RETURNING PUPILS TO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS SUCCESSFULLY, FOLLOWING PERMANENT EXCLUSION: PARTICIPANT PERCEPTIONS

Jackie Lown

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

In 1996, the authority within which this researcher works became a Unitary Authority, and received a substantial Standard Fund Grant to tackle exclusion and disaffection. The project aims included the objective of increasing the number of permanently excluded pupils returning to mainstream schools. I was seconded to the project, as a full time educational psychologist, along with a behavioural support teacher, education social worker and four learning support assistants. The project, though changing year on year in terms of specific content, continued for three years; towards the end of this period, the reintegration process for excluded children became the responsibility of the behaviour support service, and the project as a discrete entity ceased to exist. Permanent exclusion rates in this LEA mirrored national figures at the time the project began.

Review of the literature revealed that although plenty had been written about exclusion, relatively little existed in the literature concerning the return of permanently excluded pupils to new schools. Of the small body of literature that did exist, much was found to be speculative. In addition, little had captured the views of pupils and families about the processes of reintegration. The literature indicated various factors that were believed to be important in ensuring success of new placements, including a small amount specifically related to post-exclusion, though it was observed that the evidence upon which this was based could not be described as robust.

The present empirical study sought to discover the perceptions of participants (pupils, families, school staff and LEA support staff) about the experiences of return to mainstream school for five pupils. These pupils were selected on the basis that they had maintained new placements for at least three terms following return. This study took a 'solution focused' view – ie it explored the factors which participants viewed as important in supporting the long-term success of new placement. This perspective arose because examination of LEA records revealed that over a period of six years, some years showed only 25% of pupils were maintained in new placements for three terms or more. Data was obtained through individual interviews with parents, pupils,

receiving school staff and LEA support staff. In addition, a focus group interview was held with members of the LEA behaviour support team.

Since participant perceptions and attitudes were sought, 'new paradigm' interpretive methodology was applied, and grounded theory was used to analyse individual interviews and focus group data.

The main findings of the research highlighted:

- the varying perceptions of what constituted 'successful' reintegration: LEA records were not always consistent with parental perception
- the relatively low profile given by pupils and parents to the preparation of new placements in terms of curriculum, basic skills, subject choices, graduated build up etc (all of which are indicated to be important by the existing literature)
- the critical importance of the quality of relationships within pupil relational networks: this dimension incorporates adult/pupil relationships, those pertaining to adult/adult relationships within the pupil network, and pupil/pupil networks
- the quality of emotional support available to pupils, arising from the quality of those relationships within the relational network. In addition, academic support was also raised
- the perceived importance of the pupils' own characteristics: attitude towards the new placement and their determination to succeed

In the context of pupils returning to new mainstream schools following permanent exclusion, and sustaining these placements beyond three terms, the present study (through the application of grounded theory) raises three core dimensions which play a critical role in initial and maintained success, namely: relationships, support and pupil characteristics. Some of these issues raised may also be directly applicable to other aspects of inclusive practice, for example pupils moving from enhanced provision/special units/special schools into mainstream settings. The psychological and social processes of such transitions for pupils and their families may well echo those described in this dissertation.

CONTENTS

Tables

Figures

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE

REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

Remember Me?

'Do you remember me?' asked the young man.
The old man at the bus stop,
Shabby, standing in the sun, alone,
Looked round.
He stared for a moment screwing up his eyes,
Then shook his head.
'No, I don't remember you.'
'You used to teach me,' said the young man.
'I've taught so many,' said the old man, sighing.
'I forget.'
'I was the boy you said was useless,
Good for nothing, a waste of space.
Who always left your classroom crying,
And dreaded every lesson that you taught.'
The old man shook his head and turned away.
'No, I don't remember you,' he murmured.
'Well, I remember you,' the young man said.
Phinn (2001), page 68.

The present Labour government has made a serious issue of 'education, education, education' and has raised the profile of those children who have proved more vulnerable to failure in the past. Alongside this new focus has come increased debate, guidance and legislation about inclusion. This chapter will pay attention to that which impacts upon those vulnerable to exclusion through intentional exclusion from school, and will also survey the existing literature concerning the return of such children to school.

This chapter will offer a brief introduction to the symbiotic issues of exclusion and reintegration, whilst taking only a cursory look at the causes of exclusion. The decision to spend relatively little time considering the causes of exclusion was taken in order to maximise the discussion concerning research, experience and possibility for returning pupils to new schools following the trauma of exclusion. The Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b) highlights the importance of listening to pupils' views regarding their own learning needs. The view is reiterated in this chapter: it is essential to reveal pupils' views about returning to mainstream school in order to become informed about, learn from, and act upon, what we as educators are told by children and what we go on to tell others.

