, this thesis asked people who have experienced making placement decisions to explain the phenomenon. Their view was sought through a questionnaire, and analysis revealed that although school structure and organisation account for some of the explanations so do within child factors, issues around relationships, processes and the curriculum as well as exosystemic and chronosystemic factors.

### **Section 9.03 “The big picture” – a holistic account**

“Anyone can make a forecast, sketch out a handful of scenarios, argue for what ought to be done, and identify some new trend. It takes special skills however to see the big picture – and to continually reformulate what is seen” (Marien, 2002, p. 272). This thesis has explored the “big picture”, being grounded in the “initial condition” (Bell, 2001): – the phenomenon and possible causes of the over-representation of secondary aged students in special schools. It contextualised this phenomenon in concepts of diversity

and inclusion. The thesis then moved beyond this, asking “what ought we do” (Bell, 2001) about this situation. A normative, transformative vignette of a future school was created, one which includes the children who are currently excluded from mainstream schools. The study is distinctive in that it did not end at this point. Rather, it presented the vignette to various audiences of experts and practitioners in the field of education and inclusion who evaluated the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the vignette. The suggestions arising from these discussions informed the reformulating and development of the vignette.

The thesis also articulates the need for a broad, multi-level, multi-factor understanding of disability and special educational needs. The thesis itself makes connections between individuals, schools and wider society, and ranges from the “micro-contexts of biographical and school life to the wider social and economic conditions and relations in which the former are embedded” (Barton, 1995, p. 58). This holistic perspective is used rather than a focus on a singular psycho-medical, organisational or sociological model. The conclusions made draw attention to the limitations of current models of disability, no one model or conceptualisation is sufficient in itself to cover all explanations of the situation, participants tended to attribute a range of factors for causing the phenomenon. There is thus a need for a model that accommodates factors in both the individual and in the organisation.

## **Section 9.04      The contribution to knowledge**

The sections above outline what is original about this thesis. What follows is a discussion of what the findings and the process have contributed to existing knowledge. This is examined at both a theoretical and methodological level.

### **9.04(a)      Contribution to theoretical knowledge**

This study has highlighted the secondary over-representation in special schools in England, and subjected the phenomenon to critical appraisal. It has produced an in-depth analysis of the reasons that stakeholders believe explain this over-representation, which as discussed above demonstrates the limitations of current models of special educational needs and disability. This study adds weight to the view that inclusion is complex, multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. It shows that there are limitations to viewing inclusion through a single theoretical lens, and that commonly held models of disability and special educational needs are limited. In their description of their findings into aspects of inclusion Thomas et al. (1998) concede that the

compartmentalising of their findings, while aiding analysis, is artificial, concluding that “inclusion is about a whole experience” (p. 71). The thesis begins to map the “whole experience” of inclusion onto an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which accounts for the various themes relating to why pupils of secondary age are over-represented in special schools. A limitation of the thesis is that currently the analysis is contained in separate themes, and while there is some acknowledgement of the themes being multifaceted and interlinked, each theme could be further broken down and mapped out. (An example of this relates to the role of parental preference in section 9.05b below.)

Despite this limitation, the analysis was translated into an imaginary design of a possible future inclusive school and education system, itself a novel way of applying findings. The vignette was presented to an audience of experts which facilitated the drawing of conclusions about how to refine and develop the school design. The workshops also highlighted some of the persistent issues, tensions and dilemmas inherent in the purposes and design of schools in a diverse society, demonstrating the value of engaging with a critical audience of experts when attempting to find and create solutions to a problem. The final vignette can be seen as a model for an inclusive school and education system, which is plausible, comprehensive and distinct. It is distinct from both the current system, and from previous visions of future schools in that rather than being based on the outcomes of trends and drivers it is based on a normative future, and also in that it has been subject to evaluation and development by others beyond the original author.

#### **9.04(b) Contribution to methodological knowledge**

Contributions to methodological knowledge and research design were mostly made in the area of futures studies. Although this is not the first time specific futures studies methodologies have been applied to the field of special educational needs and inclusion (see for example SEN Policy Options Steering Group, 2005) it is rarely applied to this area. In addition to the distinctiveness of the created vignette as described above, the thesis models an approach to the planning and design of future educational establishments as well as how to raise awareness of educational futures and of persistent issues and tensions endemic in education. I have shown that futures studies workshops are useful in raising awareness about educational values, in creating space for practitioners and policy makers to engage with 1/ their assumptions about

the future, 2/ their values and ethos and 3/the effect of tensions and issues in education systems on their values, ethos and assumptions (and *vice versa*).

On a practical level the thesis draws attention to the fact that scenario planning is only a small aspect of futures studies, revealing that care should be taken when stating that a scenario planning methodology has been employed, but also that there is a wide selection of tools that can be used to facilitate and enhance futures thinking. Futures thinking projects should outline what they are setting out to achieve and select appropriate techniques based on this. This thesis also shows that care should be taken when applying a SWOT analysis as part of an evaluation of a product or process. What is recorded in note form on a SWOT matrix does not always reflect what was said, as scribes can attribute their own meaning to statements. Also, there can be a lack of clarity in what constitutes strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as well as the notion that some comments cannot be categorised using the dichotomy imposed by a SWOT analysis.

## **Section 9.05      The implications of the findings**

This section outlines the implications of the findings for policy and practice and for future research. The policy recommendations are applicable to governmental, local authority and school level policy contexts. Some of the implications for future research emerge from the limitations of the thesis.

### **9.05(a)      Implications for policy and practice**

The existence of over-representation of older children in special schools needs to be acknowledged; as this phenomenon evidences inequitable practices it should not be simply accepted as it currently appears to be. The phenomenon requires further examination by policy makers as it could shed light on other examples of disproportionality within both the special education system and the education system as a whole. It could also have policy implications for issues such as youth offending and youth unemployment.

Current government policy recognises that special schools have much to offer (Department for Education, 2011b), and should continue to be part of the offer of school choice to parents. This study has recognised that special schools do have strengths. I contend that the strengths and incentives that some special schools offer could be examined with a view to creating general schools that also offer these strengths. The questionnaire found that there was also however a sense that special schools are the only available provision for a

child, as some secondary schools continue to assert they cannot meet the needs of certain children. As Mittler (2008) questions: “how many parents would opt for a mainstream placement if they could be sure that their child’s educational and non-educational needs could be met?” (p. 5). The study provides empirical evidence of the barriers presented by and difficulties caused by the organisational practices of secondary schools for students with SEN.

However, another issue related to models of disability and special educational needs points out that just as the individual deficit model has its limitations, perhaps there are comparable limitations of seeing the school as being deficient, of failing to meet some ideal as the organisational paradigm suggests.

Ancillary findings drawn from the responses to the questionnaire but not relevant to the research aims showed that specialist provision (in special schools) can have its own limitations. Special schools were felt by a number of stakeholders: to be unsuitable for certain children with particular needs due to the needs of majority of students within the school; to offer a limited curriculum below the academic potential of the child; to be institutional, unrealistic settings; and to be unable to deal with the needs of some children. Thus, it should not be assumed that special schools offer a “better” alternative for children with special educational needs than the mainstream.

Both parts of the study draw attention to the potential of “inclusion” to cause exclusion. The empirical investigation in part one revealed cases where it was “inclusion” in the mainstream that led to problems that in turn meant special school placements needed to be sought. This reveals that current practices of inclusion could still be viewed as integration – the child having to fit into the routines and expectations of the school and failing to do so. This thesis adds weight to the assertion that rather than ending the bias towards inclusion, there is actually a need to start including rather than simply integrating diverse students. Further exploration is implied in order to investigate what is constructed as inclusion in current school practice and to measure if and how it is inclusive according to the broadest definitions. This is a huge undertaking, the literature review describes how difficult it is to define inclusion, and the discussion in chapter 8 highlights that this has implications for if and how inclusion can be measured.

One definition of inclusion is the inclusion of all children in the curricula, cultures and communities of schools. While the future school seemed to include children with SEN who are currently excluded (as indicated by the fact that only limited discussion was made of these children) it identified the potential of other groups of students to be excluded or marginalised. Specific mention was made of: students who are difficult to engage; new pupils joining the school half way through a year; children with parents who are disengaged from school; and students who do not want to be involved in the social and community life of the school. No descriptions of inclusive practice that I have come across have examined the potential of the inclusive system portrayed to exclude other diverse groups.

Another finding that has policy implications is the role that processes related to the identification and placement of children with SEN play in the phenomenon of over-representation. The striking disparity between the recognition by LA staff of the role played by the processes and procedures relevant to special educational needs compared to the larger effect of process seen by other stakeholders suggests a need for local authority level evaluation of these processes. A similar evaluation needs to be made of the role of voice and choice – who is involved in placement decisions? And who is able to make the final choice?

Policy makers often set out visions of preferable futures as justification for policy decisions. This thesis has demonstrated the benefit of evaluating such visions, opening them up to ground-level practitioners and asking them to comment on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats they see in the vision. In doing so, tensions and dilemmas arising from the vision that may have been hidden may become apparent. This then leads to the task of seeking to resolve and balance the tensions, the first step of which is acknowledging they exist. This is true not only of visioning by political parties, but also of newly created schools as they seek to outline their aims and objectives of their ethos.

The literature review describes several large scale studies which involved input from a range of experts and stakeholders, and that used a variety of detailed futures studies methodologies. This level of exploration is unfeasible on the scale of a doctorate project, limited by time and resources. There are benefits of large scale futures studies being funded by a large organisation such as a state; on the whole the studies commissioned by government

departments/ministerial mandate, or international organisations, gave more detail than the smaller studies explored. Educational policy makers should see futures studies as an effective way to explore the repercussions of potential policy decisions. Futures studies methods are widely used in industry and corporate organisations, and could be used as a viable tool in state decision making. There are provisos to this, however: the literature review described how futures studies designed to present the agenda of one political party in the UK have now been archived and seemingly overlooked by another.

This latter point highlights the influence of policy makers and political agendas on education, diversity and inclusion, which is another thread that runs through this thesis. Both parts of the thesis drew attention to the pressure that league tables and targets place on schools, causing schools to be less willing to include certain learners. This concern was also raised in the focus groups' evaluations of the vignettes; schools and stakeholders will not countenance alternative pathways and foci of learning until current standards of appraisal are removed. One sub-group went as far to state that education should be non-party political so that practice and policy would not change every time an administration changed.

The thesis reveals many other implications for future educational policy, including the role of parents, teacher training and continued professional development, the location of multi-agency teams, curriculum content, the funding of the educational system and size of schools. There is not enough room to discuss these concepts in detail in the conclusion chapter, but chapter 7 and appendix 26 explore some of these themes further and they are also examined in the literature review.

#### **9.05(b) Implications for future research**

As discussed in the methodology chapter for part one the small size of the sample and the extending of sample selection through snowballing and self-selection means there is no strong basis for a claim to generalisability. (Demonstrated by 16 of the 27 Likert-type rating scale items breaking parametric assumptions when a chi-squared measure of association is run, indicating an increase in sample size is needed.) This is not a representative large sample as in a scientific survey but it does represent a particular sample with different stakeholder perspectives – and is a marker of what they believe. This thesis does reveal there are differences in opinions regarding the reasons

given by different stakeholder groups. This difference raises a number of potential avenues for future research.

Any work carried out on imagining how to make schools more inclusive should involve participation from all stakeholder groups as they all have a slightly different view on the problems and their causal effect on the situation. One stakeholder view omitted from this current study is that of the pupil with SEN. There is a place for future work to examine children with SEN's agreement or otherwise with the themes that have arisen in this study. This is especially pertinent as such a large proportion of the reasons for over-representation are located within the child. The future school vignette was not presented to or evaluated by children with SEN or their parents. This would be a clear next step for any follow up work that is carried out based on this thesis. An extension to this is the presentation and evaluation of the vignette by a range of children – not simply those with special educational needs.

Another approach to future research would be the repetition of the questionnaire, with a focus on describing successful cases of inclusion in mainstream secondary schools, and looking at factors that indicate inclusion has taken place successfully, exploring the practices and processes used to attain this. Alternatively, case studies of successful (and unsuccessful) inclusive practice could be carried out. An original aim of this thesis involved the carrying out of case studies of children going through transition from mainstream primary to secondary schools (either mainstream or special). However gate-keeping issues prevented this from occurring. This would still be an important avenue to explore, and perhaps could be carried out with the backing of a university department or as participatory research.

One of the main themes discussed was that of parental preference. This accounted for 7% of the comments in part one. All groups made reference to the role parental preference had in the decision to send a child to special school, and comments were distributed as expected, (albeit with less references from secondary school teachers than any other group). These are beliefs that are attributed to parents by other stakeholders. There is no evidence about how the respondents reached these conclusions about parental motivation or to what evidence they have to back these thoughts up. That parents mention it too means it is in some way verifiable but needs further exploration. This is especially significant since when the theme of voice and choice is raised: although there were 51 mentions of the parents making their

choice there were also 48 mentions of professional advice being given and 28 of it being a result of a team decision. Parents commented less than expected on the voice and choice theme. Further exploration needs to be made of the role of professional suggestion having an impact on parental choice and preference.

Several participants commented that the future school vignette I presented had elements of being idealistic and utopian. Thomas and Tarr (1999) suggest that if these terms are employed by participants the meaning these participants attribute to them should be documented and explored. This thesis unpacks the complexity of these terms and the use of them in writing on special educational needs and inclusion as “weapons” to discredit those who hold an alternative view. Thus, I should, perhaps, have asked the user to define the term when used to gain a fully understanding of their meaning. (The same could be said for participants’ use of other contested concepts, such as inclusion and diversity.)

A final area for research involves “back-casting” – taking the preferable future and mapping out the steps that would need to be taken in order to achieve this future from the current context. Back-casting acts to bridge the gap between a preferred future and the present, and could involve experts in the field and policy makers. There are a variety of futures studies methods and tools dedicated to this approach which could be utilised.

#### **9.05(c) Concluding thoughts**

This thesis did not set out to develop a set of generalisable regularities of what causes the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools. Nor did it seek to identify and examine participants’ lived beliefs. Rather it sought to develop deeper levels of understanding and explanation, whilst acknowledging that these are contingent on the experiences, society, culture and belief systems of participants in the study and of the researcher. The vignette that is presented is also informed by these contingencies.

A goal of the critical realist approach to research and knowledge is highlighted by the adjective “critical”, demonstrating its emancipatory potential. This is further reinforced by the categorisation of the type of future described by the vignette. It is a preferable future, containing words like “overcome” and “circumvent”. It is normative; taking a value-led perspective: what do I want the future to look like? It is transformative, outlining the need for a change

from the current education system and practices. These features of this thesis lead to deep ethical arguments, for example “is it ethically defensible to build a model for a utopia and not seek to transform it into action” (Masini, 2006, p. 1165)? The ultimate purpose of this thesis was to stir debate about inclusive educational policy, and the question remains: how do I do this? Opportunities for the dissemination of this research have already taken place, through the seminars and focus groups, as well as through presentations at conferences and in newsletters and policy papers. In addition to this participants were given an opportunity to request a copy of a condensed version of this thesis.

Secondary aged children are over-represented in special schools in England. This is a historic pattern that is seen in the majority of local authorities (as well as in some international contexts). This thesis has sought to explain why this phenomenon occurs, and has revealed an array of possible reasons. In seeking to overcome the causes of the situation, and to imagine an inclusive, diverse school system, an alternative is suggested, which has been refined and developed by a range of stakeholders. However, this new system also has the potential to exclude, dilemmas and tensions are still faced and it reveals how changes are needed at a variety of levels. The questions set out in the title – where are we now (our initial condition) and where could we be have begun to be answered.

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# Appendices

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## Appendix 1 Additional investigation: are population patterns the same for each type of primary need?

The findings reported in this appendix were an exploration of the patterns of over-representation according to primary need as recorded by the then DCSF. A research question that I began with, but subsequently omitted was “*are these patterns (of over-representation of secondary aged children) the same for each category of Special Educational Need?*” The answers to this question are not based upon the questionnaire, or the parental interviews, but on a further analysis of data gained from the then DCSF, following a data request (received 11/05/2010). It shows special school population by age and category of need in England in 2009. This section explores the population of pupils in special schools according to the area of recorded primary need, in order to see if the patterns of more pupils of secondary age than pupils of primary age in special schools, population of a special school rising as a cohort ages is true for all categories of need.

Figure 1 shows the special school population, the total of each need as a percentage divided into primary and secondary proportion. All categories of need have more than 50% of their population in the secondary age range, with the exception of Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties which has 55% of the population in special school made up of primary aged pupils.

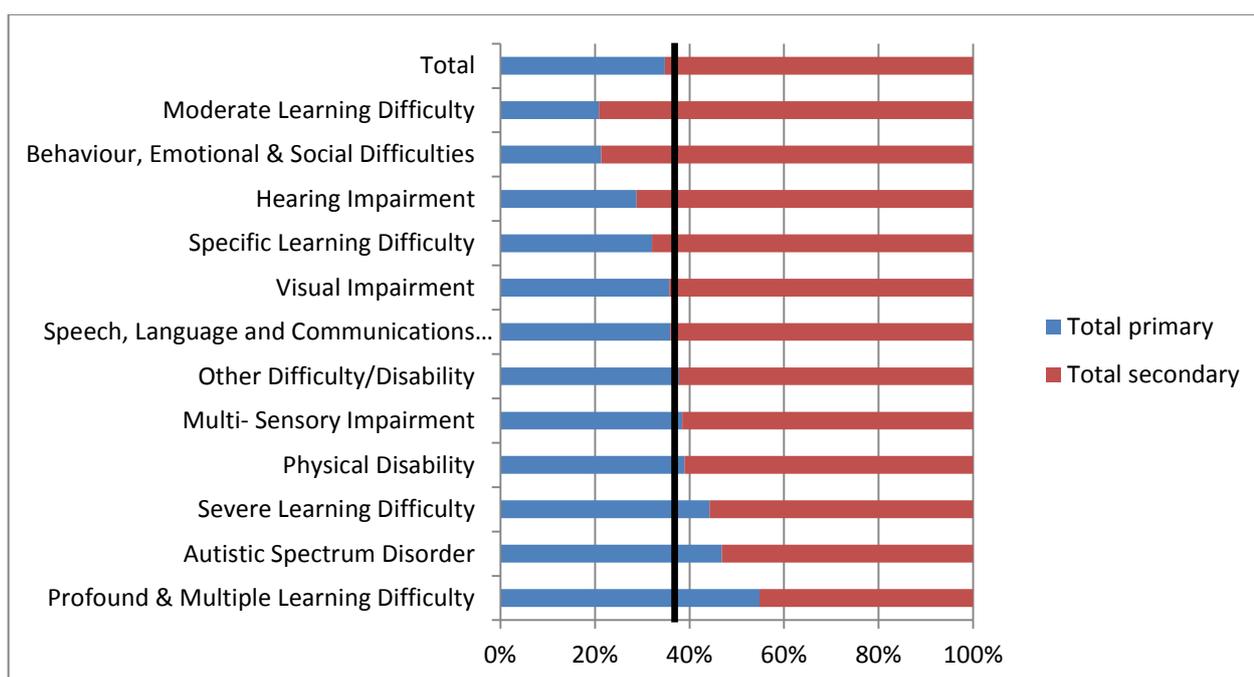
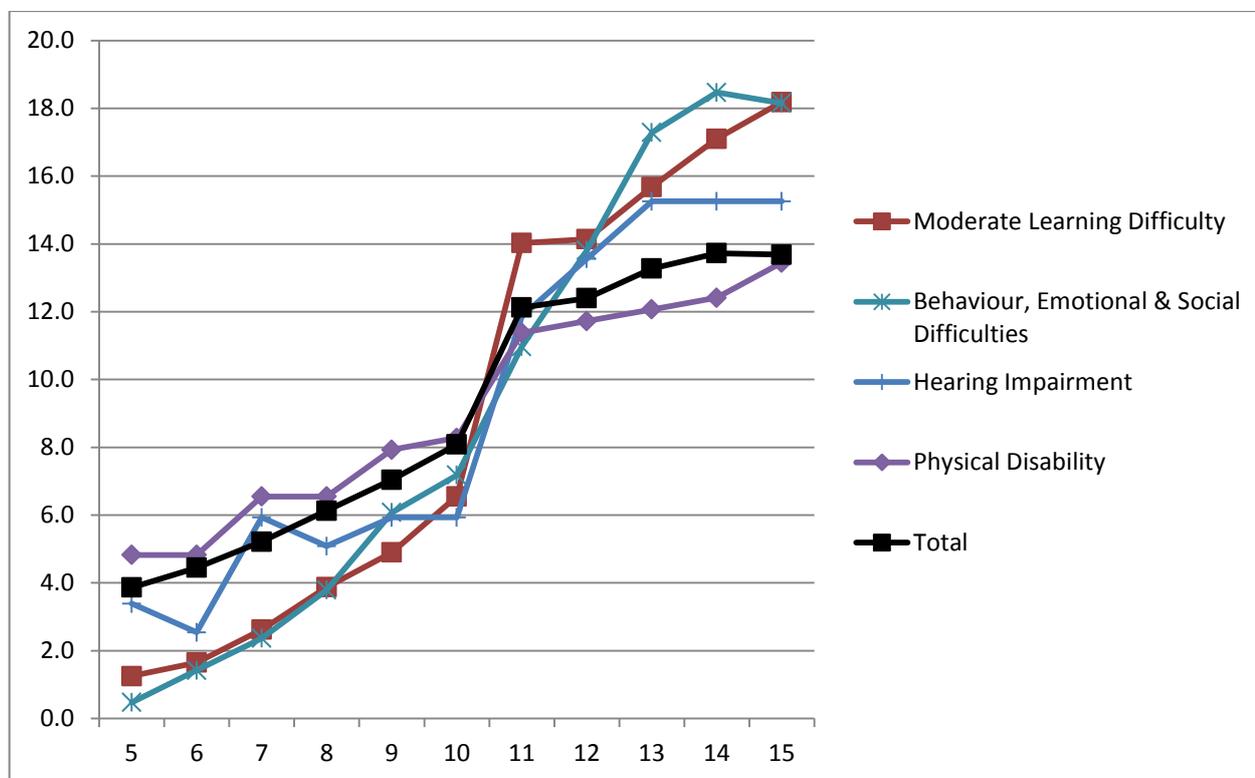


Figure 2: Special school population, total numbers of primary and secondary aged children, according to need. (The black line is to compare need according to total breakdown)

Nine of the twelve listed categories of need have over 60% of their total pupils of secondary age. Four of the categories of need show a larger proportion of secondary aged children than the total over-representation, they are Moderate Learning Difficulties, Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties, Hearing Impairment and Specific Learning Difficulties.

Percentage proportion of pupil numbers against age for each category of need were then plotted. As

there are 12 data lines the graph would be unclear if all plotted together. To counter this problem I have placed them into three graphs – those that are similar to the national trend (Fig 2), those that may rise, but do not have a big jump at age 10-11 (Fig 3) , and those that do not rise every year (Fig 4). This is not a longitudinal snapshot, that is, it does not follow one cohort through their time at school, so dips in the trend do not necessarily mean pupils have left special schools.