Introduction

The incidence of permanent exclusion in Britain is mercifully low. Parsons and Howlett (2000) suggest less than 1 percent of the school population is permanently excluded; one to two thirds of this group of pupils are subsequently returned to new mainstream school placements. We know relatively little about the long-term outcomes for pupils returned to mainstream; reintegration is a fairly new concept, and the numbers involved are relatively small. Therefore it is important to learn from the current literature and experiences of those have returned, in order to inform evolving understandings and shape future developments in educational policy and practice in relation to these pupils.

It would be impossible to consider the experience of reintegration in isolation from political pressures; similarly it would be impossible to consider reintegration in isolation from the processes of exclusion. Reintegration needs to be viewed 'in the round', and so the aims of this literature review are to:

- Consider the political context of rising exclusion rates
- Take a brief look at the causes of exclusion
- Debate the link between emotional and behavioural difficulties and special educational needs, considering the possible impact of any link for the process of reintegration
- Explore the arguments for reintegrating pupils previously permanently excluded, and consider in detail several studies that address this phenomenon
- Raise the issue of listening to children's voices to inform educational theory and practice about the processes inherent in reintegration
- Consider the main factors that emerge as potentially important in determining the success of reintegrated placements following permanent exclusion

The political context

Exclusion from school is not a new phenomenon. It is likely to have been happening in one form or another since schools came into existence. The 1944 Education Act contained within it the right for head teachers to exclude pupils from school, but the subject seems to have drawn little political interest from that time until the early

1990's, when the first national monitoring data became available. Referring to the Labour Government which took office in 1997, Fisher (2001) writes:

> *The present government, so delightfully tempting to criticise for*
> *many of its education policies, has, during its period in office,*
> *poked a stick into a number of hornets' nests, including this one*
> *[exclusion], which have lain buzzing and undisturbed for long*
> *years, and it deserves credit for so doing.*
> **Fisher (2001), page 1.**

Political interest in exclusion during the early 1990's was probably driven by "needs must". Exclusion rates in Britain were observed to be spiralling rapidly, and there was growing concern about the social costs of such a trend. Many authors comment on the explosion in exclusion figures in the 1990's, although it has to be recognised that national exclusion figures were not kept prior to 1990, and were known to have been under-recorded by the National Exclusions Registration System in 1990/1 and 1991/2. Blyth and Milner (1996) report on a DfE study of permanent exclusions showing a rise of 32% (2,910 to 3,833) between 1990/1 and 1991/2.

Parsons (1999) traced the growing number of permanent exclusions from schools in England between 1990 and 1998, and recorded growth from 2,910 in 1990/1 to 13,041 in 1997/8. These have been plotted on the graph below, with the years 1998 – 2001 added by reference to the National Statistics Bulletin (DfES website, 2002). The figures for 2002-3 have been added by reference to the Ofsted publication (2005).

Table 1: Permanent Exclusion Rates (England) 1989 -2003

Number of pupils permanently excluded

Year
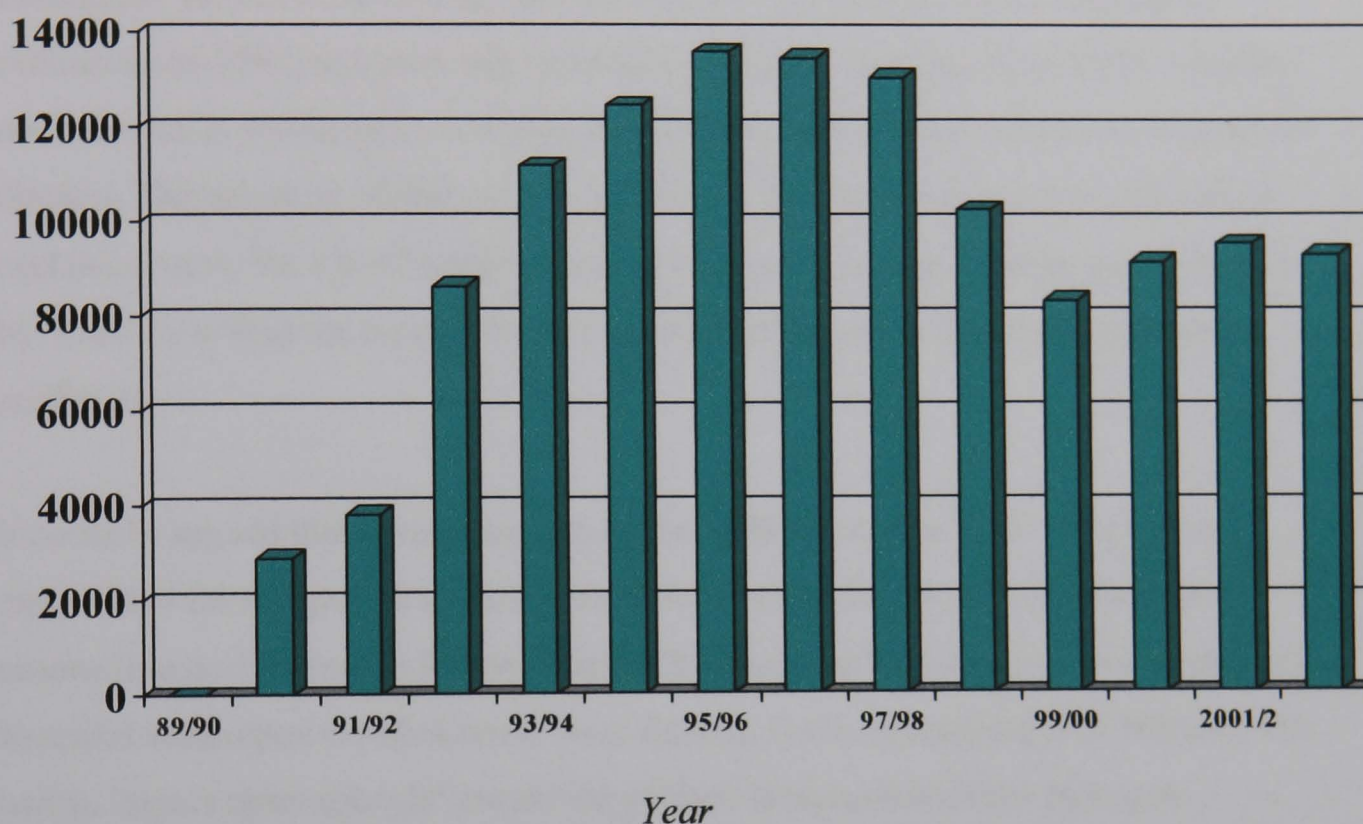
As well as the steep rise in frequency of permanent exclusions in the 1990's, it is interesting to ponder the other reasons for political interest in the subject during this period. Hayden and Dunne (2001) suggest three possible reasons:

i) concern about childhood experience being restricted, or of poorer quality, if denied the normal experience of schooling

ii) "the public's concern about the 'dangerousness' of children who are without schooling" (Hayden and Dunne, 2001), and, probably most importantly,

iii) increasing concern about the 'alternative' activities which children out of school engage in, particularly since there was growing evidence of a link between absence/exclusion from school and criminal activity/anti-social behaviour (DfE,1994; Parsons, 1999; Searle, 1996; Audit Commission, 1996).

Causes of Exclusion

Why was there such a massive increase in the number of exclusions in the early 1990's? Authors have considered this question in detail (eg Hayden and Dunne, 2001;

Parsons 1996 and 1999; Parsons and Howlett, 2000). The question stated in this way assumes that children were largely retained in schools prior to that time, and of course this assumption is not necessarily accurate; there may have been similar numbers "unofficially" excluded from schools, or choosing to exclude themselves by non-attendance. However, following the introduction of national record-keeping on exclusions in 1990, and such huge growth in numbers apparent from 1990 – 98 (see table above), it seems safe to assume that at least some degree of increase was not an illusion. The intention of this study is not to focus on the reasons for the growth in exclusion rates, but a brief overview of the main themes related to the question may be useful in setting the context for the issue of reintegration following permanent exclusion.

It could be argued that several aspects of the 1988 Education Reform Act were responsible for the growth in exclusion rates to some degree, the implications unravelling in the years to follow. The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced a new financial basis upon which schools were funded, Local Management of Schools; this had an impact upon schools' awareness of their own marketability and upon "resources for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and with mild or moderate learning difficulties" (Galloway et.al., 1994, page 33). Hayden and Dunne (2001) point out that the Act led to increasing "focus upon literacy and numeracy, attainment targets and league tables, reduc[ing] the complexity of what happens in schools to what is measurable" (page 4). It is generally accepted that the curriculum changes which followed the introduction of the 1988 Education Act served to narrow the focus of educational experience, placing increasing value on attainments in "the basics", leading to alienation for those most likely to find success in these skills difficult or undesirable.

> *Performance tables have often been blamed for this...Some feel that many behavioural problems are the response of those who have fallen behind and are not being helped to catch up, for whom an academic curriculum seems increasingly difficult, uninteresting, or irrelevant*
> **Social Exclusion Unit (1998), page 11.**

Parsons (1996) draws together four categories of the causes of the rise in exclusions, namely:

a) Psychosocial; these reasons concern "within child" factors which lead to there being "more behaviourally difficult children and young people" (Parsons 1996, page 182)

b) Family and social problems; Parsons (1996) alleges that the number of families in poverty and family breakdown has increased. He states "There is an association between social dislocation, poverty and difficulties at school, including the experience of exclusion" (Parsons, 1996, page 183).

c) Educational resources. There is:

> *tension between the business ethic and the professional ethic: the former urges them [schools] to organise their enterprise so that it is most effective and efficient and this may mean removing obstacles to those goals and ingredients likely to lower its standing – behaviourally difficult pupils*
> **Parsons (1996), page 183.**

d) Cultural response to alienating and alienated behaviour. Pupils are seen as culprits rather than victims, and this suggests that the means to ameliorate difficulties lies largely outside the control of schools, thus encouraging a punitive response. Parsons (1996, page 183) uses the phrase "reject the rejector". Hayden and Dunne (2001) posit that "child welfare should be the focus in the management of exclusion – the approach should be problem solving, rather than blaming" (page 85).