**Figure 3: Special school population percentage proportion of each category total, by age (needs that meet trend)**

Only Moderate Learning Difficulties, Behavioural Emotional and Social Disorders, Hearing Impairments and Physical Difficulties meet both trends of a year on year rise, with a jump between age ten and eleven. Six of the 12 categories see a year on year rise, in line with trend of total pupil numbers. With Visual Impairments there is an overall rise, but some data points stay level, and there is a drop.

The population of those with a primary need of visual impairment in special schools does rise year on year, but the biggest rise is after secondary transfer. The population of pupils with Severe Learning Difficulty also rise year on year, but there is no big leap between age 10 and 11, and after age 11 it appears to level off. The population of children with profound and multiple learning difficulties remains fairly constant.

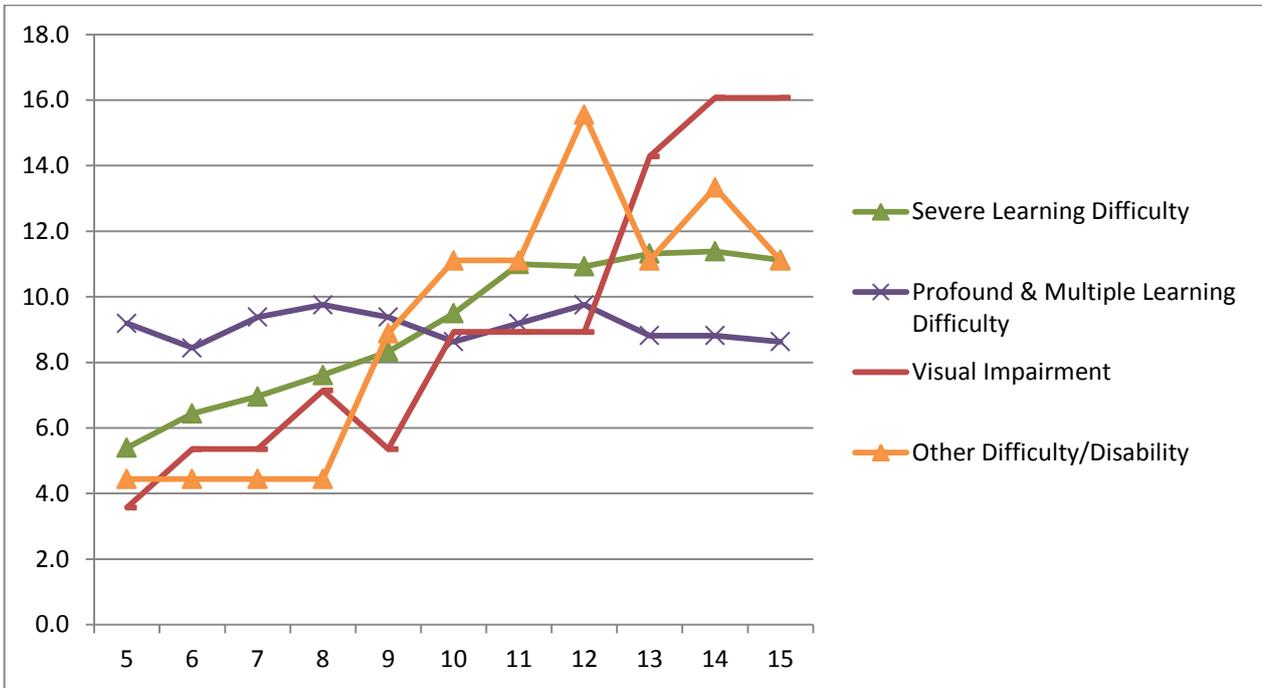


Figure 4: Special school population percentage proportion of each category total, by age (no leap age 10-11)

Figure 4 demonstrates that Specific Learning Difficulties, Speech Language and Communication Needs, Autistic Spectrum Disorder see year on year rise at primary ages, a jump at age 10 but falls at secondary age. Multi-sensory impairments is an erratic picture, with one data set missing (age 10).

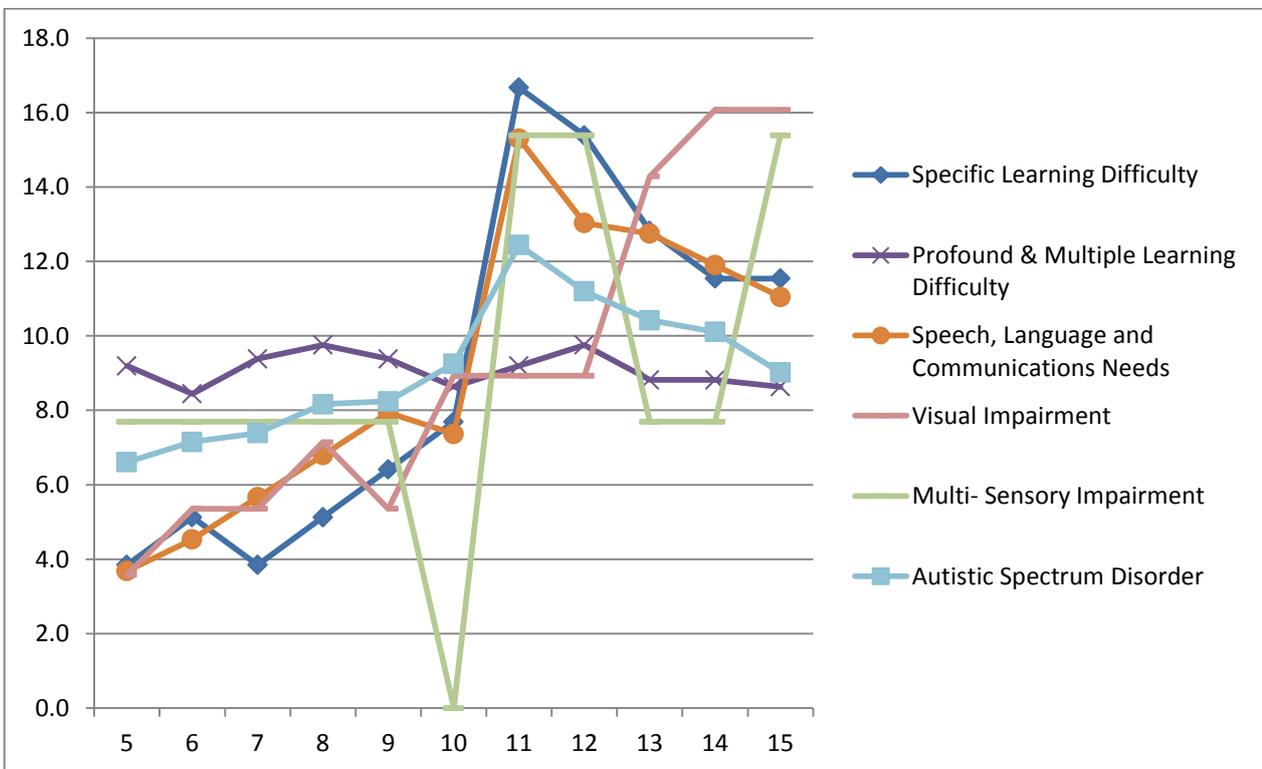


Figure 5: Special school population percentage proportion of each category total, by age (no rise every year.)

During one of the focus groups a participant asked what would happen if the cases of children with Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties as a primary need were removed. I investigated this, removing children with BESD from the total number of cases. The findings can be seen in Figure 5.

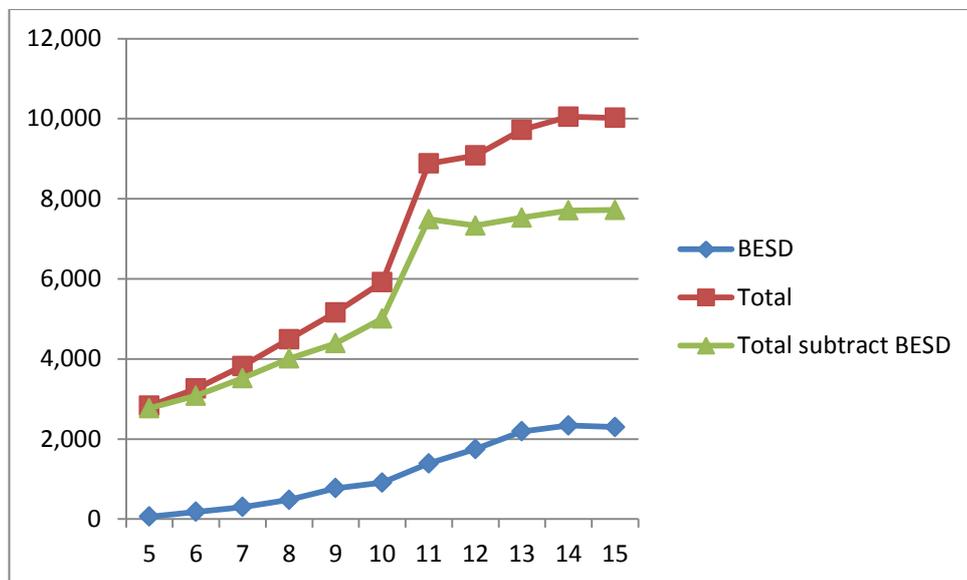


Figure 6: Graph comparing special school population with and without children with BESD as a primary need.

The pattern of a jump at age 10 still occurs in the population even when the cases of children with BESD are removed. So, the removal of the of children with BESD from the total special school population does not seem to account for much of the population patterns at primary level, but there seems to be an effect at secondary level (without BESD the year on year rise levels off). Figure 6 examines the changes in population in special school of children with BESD. This graph shows the patterns of a year on year rise (except at age 14-15), a jump between age 10 and 11, which is similar to the general special school population patterns. However, rather than returning to a “normal” gradient, the graph keeps rising at a similar rate to the 10-11 jump, until age 13.

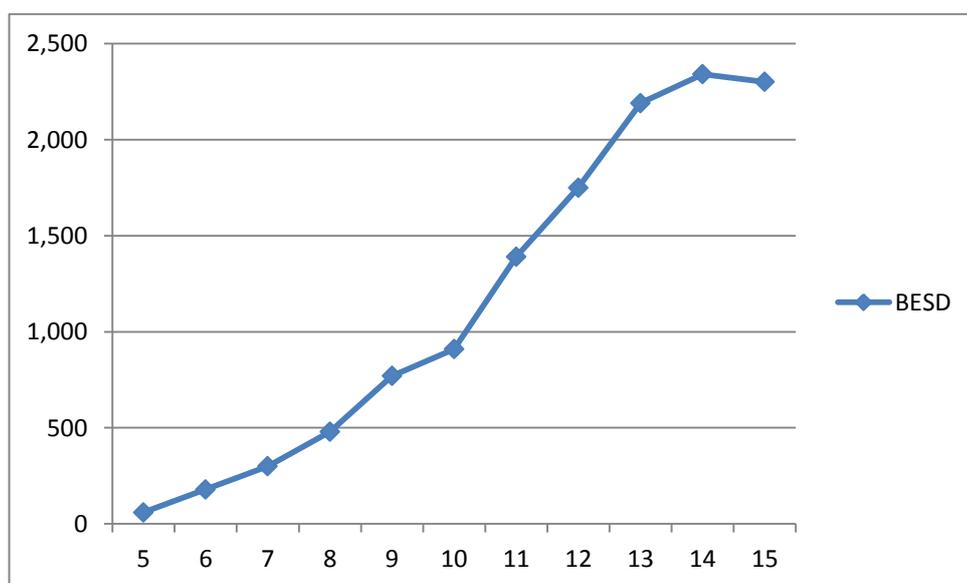


Figure 7: The population of children with BESD as their primary need in special schools

## Appendix 2 Consent form for expert interviews



### GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information which I give may be shared with the supervisors of this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....  
(Signature of participant )

.....  
(Date)

(If completed on-line, typed signature, with email address accepted as consent)

.....  
(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher: [REDACTED]

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Alison Black, [aeb214@ex.ac.uk](mailto:aeb214@ex.ac.uk)

OR

Prof Brahm Norwich, [B.Norwich@ex.ac.uk](mailto:B.Norwich@ex.ac.uk)

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

### Appendix 3 Invitation email

**From:** Black, Alison [mailto:████████████████████]

**Sent:** 02 March 2010 ██████████

**To:** ██████████

**Subject:**

Dear ██████,

I am a student at the University of Exeter, currently undertaking a doctoral research project. I am being supervised by Dr Hazel Lawson, who suggested I contact you due to your expertise in the field I am studying.

I am looking at issues of inclusion in primary and secondary schools, specifically comparing the two settings, and am hoping to develop a survey instrument. In order to construct this tool I am looking for opinions from those like yourself who have insight into issues surrounding inclusion further to those given in the literature.

To this end, would you be willing to participate in a short semi-structured interview? This can be in the form that is most convenient for you - in person at the University of Exeter or the surrounding area, by telephone, or through electronic mail communication. I envisage it taking no more than half an hour if an oral interview.

If you are prepared to take part in this study, please let me know by replying to this email. Alternatively you could contact me on ██████████. Please feel free to request more details on my study if you need more information.

Thank you for your time  
Alison Black

### Appendix 4 Briefing email prior to face to face interview

Dear ██████,

thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview for my doctoral studies. Are you still available on ██████████  
██████████? Let me know a time, I am available both days at the moment.

As mentioned in my original email the subject we will be exploring through the interviews is inclusion in primary and secondary schools, specifically comparing the two settings. We will discuss placement decisions at transition age 11, and the primary and secondary schooling systems. The interview will be in two main parts - some preparatory work can be done for the first part, as outlined below.

First part, Case study questions:

It would be helpful if you could think of examples of children you have encountered who had been educated **in a mainstream setting up to year 5/6, and then moved to a special school setting**. If you could describe the characteristics of this child this would be helpful - in terms of gender, type and severity of need, attainment level, parental support.

Another case study question would be to think of a **child who attended mainstream primary school, then transferred to mainstream secondary school, only for the secondary school placement to be unsuccessful**. What made the situation unsuccessful? What were the characteristics of this child? In both cases what were the characteristics of the schools involved? **Names of the children and the schools will not be required.**

Second part:

In this part I use graphs created from DCSF data to illustrate the special school population. We will discuss the patterns evident on these graphs, and ask for reasons you feel could explain the patterns found, based on your own experience. This is exploratory, and is seeking field worker opinion on the patterns, not a mathematical understanding of them!

Finally we will discuss meeting of special educational needs in mainstream settings, and a discussion of your experience of inclusive settings, as well as your understanding of the concept of inclusion.

I look forward to meeting you at this time, and hearing your views on these issues.

Thank you  
Alison Black

## **Appendix 5      Semi-structured interview schedule (and additional questions posed)**

**Questions in bold – part of the interview schedule**

Questions in normal font – questions added during semi structured interview as a response to issues raised

**1 - Can you outline your current job role?**

**2- Are you, or have you recently been involved in placement decisions and transition planning, at age 11 specifically?**

**3- In the preparation email I sent you I asked could you think of examples of different case study examples of children. Where you able to do that?**

**4- What about the other one? The child being educated in the mainstream up to the end of primary, and then special?**

**5 - You mentioned that you could think of the case of a child who went from mainstream primary, mainstream secondary and then special. Was it that the secondary placement was unsuccessful, or were there other factors?**

**6 - What conditions would the secondary school have to put in place for the placement of that child to be successful?**

7- You said in that case the parents find it quite difficult to accept? Was there disagreement at the provisional stage do you know, or did she just accept that all that could be done had been done?

*I think we'll move on to my actual research problem which is based on DCSF statistics. I'll show you a graph , (passed over graph, pointing to pertinent bits through explanation)that shows pupil numbers in special schools over the past five years, divided into the primary, that is 5-10, and secondary 11-16. All these children are in special schools, that's how many primary (points on graph) that's how many secondary.*

**8- Is it a surprise to you? A surprise that two-thirds of the special school population are secondary age?**

9- The key research theme that I am trying to get to the bottom of is the jump – if you look at a graph and plot it year on year, so at age 5 there are so many children, age 6 there are more children, it rises year on year and there is a big jump at age 10/11 which corresponds to the transfer and I guess I am trying to get to the bottom of why there are so many of the special school population are the older children.

10 - Do you think there is a general difference between the attitudes of primary schools in general and the attitudes of secondary schools in general?

**11 - Do you think the likelihood of children being included in a mainstream secondary depends on need – are there needs where children are more likely to be included?**

**12 - What about the other way around – they have a need that can be included.**

**13 - Have you come across a secondary school that is fully inclusive?**

**14 - What are its characteristics and ethos and value system?**

*I think that's the last of the questions I've got. The interview is to generate data for my thesis which is looking at the disproportionality of numbers, so your suggestions will be put together on a quantitative rating scale.*

## Appendix 6 Emailed interview schedule

*What follows below was emailed as an attachment to the 5 "experts" who had agreed to take part in email interviews. Participants filled in their responses below each question and returned the completed schedule to me by email. (The questionnaire was sent as two documents.)*

Part 1: I'm Alison Black, a student studying for a PhD at the University of Exeter, with a research interest in Special Educational Needs and Educational Futures. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

This interview is part of the **pilot phase** in my research, in that it will be used to generate possible explanations beyond those in the literature for a particular phenomenon that will be further explored through use of a survey tool. At this stage I cannot explain what my research is about as it may influence your answers, but after the interview I will be happy to discuss what it is I am exploring. Please email any questions you may have, or ring me on [REDACTED]. I have also attached a "debrief" in the final section of the second interview schedule.

I am interviewing you as someone with expertise in the area of Special Educational Needs and transition/transfer.

Thank you for agreeing to take part, and I would like to assure you about the confidentiality and anonymity of the information given. I have attached a copy of the **consent form** to the email that accompanies this – **please return it with your questionnaire**.

The space between the questions in no way reflects how long your answers are required to be. Please record as much or as little as you wish – however, greater detail will likely yield more information for the study development. The information provided in brackets are prompts that explain the question further, but are in no way restrictive of the information you can provide.

### **Warm up:**

Can you outline your current job role? (title of role, brief job description)

What involvement do you have with children with special educational needs? (Do you see them? Where? Do you deal with parents/ schools that have children with SEN?)

Are you or have you recently been involved in placement decisions and transition planning at age 11 for children with special educational needs?

Can you outline what part you play regarding these aspects of your job?

### **Case study examples:**

Case study 1: - Can you think of an example of a child who had been educated in mainstream up to year 5 or 6, then was moved to special school? (Don't need to name child).

Can you recall why the placement decision was made in this case?

What were the characteristics of this child? (Gender, type of need, severity of need, attainment, parental support etc....)

What were the characteristics of the school the child had a successful mainstream placement in?

What were the characteristics of the school the child may have attended post-transition that implied inclusion of this child could not be achieved there.

Under what conditions would a mainstream secondary placement have been successful for this child?

What was anticipated by stakeholders that implied inclusion in a mainstream secondary would not be appropriate? (Stakeholders – those involved in transition planning/ statementing meeting – could be parents, headteachers, SENCos etc.)

Case study 2 - Can you think of a case of a child who attended mainstream primary school, then transferred to a mainstream secondary only for the secondary placement to be unsuccessful?

What was the outcome of this situation?

What factor/ factors implied the placement to be unsuccessful?

What were the characteristics of the child?

What were the characteristics of the secondary school?

Under what conditions would a secondary placement have been successful for this child?

Which of the two above scenarios is most common in your experience? (Child moved to special school at transfer, or child moved to special school following an unsuccessful time in mainstream secondary)

Have you ever been involved in a case where there was a disagreement between stakeholders over the placement decision made during 11+ transition planning?

Can you describe what the issue was and how it was resolved?

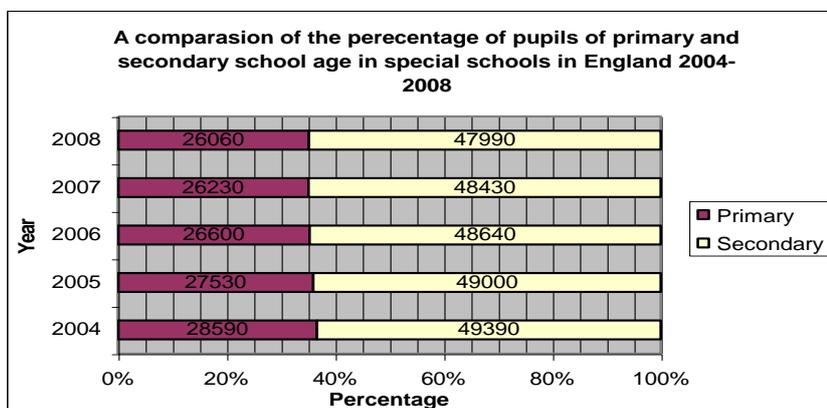
**This is the end of part one of the interview. Please now proceed to part two, the document entitled “AB email Interview 2”**

Please save this document, then attach it to an email address to me, or alternatively copy and paste it onto the body of the email.

## Part 2: Research problem:

Would it surprise you to learn that on average **two-thirds** of the **special school population** is made up of students aged 11 and older? (See graph for illustration of statistics over past 5 years). Why does this surprise you/ not surprise you?

Why does this surprise you/ not surprise you?



What reasons, using your own experience, could you suggest explain this pattern? (Two-thirds of special school population are of secondary age.)

What factors do you feel are important to achieving inclusion for children with special needs in a mainstream secondary school?

Is the likelihood of a student being included in a mainstream secondary school dependant on type of need?

If yes, what type of needs **can** be met in most secondary schools?

What types of need could **not** be met in most secondary schools?

Have you come across a secondary school you could say was fully inclusive?

What are its characteristics?

What do you mean by fully inclusive?

So I can compare this discussion to quantitative findings, would you tell me what LA you had dealings with?

**This is the end of the questions that make up the interview. Please save this document and return it to me, or alternatively copy and paste it onto an email to me.**

**The information below discusses the purpose of my research, and research findings. There is also an additional request.**

**Debrief:**

This interview is to generate data for my thesis which is looking into why there is a disproportionality of numbers of secondary age pupils in special schools. Your suggestions will be added to those found in the literature, and a rating and ranking questionnaire sent out to see which are the most commonly cited barriers to inclusion at secondary level. There is wide local authority variation, but this doesn't correlate with proportion of students with SEN, proportion of students in special school, population density.

**Additional request:**

As part of my study I am looking to explore case studies of families undergoing the transition from mainstream primary to special school this year. Would you be willing to give my name and contact details to parents of children in this situation who you feel may be willing to take part in the case study, or alternatively suggest a way I could identify and contact parents in this situation? You are under no obligation whatsoever to do this.