Political and social concerns about the undoubted growth in exclusion rates during the 1990's raised uncomfortable questions about the provision being made for those children excluded from school: both the existence and quality of such provision (Gray and Panter, 2000). The latter months of the last Conservative government saw the implementation of the 1996 Education Act, which included the expectation that LEAs would establish Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) which:

> *shall make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at school or otherwise than at school for those children of compulsory school age, who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them*
> **1996 Education Act, Section 19.**

However, this legislation carried no stated expectation concerning the number of hours pupils would spend receiving such education, and it seems that 5 hours per week was common practice, often for extended periods. Parsons (1999) noted that,

according to information provided to the Department for Education in 1994, the majority of pupils received less than five hours per week, a large number received less than ten hours per week, and only a small number of LEAs provided full- and half-time education.

Soon after the general election in June, 1997, the Labour Government's expressed commitment to social inclusion led to the establishment of the "Social Exclusion Unit", which was charged with responsibility to report to the Prime Minister on how to:

> make a step-change in the scale of truancy and exclusions from school, and to find better solutions for those who have been excluded
> **Social Exclusion Unit (1998) foreword.**

This marked the beginning of a new era in government guidance and initiative focused on reducing exclusions, reintegrating those excluded and improving attendance, culminating in the commitment to reduce exclusions by one third by 2002.

In 1999, the DfEE produced guidance that directly addressed the issues contained within the quotation above. The document "Social Inclusion: Pupil Support", or SIPS, (DfEE, 1999) included sections on handling disaffection, preventing exclusion, the use of exclusion, and most importantly for this study, reintegration. Exclusion is viewed as one response (amongst many) to behavioural problems, and one that should be reserved for the most extreme difficulties. The document sets out the expectation that schools will try a whole range of other strategies before resorting to permanent exclusion.

Chapter 6 of the SIPS document (DfEE, 1999), is concerned with the use of exclusion and acknowledges the tension between maintaining children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream educational environments, whilst at the same time requiring that "Schools must maintain discipline and good conduct to secure an orderly learning environment so that teaching and learning can take place" (DfEE, 1999a, page 31). It is difficult to imagine how the tension created by these opposing interests can ever be resolved. On the one hand, the movement towards an inclusive society and inclusive schools lays convincing arguments for retaining *all* pupils within the mainstream in order to avoid the vulnerabilities which

result from educational exclusion and its bed-fellow social exclusion. On the other hand, schools are charged with the responsibility of functioning as well-ordered social institutions, protecting the rights of children to be safe and to learn.

> *It is ironic that at the same time as a growing demand for policies which promote inclusive education...there has also been a rapid growth in the number of pupils excluded from schools because of behaviour problems. It does appear that particularly where special educational needs concern challenging behaviour, schools find it hard to balance the individual's need for support with the institutions need to maintain order.*
> **Smith (1996), page 151.**

Billington (2000) views the process of removing children from schools as unacceptable, and one resulting from difference:

> *For we live in a culture in which children are removed from one school and placed elsewhere just because their differences are deemed unacceptable, although usually there will be a paucity of evidence to suggest that this will result in any kind of success...and thus [such solutions] constitute punitive acts of authority in which children's differences are identified prior to the imposition upon them of a social exclusion*
> **Billington (2000), page 2.**

It seems then, that there continues to be a philosophical dilemma, resulting in very real practical difficulties, concerning the differing needs of some of the stakeholders in education, namely pupils/families and schools (Gray and Panter, 2000). The authors of government guidance appear to encounter considerable difficulties in bridging the gap between children's rights/best interests and the pressure to continue to see exclusion from school as an acceptable response to poor behaviour. The SIPS document (DfEE 1999a) attempts to make clear the responsibility that rests upon LEAs, schools, teachers and governors to do what they can to retain pupils with diverse emotional and behavioural needs within the mainstream context, and sets out clear practical strategies for doing so. At the same time, the document underlines the need for schools to retain order, making exclusions in response to serious breaches of discipline policy, or when a pupil remaining in school would harm the education or welfare of the pupil or other pupils (DfEE 1999a).

In an apparent attempt to resolve this dilemma the government has continued to produce guidance that offers advice regarding the appropriateness of permanent

exclusion and the range of alternative responses open to schools (Department for Education and Skills, 2003a and 2003b). Such documents increasingly encourage LEAs to reintegrate pupils when permanent exclusion has been seen as the appropriate 'last resort'.