**Thank you for your time.**

## Appendix 7 Sampling frame process

Total sample needed	Minimum 60
Response rate to pilot	50%
Minimum oversample	Oversample by 60, thus total sample 60 +60=120
Preferred participant numbers	20 "experts" (EP, inclusion officers) 20 parents 15 primary school staff 15 secondary school staff 15 special school staff (85 total)
Layer 1	Local Authority Type
	London Borough, County Council, Metropolitan, Unitary
Remove those Local Authorities with incomplete/ contentious data (Isle of Scilly, city of London – no secondary school population, Cheshire East, Cheshire West& Chester Council as DCSF data lists them as Cheshire, Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire council as DCSF lists them as Bedfordshire.)	
Layer 2	Representative sampling used to ratio 4 county councils: 4 London Boroughs: 5 metropolitan: 7 Unitary
Select LA from randomised numbered list	County council 18 ██████████ County Council 12 ██████████ County Council 7 ██████████ County Council 24 ██████████ County Council London Borough 4 ██████████ 27 ██████████ 26 ██████████ 24 ██████████ Metropolitan 34 ██████████ Metropolitan Borough Council 27 ██████████ City Council 30 ██████████ Metropolitan Borough Council 2 ██████████ Metropolitan Borough Council 23 ██████████ Metropolitan Borough Council Unitary 23 ██████████ Borough Council 8 ██████████ City Council 47 ██████████ Council 7 ██████████ Council 28 ██████████ City Council 14 ██████████ Council 16 ██████████ Borough Council
Layer 3 - stakeholders	EP, school advisers and inclusion officers via council website (20 of each) SENCo's/ head teachers in primary/ secondary schools (randomly sampling schools from identified LAs using Edubase2, 3 of each type per LA) (potential of 240 replies!) Direct contact made with approx 100 establishments, more than one stakeholder in each. Snowballing: Parent's via parent partnership (unlimited – 20 parent partnerships contacted, along with postings on SEN/ disability forums) School advisors/ SENCos – SENCo forum (unlimited)
Layer 4 – post questionnaire filter	The questionnaire has a question that asks subject to identify Local Authority. If this does not correspond to LAs in sample frame, the questionnaire will be disregarded.

## Appendix 8 Invitation to partake in questionnaire

*This is an example of one of the emails set to the sampled stakeholders. Similar emails were sent to local authority staff and Parent Partnership Officers, with relevant details changed.*

Dear Head Teacher,

I am a teacher who is researching the process of transition for children with Special Educational Needs from mainstream primary school to secondary school/ special school. I am particularly interested in the views of Head Teachers in special schools who may be involved in some of the processes regarding placement decisions in any way. I am trying to discover why so many pupils with SEN attend special school when they reach secondary age.

I am exploring this important issue through a questionnaire that will take between 10-15 minutes to complete. Please click on the following link to get to the questionnaire:

[Transition and the number of secondary aged pupils in special schools.](#)

The questionnaire will be open until the 29th October.

Please consider forwarding this email to anyone else in your Local Authority area who may have a view on this topic, as I am interested in the views of all involved, including the views of parents.

Thank you for your time

Alison Black  
PhD Researcher  
Graduate School Of Education  
College Of Social Sciences and International Studies  
University of Exeter

## Appendix 9 Non-response request email

*The email below was sent to each member of the sample with the non-response request in the final paragraph.*

**From:** Black, Alison  
**Sent:** 17 November 2010 13:30  
**Subject:** FW:

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Firstly, if you have already received this questionnaire request and link I would ask you to consider completing it, as the study is drawing to an end and there are some gaps within my sample.

I am researching the process of transition for children with Special Educational Needs from a mainstream primary school to a secondary school/ special school. I am interested in the views of Local Authority staff involved with Special Educational Needs who have had some experience of this area, whether it be attending review meetings, making placement decisions, or helping and supporting parents and pupils to decide on the most appropriate placement for students who are reaching the end of primary school, or during secondary school.

As already stated, I have already distributed the questionnaire and apologise if this is the second or third time you have received it, but I am awaiting responses from your area of expertise, and in order to avoid under-representation I am distributing it again. If you have completed the questionnaire already I would like to pass on my thanks. I would like to assure you of the anonymity of this exercise, ethical approval has been granted by the university for the questionnaire and its use.

If you have looked at the questionnaire and decide not to complete it, it would be helpful to get an idea of why you chose not to do so. This can be done through a simple email to myself. Answers will be treated anonymously.

Alison Black

## The number of secondary aged pupils in special schools.

This survey forms part of a study which is exploring why there are more pupils of secondary school age in special schools in **England** than those of primary school age.

You have been chosen to take part in this survey as you have experience of the transfer of pupils with Special Educational Needs from a primary setting (Key Stage 2) to a secondary setting (Key Stage 3) in England. This experience could be personal, or in a professional capacity, as I am collecting the views of parents and school/ Local Authority staff.

Could you please try to complete and submit the survey by the 19th November. It should take no more than 15 minutes to complete, and comprises of three short sections, the first two being the main ones. Section 3 is simply for any other comments in response to the survey.

Please make sure you have saved the final survey responses before you submit in case there is a problem in submission. You can print your answers before sending.

**Warning:** Please make sure you submit by clicking the **Submit** button **not** the **Exit and Clear** survey button as this will delete all your responses.

Please contact Alison Black ([aeb214@ex.ac.uk](mailto:aeb214@ex.ac.uk)) if you have any problems.

Thank you for your time in contributing to this work.



### **A Note On Privacy**

This survey is anonymous.

The record kept of your survey responses does not contain any identifying information about you unless a specific question in the survey has asked for this. If you have responded to a survey that used an identifying token to allow you to access the survey, you can rest assured that the identifying token is not kept with your responses. It is managed in a separate database, and will only be updated to indicate that you have (or haven't) completed this survey. There is no way of matching identification tokens with survey responses in this survey.

## Questions for ALL

### Role

#### Role1: What was your role in the process of transfer?

If you have acted in more than one of these capacities please choose the role you have **most** experience in, and try to **answer the remaining questions from this perspective.**

Please choose **\*only one\*** of the following:

- Parent of child with Special Educational Needs
- Educational Psychologist
- Local Authority SEN advisor/ inspector (or equivalent)
- SEN officer/placement officer (or equivalent)
- Primary SENCO
- Primary head teacher
- Secondary SENCO
- Secondary head teacher
- Special school head teacher
- Other

### Case study (Section 1 of 3)

In the next few questions you are asked to think of a case you have been involved in where a child transfers from a mainstream primary setting to a special setting during Year 6, or at the transfer between Year 6 and 7.

If you are completing this survey as a **parent** of a child with a Special Educational Need, this would be your child.

In the case of **secondary staff**, please outline a case where a child attended mainstream secondary school, then transferred to a special school.

**Please do not give the names of children, schools, or any other persons.**

#### CS1all: Gender of child?

Please choose *\*only one\** of the following:

- Female  
 Male

#### CS2All:

**What was the child's primary/ main Special Educational Need? (Select the category which represents the primary area of need.)**

This question uses the categories of need as used by the government, and refers to the MAIN educational need of the case study student.

Please choose *\*only one\** of the following:

- Cognitive and learning need - **Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)**  
 Cognitive and learning need - **Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)**  
 Cognitive and learning need - **Profound Learning Difficulty (PMLD)**  
 Cognitive and learning need - **Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)**  
 Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Need/Difficulty (**BESD**)  
 Communication and learning needs - **Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**  
 Communication and learning needs - **Speech Language and Communication Need (SLC)**  
 Sensory and/or physical needs - **Hearing Impairment (HI)**  
 Sensory and/or physical needs - **Visual Impairment (VI)**  
 Sensory and/or physical needs - **Multisensory Impairment (MI)**  
 Sensory and/or physical needs - **Physical Disability (PD)**  
 **Other**

#### All3: What Local Authority was involved (for example Devon, Newham)?

If unsure, please type the name of your nearest town and the county it is in.

Please write your answer here:

## Questions for PARENTS

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Parent of child with Special Educational Needs' to question 'Role1 ']

**CS4Pa:**

**In the space below, could you outline your experience regarding your child's transfer between the primary setting to a secondary setting?**

**Consider:**

**Describe the primary school your child attended.**

**When did you begin to think about where your child would attend secondary school?**

**Who was involved in the decision making process regarding where your child would attend school? To what extent?**

**Why was the final school placement chosen?**

**Any other comments?**

This is an open question, meaning you are able to type in your own answer, based on your experience. You can be guided by the prompts given, but do not feel limited by them.

Please write your answer here:

--

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Parent of child with Special Educational Needs' to question 'Role1 ']

**CS5Pa: Did you visit any schools before making/ agreeing to a placement decision?**

Please choose \*only one\* of the following:

Yes

No

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Parent of child with Special Educational Needs' to question 'Role1 ' *and* if you answered 'Yes' to question 'CS5Pa ']

**CS6Pa: What type of schools did you visit? Please note how many of each.**

Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

<input type="checkbox"/> Mainstream secondary school	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Special School	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other kind of provision (please state which)	<input type="text"/>

## Questions for LOCAL AUTHORITY STAFF and PRIMARY/ SPECIAL SCHOOL STAFF

[Only answer this question if you answered 'SEN officer/placement officer (or equivalent)' or 'Primary SENCO' or 'Primary head teacher' or 'Local Authority SEN advisor/ inspector (or equivalent)' or 'Educational Psychologist' or 'Special school head teacher' to question 'Role1 ']

**CS4LApri: In the space below, could you outline your experience regarding the child's transfer between the primary setting to a secondary setting?**

**Consider:**

**Describe the primary school the child attended.**

**Who was involved in the decision making process regarding placement post-primary? To what extent?**

**What factors led to the choice of placement for this child?**

**Under what circumstances would a placement in a mainstream secondary school have been successful?**

**Why was the final school placement chosen?**

**Any other comments?**

This is an open question, meaning you are able to type in your own answer, based on your experience. You can be guided by the prompts given, but do not feel limited by them.

Please write your answer here:

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Local Authority SEN advisor/ inspector (or equivalent)' or 'Primary head teacher' or 'Educational Psychologist' or 'Primary SENCO' or 'SEN officer/placement officer (or equivalent)' or 'Special school head teacher' to question 'Role1 ']

**CS5LApri: Did the parents visit any schools before making/ agreeing to a placement decision?**

If you are not sure, please select "no answer"

Please choose \*only one\* of the following:

Yes

No

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Educational Psychologist' or 'Local Authority SEN advisor/ inspector (or equivalent)' or 'Primary SENCO' or 'Primary head teacher' or 'SEN officer/placement officer (or equivalent)' or 'Special school head teacher' to question 'Role1 ' and if you answered 'Yes' to question 'CS5LApri ']

**CS6LApri: What type of schools did the parent's visit? Please note how many of each, if known.**

Please choose all that apply and provide a comment:

<input type="checkbox"/> Mainstream secondary school	
<input type="checkbox"/> Special School	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other kind of provision (please state which)	

## Questions for SECONDARY SCHOOL STAFF

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Secondary SENCO' or 'Secondary head teacher' to question 'Role1 ']

**CS4Sec:**

**The case you are describing is one where a child with Special Educational Needs attended a mainstream primary school, then transferred to mainstream secondary, but the secondary placement was unsuccessful. Use the prompts below to outline this experience.**

**Consider:**

**What was the outcome of this situation?**

**What factor(s) implied the placement was unsuccessful?**

**Under what conditions would a secondary placement have been successful for this child?**

**Who was involved in the decision making process? To what extent?**

**Any other comments?**

This is an open question, meaning you are able to type in your own answer, based on your experience. You can be guided by the prompts given, but do not feel limited by them.

Please write your answer here:

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Secondary SENCO' or 'Secondary head teacher' to question 'Role1 ']

**CS5Sec: As a member of staff in a secondary school can you think of a case where you have considered a child who was due to transfer into your school whose needs you thought would be better met in a special school?**

Please choose \*only one\* of the following:

- Yes  
 No

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Yes' to question 'CS5Sec ']

**CS6sec:**

**Gender of child?**

Please choose \*only one\* of the following:

- Female  
 Male

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Yes' to question 'CS5Sec ']

**CS7sec: What was the child's primary/ main Special Educational Need? (Select the category which represents the primary area of need.)**

Please choose \*only one\* of the following:

- Cognitive and learning need - **Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD)**
- Cognitive and learning need - **Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)**
- Cognitive and learning need - **Profound Learning Difficulty (PMLD)**
- Cognitive and learning need - **Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)**
- Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Need/Difficulty (**BESD**)
- Communication and learning needs - **Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**
- Communication and learning needs - **Speech Language and Communication Need (SLC)**
- Sensory and/or physical needs - **Hearing Impairment (HI)**
- Sensory and/or physical needs - **Visual Impairment (VI)**
- Sensory and/or physical needs - **Multisensory Impairment (MI)**
- Sensory and/or physical needs - **Physical Disability (PD)**
- Other**

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Yes' to question 'CS5Sec ']

**CS8Sec: What Local Authority was involved (for example Devon, Newham)?**

Please write your answer here:

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Yes' to question 'CS5Sec ']

**CS9sec:**

**Why do you think the child's Special Educational Needs could not be met in your school?**

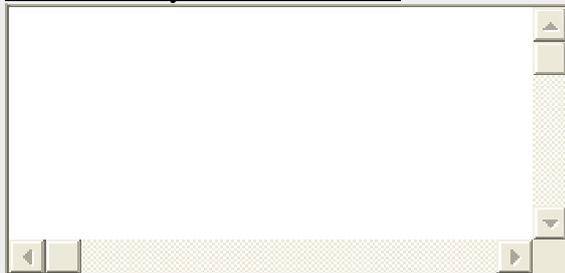
Please write your answer here:

## Questions for ALL

**CSall10:** This question is a space for you to discuss any themes or issues arising from the cases discussed so far that you wish to expand on.

This question can be left blank.

Please write your answer here:



### The special school population (Section 2 of 3)

The special school population in England is made up of nearly 75,000 students. Two thirds (66%) of these students are aged 11-16.

The next few questions ask you to give reasons why this situation exists.

**pop1:**

**Can you give up to four reasons why you believe there are twice as many secondary aged pupils in special schools than those of primary age?**

Please write your answer(s) here:

1:	<input type="text"/>
2:	<input type="text"/>
3:	<input type="text"/>
4:	<input type="text"/>

**pop2:**

Listed below are reasons that **MAY** explain why there are twice as many secondary aged pupils than those of primary age in special schools.

**TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THEY POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS OF THE NUMBER OF SECONDARY AGED CHILDREN IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS?**

There are three sets of factors. Taking one set at a time, **READ ALL THE POSSIBLE FACTORS FIRST**, and then work through the list and click to show to **WHAT EXTENT YOU THINK EACH STATEMENT EXPLAINS WHY THERE ARE TWICE AS MANY PUPILS OF SECONDARY AGE IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS**, on a scale of 0 (does **NOT** explain situation at all) to 6 (is a **KEY** explanation of the situation.)

If unsure about any factor select "No answer".

If you lose sight of the scale as you move down the responses, hover the mouse over the response circles and the respective scale number will appear.

**(First set of 3)**

After having read through the statements above please now rate them.

If you lose sight of the scale as you move down the responses, hover the mouse over the response circles and the respective scale number will appear.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6 Very much
When children are young there is a greater tolerance for immature behaviours.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Primary schools are smaller in size.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Special Needs Coordinators in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Head teachers in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The culture and climate of most secondary schools make them less inclusive.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
There is less special school provision at pre-school/ primary age.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
It is harder to include children with unusual or atypical needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The secondary aged peer group are less considerate of those who are unusual.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Special schools provide a more protective environment than secondary schools.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

**pop2b: This is the second set of statements.**

**Again, READ ALL THE POSSIBLE FACTORS FIRST, and then work through the list and click to show to WHAT EXTENT YOU THINK EACH STATEMENT EXPLAINS WHY THERE ARE TWICE AS MANY PUPILS OF SECONDARY AGE IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS.**

**(Second set of 3)**

After having read

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

through the statements above please now rate them.

If you lose sight of the scale as you move down the responses, hover the mouse over the response circles and the respective scale number will appear.

	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6 Very much
It takes time for parents to come to accept that their children might not fit in with the traditional mainstream curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Some secondary school teachers have negative attitudes implying that pupils with complex SEN belong somewhere else.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
It takes a long time to go through the statementing process, the child may be at the end of Key Stage 2 before the best placement is decided.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
In secondary school the child has to switch between lots of different adults all day without the security of a class teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Children working below attainment level 2 cannot easily access Key Stage 3 curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Government policy focuses too much on academic achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
In secondary schools the expectation is the child should change to fit system.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Pupils with emerging difficulties in learning are given a chance to progress in primary school; by secondary age assessments have become firmer about what is needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
School inspections focus too much on academic achievement.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

**pop2c: This is the final set of statements.**

**Again, READ ALL THE POSSIBLE FACTORS FIRST, and then work through the list and click to show to WHAT EXTENT YOU THINK EACH STATEMENT EXPLAINS WHY THERE ARE TWICE AS MANY PUPILS OF SECONDARY AGE IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS.**

**(Final set of 3)**

After having read through the statements above please now rate them.

If you lose sight of the scale as you move down the responses, hover the mouse over the response circles and the respective scale number will appear.

This is the final question of this type.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	0 Not at all	1	2	3	4	5	6 Very much
Secondary schools do not have enough resources to adapt to some children's unusual or atypical needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The amount of data and evidence required for a special school placement can take a long time to gather.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Parents are open to persuasion by professionals who suggest "wouldn't your child be better educated in so and so special school?"	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Primary schools are more able to absorb immature behaviour.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Children are more likely to be included in the culture and climate of special school because they are valued and they can contribute.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The special school environment has more adaptations for children with unusual needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Local Authorities see tribunal cases are time consuming and costly, so accept parental preference for special school placement.	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The Key Stage Three curriculum (Year7-9) is inflexible, and insufficiently differentiated.	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Parents believe their child will "never make it" in secondary school.

### Comments (Section 3 of 3)

#### Question for PARENTS only

[Only answer this question if you answered 'Parent of child with Special Educational Needs' to question 'Role1 ']

**ParentsC1: Parents - would you like to have an interview conversation based on you experiences of transfer? This will be used to gather more data on this important issue. Any interview would be conducted by telephone, and last no more than 30 minutes.**

By adding your name and contact details to this survey it means the survey is no longer anonymous. It will however remain confidential, and your name and individual survey responses will not be shared with another party.

Please write your answer(s) here:

Name:	<input type="text"/>
Contact telephone number:	<input type="text"/>
E-mail address (if available):	<input type="text"/>

#### Question for ALL

**Com1: This last question is a space for you to discuss any themes or issues arising in this survey that you wish to comment on. It can be left blank**

You have reached the end of the survey. Thank you for your time.

Please write your answer here:

**Submit Your Survey.**

Thank you for completing this survey.

## Appendix 11 Ethical approval for Part 1

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



Graduate School of Education

### Certificate of ethical research approval

**STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS**  
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/category/publications/guidelines/> and view the School's statement on the 'Student Documents' web site.

**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Alison Black

Your student no: 580034133

Return address for this certificate: [REDACTED]

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD

Project Supervisor(s): Brahm Norwich and Hazel Lawson

Your email address: aeb214@ex.ac.uk

Tel: [REDACTED]

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:.....*Alison Black*.....date: *1/3/10*.....

**NB** For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must **not be included** in your work. It can be kept for your records.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: August 2009

# Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 580034133

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## Title of your project:

Future secondary schools for diversity: where are we now, and where could we be?  
A "futures thinking" approach to scenario planning for diversity, informed by an investigation of the current overrepresentation of secondary aged students in special schools in England.

## Brief description of your research project:

Primary aim: creation, development and evaluation of models of "future secondary schools for diversity," informed by and evaluated through an exploration of why more students with special educational needs go into special schools around the age of transfer. The research undertaken to meet this primary aim will be in two distinct parts as described below.

### Part 1:

- an empirical enquiry into why there are more pupils of secondary school age in special schools than those of primary age (Black, 2009)

- examining what reasons are most commonly given by stakeholders as to why a child leaves the mainstream at transfer,
- exploring who the children who enter special schools at transfer are, their characteristics

### Part 2:

- the production and development of theoretical ideas about future schooling and creative ways of resolving differentiation dilemmas (such as those identified in part one of study), specifically vignettes of "future secondary schools for diversity".

To meet aim one I will use survey research, both in the form of a questionnaire and some semi-structured interviews. I also hope to use a case study approach of students and their families going through the transfer process, moving from a mainstream primary to a special school. Larger case studies of "non-traditional" secondary schools will also be carried out to meet aim two. A type of design based research, specifically scenario planning, will be used as the futures thinking aspect of the project, as I create and develop models of future secondary schools for diversity.

*The remainder of this ethics form relates to part one of the research, undertaken in year 1 of the study. A second application for ethical approval will be submitted prior to commencement of data collection for part 2.*

## Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

Local authority Special Educational Needs advisors

Special Educational Needs coordinators

Educational Psychologists

Parents of children with special educational needs who have left mainstream during or after transition to secondary schools.

Children who leave mainstream school at transfer, either those who have already left and are currently in special school, or tracking those in year 5/6 whose transition review indicates that they might leave mainstream before the age of transfer. (Aged between 10 to 16)

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

last updated: August 2009

**Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs)** a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

*Informed Consent:*

Participation is voluntary for all – each participant will be asked if they wish to take part in the study. The purpose of the project will be made clear to all participants, and an oral and written explanation provided. Details on how their answers are to be used will be provided in written and oral form. Written consent form will be signed by participant and researcher, and a copy kept by the participant and the researcher. A “child-friendly” copy will be provided for the child participants. Researcher’s contact details, and those of primary supervisor, are made clear on these forms, and participants are told that they can withdraw at any time from the process. Where the views of children with special educational needs are sought both parental and subject consent will be sought in the manner outlined above. In the first instance the researcher will ask the parents’/ carers permission, then, gaining approval, parent and researcher will seek consent from the child. It is unlikely I will be interviewing children with no oral communication skills. In the event I do, a separate ethics form will be submitted.

*Confidentiality:*

Participants will not be named in the write up of research. However if a section of interview is recorded verbatim in the research project the person who makes the statement has the right to be acknowledged if they wish. Otherwise pseudonyms will be used. Oral interviews will be digitally recorded, and transcribed responses will be seen only by researcher and both supervisors, and if are to appear in research report will be anonymous. Both transcripts and any sections used will be referred to the participant to ensure they are accurate. Any references to real people/ places named in an interview by participant or researcher will be changed to a pseudonym immediately during transcription. Electronic data will be kept on a password protected private computer, with a backup on password protected private university network area. Both of these are protected by anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Paper copies of questionnaires etc will be kept in a secure building, or a locked cabinet when not in use, or near to the researcher’s person when travelling/ being studied. Collected written information will be destroyed by shredding and securely disposing when it is no longer required. Any audio recording will also be disposed of digitally. Questionnaires will be anonymous; names will not be recorded on them. If identifiers need to be used to collate case study information these will be in the form of reference numbers, rather than names.

Participants will made aware that researcher has a responsibility to disclosure on grounds of illegal behaviour that may come to light through data-collection. The option to disclose to the relevant authorities will be considered at depth, and discussed with senior supervisor before (and if) any action is taken.

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Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee  
last updated: August 2009

**Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

**Pilot study –**

1/

Semi-structured interviews, by telephone or electronic mail

SEN advisors, Educational Psychologists, SENCo's –.

Opportunistic sample through university links

Participants should be informed where I obtained their names/ contact details.

Aims of research made clear, consent forms provided.

Their preference of communication used, and strict time frames adhered to by researcher.

2/ Survey and semi-structured interview for parents tested on family friend whose child moved from mainstream to special provision aged 10

It should be made clear that this is a pilot – the answers will not be used to generate results, but rather to test the survey and interview tool. Data will be dealt with in same manner as actual results regarding storage and anonymity.

**Survey**

Participants are professionals involved in placement and statutory assessment decisions and parents of children with SEN. Opportunistic and representative sampling – a range of participants from each category, and in certain geographical areas.

The survey tool will be used to yield both qualitative and quantitative data in the form of rating and ranking scales. There will be an electronic and paper version of the tool.

Participants will have a choice about which to use. Clear instructions on survey tool, along with description of project, and how data will be used.

Contact details of researcher will be supplied should any queries arise.

The forms will be anonymous, certain demographic information will be asked for, but will not be compulsory to complete.

The survey tool may be used to identify case-study participants. This will be purely voluntary, and up to the participant if they wish to pursue this option. Simple steps on how to contact the researcher in this instance provided, rather than recording personal details on survey.

**Case study**

The case: children who leave mainstream school at transfer, either those who have already left and are currently in special school, or tracking those in year 5/6 whose transition review indicates that they might leave mainstream before the age of transfer

Data collected:

Interviews of all stakeholders in the case, statements and Individual Education Plans and assessment data to see if there are any generalisable patterns in those students who leave mainstream at transfer.

Personal documents such as IEPs, individual assessment results, statements will not appear anywhere in the final thesis. Documents will be made anonymous on replication, and originals returned to owner of document. If a copy is provided, this will be made anonymous by the researcher, and initial copy destroyed.

Permission should be sought from parent/ carer and the child in manner described previously. Where data gained from school records, school head teacher should be contacted, and nature of research explained to them.

Gatekeeping – see section below for detailed discussion of this issue.

**General checks for all stages:**

Semi-structured interviews in person/ on the phone recorded digitally. Before recording device is switched on, ensure oral consent to be recorded is received. (Written consent will have been sought when initial paperwork filled in.) If participant is unwilling to be digitally recorded, ask if researcher

can record notes in written format. Child participants asked if they would like parents to be present during interview process. Child's wishes to be met.  
Where email correspondence is used check for written consent for discussion to be used before and after discussion commences. If not given, delete emails.

At end of sessions, and of research project, each participant should be debriefed. A copy of transcriptions will be forwarded, and any changes/ omissions adapted on transcripts as requested by participant. Final research report forwarded to all parties if requested (right to request made clear on consent form.)

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

**Gatekeeping** – in order to have access to the select group of children who will participate in the case study an intermediary will need to be involved. Where professionals are used, these have their own separate codes of ethical and professional conduct which must be respected by the researcher. Under no circumstances will I approach specific cases that may have named in individual case studies.

Rather the gate keeper, if willing, will approach the parents/ carers of the possible case subject to gauge willingness to take part, and if consent given, then the gate keeper can provide the researcher with contact details, or alternatively provide researcher contact details to the parents/ carers. An alternative method is contacting parents/ carers directly through on-line parents forums. In this instance the researcher will place an article outlining research and asking for participants. Participants will then contact researcher using details provided. After this primary contact normal consent will be gained.

Semi-structured interviews of parents, Local authority representatives and children will be recorded digitally, with access given only to researcher, and supervisors. These interviews will be immediately transcribed, and made anonymous. The digital records will be kept on encrypted files on the researcher's private laptop.

Electronic data will be kept on a password protected private computer, with a backup on password protected private university network area. Both of these are protected by anti-virus and anti-spyware software. Paper copies of questionnaires etc will be kept in a secure building, or a locked cabinet when not in use, or near to the researcher's person when travelling/ being studied.

Researcher clearance – I currently hold 2 CRB disclosure certificates with The University of Exeter – one issued September 2008, one issued March 2009. I also hold a Criminal records disclosure to enable me to work as a teacher in schools in Northern Ireland, issued September 2008.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

Make participants aware that researcher has a responsibility to disclosure on grounds of illegal behaviour that may come to light through data-collection. The option to disclose to the relevant authorities will be considered at depth, and discussed with senior supervisor before (and if) any action is taken.

As discussion of entitlement issues relating to school placement or the statutory assessment process occur it may be that parents/ children being interviewed seek advice/ opinion on their case. None should be given by the researcher, due to limit in expertise in this matter. Perhaps advise to contact SEN advisor for Local Authority.

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**This form should now be printed out**, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

*N.B.* You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

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This project has been approved for the period: March 10 until: June 12

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): B. M. [Signature] date: 2/3/10

*N.B. To Supervisor:* Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

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SELL unique approval reference: 2/09/10/62

Signed: [Signature] date: 16/03/2010  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

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This form is available from <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/>

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: August 2009

## Appendix 12      Generating initial codes

*This appendix outlines an example of initial coding, moving from the respondent's response in the left hand column, to initial coding in the other columns, based on Flick's (2006) "basic questions": **What** is the issue or phenomenon, **who**, **where** and **when**, as well as "intensity words" and generic memos.*

For the question that asked:

**In the space below, could you outline your experience regarding the child's transfer between the primary setting to a secondary setting?**

**Consider:**

**Describe the primary school the child attended.**

**Who was involved in the decision making process regarding placement post-primary? To what extent?**

**What factors led to the choice of placement for this child?**

**Under what circumstances would a placement in a mainstream secondary school have been successful?**

**Why was the final school placement chosen?**

**Any other comments?**

Respondent's response:	What	Who, where, when	Intensity, memos
offered support and advice to parent primary school very inclusive practice - have had many children with SEN moving to mainstream would have been traumatic due to size of buildings, cohort etc final school was mld special school - small building /small numbers etc	Very inclusive primary school Traumatic Size of buildings "cohort" Special school small buildings, small numbers	Female (BESD) Successful transition for primary school in past	Numbers in cohort or just cohort? Very inclusive, many children, traumatic

Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE.

## **Appendix 13      Table showing descriptive statistics**

*The table on page 344 shows the mean, standard deviation and modal value of each of the Likert-type rating scale items. It also shows the number of participants who responded to the scale item. The items have been arranged in order from largest mean to smallest mean.*

## **Appendix 14      Table showing cross tabulations**

*The tables on page 345-351 show the 3x3 cross-tabulations of the results of the Likert-type rating scales. They show the frequency counts between role and selected level of explanation. It reports which statistical test was used (dependant on whether parametric assumptions are met), the generated value of the test, the degrees of freedom, and the probability. Where  $p$  is less than 0.05 the Cramer's  $V$  value is given, and the associated variation (Cramer's  $V^2$ ). Highlighting has been used to demonstrate the level of the  $p$  value (red indicates  $p \geq 0.05$ , green indicates  $p < 0.05$ ).*

*The items are arranged in the order they appear in the data analysis in Chapter 4.*

Rating scale item:	The special school environment has more adaptations for children with unusual needs.	Special schools provide a more protective environment than secondary schools.	In secondary school the child has to switch between lots of different adults all day without the security of a class teacher.	Government policy focuses too much on academic achievement.	Primary schools are smaller in size.	Children are more likely to be included in the culture and climate of special school because they are valued and they can contribute.	School inspections focus too much on academic achievement.	When children are young there is a greater tolerance for immature behaviours.	Children working below attainment level 2 can not easily access Key Stage 3 curriculum.
Total	98	98	97	95	99	96	99	100	97
Mean	5.26	5.05	4.92	4.77	4.6	4.56	4.54	4.32	4.27
Standard Deviation	1.16	1.49	1.3	1.75	1.74	1.67	1.8	1.46	1.82
Mode	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Rating scale item:	Parents believe their child will "never make it" in secondary school.	In secondary schools the expectation is the child should change to fit system.	The Key Stage Three curriculum (Year7-9) is inflexible, and insufficiently differentiated.	The culture and climate of most secondary schools make them less inclusive.	The secondary aged peer group are less considerate of those who are unusual.	Some secondary school teachers have negative attitudes implying that pupils with complex SEN belong somewhere else.	Primary schools are more able to absorb immature behaviour.	Head teachers in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs.	It is harder to include children with unusual or atypical needs.
Total	95	96	91	97	98	98	99	96	97
Mean	4.24	4.22	4.19	4.1	4.1	4.03	4.02	3.95	3.73
Standard Deviation	1.77	1.8	1.63	1.76	1.91	1.52	1.65	1.77	1.99
Mode	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	6
Rating scale item:	Pupils with emerging difficulties in learning are given a chance to progress in primary school; by secondary age assessments have become firmer about what is needed.	It takes a long time to go through the statementing process, the child may be at the end of Key Stage 2 before the best placement is decided.	The amount of data and evidence required for a special school placement can take a long time to gather.	Secondary schools do not have enough resources to adapt to some children's unusual or atypical needs.	Special Needs Coordinators in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs.	It takes time for parents to come to accept that their children might not fit in with the traditional mainstream curriculum.	Parents are open to persuasion by professionals who suggest "wouldn't your child be better educated in so and so special school?"	There is less special school provision at pre-school/ primary age.	Local Authorities see tribunal cases are time consuming and costly, so accept parental preference for special school placement.
Total	98	97	98	99	98	98	96	91	90
Mean	3.62	3.62	3.5	3.44	3.43	3.4	2.91	2.45	2.3
Standard Deviation	1.78	2.15	2.16	2.05	1.86	1.68	1.88	2.18	1.95
Mode	5	6	6	6	3	3	3	0	0

	Special schools provide a more protective environment than secondary schools					The special school environment has more adaptations for children with unusual needs.			
	School staff n=30	LA staff n=29	Parents n=39	Total (n=98)		School staff n=30	LA staff n=28	Parents n=40	Total (n=98)
Low explanatory factor	0 0%	2 6.9%	2 5.1%	4 4.1%	Low explanatory factor	0 0%	2 7.1%	0 0%	2 2.0%
Medium explanatory factor	7 23.3%	8 27.6%	4 10.3%	19 19.4%	Medium explanatory factor	5 16.7%	8 28.6%	4 10.0%	17 17.3%
High explanatory factor	23 76.7%	19 65.5%	33 84.6%	75 76.5%	High explanatory factor	25 83.3%	18 64.3%	36 90%	79 80.6%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 5.725 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.175 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>		Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 4 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 7.818 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.050 <b>p=0.050</b>	
	The culture and climate of most secondary schools make them less inclusive					Children are more likely to be included in the culture and climate of special school because they are valued and they can contribute.			
	School staff n=29	LA staff n=29	Parents n=39	Total (n=97)		School staff n=31	LA staff n=28	Parents n=37	Total (n=96)
Low explanatory factor	6 20.7%	1 3.4%	4 10.3%	11 11.3%	Low explanatory factor	1 3.2%	6 21.4%	1 2.7%	8 8.3%
Medium explanatory factor	14 48.3%	17 58.6%	10 25.6%	41 42.3%	Medium explanatory factor	13 41.9%	10 35.7%	8 21.6%	31 32.3%
High explanatory factor	9 31.0%	11 37.9%	25 64.1%	45 46.4%	High explanatory factor	17 54.8%	12 42.9%	28 75.7%	57 59.4%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 12.641 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.010 <b>p&lt;0.05</b>	Cramer's v = 0.259 6.7% of variation explained by role	Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 11.689 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.014 <b>p&lt;0.05</b>	Cramer's v = 0.265 7.0% of variation explained by role

	In secondary school the child has to switch between lots of different adults all day without the security of a class teacher					Primary schools are smaller in size.			
	School staff n=30	LA staff n=29	Parents n=38	Total (n=97)		School staff n=31	LA staff n=29	Parents n=39	Total (n=99)
Low explanatory factor	0 0%	0 0%	2 5.3%	2 2.1%	Low explanatory factor	1 3.2%	1 3.4%	9 23.1%	11 11.1%
Medium explanatory factor	4 13.3%	14 48.3%	7 18.4%	25 25.8%	Medium explanatory factor	8 25.8%	7 24.1%	8 20.5%	23 23.2%
High explanatory factor	26 86.7%	15 51.7%	29 76.3%	70 72.2%	High explanatory factor	22 71.0%	21 72.4%	22 56.4%	65 65.7%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 11.994 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.006 <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	Cramer's v = 0.269 7.2% of variation explained by role	Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 8.185 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.078 <b>p&gt;0.050</b>	
	In secondary schools the expectation is the child should change to fit the system					Children working below attainment level 2 can not easily access Key Stage 3 curriculum			
	School staff n=29	LA staff n=29	Parents n=38	Total (n=96)		School staff n=31	LA staff n=28	Parents n=38	Total (n=97)
Low explanatory factor	6 20.7%	2 6.9%	4 10.5%	12 12.5%	Low explanatory factor	0 0.0%	8 28.6%	4 10.5%	12 12.4%
Medium explanatory factor	13 44.8%	15 51.7%	4 10.5%	32 33.3%	Medium explanatory factor	10 32.3%	10 35.7%	8 21.8%	28 28.9%
High explanatory factor	10 34.5%	12 41.4%	30 78.9%	52 54.2%	High explanatory factor	21 67.7%	10 35.7%	26 68.4%	57 58.8%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 20.257 DF: 4 Exact significance: 0.000 <b>p=0.000</b>	Cramer's v = 0.320 10.2% of variation explained by role	Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 14.865 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.004 <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	Cramer's v = 0.276 7.6% of variation explained by role

	The Key Stage Three curriculum (Year7-9) is inflexible, and insufficiently differentiated.					Pupils with emerging difficulties in learning are given a chance to progress in primary school; by secondary age assessments have become firmer about what is needed			
	School staff n=30	LA staff n=27	Parents n=35	Total (n=91)		School staff n=31	LA staff n=29	Parents n=38	Total (n=98)
Low explanatory factor	1 3.4%	4 14.8%	2 5.7%	7 7.7%	Low explanatory factor	6 19.4%	6 20.7%	5 13.2%	17 17.3%
Medium explanatory factor	14 48.3%	13 48.1%	12 34.3%	39 42.9%	Medium explanatory factor	14 45.2%	16 55.2%	13 34.2%	43 43.9%
High explanatory factor	14 48.3%	10 37.0%	21 60.0%	45 49.5%	High explanatory factor	11 35.5%	7 24.1%	20 52.6%	38 38.8%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 4.885 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.295 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>		Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 0 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson's chi-square	Value: 5.878 DF:4 Asymptotic significance: 0.208 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>	
	Some secondary school teachers have negative attitudes implying that pupils with complex SEN belong somewhere else.					Head teachers in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs.			
	School staff n=31	LA staff n=28	Parents n=39	Total (n=98)		School staff n=29	LA staff n=28	Parents n=39	Total (n=97)
Low explanatory factor	2 6.5%	1 3.6%	2 5.1%	5 5.1%	Low explanatory factor	4 13.8%	1 3.6%	6 15.4%	11 11.5%
Medium explanatory factor	15 48.4%	16 57.1%	18 46.2%	49 50.0%	Medium explanatory factor	15 51.7%	11 39.3%	13 33.3%	39 40.6%
High explanatory factor	14 45.2%	11 39.3%	19 48.7%	44 44.9%	High explanatory factor	10 34.5%	16 57.1%	20 51.3%	46 47.9%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 1.180 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.911 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>		Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 5.331 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.248 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>	

	Special Needs Coordinators in mainstream secondary schools do not think their schools are appropriate for certain needs.					Primary schools are more able to absorb immature behaviour			
	School staff n=29	LA staff n=29	Parents n=40	Total (n=98)		School staff n=31	LA staff n=29	Parents n=39	Total (n=99)
Low explanatory factor	10 34.5%	3 10.3%	9 22.5%	22 22.4%	Low explanatory factor	2 6.5%	3 10.3%	4 10.3%	9 9.1%
Medium explanatory factor	13 44.8%	16 55.2%	15 37.5%	44 44.9%	Medium explanatory factor	17 54.8%	15 51.7%	11 28.2%	43 43.4%
High explanatory factor	6 20.7%	10 34.5%	16 40.0%	32 32.7%	High explanatory factor	12 38.7%	11 37.9%	24 61.5%	47 47.5%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 0 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson's chi-square	Value: 6.895 DF: 4 Asymptotic significance: 0.142 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>		Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 6.581 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.153 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>	
	It is harder to include children with unusual or atypical needs.					Secondary schools do not have enough resources to adapt to some children's unusual or atypical needs.			
	School staff n=31	LA staff n=26	Parents n=40	Total (n=97)		School staff n=30	LA staff n=29	Parents n=40	Total (n=99)
Low explanatory factor	6 19.4%	8 30.8%	5 12.5%	19 19.6%	Low explanatory factor	4 13.3%	10 34.5%	10 25.0%	24 24.2%
Medium explanatory factor	16 51.6%	12 46.2%	7 17.5%	35 36.1%	Medium explanatory factor	17 56.7%	13 44.8%	6 15.0%	36 36.4%
High explanatory factor	9 29.0%	6 23.1%	28 70.0%	43 44.3%	High explanatory factor	9 30.0%	6 20.7%	24 60.0%	39 39.4%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 0 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson's chi-square	Value: 19.549 DF: 4 Asymptotic significance: 0.001 <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	Cramer's v = 0.317 10.0% of variation explained by role	Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 0 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson's chi-square	Value: 19.288 DF: 4 Asymptotic significance: 0.001 <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	Cramer's v = 0.312 9.7% of variation explained by role

	Parents are open to persuasion by professionals who suggest “wouldn’t your child be better educated in so and so special school?”					Local Authorities see tribunal cases are time consuming and costly, so accept parental preference for special school placement.			
	School staff n=29	LA staff n=29	Parents n=38	Total (n=96)		School staff n=28	LA staff n=27	Parents n=35	Total (n=90)
Low explanatory factor	7 24.1%	7 24.1%	16 42.1%	30 31.2%	Low explanatory factor	8 28.6%	7 25.9%	21 60.0%	36 40.0%
Medium explanatory factor	18 62.1%	10 34.5%	14 36.8%	42 43.8%	Medium explanatory factor	16 57.1%	15 55.6%	8 22.9%	39 43.3%
High explanatory factor	4 13.8%	12 41.4%	8 21.1%	24 25.0%	High explanatory factor	4 14.3%	5 18.5%	6 17.1%	15 16.7%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 0 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson’s chi-square	Value: 10.386 DF: 4 Asymptotic significance: 0.034 <b>p&lt;0.05</b>	Cramer’s v = 0.233 5.4% of variation explained by role	Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 2 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson’s chi-square	Value: 11.456 DF: 4 Asymptotic significance: 0.022 <b>p&lt;0.05</b>	Cramer’s v = 0.252 6.4% of variation explained by role
	Parents believe their child will never make it in secondary school					It takes a long time to go through the statementing process, the child may be at the end of Key Stage 2 before the best placement is decided.			
	School staff n=29	LA staff n=29	Parents n=37	Total (n=95)		School staff n=29	LA staff n=29	Parents n=39	Total (n=97)
Low explanatory factor	2 6.9%	1 3.4%	8 21.6%	11 11.6%	Low explanatory factor	4 13.8%	14 48.3%	4 10.3%	22 22.7%
Medium explanatory factor	14 48.3%	12 41.4%	7 18.9%	33 34.7%	Medium explanatory factor	11 37.9%	13 44.8%	9 21.1%	33 34.0%
High explanatory factor	13 44.8%	16 55.2%	22 59.5%	51+53.7%	High explanatory factor	14 48.3%	2 6.9%	26 66.7%	42 43.3%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher’s exact test	Value: 10.137 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.033 <b>p&lt;0.05</b>	Cramer’s v = 0.237 5.6% of variation explained by role	Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 0 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson’s chi-square	Value: 28.499 DF:4 Asymptotic significance: 0.000 <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	Cramer’s v = 0.383 14.7% of variation explained by role

	The amount of data and evidence required for a special school placement can take a long time to gather					The secondary aged peer group are less considerate of those who are unusual			
	School staff n=30	LA staff n=29	Parents n=39	Total (n=98)		School staff n=30	LA staff n=28	Parents n=40	Total (n=98)
Low explanatory factor	4 13.3%	16 55.2%	6 15.4%	26 26.5%	Low explanatory factor	3 10.0%	7 25.0%	3 7.5%	13 13.3%
Medium explanatory factor	11 36.7%	12 41.4%	9 23.1%	32 32.7%	Medium explanatory factor	13 43.3%	16 57.1%	6 15.0%	35 35.7%
High explanatory factor	15 50.0%	1 3.4%	24 61.5%	40 40.8%	High explanatory factor	14 46.7%	5 17.9%	31 77.5%	50 51.0%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 0 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson's chi-square	Value: 29.326 DF: 4 Asymptotic significance: 0.000 <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	Cramer's v = 0.387 15.0% of variation explained by role	Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 2 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson's chi-square	Value: 24.688 DF:4 Asymptotic significance: 0.000 <b>p&lt;0.001</b>	Cramer's v = 0.355 12.6% of variation explained by role
	There is less special school provision a pre-school/ primary age.					Government policy focuses too much on academic achievement.			
	School staff n=25	LA staff n=28	Parents n=38	Total (n=91)		School staff n=28	LA staff n=29	Parents n=38	Total (n=95)
Low explanatory factor	8 32.0%	20 71.4%	12 31.6%	40 44.0%	Low explanatory factor	1 3.6%	2 6.9%	6 15.8%	9 9.5%
Medium explanatory factor	11 44.0%	5 17.9%	13 34.2%	29 31.9%%	Medium explanatory factor	6 21.4%	8 27.6%	7 18.4%	21 22.1%
High explanatory factor	6 24.0%	3 10.7%	13 34.2%	22 24.2%	High explanatory factor	21 75.0%	19 65.5%	25 65.8%	65 68.4%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 0 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson's chi-square	Value: 13.572 DF: 4 Asymptotic significance: 0.009 <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	Cramer's v = 0.273 7.5% of variation explained by role	Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 3.334 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.509 <b>p&gt;0.5</b>	

	School inspections focus too much on academic achievement.					When children are young there is a greater tolerance for immature behaviour.			
	School staff n=30	LA staff n=29	Parents n=40	Total (n=99)		School staff n=31	LA staff n=29	Parents n=40	Total (n=100)
Low explanatory factor	2 6.7%	2 6.9%	6 15.0%	10 10.1%	Low explanatory factor	1 3.2%	1 3.4%	2 5.0%	4 4.0%
Medium explanatory factor	6 20.0%	8 27.6%	13 32.5%	27 27.3%	Medium explanatory factor	16 51.6%	19 65.5%	13 32.5%	48 48.0%
High explanatory factor	22 73.3%	19 65.5%	21 52.5%	62 62.6%	High explanatory factor	14 45.2%	9 31.0%	25 62.5%	48 48.0%
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 3.569 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.471 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>		Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	No, 3 cells have expected count less than 5	Fisher's exact test	Value: 7.847 DF: N/A Exact significance: 0.066 <b>p&gt;0.050</b>	
	It takes time for parents to come to accept that their children might not fit in with the traditional mainstream curriculum.								
	School staff n=31	LA staff n=28	Parents n=39	Total (n=98)					
Low explanatory factor	3 9.7%	4 14.3%	6 15.4%	13 13.3%					
Medium explanatory factor	19 61.3%	20 71.4%	19 48.7%	58 59.2%					
High explanatory factor	9 29.0%	4 14.3%	14 35.9%	27 27.6%					
Parametric assumptions met? (Yes, if less than 25% of cells have expected count less than 5.)	Yes, 2 cells have expected count less than 5	Pearson's chi-square	Value: 4.708 DF: 4 Asymptotic significance: 0.319 <b>p&gt;0.1</b>						