It is worthy of attention here that the British government's agenda on inclusion is very much entwined with the international agenda on human rights (DfES, 2001c). The 1989 United Nations Convention on the rights of the child and the 1994 Salamanca Statement (for both, see Booth et al, 2000) were adopted by the UK, and enshrine the principle that children should have the right to be educated within their home community. However, Parsons (1999) points out that these pieces of legislation, together with The Children Act (1989), The Education Act (1997) and "common sense and humanity" were not enough to ensure the full-time education of an English 6 year old, whose case is used to illustrate how the current exclusion system can fail children (page 182).

Whether driven by political, philosophical, social or humanist beliefs, the fact is that including previously excluded children and young people into mainstream schools is currently a serious issue, and one which attracts public and political attention as well as government funding.

The international agenda creating pressures for inclusion, and the growing awareness nationally of the wasteful nature of educational and social exclusion in Britain, combined towards the end of the 1990s to bring the plight of children and young people permanently excluded from school sharply into focus. As a direct result, the possibility of returning these children into new mainstream schools started to become more real, for more children and young people. In my experience, working as an educational psychologist within LEA settings from 1985, reintegration following permanent exclusion was once a rare occurrence, experienced as a one-off situation each time it occurred. Now, LEAs are much more likely to have systems in place (though possibly in the early days of operation) which are designed to support children, families and schools through the process, and the process is becoming far more commonplace. Indeed, in a study carried out by Parsons and Howlett (2000, page 41) the conclusion is drawn "that reintegration rates are rising" (this study is

discussed in detail later). An interesting adjunct to this is that the Social Inclusion Pupil Support document (1999a) introduced the idea of 'managed moves'. The document set out an outline process for reintegrating pupils to a new school prior to permanent exclusion, if circumstances suggested that a fresh start would be the most fruitful course of action.

Definition of Terms: Exclusion and Reintegration

It would be helpful at this point to take a little time to focus on the terminology being used. The term exclusion, for the purposes of this study, is defined as the point at which a school removes a child/young person from its roll, due to behavioural difficulties, having gone through the specified official channels and procedures to reach this outcome. Of course, schools may unofficially send children home, or ask parents or carers to find another school for their child, but such "unofficial exclusions" are not to be encouraged, have no basis in law, and are not included in the definition of exclusion taken up here. Hayden and Dunne (2001) draw attention to the unknown numbers of cases of this type, and bemoan the fact that these continue to occur. The authors also draw attention to the fact that there does not seem to have been any questioning of the right of schools to exclude children permanently. This is an issue taken up by Billington and Pomerantz (2004) in their discussion of children excluded and marginalized from schools: "there is something deeply offensive to social justice in witnessing fellow human beings pushed out through overt or covert marginalisation" (page 6).

Within the term "exclusion" there are two types: fixed term exclusion, which often lasts a few days but can be in operation up to 45 days in a school year (the pupil remains on the roll of the excluding school and usually returns there); secondly, permanent exclusion, in which, following any appeals process, the pupil's name is permanently taken off roll, and the pupil does not return to the excluding school.

Reintegration means the process of returning a pupil to school and in its widest sense could include reintegration to a school previously attended, or pupils who have attended one type of school being integrated into another type: for example a pupil with physical disabilities who has attended a special school being integrated into a mainstream setting. Reintegration could imply a temporary or part time arrangement

between two schools. However, this study is concerned with the return to new mainstream provision for pupils following permanent exclusion; this implies that such a pupil is intentionally taken off the roll of one school due to emotional/behavioural problems resulting in extreme behaviour, and later introduced to the roll of another, different school. The term 'inclusion' is often used in educational parlance these days: put simply, the term is used to describe the inclusion of children with some form of learning difficulty into regular mainstream schools. Learning difficulties might take the form of physical disability, communication problems etc. I feel it is appropriate to separate out this group from those pupils intentionally excluded from school through the use of accepted legal processes leading to permanent exclusion. Although all groups might be regarded as being 'included' in mainstream settings, the latter group carries with it certain historical factors and possible expectations due to the nature of the initial exclusion. Therefore, the terms 'returning' and/or 'reintegrating' will be used rather than 'including'.

The term 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' (EBD) is used frequently in this study. The 1994 Code of Practice gave a simple definition of EBD as pupils who "may fail to meet expectations in school and in some but by no means all cases may also disrupt the education of others" and that such difficulties "may become apparent in a wide variety of forms". (In the more recent version of the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b), the term 'behavioural, social and emotional difficulties' tends to be used). Cooper (1996) debates the nature and effect of the use of the term EBD, concluding that the term can be useful, but would be more so if defined much more precisely. The author offers a "typology of some common emotional and behavioural difficulties that may lead to serious under-functioning in school and impairment in social relationships" (page 148), and suggests that the differences between externalising and internalising difficulties/behaviours should be clearly understood. Cooper places 'disaffection', 'conduct disorder' and 'delinquency – oppositional-defiance' in the 'externalising' group; these are labels that could be used to describe the pupils with whom this study is concerned.

Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: a Special Educational Need?

Several authors have grappled with the question of whether children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties should be regarded as having a

special educational need, with or without accompanying learning problems (eg Fogell and Long 1997; Smith 1996; Cooper 1996).

> *...often the question of whether pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties have special educational needs only arises at the point of exclusion and sometimes only after this most draconian of a head teacher's powers has already been invoked.*
> **Smith (1996), page 151.**

Parsons and Howlett (2000) found that, of the excluded population in their sample, sixty nine percent of primary aged pupils, and fifty percent of secondary aged pupils were deemed to have special educational needs which placed them on (the then) levels 1 – 5 of the Code of Practice, although the reasons for inclusion on schools' special needs registers is not described. In my experience working within many mainstream and special schools and Pupil Referral Units, there continues to be considerable confusion about this issue. I can think of many Special Needs Coordinators (SenCos) who view some children as just plain "naughty", and for these the question of inclusion on a special needs register would be irrelevant. For other SenCos, there may be a view that any pupil who is struggling to cope behaviourally with the demands of the school environment has, by definition, got a special educational need, in the sense that some individually tailored response needs to be available to the child.

It is interesting to consider when and why a pupil perhaps regarded as 'naughty' starts to be described as one with behavioural problems; later the same pupil may be described as one with emotional and behavioural difficulties, which may or may not be considered to constitute a special educational need. Smith (1996) suggests this is linked to resourcing: "The new description is applied in the anticipation that this will attract additional assistance, external support or alternative placement" (page 151).

It is noted in the SIPS document that:

> *The level of exclusions for pupils with a statement of SEN is extremely high; the most recent data show that the permanent exclusion rate for such pupils was seven times higher than for pupils without a statement...*
> **DfEE (1999a), page 33**

The tone of this quotation could almost be imagined to be one of surprise or disappointment. It could be construed as suggesting that children with Statements of

Special Educational Needs are unfairly over-represented in exclusion figures. This suggestion is entirely appropriate if it concerns pupils with a Statement related to a difficulty other than EBD. If such pupils are more likely to be excluded than non-Statemented peers then clearly questions should be raised about the practices which lead to such discrimination. However, the other way of looking at the issue is that it should be *expected* that pupils with Statements are over-represented in exclusion figures when the Statement relates to EBD; for such pupils, schools should be encouraged to acknowledge the existence of the emotional and behavioural difficulty as a special educational need, and place the child on the school's special needs register, moving towards Statutory Assessment when the school's own resources are proving insufficient to meet the pupil's needs. In my view, such progression through the levels of support and resourcing described in the Code of Practice (DfES 1994 and 2001) is entirely appropriate as a means of making attempts to address the pupils difficulties from within the school's own resources, and when necessary, from resources provided by the LEA. Inevitably, the pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs relating to emotional and behavioural difficulties form the most poorly behaved pupils within an LEA, and consequently are the ones most likely to be excluded.

Recent DfES documents (DfES 2003a and 2003b) carry explicit guidance regarding exclusion and pupils with special educational needs. Implicit is the assumption that not all pupils who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties should be regarded as having a special educational need. These documents suggest that children who have, previous to the exclusionable behaviour, been receiving support at school action or action plus (Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, 2001b) should be excluded less readily than pupils who have not:

> *...schools should avoid permanently excluding pupils with*
> *statements. They should also make every effort to avoid*
> *excluding pupils who are being supported at School Action*
> *or Action Plus...Schools should try every practicable means*
> *to maintain the pupil in school...*
> **DfES (2003a), pages 8 - 9**

There is an interesting lack of clarity in government documentation concerning the defining characteristics of emotional and behavioural difficulties, and whether these should be regarded as a special need or not. As indicated by Gray and Panter (2000)

the DfEE's "overall conceptual analysis of the reasons for behavioural difficulties remains muddled" (page 6), with an implicit assumption that the causes are located within the child. An attempt to address this lack of clarity is made by Cooper (1996), who offers a draft typology to firstly, identify the range of emotional and behavioural difficulties that have an impact upon educational performance and secondly, consider the aetiology of them, in the hope that doing so would assist in identifying appropriate responses. Here, Cooper raises the usefulness of locating emotional and behavioural difficulties within special educational needs terminology, concluding that the value of so doing enables teachers to better conceptualise the nature of a child's problems, understand the apparent meaning of certain patterns of behaviour and consequently respond in an effective manner.

Jones (2003) charts the constructions of emotional and behavioural difficulties over the last 50 years. She describes three distinct phases of construction, the first, ie before the 1981 Education Act, defined emotional and behavioural difficulties as 'maladjustment'; in this 'medical' model, the most appropriate responses would fall under the umbrella of 'treatment' for the individual. The second phase, which she regards as an educational model or construction, is characterised by emotional and behavioural difficulties being viewed as a special educational need; the resulting view of appropriate responses are therefore framed in terms of special educational provision. Jones claims that this model underpins current legislation, a view which Gray and Panter (2000), above, would probably see as an overly optimistic view of governmental understanding and clarity about the situation. The third construction, argues Jones, is seen as an issue separate from EBD or SEN, and framed as disaffection or disorderly behaviour; the goal therefore is the "inculcation of disaffected individuals into the social-moral order of the school" (page 148).

The question of whether emotional and behavioural difficulties are defined as a special educational need is important when considering the factors that might have significance in success or otherwise when returning those permanently excluded to new mainstream schools. It is interesting to consider whether the presence or absence of labels such as 'SEN', 'EBD' or 'Statemented' make any difference to the constructs which receiving schools (head teachers, teaching and non-teaching staff) apply when considering the potential arrival of an excluded pupil. Is it possible that

those going into a new school carrying a label of 'special educational needs' (as opposed to no descriptive label besides 'excluded') may elicit different expectations and therefore behaviours from those who have been prepared for their arrival? This is an area that appears to have, as yet, drawn little or no research interest.

The Case for Reintegration

Billington (2000, page 2) reminds us that children can be "placed elsewhere…, although usually there will be a paucity of evidence to suggest that this will result in any kind of success". It is dangerous to assume that permanently excluded pupils should always be returned to new schools, because of philosophical commitment to the idea that children and young people are bound to be better off included in mainstream settings. We can probably all think of examples where this has not been the case; indeed Parsons (cited in Fisher, 2001, page 3) goes so far as to say "The reintegration of permanently excluded children back into mainstream school is known to be a difficult process meeting with limited success". Schools can be reluctant to accept previously excluded pupils, and therefore lack commitment to the placement; this can be caused by a whole range of reasons, eg a school may feel unfairly pressurised into accepting the pupil, it may be viewed that the level of support received to make such a placement successful is inadequate, or there may be a sense of injustice created by a perception that other schools are excluding many and reintegrating less.

It needs to be acknowledged that having permanently excluded pupils return to different mainstream schools is a relatively new, and as yet infrequent, experience for most schools; schools themselves are probably going through a period of adjustment (ACE, 2003). Given that exclusion rates relative to the percentage of the whole school population continue to be small (Parsons and Howlett [2000, page 15] report an overall figure of 0.192% with the range between 0% and 1.058%) and the numbers reintegrating will be lower, schools will not often find themselves in the position of supporting a pupil through such a process.

Parsons and Howlett (2000) also report on the large variation in reintegration rates between LEAs, describing rates from 23 – 100 percent at primary level and 9 – 100 percent at secondary level. They report the mean integration rate, for pupils for whom

a return to school was deemed appropriate, to be 62 percent at primary level and 31 percent at secondary (Parsons and Howlett, 2000). Their evidence also indicates that the return rates of permanently excluded pupils are rising.

It is interesting to ponder here for a moment, why reintegration of these pupils should be viewed as a desirable end to work towards. The commitment to social and educational inclusion, as part of a social, philosophical and/or political belief system has already been mentioned, and will not be repeated here, save reiterating its undoubted importance. With permanently excluded pupils particularly in mind, the commitment to return them to mainstream schools rests on an assumption that such an education somehow results in "better" outcomes for the children and young people involved. The definition of "better", and for whom it is better, raises huge questions. Is returning to mainstream better because it means more exam passes at STA/GCSE or 'A' level? Is it better because of a rise in the percentage of school leavers who go on to further education, training, or employment? Is it better because it somehow benefits the other pupils in the school? Or is it better because the resources of the nominated school improve? Is it better because of the improved profile of the school as a 'community' resource? The list could go on and on; hard evidence for the answers to these questions is sadly lacking.

One issue concerning the desirability of returning permanently excluded pupils to other mainstream schools, which provides some answers, relates to the costs to LEAs (and therefore indirectly, schools) of different types of provision. Is return to mainstream "better" because the LEA is more efficient in its use of resources? Fisher (2001) asserts that "home tuition is found to cost at least ten times more per hour than mainstream schooling" (page 2). 'Include' (2000b) report that "even minimal provision outside mainstream school – home tuition or a part-time place in a PRU – costs more than £5000, compared with a mainstream school place in the region of £2000" (page 11). The report goes on to describe the escalating costs as a young person goes into more segregated specialist settings, citing residential special school costs around £30 000 per year and secure accommodation around £130 000 per year. The same report forecast the costs to LEAs from September, 2002, when full time educational provision was required for all pupils excluded for more than three weeks.

estimating the current PRU costs would rise from £5200 to £7200 per pupil per year (Include, 2000b, page 12).