## Appendix 15 Comparison of proportion of the total codes made by each stakeholder group

Parents		Local authority staff		Secondary school staff		Primary +special school staff		Total school staff	
School factors	33.2	School factors	38.7	with-in child factors	25.0	School factors	31.1	School factors	27.0
with-in child factors	11.3	with-in child factors	16.1	School factors	23.4	with-in child factors	17.8	with-in child factors	21.6
Resources	9.2	voice choice	10.8	Resources	13.1	process	9.1	Resources	9.7
Parents	8.4	Resources	7.8	voice choice	9.4	Parents	8.4	voice choice	8.8
process	8.0	Parents	7.4	process	5.6	voice choice	8.0	process	7.3
voice choice	7.0	exosystem	4.0	peers	4.7	relationships	7.0	Parents	5.4
exosystem	6.1	relationships	4.0	Chronosystem	3.8	Resources	5.9	relationships	5.0
relationships	5.8	process	3.6	exosystem	3.4	Chronosystem	3.2	peers	3.6
Chronosystem	4.1	Chronosystem	3.2	relationships	3.1	exosystem	3.2	Chronosystem	3.5
mainstreaming can cause	2.9	peers	1.5	Parents	2.8	mainstreaming can cause	3.2	exosystem	3.3
appropriateness	1.7	mainstreaming can cause	1.0	appropriateness	2.2	peers	2.5	mainstreaming can cause	2.5
peers	1.2	appropriateness	1.0	mainstreaming can cause	1.9	appropriateness	0.7	appropriateness	1.5
safety	0.9	safety	1.0	safety	1.6	safety	0.0	safety	0.8

## Appendix 16 Abstracts as appeared in conference information booklets

**Conference title:** JURE 2011 Pre-Conference "Education for a Global Networked Society"

**Location:** University of Exeter, Exeter

**Date:** 29<sup>th</sup> August 2011

**Delegates:** Junior educational researchers (PhD-students and graduates who have received their doctorate within the last two years), EARLI members

**Session time:** 3.55 - 4.25, Session C4 (2)

**Description as appeared in conference programme:**

**Session C4, Multicultural and diverse classrooms**

**Future secondary schools for diversity: where are we now, and where could we be? A scenario planning session, informed by an investigation of the current overrepresentation of secondary aged students in special schools in England**

*Alison Black*

"Globalisation", "diversity" "inclusion" and "the future" are terms that are becoming common phraseologies, not only in political and academic fields, but also in the media and everyday life. Most organisations are driven to cater for these concepts, and success or failure of an organisation could be seen to depend on how well they manage themselves according to these drivers. Schools are one such an organisation. Often criticised for being run according the "factory model", and catering for a homogeneous group of students, how do we develop them to cater for the diversity globalisation inevitably brings? The purpose of my thesis (that the JURE round table discussion will play a part in) is to create, develop and evaluate models/ vignettes of secondary schools that cater for diversity, producing and developing theoretical ideas about future schooling and creative ways of resolving differentiation dilemmas. I hope to explore the following research questions: What could future secondary schools for diversity look like? What kind of education system would cater best for diverse needs from age 11? How can we cater for diversity in the schooling system? A type of design based research, specifically scenario planning, will be used as the futures thinking aspect of the project, as I create and develop models of future secondary schools for diversity, based on a methodology such as that laid out by RKC (2009) and Norwich and Lunt (2006). This proposal contextualises this process within my current research, and outlines what form the round table session will take. By the end of the round table session we will have produced or evaluated possible models of future secondary schools, which in turn, will feed into my current research project.

**Conference title:** “Reflection, renewal and reality: SEN and inclusion – policy and practice”

**Location:** International Conference Centre, Birmingham

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011

**Delegates:** Teacher Union members (NASUWT)

**Session time:** 3.05 – 4.00, Session 2

**Description as appeared in conference programme:**

**WORKSHOP 6**

Workshop leader: Alison Black, Exeter University

**Future secondary schools for diversity: *Where are we now and where could we be?***

The purpose of this workshop is to create, develop and evaluate models of secondary schools that cater for diversity.

“What could future secondary schools for diversity look like?”

“What kind of education system would cater best for diverse needs from age 11?”

“How can we cater for diversity in the schooling system?”

The workshop will give you an opportunity to evaluate and contribute to the design of a future school: starting with a pre-designed future school and then the group designing its own model. This will be a challenging but stimulating process that could take your thinking about schools beyond the current assumptions and conventions of schooling. The design is based on the reasons and obstacles to more inclusive secondary schools that parents, professionals and other stakeholders give to explain the disproportionate number of secondary aged pupils in special schools.

**Invitation email to members of SEN / disability research group, sent 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2011**

Our next meeting will be a workshop run by Alison Black who is a PhD student examining why there is a higher incidence of pupils in special school who are secondary rather than primary age. She will run a workshop on a Future School and ask us to evaluate this kind of school and to come up with our own ideas about a future more inclusive school. The meeting will be on 15 Nov 12.45 – 2.00pm in room BC101. Do try to come.

## Appendix 17 Invitation letter to the SEN Policy Options Steering Group



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
AND LIFELONG LEARNING

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EX1 2LU

Telephone +44 (0)1392 264892  
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Email [education@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:education@exeter.ac.uk)  
Web [www.exeter.ac.uk/education](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/education)

Dec 2011

Dear Colleague,

### ***A school for the future - 2025: Practical Futures Thinking***

**6 March, 1.30 for 2-5pm 2012**

**Birkbeck College, Malet Street Building, Room G16**

(Malet Street, Bloomsbury, London

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/maps/interactive> for directions and see attached map)

We are writing to invite you to the next SEN Policy Options Seminar which will examine a school for the future using practical futures thinking.

In the current policy context, when the Government is aiming to redress the 'bias towards inclusion' it is useful to take a wider view of the purposes and design of school education. The next seminar will be in the form of a workshop that examines the complex interaction between values, political and organisational issues and practicalities about teaching and learning in the design of schools for all. It will aim to:

Appendix 18 Explore why some pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities leave mainstream for special schools at secondary transfer and why the special school population rises year on year as each year children pass through school.

Appendix 19 Consider a model of a school for 2025 that seeks to address these issues, and evaluate this model through a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis

Appendix 20 Begin to develop our own model of a school in 2025

This seminar will return to some of the issues raised in a previous SEN Policy Options seminar about Future schools. The event will be organised into 3 parts:

1. Presentation of recent research about the disproportionate numbers of secondary pupils in special schools and the reasons which stakeholders gave for this incidence in a national survey.
2. SWOT analysis of a possible School for the Future that addresses some of the presented issues.
3. Opportunity to take part in some Future School scenario building.

The Future School model that will be presented has been designed by Alison Black, an

experienced teacher and researcher at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter. The model has been tried and developed based on workshops run at the European Association of Research in Learning and Instruction (EARLI) and a NASUWT conference on SEND and inclusion.

## **Programme**

**2pm Welcome and introductions:** (10mins)

**2.05 Presentation:** The situation as it exists, the reasons given by stakeholders.

**2.20 A school for the Future 2025: A solution:** present scenario, explain how scenario was arrived at, the principles/ values taken into account.

**2.35: SWOT analysis:** participants collectively do a SWOT analysis on scenario.

**3.15: Group scenarios:** participants work in groups and create own scenarios

**4.45: Plenary:** brief presentation of scenarios and general discussion.

## **5pm – End**

This is the 9th event in the sixth series of these seminars. Our most recent seminars have been on the topics: 'SEN Green Paper: progress and prospects', 'Choice-equity dilemma in special education provision', 'Has SEN outlived its usefulness?' and 'Personalisation and special educational needs' The papers and outcomes of the seminars are available on an open website through the National Association of Special Educational Needs (NASEN; which has provided funding for the series) and published in the Journal of research in SEN. See the end of the letter for more about the SEN Policy Options Group and for website address for previous policy papers.

For this event we are able to have up to about 45 participants; we usually have participants from schools, local authorities, voluntary, parent and professional associations, Government departments and agencies, universities and research organisations. If you cannot attend, you might like to send on the flyer sent with this letter to others who might be interested.

We would be very pleased if you could join us, but as the places are limited, it would be helpful if you could let us know by return whether you are able to come, by email (***b.norwich@exeter.ac.uk***). We will confirm a place for you if you let us have an email contact. You will receive the main papers a few days before the seminar.

Yours sincerely,  
Brahm Norwich

## **About the SEN Policy Options Steering Group**

This group started to organise the initial series on policy options for special educational needs in the early 1990s with funding from ESRC - Cadbury Trust. The success of the first series led to a second and further series which has been supported financially by NASEN. The group has published 25 policy papers arising from these events.

The main orientation of the SEN Policy Options Group is to consider likely future policy issues in order to examine relevant practical policy options. This emphasis is on being pro-active on one hand and examining and evaluating various options on the other. The purpose is to inform and suggest policy ideas and formulation in this field. More specifically the aims of the sixth series will be:

1. To continue to provide a forum where education policy relevant to the interests of children and young people with SEN/disabilities can be appraised critically and pro-actively in the context of the development of children's services.
2. To inform and influence policy formulation and implementation, to encourage and support an active and ongoing dialogue on SEN policy and practice between key stakeholders such as NASEN and other professional associations; schools, local authorities, parents and other agencies
3. To examine and evaluate policy options in terms of current and possible developments and research in order to inform and influence policy formulation and implementation in the field.
4. To organise events where policy-makers, professionals, parents, voluntary associations and academics/researchers analyse and debate significant issues in the field drawing on policy and practice in the countries of the UK, and:
5. To arrange the dissemination of the proceedings and outcomes through publication and summary briefing papers.

Website for accessing previous policy papers:

<http://www.nasen.org.uk/policy-option-papers/>

*Current Steering Group membership*

Professor Julie Dockrell, Institute of Education; Peter Gray, SEN Policy Adviser; Dr Seamus Hegarty; Professor Geoff Lindsay, Warwick University; Professor Ingrid Lunt, University of Oxford; Professor Brahm Norwich, School of Education, Exeter University; Debbie Orton, National Strategies. Linda Redford, Penny Richardson, Educational Consultant; Philippa Russell, CDC, Adviser DfES ;; Philippa Stobbs CDC NCB; Janet Thompson, HMI;; Professor Klaus Wedell, Institute of Education, London University; Ruth Miller, EPS, East Ayrshire.

## Appendix 21      Creation of the vignette

Describing the processes I undertook in order to create the vignette is difficult, due to the imaginative, informal nature of the processes used. I have attempted to illustrate the processes in two examples below. Neither of these descriptions should be seen as definitive, deliberate processes I set out to work through, but rather are meant to be illustrative of them.

### Example 1 School size:

School size was found to be the most commented on barrier to participation in a secondary school, accounting for 7% of all coding incidents. It was recognised as a contributory factor by all stakeholder groups. When asked to rate how much over-representation of secondary aged children was explained by the fact that “primary schools are smaller in size” 65 out of the 99 participants selected the “highly explanatory” end of the scale. It was the fifth highest rated item (out of 27). Therefore, it was necessary to envisage and design a school smaller than the average secondary school and more like primary schools in size.

Conceptions of school size in terms of a/ the numbers of pupils, and b/ the physical size of the school were not distinguishable in the responses to the questionnaire. The vignette thus needed to account for both conceptions.

In January 2011 96% of primary schools in England had 500 pupils or less whereas 10% of secondary schools were this size (Based on data from Department for Education, 2011a). I decided to base the school described in the vignette on the size of the majority of primary schools, and have the national context reflect this size also.

Thus, in the vignette:

- National context: “All schools are small (maximum 500 students)”
- Braeburn school: “A small school, both physically and in terms of student numbers (max. 350 pupils on roll)”.

### Example 2:

The vignette states that

- “Class group remains constant throughout the class’s time at school...”
- “Each class has its own baseroom with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas)”.
- “Each class has their own generic class teacher”.
- “Subject specialist teachers team teach with the class teacher/ lead mixed class activities”.

These statements were based on my own experience of being a secondary school teacher who had responsibility for teaching the majority of curriculum subjects to one class of year 7 students, in addition to issues raised in part one of the study. There are three strands that emerge from these propositions contained in the vignette 1/ location, 2/ relationships, 3/ subject specialism.

Location:

The school I worked in used a primary school curriculum delivery model, one teacher facilitating the delivery of the majority of the curriculum, in one room, with one Teaching Assistant. As one homeroom was used for the majority of each day’s lessons the children were familiar with and secure in one location, organisational skills (such as locating the next room, being equipped for particular lessons) were not as necessary and less learning time was lost by pupils/ teachers moving from room to room.

The tendency of secondary schools to operate an organisational model of different subjects being

taught by different teachers in different rooms was given as a reason for the over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools: “students have to move between teachers, classrooms and sites”, whereas “primary children tend to only have one teacher for the year and do not have to move around classrooms a great deal”. This was also reflected in the rating scale: - “in secondary school the child has to switch between lots of different adults all day without the security of a class teacher” was the statement with the third highest mean.70 out of 97 participants selecting from the top end of the scale (mean 4.92, s.d. 1.3, mode 6).

#### Relationships:

These characteristics do not only have benefits in terms of physical location, they also engender closer relationships, as the word “security” in the rating scale item implies. In my experience of the homegroup approach:

- Relationships had time to develop, and become strong (Pupil-pupil, teacher-pupil, Teaching Assistant-pupil, teacher- Teaching Assistant.)
- Awareness of individual pupils’ needs, strengths and weaknesses was high.
- Knowledge of the class as a whole enabled formative, informal assessment and evaluation to be used, meaning the teacher had time to adjust pace of lessons through the week to deal with any difficulties/ misconceptions.

Relationships was a theme uncovered in the empirical study, one aspect of this theme was relationships between the child with SEN and their peers, and relationships between the children with SEN and school staff. The primary school organisational model was seen to foster closer, better relationships between these groups of people as they got to know each other over time.

#### Specialised teacher:

My experience in the secondary school I have described also raised problems that the vignette sought to overcome. As the majority of secondary school teachers have been trained as subject teachers it was hard for them to adapt to a model where they were responsible for teaching all subjects. This caused problems in the curriculum delivery of some highly specialised subjects, such as science, where, if the teacher did not feel confident in the concepts to be delivered they occasionally omitted them. This had repercussions in end of year assessment task, as well as higher up the school were pupils did not have the knowledge of key concepts they were expected to know. The home room itself was not equipped for all lessons (for example, art lessons involving painting could not be undertaken with ease due to lack of facilities such as a sink).

## Appendix 22 Traceability and transparency

*Two of the elements Kosow and Gaßner (2008) use in evaluating futures studies are traceability and transparency. Time was spent in the focus group sessions illustrating the situation the future school vignette was trying to resolve, and showing findings from the data analysis of the empirical study. I outline below how and when I did this in each focus group session. In addition I include the PowerPoint slides used in the session with the SEND research group to illustrate the information I provided the audience with.*

### *Introductory session JURE:*

5 minutes to describe population pattern, interim findings (as data analysis not complete) and progression from findings to vignette.

### *Introductory session NASUWT:*

10 minutes to describe population pattern, findings to explain phenomenon, and progression from findings to vignette. Time for questions about vignette creation (2 minutes).

### *Introductory session SEND research group:*

15 minutes to describe population pattern, findings of empirical study, progression from findings to vignette. Time for questions about vignette creation and clarifying findings (3 minutes) (See Powerpoint slides that follows below).

### *Introductory session Policy Options Steering Group:*

#### **2pm Welcome and introductions:**

**2.05 Presentation:** The situation as it exists, the reasons given by stakeholders. (Alison Black)

**2.20 A school for the Future 2025: A solution:** present scenario, explain how scenario was arrived at, the principles/ values taken into account.

Both these sessions cumulated in time for questions about points raised.

Kosow, H., & Gaßner, R. (2008). *Methods of future and scenario analysis: overview, assessment, and selection criteria.* Bonn: German Development Institute.

## A school of the future

### Practical Futures Thinking and evaluation

---

Graduate School of Education

## Aims

create, develop and evaluate models of secondary schools that cater for diversity.

- - explore why some pupils with SEN leave mainstream schools at secondary transfer and why does the population of special schools rise as a cohort ages
- - evaluate a model of a school in 2025 that seeks to overcome these reasons, through a SWOT analysis
- - begin to develop our own model of a school in 2025

---

Graduate School of Education

## The “problem”

- Two thirds of the special school population are secondary aged children
- When pupil numbers in special schools are plotted against age, there is a year on year increase in pupil numbers, with a large jump at age 10/11

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Graduate School of Education

## Reasons given by a range of stakeholders

- School level factors, including: differences in school organisation (emphasis on size), school ethos, and staff/schools ability to met child’s needs, to personalise/ individualise the learning,
- With-in child factors, such as the child’s ability in a range of areas, their vulnerability, their needs\* and attainment levels, and social “weaknesses”
- parental concern for their child
- A result of the choice of stakeholders, primarily parents, but affected by professional recommendation and requests. Child’s voice\* and a group decision.
- Resources – “support”, funding, availability of specialist staff
- an outcome of processes, particularly late identification and diagnosis,
- Exosystemic factors, relationships, peers (including the risk of bullying), and chronosystemic factors

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Graduate School of Education

## A solution...

- The year is 2025 – a school of the future
- Based on my ideas to solve the problems raised by the research, superimposed on framework developed by Norwich and Lunt (2005) as part of their futures work for the SEN policy options steering group.
- Also refined by contributions made by JURE conference round table discussion participants (August 2011), and NASUWT members who attended a workshop (October 2011).
- Any questions or clarification needed?

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Graduate School of Education

## Appendix 23 Focus group “ground rules”

*Prior to commencing focus group discussions I laid out a number of “ground rules” for the comfort of the group. The slide below was displayed during the NASUWT/ SEND presentations, and mentioned verbally to other groups.*



### Focus group “ground rules”

- You are all welcome to take part, but don't feel you have to contribute.
- It is helpful if individuals don't over-participate at the expense of others.
- Being recorded – for my research. By taking part you consent to being recorded.
- Anonymity/confidentiality
- All ideas have value.
- Feel free to ask for clarification at any point if instructions for activities are not clear.

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Graduate School of Education

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/category/publications/guidelines/ and view the School's statement on the 'Student Documents' web site.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Alison Black

Your student no: 580034133

Return address for this certificate: [Redacted]

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD

Project Supervisor(s): Brahm Norwich and Hazel Lawson

Your email address: aeb214@ex.ac.uk

Tel: [Redacted]

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: Alison Black date: 25/7/11

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.

# Certificate of ethical research approval

**Your student no: 580034133**

**Title of your project:**

Future secondary schools for diversity: where are we now, and where could we be?

A "futures thinking" approach to scenario planning for diversity, informed by an investigation of the current overrepresentation of secondary aged students in special schools in England.

**Brief description of your research project:**

Primary aim: creation, development and evaluation of models of "future secondary schools for diversity," informed by and evaluated through an exploration of why more students with special educational needs go into special schools around the age of transfer. The research undertaken to meet this primary aim will be in two distinct parts as described below.

Part 1:

- an empirical enquiry into why there are more pupils of secondary school age in special schools than those of primary age (Black, 2009)

- examining what reasons are most commonly given by stakeholders as to why a child leaves the mainstream at transfer,
- exploring who the children who enter special schools at transfer are, their characteristics

Part 2:

- the production and development of theoretical ideas about future schooling and creative ways of resolving differentiation dilemmas (such as those identified in part one of study), specifically vignettes of "future secondary schools for diversity".

Part 2 involves a type of design based research, specifically scenario planning, which will be used as the futures thinking aspect of the project, as I create and develop and evaluate models of future secondary schools for diversity.

In a focus group we would consider the questions:

What would future secondary schools for diversity (of learning needs) look like? How can we include more children with SEN in mainstream secondary schools? What kind of education system would work best for diverse learning needs? How do we overcome/ circumvent barriers such as ... (literature/ research findings)

We will evaluate previously created models, and create our own model.

*The remainder of this ethics form relates to **part two** of the research, undertaken in year 3 of the study. I have received an ethics form giving approval for Part 1. (SELL Unique approval reference: D/09/10/62, received 16/3/2010).*

**Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):**

Educational conference participants

Attendees of University of Exeter GSE seminar series

SEN/D research group at UofE

Previous Interview participants (parents of children with SEN who completed survey and volunteered to be interviewed, May-July 2011) may be asked to evaluate the scenarios proposed.

**Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs)** a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

*Informed Consent:*

Participation is voluntary for all – the event will be advertised in conference literature/ by email, and participants make own choice whether or not to attend.

The purpose of the project will be made clear to all participants, and an oral and written explanation provided. This will also contain an explanation about how the evaluations and vignettes/ scenarios will be used.

Written consent form will be signed by participant and researcher, and a copy kept by the participant and the researcher.

Researcher's contact details, and those of primary supervisor, are made clear on these forms, and participants are told that they can withdraw at any time from the process.

*Confidentiality:*

Participants will not be named in the write up of research. However if a section of the focus group discussion is recorded verbatim in the research project the person who makes the statement has the right to be acknowledged if they wish.

Also, if a scenario/ vignette created is used, the co-authors of this have a right to be named. Names will be collected on the day the focus group takes place if participants wish to be acknowledged. The acknowledgement will appear on the vignettes as they are recorded in the thesis or its appendices. Otherwise pseudonyms will be used.

The entire focus group discussions will be digitally recorded, and transcribed after the event.

Transcribed responses will be seen only by researcher and both supervisors, and if are to appear in research report will be dealt with as described above.

Any references to real people/ places named in an interview by participant or researcher will be changed to a pseudonym immediately during transcription.

Electronic data will be kept on a password protected private computer, with a backup on password protected private university network area. Both of these are protected by anti-virus and anti-spyware software.

Any audio recording will also be disposed of digitally as soon as transcription has been made.

Although participants can withdraw at any time they must understand that they will not be able to request that their responses be erased/ destroyed as this would require destroying the material provided by other individuals. It is unlikely that the researcher would be able to remove quotes while transcribing as they are unfamiliar with the participants and who said what. If a participant did want a quote removed, every effort would be taken to do so.

Participants will be made aware that researcher has a responsibility to disclosure on grounds of illegal behaviour that may come to light through data-collection. The option to disclose to the relevant authorities will be considered at depth, and discussed with senior supervisor before (and if) any action is taken.

Researcher has little control over confidentiality beyond the focus group – I cannot promise or ensure strict and absolute confidentiality, as I have no control over what participants may disclose when they leave the group. Confidentiality will be one of the issues discussed in the introductory "ground rules" (see below). Fortunately, it is unlikely any sensitive areas of discussion will be raised.

**Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:**

The nature of the focus group activity is group work and discussion. There is the possibility of participant stress caused by the intensity of interaction in a group setting. Participants should be encouraged to feel comfortable within the group setting, they should not be forced to respond/ contribute in any way, or humiliated for having a different opinion/ making an "outlandish" suggestion. "Ground rules" will be set by the researcher at the start of the event. There will be time at the end of the session to debrief informally.

Digital recording procedures outlined above.

**Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):**

The question of authorship/ intellectual property

The purpose of this focus group is to evaluate previously created vignettes of future schools. It is also to work as a group to create a group vision of what school would be like in the future. All participants are in a sense co-authors of these scenarios and have a right to be acknowledged as such. This is discussed further above.

The researcher should collect all diagrams, notes and materials created, but must ensure participants receive copies if they wish. In this instance contact details should be collected, but used only for this purpose.

**Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):**

Over - disclosure – naming of schools by participants

In discussions about what a school could be like it may be that named schools are used by participants as negative or positive examples. This could then lead to damage being done to the reputation of that school. The researcher will endeavour to "troubleshoot" these instances as they arise, reminding participants we are focusing on the future. If a particular school is named the research will encourage participants to keep confidential what they hear during the meeting.

Make participants aware that researcher has a responsibility to disclosure on grounds of illegal behaviour that may come to light through data-collection. The option to disclose to the relevant authorities will be considered at depth, and discussed with senior supervisor before (and if) any action is taken.

EDMUNDS, H. (2000) *The focus group research handbook*, New York, McGraw-Hill

SMITH, M. W. (1995) Ethics in focus groups: a few concerns. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5, 478-486.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (Unkown) Informed Consent Template for Research Involving Children (Qualitative Studies). World Health Organisation.

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY (Unknown) Human Ethics Guidelines: Interviews and focus groups 18 November 2010 Accessed 22nd July 2011

[http://sydney.edu.au/research\\_support/ethics/human/guidelines/interviews.shtml](http://sydney.edu.au/research_support/ethics/human/guidelines/interviews.shtml)

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Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: August 2009

**This form should now be printed out**, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

**N.B.** You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: July 11 until: July 12  
By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): B. Maxwell date: 25/7/11

**N.B. To Supervisor:** Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference: D/10/11/78  
Signed: [Signature] date: 27/7/11  
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

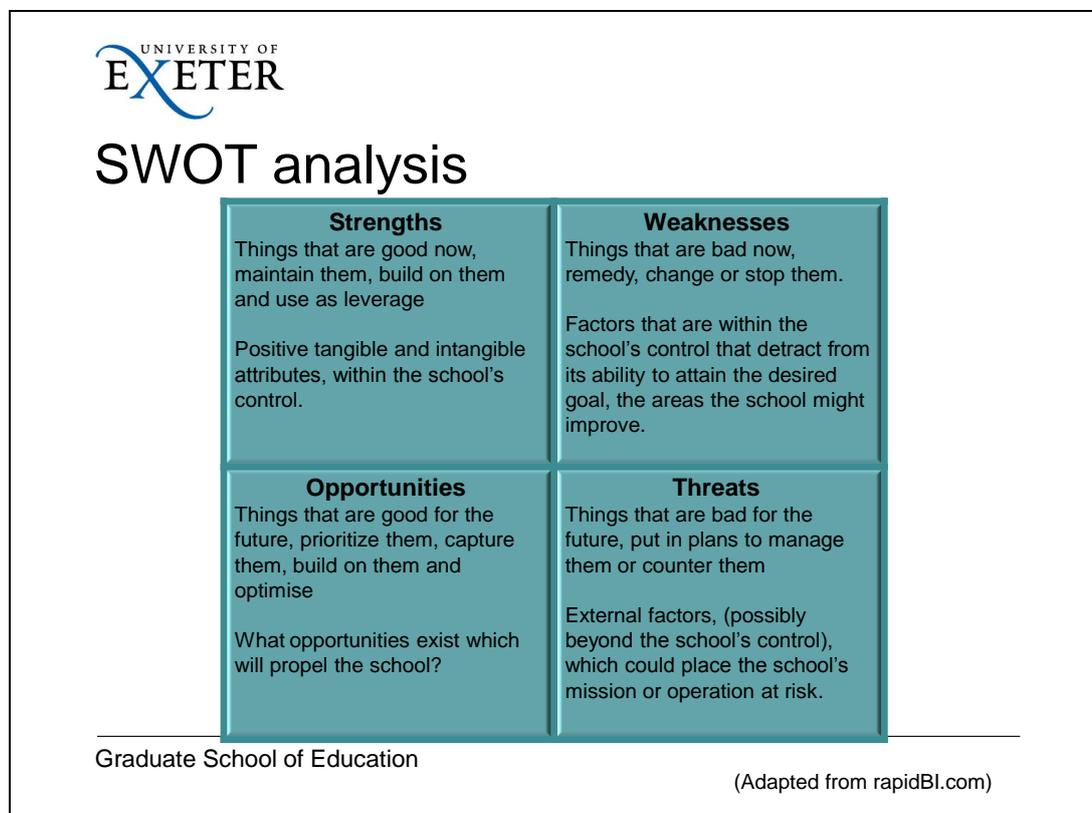
This form is available from <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/>

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee  
last updated: August 2009

## Appendix 25 Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats framework

The SWOT framework is described in this appendix, showing various definitions used and an example of a complete analysis from one of the focus group sessions.

a/ Flipchart paper was used for the recording of the SWOT, they were not filled in on the PowerPoint, rather were filled in by hand by myself or the chair of the meeting. The definitions of each of the quadrants (see below) were kept up throughout the evaluation.



b/ A typed record of the SEND research groups SWOT analysis (transcribed from a written record made by the chair during the meeting).

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimistic/ utopian</li> <li>• Setting</li> <li>• Size</li> <li>• Seamless transition of age</li> <li>• Individualised learning plan</li> <li>• Vertical grouping</li> <li>• Stable class environment</li> <li>• Life skills</li> <li>• Formative assessment</li> <li>• Parent contributions</li> <li>• Support activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size – is it small enough? Is it too small?</li> <li>• Is the age range “safe” – the dynamics of age</li> <li>• Assessment – will be assessed in “real life”. How do we prepare students for these demands? (I would argue we are rarely, if ever, summatively assessed.)</li> <li>• Parents- will they understand the policy and ethos of the school.</li> <li>• Parental expectations – will this impact on school policy</li> <li>• An objective based curriculum?</li> <li>• The dilemma posed by the PMLD child</li> <li>• Disability becomes hidden. Is this what we want in society?</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of peer mentoring, and other forms of mentoring</li> <li>• Look at Finnish, US and German model (Finland for inclusive, all age schools, US for Universities having own entrance exam)</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entitlement curriculum, and option to opt out creates a tension.</li> <li>• Catchment areas - social class and locational mobility will affect this, just as it does now.</li> <li>• Parental choice – the choice to go to special school (me).</li> <li>• Funding (or lack of it). How will we pay for this system (Finnish model, 50% tax).</li> </ul>

c/ Clarification of the different elements of the SWOT framework after initial analysis showed focus group members were unclear about the differences between strengths and opportunities, or between weaknesses and threats. This additional clarification was used for the final focus group.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Positive tangible and intangible attributes, within the school's control.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does this future school/ context do better than current school/context?</li> <li>• What are the "unique selling points"?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Factors that are within the school's control that detract from its ability to attain the desired goal The areas the school might improve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the current system do better than this future system?</li> <li>• What elements of this future add little or no value?</li> <li>• Are there any inherent problems in the design?</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Things that are good for the future that could improve the school as it exists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What opportunities exist which will propel the school?</li> <li>• What new innovation could the school bring to the society that have not been thought of yet?</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <p>External factors, (possibly beyond the school's control), which could place the school's mission or operation at risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What political, economic, social-cultural, or technology changes are taking place that could be unfavourable to the school?</li> <li>• What restraints might the school face?</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Positive tangible and intangible attributes, within the school's control.</p> <p style="background-color: yellow;">Example: "Parents know what is expected" of them, of the school, of their child, through the parental contract, parental involvement and PLP</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Factors that are within the school's control that detract from its ability to attain the desired goal The areas the school might improve.</p> <p style="background-color: yellow;">Example: "What happens to pupils who enter as a new pupil in middle of two year curriculum cycle? If they come from a different school, may have covered different topics (one advantage of National Curriculum)"</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Things that are good for the future that could improve the school as it exists.</p> <p style="background-color: yellow;">Example: "Peer mentoring and student leadership could be embedded in the curriculum and accredited."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <p>External factors, (possibly beyond the school's control), which could place the school's mission or operation at risk.</p> <p style="background-color: yellow;">Example: "Catchment areas - social class and locational mobility will affect this, just as it does now."</p>

## Appendix 26 Thematic analysis of focus group discussions

*This appendix outlines an example of the analysis of the focus group discussions. It shows how themes emerged from the transcriptions of the recorded discussions (both the whole group discussions and the feedback from the sub-group school planning exercise). Examples from one section of transcript are given.*

1. Discussions from each focus group transcribed, print out obtained and colour coded according to which focus group the feedback belonged to.

Person A: You could have someone with no communication, no physical, no nothing in the same class with someone going to university! Issues of parental understanding, specifically those who haven't got children with those needs. Parents' views will infiltrate into the children and how the children will cope, so it will depend on the school to train or experience or diversify that information into that community. The positive is those children leave it becomes a more inclusive world, at the moment there is segregation.

Person B: Children encouraged to become mentors – to what extent, and what is it they are covering, who are they going to mentoring/ working with?

Person A: A threat in parents going into schools – it depends what their motives are. If you get a high flying catchment area I expect the motives of those parents to be completely different to those in an area where the catchment is council estate background. How will those motive impact on teaching and school policy? The motives of parents might be slightly different to policy depending on the needs of the child.

Researcher: That is why there is a parental contract...

Person A: Even the parent school contract is someone defining those rules. Some people will agree with them, some won't. Far too idealistic and optimistic

Person C: If I was a parent of a seven year old girl who wanted to spend most of her time playing with certain games, didn't want to spend her time playing with other children, very easily upset if around others for long periods of time I would be very keen on this school, but I would want to know what this school would do for my daughter in order to provide the opportunity to be by herself in a constructive way. This school is quite community based/ social.

Person D: There is opportunity in the mentoring aspect – lots of research suggests this is very powerful in tackling bullying, eating disorders and other mental health issues in schools.

Person E: There is the opportunity to develop more caring, less competitive ethos, particularly in high catchment areas where there is currently more emphasis on academic results. Opportunity to change a school culture.

Person F: Strength support activities in class, enhancing learning achievement. However, a tension between entitlement – they all have to study x, and choice, they can opt in or out.

2. Statements/ phrases relating to strengths/ weaknesses/opportunities and/ or threats cut out. Statements about future school design from school planning subgroups also cut out.

Issues of parental understanding, specifically those who haven't got children with those needs. Parents' views will infiltrate into the children and how the children will cope, so it will depend on the school to train or experience or diversify that information into that community.

The positive is those children leave it becomes a more inclusive world, at the moment there is segregation.

Children encouraged to become mentors – to what extent, and what is it they are covering, who are they going to mentoring/ working with?

A threat in parents going into schools – it depends what their motives are. If you get a high flying catchment area I expect the motives of those parents to be completely different to those in an area where the catchment is council estate background. How will those motive impact on teaching and school policy? The motives of parents might be slightly different to policy depending on the needs of the child.

Even the parent school contract is someone defining those rules. Some people will agree with them, some won't. Far too idealistic and optimistic.

There is the opportunity to develop more caring, less competitive ethos, particularly in high catchment areas where there is currently more emphasis on academic results.

Opportunity to change a school culture.

- Statements read and placed temporarily onto paper (4 sheets of A2 paper) according to **who** was being described, **what** was being described or **location (where)** (Flick, 2006).

Who	What	Where
<p><b>Parents:</b> Issues of parental understanding, specifically those who haven't got children with those needs. Parents' views will infiltrate into the children and how the children will cope, so it will depend on the school to train or experience or diversify that information into that community.</p> <p>A threat in parents going into schools – it depends what their motives are. If you get a high flying catchment area I expect the motives of those parents to be completely different to those in an area where the catchment is council estate background. How will those motive impact on teaching and school policy? The motives of parents might be slightly different to policy depending on the needs of the child.</p> <p>Even the parent school contract is someone defining those rules. Some people will agree with them, some won't. Far too idealistic and optimistic.</p> <p>Children: Children encouraged to become mentors – to what extent, and what is it they are covering, who are they going to mentoring/ working with?</p> <p>Parents' views will infiltrate into the children and how the children will cope</p>	<p><b>Parent school contract:</b> Even the parent school contract is someone defining those rules. Some people will agree with them, some won't. Far too idealistic and optimistic.</p> <p><b>School ethos/ culture:</b> There is the opportunity to develop more caring, less competitive ethos, particularly in high catchment areas where there is currently more emphasis on academic results. Opportunity to change a school culture.</p> <p><b>Mentoring:</b> Children encouraged to become mentors – to what extent, and what is it they are covering, who are they going to mentoring/ working with?</p>	<p><b>School:</b> There is the opportunity to develop more caring, less competitive ethos, particularly in high catchment areas where there is currently more emphasis on academic results.</p> <p><b>Community:</b> Parents' views will infiltrate into the children and how the children will cope, so it will depend on the school to train or experience or diversify that information into that community.</p> <p><b>Wider world:</b> The positive is those children leave it becomes a more inclusive world, at the moment there is segregation.</p>

- Pattern/ framework began to emerge – a/ statements relating to level of person/ people/ role, b/ statements relating to level of school, c/ statements relating to level of system, d/ statements related to level of external landscape.
- Groups of statements relating to who/what/where placed on 4 sheets of A2 paper depending on framework in point 4 (thus, sheet 1= statements relating to level of person etc.).

Person/ people/role	School
<p><b>Parents:</b> Issues of parental understanding, specifically those who haven't got children with those needs. Parents' views will infiltrate into the children and how the children will cope, so it will depend on the school to train or experience or diversify that information into that community.</p> <p>A threat in parents going into schools – it depends what their motives are. If you get a high flying catchment area I expect the motives of those parents to be completely different to those in an area where the catchment is council estate background. How will those motive impact on teaching and school policy? The motives of parents might be slightly different to policy depending on the needs of the child.</p> <p>Even the parent school contract is someone defining those rules. Some people will agree with them, some won't. Far too idealistic and optimistic.</p>	<p><b>Parent school contract:</b> Even the parent school contract is someone defining those rules.</p> <p><b>School ethos/ culture:</b> Opportunity to develop more caring, less competitive ethos, particularly in high catchment areas where there is currently more emphasis on academic results. Opportunity to change a school culture.</p> <p>Parents' views will infiltrate into the children and how the children will cope, so it will depend on the school to train or experience or diversify that information into that community.</p> <p>Mentoring: Children encouraged to become mentors – to what extent, and what is it they are covering, who are they going to mentoring/ working with?</p>
	<p><b>Education system</b> more caring, less competitive ethos, particularly in high catchment areas where there is currently more emphasis on academic results.</p>
	<p><b>External landscape</b> Wider world: The positive is those children leave it becomes a more inclusive world, at the moment there is segregation.</p>

6. Groups of statements re-read and split into two or more categories (if applicable).  
Parents: 4 categories – parents' motives, parents' relationship with the school, parents' involvement in CPD, parents' participation, parents' ability to take part in school community.

7. Categories used to frame questions used in Chapter 7.

"What is the role of parents in this school?" "What should be contained in teacher training and CPD?"

8. Additional analysis emerged from reading data as a whole, then searching for repeated terms/ themes such as "ideology" "utopia" and synonyms, as well as searching for comments relating to the strengths and weaknesses of the methods used.

"Some people will agree with them, some won't. Far too idealistic and optimistic"

Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE.

## **Appendix 27 Previous iterations of the future school vignette**

*What follows below are each of the iterations of the futures school vignette that were presented to each of the focus groups. These run from the original vignette which was presented to the JURE focus group to the final vignette. They are colour coded to indicate changes made to the previous vignette, the colour codes are explained in the footnotes. When the vignette was presented to the focus group audience it was in black and white, there was no colour coding.*

First future school vignette

Braeburn Community School is a small school, both physically and in terms of pupil numbers (350 pupils on roll). The school is single storey, with accessibility as a key design. The school is surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. There is also provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room.

Classrooms - The *classrooms are for children, not subjects*. Each class has its own baseroom – with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas, audio-visual areas). Up to date audio visual systems and adaptive technology is available in each base. Pupils have control of displays near them (including option to leave space blank).

The children: primary and secondary aged children all included. From age 5-16, with option to stay on to 18. College and apprenticeship route also available. Each class consists of mixed ability children from 2 year groups, and has a maximum of 20 pupils per class. The class group remains constant throughout the classes time at school.

The staff: *All staff know children, and are known by all children*. Each class has their own generic class teacher. There are also specialist teachers who team teach with the class teacher. (They also provide cover for the teachers' non-contact time).

Parents: *parents are welcomed as experts and learners*. Parents are welcome to come to their child's class to take part in lessons. They are an important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions and engage with them. They are part of the planning team for their child's personalised learning plan.

Curriculum: *personal, flexible and adaptable*. There is a focus on personalised learning, and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies. The curriculum goes beyond knowledge of facts, but training in skills and dispositions needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century life. Diversity awareness is part of the personal social and health education curriculum.

Needs: it is the person, not the group they belong to, or the disability they have that is important.

### National context

There is a national curriculum, but schools have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is delivered and assessed.

Teacher training is a professional qualification, post degree and runs over 2 years. Special Educational Needs modules are a mandatory subject. Teachers working conditions reflect the professional status, with non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD.

Continuing Professional Development is a statutory requirement, some of which is delivered and organised by the school, the remainder is by other bodies.

There is not a divide between primary and secondary education.

Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each child's personalised learning.

Parents/ guardians are seen as an important part of children's personal learning plan and are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.

Braeburn Community School is a small school, both physically and in terms of pupil numbers (350 pupils on roll). The school is single storey, with accessibility as a key design **feature**. The school is surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. There is also provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room.

Classrooms - The *classrooms are for children, not curriculum subjects*. Each class has its own baseroom – **where they are taught** - with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas, **audio-visual areas**). Up to date audio visual systems and adaptive technology is available in each base. Pupils have control of displays **near them (including option to leave space blank)**.

Curriculum: *personal, flexible and adaptable*. **The school staff, in conjunction with learners and parents, develop topics that offer an opportunity to develop these skills. This is reviewed annually with each cohort. A collective decision is made on what resources are needed (ie subject experts, external visits, ICT resources)**. There is a focus on personalised learning and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies, **meaning pupils can opt in and out of various activities. Other activities are then provided to ensure the chance to cover the essential skill. The local community (businesses and organisations) are involved in delivering/ facilitating learning opportunities.**

The children: Each class consists of mixed ability children from 2 year groups, and has a maximum of 20 pupils per class. The class group remains constant throughout the class's time at school. **It is the person, not the group they belong to, or the disability they have that is important. As nationally, primary and secondary aged children all included**, from age 5-16. **There is the option to stay on at Braeburn to 18. College and apprenticeship route also available.**

The staff: *All staff know children, and are known by all children*. Each class has their own generic class teacher. There are also subject specialist teachers who team teach with the class teacher. **(They also provide cover for the teachers' non-contact time).**

**Peer group: Peer teaching, coaching and mentoring is a key part of learning delivery. All children have a guidance role for at least one other student. This can be across age, skill or dispositions. Pupils are trained for this role.**

Parents: *parents are welcomed as experts and learners*. Parents are welcome to come to their child's class to take part in lessons. They are an important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions and engage with them. They are part of the planning team for their child's personalised learning plan.

**Support – school is a multi-agency site with provision for all children's needs. A team teaching and teacher as facilitator role allows for in-class support of learning**

**In the last term of a year the main class teacher draws up a pen picture of each child – their strengths and vulnerabilities. This is passed on to the classes next class teacher. During this term both teachers team teach and next years teacher observes the class at work in a variety of styles. By changing the teacher every year it gives all students and teachers a fresh start, an experience of change, but in a structured and safe way.**

## National context

All schools are based on a small school (maximum 500pupils), ages 5-16 model. There is not a divide between primary and secondary education.

There is a national curriculum of cognitive, meta-cognitive, social and citizenship dimensions each given equal weight. It exists as a list of “essential skills” that each child should achieve. Schools have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is delivered and assessed. The curriculum goes beyond knowledge of facts, but training in skills and dispositions needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century life. Diversity awareness is part of the personal social and health education curriculum. This national curriculum is a minimum entitlement for all learners.

Teacher training is a professional qualification, post degree and runs over 2 years, resulting in a Master’s level qualification along with QTS. Special Educational Needs modules are mandatory, as is an extended school placement module. Teachers working conditions reflect the professional status, with non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD. CPD can occur with-in school or with external providers, and is personalised for teacher needs. CPD is an entitlement, a statutory requirement; schools must make provision for it in terms of time and funding.

Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each child’s personalised learning. Schools are legally responsible for formulating and reviewing each pupils Personalised Learning Plan. It is recognised nationally that there is a spectrum of differing abilities and attainments. Disabilities are diagnosed and recognised, but added to PLP in form of learner strengths and targets. Formative assessment for learning is the norm.

Parents/ guardians (Key worker for looked after children) are seen as an important part of children’s personal learning plan and are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.

School accountability based on pupils’ achievement of PLP goals. Schools report these to government. There is no standard national assessment framework or tests.

Funding: The state contributes a significant proportion; adequate common levels of funding are set by the state, supplied for specific purposes and audited through transparent audit trails. There is an adequate level of additional compensatory resources allocated for areas of *disadvantage*

Schools are not permitted to discriminate on basis of gender, ethnicity, learning ability. Where a school is over subscribed mechanisms are set in place for creation of another school.

Multi-disciplinary sites - There is a multi-disciplinary team available on site. This includes psychologists, physiotherapists, clinicians, social workers and counsellors.



Third future school vignette,  
following analysis of findings and  
literature review

### National context

All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary education.

#### National curriculum

- Cognitive, meta-cognitive, personal, social and citizenship learning dimensions given equal weight.
- Focus on knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century life.
- Schools able to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is taught and assessed.
- National Curriculum is a minimum entitlement for all learners.

#### Teacher training and continuing professional development (CPD)

- Professional qualification, post degree, runs over 2 years, resulting in a Master's level qualification along with QTS.
- Special educational needs and disability aspects are mandatory, as is an extended school placement module.
- Working conditions reflect professional status, with adequate non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD.
- CPD is an entitlement, a statutory requirement; schools must make provision for it in terms of time and funding. It is personalised to meet needs of the teacher.

#### Personalised Learning Plan

- Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each student's personalised learning, every student has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).
- Schools are legally responsible for formulating and reviewing each student's Personalised Learning Plan on a minimum of a biannual basis.
- National recognition that there is a spectrum of differing abilities and attainments. Disabilities are diagnosed and recognised, but integrated into PLP holistically in the context of student's needs, strengths and learning goals.
- Formative assessment for learning is the norm.

#### Parents/ guardians (Key worker for Looked After children)

- Seen as important partners in students' learning and are involved in formulating PLPs.
- Are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.

#### Funding

- Adequate common levels of funding are set and provided by the state, supplied for specific purposes and reviewed through transparent audit trails.
- Additional compensatory resources allocated for areas of disadvantage.

#### Accountability

- School accountability based on students' achievement of PLP goals. Schools report these to parents and government. There is no standard national assessment framework or tests.
- National monitoring and publication of i. learning and achievements of children, and ii. quality of provision is done through regular surveys of representative samples rather than all schools.

#### Multi-disciplinary sites

- There is a multi-disciplinary team available on each school site. This includes psychologists, therapists, clinicians, social workers and counsellors.

Schools are not permitted to discriminate on basis of gender, ethnicity, faith or learning ability.

### Braeburn Community School

- A small school, both physically and in terms of student numbers (max. 350 pupils on roll).
- Clear vision based on rights and respect for all – this theme is open for discussion and deliberation by staff, students and parents.
- School council of staff and students who deliberate on broad policy and review school; authority ultimately lies with teachers.
- Single storey, with accessibility as a key design feature, surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. (break and lunch are staggered, 5 year groups in each "sitting", for ease of catering logistics and playground supervision).
- Provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room, and a quiet room.

The students:

- Students are seen as individuals, with individual strengths and needs, who can contribute to school life.
- It is recognised that all students have needs; and that provision is designed to best meet these needs.
- How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with student, parents and school staff. (Could include peer mentoring, in-class teacher support, physical resources, out-of-class activities).
- Class consists of students with mixed characteristics (abilities, dispositions, interests) from 2 year groups, maximum of 20 students per group.
- Class group remains constant throughout the class's time at school, but there are structured opportunities for work with other classes/ age groups. Out-of class opportunities are available to all students, but curriculum consistency is ensured.

Curriculum: *personal, flexible and adaptable.*

- The school community (school staff, students, parents) contribute to identifying topics that offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding, dispositions and skills. These are reviewed annually with each cohort.
- Focus on personalised learning and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies, meaning students can opt in and out of various activities. Other activities are then provided to ensure the opportunity to cover the curriculum.
- Collective decision is made on what resources are needed (ie subject experts, external visits). Local community (businesses and organisations) are involved in teaching programmes / facilitating learning opportunities.

Classrooms: *are for children learning, not curriculum subjects.*

- Each class has its own baseroom with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas).
- Up to date audio visual systems and adaptive technology (where required) is available in each base.
- Pupils have ownership of room displays.

The staff: *all staff know children, and are known by all children.*

- Each class has their own generic class teacher for the whole year. The class teacher changes each year.
- Subject specialist teachers team teach with the class teacher/ lead mixed class activities.
- There is a structured transition year on year as the class's main teacher changes, involves reviewing PLPs, observations and team teaching by the new teacher in the final term of a year.

Peer group:

- Peer teaching, coaching and mentoring is a key part of learning. All students have a guidance role for at least one other student. This can be across age, skill or dispositions. Pupils are trained for this role.

Parents: *parents are welcomed as experts and learners.*

- Welcome to participate in their child's class and to take part in lessons.
- An important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions and engage with them.
- Part of the planning team for their child's Personalised Learning Plan.

Support:

- School is a multi-agency site with provision for all students' needs.
- Team teaching and teacher-as-facilitator role allows for in-class support of learning.
- Learning support is available for all students.

## National context

All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary education.

### National curriculum

- Cognitive, meta-cognitive, personal, social and citizenship learning dimensions given equal weight.
- Focus on knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century life.
- Schools able to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is taught and assessed.
- National Curriculum is a minimum entitlement for all learners.

### Teacher training and continuing professional development (CPD)

- Professional qualification, post degree, runs over 2 years, resulting in a Master's level qualification along with QTS.
- Special educational needs and disability aspects are mandatory, as is an extended school placement module.
- Working conditions reflect professional status, with adequate non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD.
- CPD is an entitlement, a statutory requirement; schools must make provision for it in terms of time and funding. It is personalised to meet needs of the teacher.

### Personalised Learning Plan

- Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each student's personalised learning, every student has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).
- Schools are legally responsible for formulating and reviewing each student's Personalised Learning Plan on a minimum of a biannual basis.
- National recognition that there is a spectrum of differing abilities and attainments. Disabilities are diagnosed and recognised, but integrated into PLP holistically in the context of student's needs, strengths and learning goals.
- Formative assessment for learning is the norm.

### Parents/ guardians (Key worker for Looked After children)

- Seen as important partners in students' learning and are involved in formulating PLPs.
- Are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.
- There is a school: parent contract outlining rights and responsibilities.

### Funding

- Adequate common levels of funding are set and provided by the state to schools, supplied for specific purposes and reviewed through transparent audit trails.
- Additional compensatory resources can be requested by schools using a bid system. They need to provide evidence of the need for the resource and what they have attempted to provide for need thus far.

### Accountability

- School accountability based on students' achievement of PLP goals. Schools report these to parents and government. There is no standard national assessment framework or tests.
- National monitoring and publication of i. learning and achievements of children, and ii. quality of provision is done through regular surveys of representative samples rather than all schools.

### Multi-disciplinary sites

- There is a multi-disciplinary team available on each school site. This includes psychologists, therapists, clinicians, social workers and counsellors.

Schools are not permitted to discriminate on basis of gender, ethnicity, faith or learning ability.

### Braeburn Community School

- A small school, both physically and in terms of student numbers (max. 350 pupils on roll).
- Clear vision based on rights and respect for all – this theme is open for discussion and deliberation by staff, students and parents.
- School council of staff and students who deliberate on and review broad school policy.
- Single storey, with accessibility as a key design feature, surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. (Break and lunch are staggered, for ease of catering logistics and playground supervision).
- Provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room, and a quiet room.

#### The students:

- Students are seen as individuals, with individual strengths and needs, who can **each** contribute to school life.
- It is recognised that all students have needs; and that provision is designed to best meet these needs.
- How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with student, parents and school staff. (Could include peer mentoring, in-class teacher support, physical resources, out-of-class activities).
- Class consists of students with mixed characteristics (abilities, dispositions, interests) from 2 year groups, maximum of 20 students per group.
- Class group remains constant throughout the class's time at school, but there are structured opportunities for work with other classes/ age groups. Out-of class opportunities are available to all students, but curriculum consistency is ensured.

#### Curriculum: *personal, flexible and adaptable.*

- The school community (school staff, students, parents) contribute to identifying topics that offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding, dispositions and skills. These are reviewed annually with each cohort.
- Focus on personalised learning and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies, meaning students can opt in and out of various activities. Other activities are then provided to ensure the opportunity to cover the curriculum.
- Collective decision is made on what resources are needed (ie subject experts, external visits). Local community (businesses and organisations) are involved in teaching programmes / facilitating learning opportunities, **if required for a particular topic.**

#### Classrooms: *are for children learning, not curriculum subjects.*

- Each class has its own baseroom with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas).
- Up to date audio visual systems and adaptive technology (where required) is available in each base.
- Pupils have ownership of room displays.

#### The staff: *all staff know children, and are known by all children.*

- Each class has their own generic class teacher **for each two year cycle.**
- Subject specialist teachers team teach with the class teacher/ lead mixed class activities.
- There is a structured transition every **two years** as the class's main teacher changes, involves reviewing PLPs, observations and team teaching by the new teacher in the final term of a year.

#### Peer group:

- Peer teaching, coaching and mentoring is a key part of learning. All students have a guidance role for at least one other student. This can be across age, skill or dispositions. Pupils are trained for this role.

#### Parents: *parents are welcomed as experts and learners.*

- Welcome to participate in their child's class and to take part in lessons.
- An important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions and engage with them.
- Part of the planning team for their child's Personalised Learning Plan.

#### Support:

- School is a multi-agency site with provision for all students' needs.
- Team teaching and teacher-as-facilitator role allows for in-class support of learning.
- Learning support is available for all students.

Penultimate future school vignette,  
following SEND focus group

## A school of the future, 2025

This document describes one vision for an inclusive school (and education system) in the year 2025. It sets out the values related to education and inclusion held by policy makers, and reflected in the description of the national and school context.

Page 2 describes the national context – a picture of the education system throughout England in 2025.

Page 3 describes a specific community school, with reference to school level policy, practice and organisation.

### Values and purpose statement

All children are seen as able to learn and contribute to school and community life.

As such, all children are welcome in the community school.

There is no separate special education system.

The education system seeks to

- provide young people with a broad and balanced range of experiences and areas of knowledge
- enable personal fulfilment; and realise personal potential
- to prepare individuals for future life and work in a rapidly changing and uncertain world
- contribute to and improve society through the education and training of the young people in its care

## National context

All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary schools.

### National curriculum

- Cognitive, meta-cognitive, personal, social and citizenship learning dimensions are given equal weight.
- Focus on knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century life.
- Schools are able to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is taught and assessed.
- The National Curriculum is a minimum entitlement for all learners.

### Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- Professional qualification, post graduate degree, runs over 2 years, resulting in a Master's level qualification along with **Qualified Teacher Status**.
- Special educational needs and disability aspects are mandatory for **completion of degree**, as is an extended school placement module.
- Working conditions reflect professional status, with adequate non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD.
- CPD is an entitlement, a statutory requirement; schools must make provision for it in terms of time and funding. It is personalised to meet needs of the teacher.

### Personalised Learning Plan (PLP)

- Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each student's personalised learning, every student has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).
- Schools are legally responsible for formulating and reviewing each student's Personalised Learning Plan on a minimum of a biannual basis.
- **There is** national recognition that there is a spectrum of differing abilities and attainments. Disabilities are diagnosed and recognised, but integrated into PLP holistically in the context of student's needs, strengths and learning goals.
- Formative assessment for learning is the norm.

### Parents/ guardians (Key worker for **Children in Care**)

- Seen as important partners in students' learning and are involved in formulating PLPs.
- Are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.
- There is a **negotiated** school: parent contract outlining rights and responsibilities.

### Funding

- Adequate common levels of funding are set and provided by the state to schools, supplied for specific purposes and reviewed through transparent audit trails.
- Additional compensatory resources can be requested by schools through a bidding system. They need to provide evidence of the need for the resource and what they have attempted to provide to meet the need thus far.

### Accountability

- School accountability is based on students' achievement of PLP goals. Schools report these to parents and government. There is no standard national assessment framework or tests.
- National monitoring and publication of i. learning and achievements of children, and ii. quality of provision is done through regular surveys of representative samples rather than all schools.

### Multi-disciplinary sites

- There is a multi-disciplinary team available on each school site. This includes psychologists, therapists, clinicians, social workers and counsellors.

Schools are not permitted to discriminate on basis of gender, ethnicity, faith or learning ability.

### Braeburn Community School

- A small school, both physically and in terms of student numbers (max. 350 pupils on roll).
- Clear vision based on rights and respect for all – this theme is open for discussion and deliberation by staff, students and parents.
- School council of staff and students who deliberate on and review broad school policy.
- Single storey, with accessibility as a key design feature, surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. (Break and lunch are staggered, for ease of catering logistics and playground supervision).
- Provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room, and a quiet room.

The students:

- Students are seen as individuals, with individual strengths and needs, who can each contribute to school life.
- It is recognised that **all** students have needs; and that provision is designed to best meet these needs.
- How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with the student, their parents and school staff. (Could include peer mentoring, in-class teacher support, physical resources, out-of-class activities).
- Class consists of students with mixed characteristics (abilities, dispositions, interests) from 2 consecutive year groups, maximum of 20 students per group.
- Class group remains constant throughout the class's time at school, but there are structured opportunities for work with other classes/ age groups. Out-of-class opportunities are available to all students, but curriculum **coherence** is ensured.

Curriculum: *personal, flexible and adaptable.*

- The school community (school staff, students, parents) contribute to identifying topics that offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding, dispositions and skills. These are reviewed annually with each cohort.
- Focus on personalised learning and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies, meaning students can opt in and out of various activities. Other activities are then provided to ensure the opportunity to cover the curriculum.
- Collective decision is made on what resources are needed (ie subject experts, external visits). Local community (businesses and organisations) can be involved in teaching programmes / facilitating learning opportunities, if required for a particular topic.

Classrooms: *are for children learning, not curriculum subjects.*

- Each class has its own baseroom with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas).
- Up to date audio visual systems and adaptive technology (where required) is available in each base.
- Pupils have ownership of room displays.

The staff: **all staff know and are known by all children.**

- Each class has their own generic class teacher who remains with **them for two years.**
- Subject specialist teachers team teach with the class teacher/ lead mixed class activities.
- There is a structured transition every two years as the class's main teacher changes, involves reviewing PLPs, observations and team teaching by the new teacher in the final term of a year.

Peer group:

- Peer teaching, coaching and mentoring is a key part of learning. All students have an **opportunity to hold** a guidance role for at least one other student. This can be across age, skill or dispositions. **Students** are trained for this role.

Parents: *parents are welcomed as experts and learners.*

- Welcome to participate in their child's class and to take part in lessons.
- An important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions and engage with them.
- Part of the planning team for their child's Personalised Learning Plan.

Support:

- School is a multi-agency site with provision for all students' needs.
- Team teaching and teacher-as-facilitator role allows for in-class support of learning.
- Learning support is available for all students.

Final future school vignette, following  
POSG focus group and re-reading of  
literature review

## A school of the future, 2025

This document describes one vision for an inclusive school (and education system) in the year 2025. It sets out the values related to education and inclusion held by policy makers, and reflected in the description of the national and school context.

Page 2 describes the national context – a picture of the education system throughout England in 2025. **All schools in England share the values as described below.**

Page 3 describes a specific community school, with reference to school level policy, practice and organisation.

### Values and purpose statement

All children are seen as able to learn and contribute to school and community life.

As such, all children are welcome in the community school.

There is no separate special education system.

The education system seeks to

- provide young people with a broad and balanced range of experiences and areas of knowledge
- enable personal fulfilment; and realise personal potential
- to prepare individuals for future life and work in a rapidly changing and uncertain world
- contribute to and improve society through the education and training of the young people in its care

**Schools are not permitted to discriminate on basis of learning ability, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, cultural background or faith.**

## National context

All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary schools.

### National Curriculum

- Cognitive, meta-cognitive, personal, social and citizenship learning dimensions are given equal weight.
- Focus on knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century life.
- Schools are able to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is taught and assessed.
- The National Curriculum is a minimum entitlement for all learners.

### Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- Professional qualification, post graduate degree, runs over 2 years, resulting in a Master's level qualification along with Qualified Teacher Status.
- Special educational needs and disability aspects are mandatory for completion of degree, as is an extended school placement module.
- Working conditions reflect professional status, with adequate non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD.
- CPD is extended to all staff who work with children in the school context.
- CPD is an entitlement, a statutory requirement; schools must make provision for it in terms of time and funding. It is personalised to meet needs of the staff member. It includes training in effective collaboration.

### Personalised Learning Plan (PLP)

- Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each student's personalised learning, every student has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).
- Schools are legally responsible for co-formulating and co-reviewing each student's Personalised Learning Plan on a minimum of a biannual basis, with the student and parent.
- All teaching staff have a responsibility for maintenance and delivery of the PLP.
- There is national recognition that there is a spectrum of differing abilities and attainments. Impairments and disabilities are recognised and integrated into PLP holistically in the context of student's needs, strengths and learning goals.
- Formative assessment for learning is the norm, across all the learning dimensions.

### Parents/ guardians (Key worker for Children in care)

- Seen as important partners in students' learning, recognised as a valuable resource, and are actively involved in formulating and reviewing PLPs.
- Are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.
- There is a negotiated school: parent contract outlining rights and responsibilities.

### Funding

- Adequate common levels of funding are set and provided by the state to schools, supplied for specific purposes and reviewed through transparent audit trails.
- Additional compensatory resources can be requested by schools through a clear navigable bidding system. They need to provide evidence of the need for the resource and what they have attempted to provide to meet the need thus far.

### Accountability

- School accountability is based on students' achievement of PLP goals. Schools report these to parents and government. There is no standard national assessment framework or tests.
- National monitoring and publication of i. learning and achievements of children, and ii. quality of provision is done through regular surveys of representative samples rather than all schools.
- Individual schools undertake a regular self-evaluation and action plan developed with all members of the school and wider community.

### Multi-disciplinary sites

- There is a multi-disciplinary team available on each school site. This includes psychologists, therapists, clinicians, social workers and counsellors. Their operational practices reflect the ethos of the school.

**Braeburn Community School**

- A small school, both physically and in terms of student numbers (max. 350 pupils on roll).
- Clear vision based on rights and respect for all – this theme is open for discussion and deliberation by staff, students and parents.
- School council of staff, students, **parents and community representatives** who deliberate on and review broad school policy.
- Single storey, with accessibility as a key design feature, surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. (Break and lunch are staggered, for ease of catering logistics and playground supervision).
- Provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room, and a quiet room.

## The students:

- Students are seen as individuals, with individual strengths and needs, who can each contribute to school life.
- It is recognised that **all** students have needs; and that provision is designed to best meet these needs.
- How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with the student, their parents and school staff. (Could include peer mentoring, in-class teacher support, physical resources, out-of-class activities, **variability of start/ end times**).
- Class consists of students with mixed characteristics (abilities, dispositions, interests) from 2 consecutive year groups, maximum of 20 students per group.
- Class group remains constant throughout the class's time at school, but there are structured opportunities for work with other classes/ age groups. Out-of-class opportunities are available to all students, but curriculum coherence is ensured.

Curriculum: *personal, flexible and adaptable.*

- The school community (school staff, students, parents) contribute to identifying topics that offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding, dispositions and skills. These are reviewed annually with each cohort.
- Focus on personalised learning and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies, meaning students can opt in and out of various activities. Other activities are then provided to ensure the opportunity to cover the curriculum.
- Collective decision is made on what resources are needed (ie subject experts, external visits). Local community (businesses and organisations) can be involved in teaching programmes / facilitating learning opportunities, if required for a particular topic.
- **The curriculum provides opportunities for the school and students to contribute to the local community.**

Classrooms: *are for students learning, not curriculum subjects.*

- Each class has its own baseroom with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas).
- Up to date audio visual systems and adaptive technology (where required) are available in each base.
- Pupils have ownership of room displays.

The staff: *all staff know and are known by all students.*

- Each class has their own generic class teacher who remains with them for two years.
- Subject specialist teachers team teach with the class teacher/ lead mixed class activities.
- There is a structured transition every two years as the class's main teacher changes, involves reviewing PLPs, observations and team teaching by the new teacher in the final term of a year.
- **All staff who work in school undertake CPD related to understanding the needs of children and child development.**

## Peer group:

- Peer teaching, coaching and mentoring is a key part of learning. All students have the opportunity to hold a guidance role for at least one other student. This can be across age, skill or dispositions. Students are trained for this role.

Parents: *parents are welcomed as experts and learners.*

- Welcome to participate in their child's class and to take part in lessons **(negotiated with child and staff).**
- An important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions/ engage with them.
- Part of the planning team for their child's Personalised Learning Plan.

## Support:

- School is a multi-agency site with provision for all students' needs.
- Team teaching and teacher-as-facilitator role allows for in-class support of learning.
- Learning support is available for all students.

## **Appendix 28     The final future school vignette**

*This appendix is the final future school vignette, created after the SEN POSG focus group.*

Final future school vignette.

## **A school of the future, 2025**

This document describes one vision for an inclusive school (and education system) in the year 2025. It sets out the values related to education and inclusion held by policy makers, and reflected in the description of the national and school context.

Page 2 describes the national context – a picture of the education system throughout England in 2025. All schools in England share the values as described below.

Page 3 describes a specific community school, with reference to school level policy, practice and organisation.

### **Values and purpose statement**

All children are seen as able to learn and contribute to school and community life.

As such, all children are welcome in the community school.

There is no separate special education system.

The education system seeks to

- provide young people with a broad and balanced range of experiences and areas of knowledge
- enable personal fulfilment; and realise personal potential
- to prepare individuals for future life and work in a rapidly changing and uncertain world
- contribute to and improve society through the education and training of the young people in its care

Schools are not permitted to discriminate on basis of learning ability, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, cultural background or faith.

## National context

All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary schools.

### National Curriculum

- Cognitive, meta-cognitive, personal, social and citizenship learning dimensions are given equal weight.
- Focus on knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century life.
- Schools are able to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is taught and assessed.
- The National Curriculum is a minimum entitlement for all learners.

### Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- Professional qualification, post graduate degree, runs over 2 years, resulting in a Master's level qualification along with Qualified Teacher Status.
- Special educational needs and disability aspects are mandatory for completion of degree, as is an extended school placement module.
- Working conditions reflect professional status, with adequate non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD.
- CPD is extended to all staff who work with children in the school context.
- CPD is an entitlement, a statutory requirement; schools must make provision for it in terms of time and funding. It is personalised to meet needs of the staff member. It includes training in effective collaboration.

### Personalised Learning Plan (PLP)

- Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each student's personalised learning, every student has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).
- Schools are legally responsible for co-formulating and co-reviewing each student's Personalised Learning Plan on a minimum of a biannual basis, with the student and parent.
- All teaching staff have a responsibility for maintenance and delivery of the PLP.
- There is national recognition that there is a spectrum of differing abilities and attainments. Impairments and disabilities are recognised and integrated into PLP holistically in the context of student's needs, strengths and learning goals.
- Formative assessment for learning is the norm, across all the learning dimensions.

### Parents/ guardians (Key worker for Children in care)

- Seen as important partners in students' learning, recognised as a valuable resource, and are actively involved in formulating and reviewing PLPs.
- Are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.
- There is a negotiated school: parent contract outlining rights and responsibilities.

### Funding

- Adequate common levels of funding are set and provided by the state to schools, supplied for specific purposes and reviewed through transparent audit trails.
- Additional compensatory resources can be requested by schools through a clear navigable bidding system. They need to provide evidence of the need for the resource and what they have attempted to provide to meet the need thus far.

### Accountability

- School accountability is based on students' achievement of PLP goals. Schools report these to parents and government. There is no standard national assessment framework or tests.
- National monitoring and publication of i. learning and achievements of children, and ii. quality of provision is done through regular surveys of representative samples rather than all schools.
- Individual schools undertake a regular self-evaluation and action plan developed with all members of the school and wider community.

### Multi-disciplinary sites

- There is a multi-disciplinary team available on each school site. This includes psychologists, therapists, clinicians, social workers and counsellors. Their operational practices reflect the ethos of the school.

**Braeburn Community School**

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- Clear vision based on rights and respect for all – this theme is open for discussion and deliberation by staff, students and parents.
- School council of staff, students, parents and community representatives who deliberate on and review broad school policy.
- Single storey, with accessibility as a key design feature, surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. (Break and lunch are staggered, for ease of catering logistics and playground supervision).
- Provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room, and a quiet room.

## The students:

- Students are seen as individuals, with individual strengths and needs, who can each contribute to school life.
- It is recognised that **all** students have needs; and that provision is designed to best meet these needs.
- How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with the student, their parents and school staff. (Could include peer mentoring, in-class teacher support, physical resources, out-of-class activities, variability of start/ end times).
- Class consists of students with mixed characteristics (abilities, dispositions, interests) from 2 consecutive year groups, maximum of 20 students per group.
- Class group remains constant throughout the class's time at school, but there are structured opportunities for work with other classes/ age groups. Out-of-class opportunities are available to all students, but curriculum coherence is ensured.

Curriculum: *personal, flexible and adaptable.*

- The school community (school staff, students, parents) contribute to identifying topics that offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding, dispositions and skills. These are reviewed annually with each cohort.
- Focus on personalised learning and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies, meaning students can opt in and out of various activities. Other activities are then provided to ensure the opportunity to cover the curriculum.
- Collective decision is made on what resources are needed (ie subject experts, external visits). Local community (businesses and organisations) can be involved in teaching programmes / facilitating learning opportunities, if required for a particular topic.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for the school and students to contribute to the local community.

Classrooms: *are for students learning, not curriculum subjects.*

- Each class has its own baseroom with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas).
- Up to date audio visual systems and adaptive technology (where required) are available in each base.
- Pupils have ownership of room displays.

The staff: *all staff know and are known by all students.*

- Each class has their own generic class teacher who remains with them for two years.
- Subject specialist teachers team teach with the class teacher/ lead mixed class activities.
- There is a structured transition every two years as the class's main teacher changes, involves reviewing PLPs, observations and team teaching by the new teacher in the final term of a year.
- All staff who work in school undertake CPD related to understanding the needs of children and child development.

## Peer group:

- Peer teaching, coaching and mentoring is a key part of learning. All students have the opportunity to hold a guidance role for at least one other student. This can be across age, skill or dispositions. Students are trained for this role.

Parents: *parents are welcomed as experts and learners.*

- Welcome to participate in their child's class and to take part in lessons (negotiated with child and staff).
- An important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions/ engage with them.
- Part of the planning team for their child's Personalised Learning Plan.

## Support:

- School is a multi-agency site with provision for all students' needs.
- Team teaching and teacher-as-facilitator role allows for in-class support of learning.
- Learning support is available for all students.

## **Appendix 29      Exploration of the themes raised in the analysis of the focus group discussions**

*This appendix examines each of the themes that emerged from all the focus group sessions, briefly discussing them in terms of the literature (in note form). It is set out under the same question headings that were used in the analysis described in chapter 7 and table 7.1.*

### **What is the role of parents in this school?**

Role, beliefs and choices of parents are threads that run throughout this thesis, demonstrated in the analysis and discussion of the empirical study described in Chapter 4 and 5, and in the literature review.

Literature review demonstrates how other visions of inclusive schools see a key role for parents; the inclusive school has direct links with parents (Miles & Ainscow, 2011; Thomas, Walker, & Webb, 1998) and it narrows the gulf between home and school (Mittler, 2008). The inclusive school draws on the knowledge of all, including parents (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Wedell, 2005; Wolfendale, 1997).

Practical ways of achieving this are suggested by Mittler (2008)

An inclusive school is one where parents' expertise is recognised, acknowledged and utilised by teachers (Mittler, 2008; Wedell, 2005; Wolfendale, 1997).

Parents could also be involved in school management decisions as well as involvement in general school activities (Japanese Central Council for Education, 1996, reported by Van Aalst, 2001).

Some of studies described in the literature review still have a narrow view of parental participation – the Canadian study (Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, 1994) suggests that in an inclusive school parents are welcomed and "given advice about how to support their children's learning" (p161). Though important, could be extended to teachers being given advice by parents on how to support their child's learning, as is described in the vignette.

Much discussions in recent times about the concerns parents have raised about the education system in England (Lamb, 2009; Mittler, 2008).

Parents are dissatisfied with lack of information about their child's progress, and about a lack of information in how parents and school can work together (Mittler).

Parents expect timely information, engagement in purpose of what school is setting out to achieve (Lamb, 2009). They have a view on what a schools priorities should be (countering bullying and developing positive peer relationships) (SEN Policy Options Steering Group, 2009).

National survey of the Swedish public (reported by Söderberg, 2001) found the majority of parents wanted to participate "very much" or "quite a lot" in decisions regarding school organisation factors such as class size, norms and rules, school environment and extra support. In my study one of the small groups designing their own school based their

design from the premise of a parent: "what would I want for my child...".

What about the parents who are silent, or unable to participate, who "lack the time, energy, motivation and money" (Mittler, 2008, p. 5) to participate?

Danger this could create a new set of children disadvantaged by the system, creating a division into two categories:

- those whose parents are willing and active members of the school community
- those who have parents that are not.

Current special education system is seen to be affected by this very situation, resources are given to those who are prepared to fight for them (Mittler, 2008). One of the reasons that Lindsay et al's (2006) literature review found contributed to the over-representation of some ethnic minority groups in the special education system is the difference in parental support amongst the ethnic groups.

Further suggestions to improve the vignette:

Possibility of nominating an "additional adult" for the child whose parents cannot take part. Could be in the form of a learning mentor to take the place of the parent, just as a case worker would take the parent role in the case of a child in care.

Exploring ways to engage the parents who cannot participate, (for example video conferencing, social networks, e-mails, a communication book, school teachers to visit homes/ places of work).

### **What is learnt?**

Competing concepts of choice and entitlement and also the assessment of the variety of learning outcomes.

A suggestion by some focus group participants that pupil tracking and diverse pathways could be used as a way of negotiating choice, entitlement and ability tensions.

See Literature review for descriptions of tracks/ pathways.

Tracks and pathways is an aspect of a future school utilised by Burnett & Carrington (2006), in their future school all pupils are educated until year 9, at which point three different pathways emerge. Warnock is another advocate of separate tracks (Warnock, 1991).

There is opposition to the notion of tracking in the literature (Ainscow, 2005; Corbett, 1997; European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2005).

Against the ideal of dismantling separate programmes, services and specialisms which they see as necessary in achieving an inclusive school (Ainscow & Miles, 2011).

Both the literature review and the findings of the questionnaire contained in this thesis describe how tracking in the form of streaming (a common educational practice in secondary school organisation according to EADSNE, 2005) leads to exclusionary practice.

Streaming was cited in case studies as why parents chose to remove their child from a mainstream secondary school and place them in a special school – having special educational needs seen as being synonymous with low ability, so children with SEN were

put in the bottom class, to be bored or bullied by peers (see chapter 4). The EADSNE argues for heterogeneous grouping, streaming contributes to marginalisation, whereas mixed grouping can “contribute to overcoming the increasing gap between students with SEN and their peers” (p. 22).

Corbett (1997) critiques Warnock’s notion of pupil tracking, arguing it implies there is one way and one way only to organise pupil grouping, Warnock’s suggestion fails to recognise that the differences within alternative forms of mainstream schooling advantage some learners over others.

Sociological paradigm holds that conceptualisation of special education as a “sorting mechanism contributing to the reproduction of existing social inequalities by siphoning off a proportion of the school population and assigning them to an alternative, lower-status educational track” (Skidmore, 2004, p. 4). Although Skidmore uses this in the context of the special school being the alternative track, it could also be applied to the notion of pupil tracking within a school. “the oppression of standardised teaching and curriculum and the exclusionary and sorting practice of school” (Facer, 2011, p. 28)

Potential to allow every child to negotiate a distinct, unique educational pathway for their purposes, (“Cumulative Education Plan” Ontario Royal Commission on Learning, 1994). This could take many forms. The German and Japanese Studies reported by Van Aalst (2001) describe a vision of the involvement of a core-curriculum element, focused on fundamental of learning in tandem with a set period of time put aside for “integrated studies” either within or outside of school. “Credits” are available in and outside of school based activities. Also an emphasis on “integrated learning”, the core curriculum being diversified with a larger place for non-academic studies in this core curriculum. The German study sees academic and vocational learning as being positioned as holding equal value.

Difference to these strategies from the three-way track as described by Burnett and Carrington (2006) is that all children have opportunities to access all tracks. This approach also recognises that adaptation of curriculum is needed for all students, not just a select few (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2006).

### **Where does learning take place?**

Some of the futures literature questions the likelihood of there being a place called school at a future point (Facer, 2011; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). Two of the six OECD scenarios portray future worlds in which “de-schooling” occurs. Sutch (2009) reports on the results of public and stakeholder engagement activities that the Beyond Current Horizon programme undertook to inform their scenario planning exercises. Shows aspiration for a shift from a formal, large school building to a smaller community of learners, and a few cases of virtual classrooms emerged.

Facer (2011) argues for a place called school in a section entitled “in defence of a school” (pp. 28-29). Argues that schools are “critical sites” (Facer, 2012, p. 99) the physical school is worth continued investment, despite transformation of learning due to technological advance. Her reasons for maintaining a place called school are to ensure community members encounter each other, to counter the inequalities and injustice posed by the informal revolution, and finally, to provide care and protection for children.

Parallel notion is one of learning being split between a school site and external learning opportunities. (Discussed to some extent in references to the personalised learning plan above.) Data collected from the "Million Futures" website (an online tool that presents participants with various questions about future life and learning) revealed "there was opposition to large rooms with lots of desks and many students, instead there should be the freedom to move around, to have flexible hours, and to appreciate learning that happens outside the classroom" (Sutch, 2009, p. 197).

Robertson (2003) critiques the view that inclusion only occurs when all children attend their local school, says this is based on the almost obsolete view that school is the only place to learn, a view challenged by the advent of e-learning/use of the internet. Wedell (2005) points to the location of learning outside of school as an approach to inclusion.

Beyond Current Horizons project notes the trend relating to the weakening of institutional boundaries, with the capacity to interact easily from a distance, the creation of personal "clouds" of information, people and resources and the merging of private and public provision of public services. They suggest an allocation of "more significant roles for work based learning, inter-generational learning, social and community based learning, remote and on-line provision, professional accreditation, informal learning for pleasure and family learning" (Facer, 2009, p. 238)

Dangers are seen in potential inequality caused by the digital divide. Facer (2011) notes the power of technology creates a new diversity, economic wealth allows for greater access to technology and a new division arising between those who can afford the learning technology, and those who cannot.

I have witnessed this: worked in a school that had a policy of "a laptop for all", then with economic restraints became a PDA for all, and finally a PDA for those who could afford it. Parents bought a PDA through the school for their child, and there was a collection of PDAs for loan during class time for those whose parents did not invest in one.

Second problem - how the aims of teaching and developing social learning could be achieved outside of a school building context.

There are suggestions made in the focus groups on how the community and local business/work places can be involved in offering learning opportunities. Specific mention of children with SEN. However, difficulties posed regarding legal issues of the student in the work place or external learning environments (For example, the school's responsibility for caring for the student, and if this responsibility continues in the external work place).

### **What is the best size of school?**

Systematic review on size by the EPPI-centre (Garrett et al., 2004) enquired about effect of secondary school size on a number of variables.

Found that:

- there was a negative association between students' feelings of engagement, connectedness and participation and increased school size,
- that student perceptions of culture and ethos also decline as size increases.
- teachers in small schools tend to have more positive perceptions of school climate and resource availability.

- Majority of studies demonstrate no statistically significant association with size and attainment.
- a negative relationship between average secondary school size and costs (defined as direct public expenditure on schools), as the school gets bigger cost fall (known as economies of scale)
- no overall consistent relationship between secondary school size and outcomes.

Ontario Commission (1994) outlines support for smaller schools and a "schools within schools" model (where a large school site is split into separate sub-schools). Ensures that the positives of both models are gained in the school. EPPI review did examine studies that evaluated the school within school approach, could find few rigorous evaluations of these initiatives. Do recognise that it "may have the potential to offer the benefits of both small and large schools by maintaining several small schools within the same school site" (Garrett et al., 2004, p. 5).

### **Who goes to this school?**

The notion of local and community-based schools are prevalent in most descriptions of inclusive schools

Success or failure of this model of an inclusive school is predicated on parents choosing to send their children there. The idea of attendance at local school is difficult to make sense of if parents make a choice about the schools they wish their children to attend (Robertson, 2003) - "given the structural forces which produce exclusive practices in schools...how will inclusive schools emerge and survive?" (Cummings, Dyson, & Millward, 2003, p. 50).

"Structural forces" marketisation, and target-led approaches to school appraisal and parental choice, favoured by successive UK governments (as exemplified in: Department for Education, 2010; Department for Education, 2011b).

Two issues at play here – the affect of marketisation and the affect of parental choice in pupil placement. The latter point is a huge contributory factor. Parents choose special school placement due to their concerns for their child: ..... "for some children their survival is predicated upon their withdrawal from hostile schooling experiences" (Facer, 2011, p. 28).

Current trend in the educational landscape towards an increasing diversity of the educational markets (Sandford & Facer, 2008). Results in greater choice and competition between schools. Contrary to the vision I present, where all schools are based on the same model, and become homogenous, the BCH team conclude their report suggesting that a "diverse ecology of educational institutions and practices" (Facer, 2009, p. 243) needs created, rather than one single template of a school for the future. Is this very diversity, they claim, that will help us respond to uncertainty of what the future will be. However, I posit that this "survival of the fittest" mentality does not seem to have much concern for equity, or that some pupils may be disadvantaged by this approach (by being a member of a school that does not survive in the market). Literature reviewed in this thesis (see ch 2, section 2.02 a) also critiques the trend for school specialisation and diversification, noting that it leads to inequitable provision, and socio-economic stratification.

Still a demand in the literature for the imperative of parental choice (Hutmacher, 2001;

Lamb, 2009; Söderberg, 2001). In a national survey of the Swedish public (reported by Söderberg), two out of three parents expressed a strong interest in choice of school and almost half on choice of teacher. Söderberg then reports on another Swedish study that took place in 1993 (Skolverket, 1993, original in Swedish) which found that choice of school is mediated by quality issues – the quality of the education provided, and the quality of the social climate, as well as geographic proximity and access to friends. These later factors do not seem a constraining factor for some of the parents who responded to my questionnaire, as a number opted for out of county placement and residential schooling.

The Swedish survey also reports that:

- four fifths of parents thought classes should be mixed with pupils from different social and cultural backgrounds,
- over half believe choice of school widens rifts.

So, although parents believe school choice widens socio-economic gaps there is still a demand for choice of provision based on quality issues. Thus, “the demand for choice and diversity revealed by the survey is only to be expected so long as schools do not find other ways of meeting demands” (Söderberg, p. 193). If the local schools provided a quality education and a quality social climate, there perhaps would not be such a call for school choice. This relates to a Swedish context, and so direct generalisations cannot be made to parental opinion in England. It would be interesting to see the results of a similar survey if it took place in an English context.

### **How is the school/ system funded?**

Financing a school and a school system is a complex issue, there will always be a debate between what is adequate, and who should get additional resources and why.

Literature review in chapter two contained some critique of the current funding system used in England, with suggestions that “piecemeal” inclusion is more expensive, and a poor use of resources (Thomas et al., 1998). They assert that inclusion works best when fully funded, with resources redirected from segregated provision. Current practice of local authorities funding residential placements for some children with special educational needs is to the detriment of funding for others with special needs (Mittler, 2008).

The question of where funding will be obtained from is not unique to my vignette, the OECD recognise that some of their scenarios will call for a significant increase in spending, and questions where these resources will be found. The BCH project also acknowledges that economic circumstances affect the realisation of some of their scenarios, recognising they hold significant demands on public resources and it is unlikely a “windfall” (Facer, 2009, p. 205) will provide resources from public funds.

One of the focus group discussions evaluating the vignette raised the macro-political issue of how tax-payers money is used, and the need for the democratic will for money to be used to finance schools like this one. Sandford (2009) echoes this matter, the current education system is centrally funded, the primary source of which is the tax payer. Raises an alternative – voucher system. In his example the voucher represents the state and tax payers’ investment, can be exchanged for the provision that meets the learners’ choice. Schools can also generate their own revenue through hiring out their facilities, and pupils contribute to fund raising efforts. Also reflected in some of the POSG scenarios (SEN

Policy Options Steering Group, 2005).

Canadian public consultation suggested the need for an equal base of per-pupil funding, which is then supplemented in some school boards on equity grounds. Suggestion in the Japanese study that schools pool expensive high performance equipment to save on costs.

### **What should be contained in teacher training and Continuing Professional Development?**

Teacher training and CPD is an area of importance for the development of inclusive schools. This was raised in the literature review, the study into over-representation and is reiterated in the evaluations of the vignette. Van Aalst (2001), reporting on the Canadian study states one of the conclusion that the study reached was that "no serious improvements can take place without the enthusiastic involvement of teachers. On-going professional learning, both formal and informal, must become a normal, integral part of teaching careers and should thus be made mandatory" (Van Aalst, p. 161).

Also reinforced in the evaluations of the vignette is the involvement of all stakeholders in various elements of training. This view is one also espoused by Tilstone (2003), who suggested, it as a way of challenging the preconceptions and prejudices of all staff, and establishing a collective knowledge base for valuing the diversity of pupils.

However, there is a danger that the SEN element of any training initiative runs the risk of being "a perfunctory rehearsal of the mantras of inclusion and a tour of the range of children's deficits they are likely to see in the classroom" (Allan, 2008, p. 19). Any individual focus on SEN does not necessarily provide understanding of how to teach inclusively.

Robinson (2006) acknowledges that current policy imperatives (such as personalisation) necessitate an examination of what should be offered in teacher training. Implications for models of future schools and education systems, she warns that "quite how school-based training will be shaped in a society in which the whole concept of the school as we know it likely to be transformed is... difficult to envisage" (p. 34).

### **Is there a place for school leadership?**

School leadership did not emerge as a contributory factor to the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools in questionnaire findings. However, some case studies of inclusive schools do note the importance of strong leadership (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006; Lunt & Norwich, 2009). Leadership also seen as a critical proponent of school effectiveness (Hextall & Mahonney, 1998), and also as a key component of an inclusive school.

Accountability is a theme that runs throughout all of the OECD scenarios (2001) in various forms. The authors state that future models of education still need accountability to be assured, but without effecting flexibility of the models (p. 107). (See section on competition and publications of results below.) Accountability through leadership?

Alternative to traditional notions of leadership was discussed in one of the focus groups, using a more democratic model. Both the Canadian and Japanese case studies make reference to this approach, recognition of need for more influence of students, teachers, parents and the community on how schools are run.

If inclusion is construed as being the responsibility of everyone, as argued by Allan (2008), then there is collective investment, and is more likely to be successful. The Index for Inclusion does see a place for collaborative and participatory leadership approach (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

### **What happens after school?**

One criticism of the vignette was that it provided an artificial environment, different from the "real world". This same argument could be made of schools today – both mainstream and special – that they are sheltered, and different to the "real world". Warnock states that schools are not microcosms of society, and are for the "unique" "temporary" enterprise of education, directed towards preparing students for life after school (Warnock & Norwich, 2010). Norwich in the same volume counters that these points are assumptions that are not justified. Adds that there is a need to see the connections between school and life after school, rather than just the differences.

Another critique centred on assessment. Assessment has already been discussed in terms of needing to expand a schools "repertoire" of assessment tools to cater for the different types of learning that the school described in the vignette values. The discussion of assessment in the context of what happens after school is the questioning of how students will access university or work post school.

Multiple purposes to assessment:

- legitimisation – schooling is fit for purpose, and works (Sandford, 2009) This allows reliable information about national standards over time to be published and examined, and also holds schools individually accountable (Bevan, Brighouse, Mills, Rose, & Smith, 2009).
- to differentiate, which Sandford claims is the sorting and organising of people into different life paths and educational streams thought to be appropriate for them.
- to provide a personal record of achievement for pupils (Sandford), and provide parents with information about their child's progress (Bevan et al., 2009)(DCSF).
- can also be used to optimise the effectiveness of pupils learning and teachers teaching Expert Group in Assessment (Bevan et al., 2009). (Sandford makes no reference to assessment having a formative role in the learning process).

Any school design and education system has to consider what the purposes of assessment are: do they act as "a badge indicating that compulsory schooling has ended, as a means of differentiation between young people, as a mark of competence in a given area, or as something else entirely" (Sandford, p. 191)?

With regards to the criticism of lack of summative assessment in the vignette, is everything assessed after school? Are all assessments faced after school summative? The assessment in the vignette is formative, "not in the sense you can't pass it on to future employers/ higher education, but more in the sense it is informing the learning the students are going through" (my response in session to query about assessment).

### **Where is specialist support located?**

Co-location and cooperation between multi-agency teams, although mentioned in many descriptions of inclusive schools (see literature review), presents a number of problems.

One raised in the focus groups was the difference between the different models of

behaviour and learning that different groups adopt (Wigfall & Moss, 2001). Each agency's approach based on their specific training, experience and professional identity (Farrell & Venables, 2009), which may prevent effective collaboration.

Perhaps this is actually a strength, the analysis of the questionnaire showed the over-representation can be attributed to a range of conceptualisations of development and disability. Dyson, Lin and Millward (1998) found that where effective interagency work occurs the agencies involved had developed a set of shared aims that were powerful enough to counter their different core purposes. They recommend that each agency publish a vision as a basis for building up common aims and activities.

I would argue that the publication of a vision for each group is not enough, work needs done to synthesise these visions, which can then inform the set of shared aims, and practices (Wigfall & Moss, 2001). Lacey (2003) suggests that different agencies could be trained to conduct assessments in their own discipline, but also in the assessment procedures of other groups to a basic level. This means that one multi-agency worker can take a key role in each child's case.

Another problem that was raised was the watering down of multiagency teams if there are not enough for each school to have each separate professional, and the related aspect of schools and children not being able to access support for low incidence needs that may present themselves. A "local only" approach to inclusion will "almost certainly prevent some children... from receiving adequately resourced education and therapy, or the associated expertise" (Robertson, 2003, p. 106).

### **What is the external education landscape/ system like?**

#### ***Aims and purposes of education***

Need to make the aims and purposes of the school and education explicit voiced by one of the focus groups. I agreed and added these.

Bullet pointed list outlining what the education system sought to achieve on the first page of the vignette was taken from the findings of a parental survey of perspectives on the school curriculum (Norwich, Black, & Greenwood, 2011). These "purposes of education" were rated as top priorities by parents in the survey (over 90% of the 840 respondents agreed or agreed strongly with the statements). Also reflect the ethos of the future education system I sought to describe.

The studies of the future that Van Aalst (2001) describes all make value and purpose statements, range from ensuring all students have high levels of Literacy (Canada), a deepening understanding across a wide variety of subject areas (Canada) including own language, history, traditions and culture (Japan), to prepare students to be socially responsible (Canada, Japan, Germany) are a selection.

Gerschel (2003) contends that "the statement of aims of most schools usually stress that each pupil is valued as an individual and it is the intention of staff to help fulfil her or his potential" (p 55), but that despite this aim there is still implicit tensions between the different perceived focus and purposes of education.

#### ***Competition and publication of results***

One of the purposes of assessment raised in the discussion above is that of legitimisation of the school and education system. No notion of competition in the future school

vignette, and no indication that schools will have to publish any results. Begs the question of how are schools held accountable? German futures project describes the role of assessment in accountability of schools: State regulation should be minimal, focused on financial and legal frameworks, and quality judgments. Internal and external evaluation should be used, with a focus on locally sensitive arrangements (Van Aalst, 2001).

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