Studies Exploring Reintegration

Enabling young people to return to and remain in mainstream school is one of today's key social policy challenges, yet there has been little research to inform practice in this area.
Include (2000a), page 1.

Studies which concern the reintegration of pupils following permanent exclusion are few in number; some will be considered in detail in this section. There are, however, studies which have other aspects of integration as their main concern, yet offer interesting and useful insights which may be applicable to the experiences of the excluded population.

One such study, by Jacklin and Lacey (1993), discusses the integration of pupils from a special school catering for pupils with physical disabilities, to mainstream primary and secondary schools. The article does not specify how many pupils the study is based on, nor how children were selected as being 'ready' for integration (except to say "Typically, our 'best pupils'...are chosen for integration" page 55). The authors place emphasis on the identification of two important factors which appear to underpin the success or otherwise of the attempted integration programmes:
i) Support structures within the school environment
ii) Friendships and relationship patterns emerging following integration

The first point relates to how closely the support structures within the special school environment and the new school are matched: ie children's access to support and resources such as physiotherapy, advisory teachers, nursing advice and access of school staff to guidance and advice. The point is made that difficulties can occur when access to such support and resources is somehow divorced from the mainstream context (eg children travelling away from school to receive physiotherapy), and an argument is made for providing such essential aspects of the children's educational experience within the mainstream setting. The authors conclude that "it is possible to maintain supportive elements within the mainstream similar to those found in a special school, given a multidisciplinary network of support and/or unit working with

the support of a special school." It could be argued that the same issue is applicable to the role of PRUs in working with mainstream schools, and preparing children for return. Arguably, there may be issues here for those involved in supporting excluded pupils into new mainstream schools: replicating, as far as possible, the PRU resources and support levels in the mainstream school could make an important difference in the success of new placements.

In relation to the second point, concerning friendship and relationship patterns which emerge following integration, Jacklin and Lacey (1993) maintain that this is equally important in the future success of the integrated placement. They state "We found the most important part of the process of integration into mainstream is the period spent attempting to build supportive relationships with staff and pupils" (page 56). The authors sadly do not describe the attempts which are made (if any) to smooth this process, they merely stress the importance of it. In so doing, they highlight a concern which is omitted from many studies investigating reintegration following permanent exclusion: namely the importance of the preparatory work done with both the integrating child and the receiving group of pupils, in order to promote effective and speedy social integration.

Jacklin and Lacey (1993) raise one more issue which is pertinent to the return to mainstream schools following permanent exclusion. They discuss the 'period of adjustment' which they identify the children in their study as going through, and assert that "For those children transferring from a special to a mainstream school, this may be a particularly challenging time" (page 56). In Jacklin and Lacey's model, the pupils are provided with adult support through this period of adjustment, as it is acknowledged that they will be both attempting to build a supportive network of friendships which may or may not be successful, and at the same time coping with the emotional implications of loosening ties from the previous school in preparation for building this new network. The authors clearly believe that the pupils will need support through this process of adjustment, and though it is not clearly stated, leave the reader to assume that this support is available for as long as pupils require it.

Again there are parallels here with the process of reintegration for pupils excluded from one school and returning to mainstream education in a school which is new to

them. In the present study pupils usually have three moves to contend with, namely leaving the network of the original school, building new relationships in the PRU and the further relationship network required to make and maintain the transition to the new school to which the pupil will be admitted. If we accept that excluded pupils may go through a similar emotional process to the pupils with physical disabilities in Jacklin and Lacey's study (1993), we see some intriguing questions emerge: do excluded pupils have these arising emotional needs acknowledged and addressed? Are they appropriately and adequately supported during this process of adjustment? How are they supported? What is the nature of the support that they require? Are there differences between support being organised for delivery by adults and that being proffered by peers? Does the period of support extend long enough for the new social network to be sufficiently established to meet pupils' ongoing needs?

Tootill and Spalding (2000) undertook a study which tracked the process of reintegration to mainstream schools of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who had previously attended a special school in Liverpool. The initiative to reintegrate 26 pupils over a four year period had been set up in 1994, following LEA agreement to fund reintegration arrangements and additional staff appointed specifically for the purpose. The authors report that 21 out of the 26 pupils "remained successfully in mainstream education", though it is not specified how long the pupils needed to remain in such placements in order to be regarded as "successful". A small amount of detail is given to describe how pupils were selected for readiness to reintegrate to mainstream settings. It is noted that the pupils were mostly secondary age and were "believed to be ready to return", determined through discussions with staff in the special school, parents and involved professionals. Each pupil went through a period of one year's transition, which contained preparation, part time attachment and trial placement within the identified school, with each programme individualised to meet the needs of the pupil, parents and receiving school. During this one-year period, the placement within the special school was kept open, and for the new placement, a "full, flexible and varied programme of support" was offered. The "preparation" referred to involved the special school staff in offering "twice weekly support to prepare them academically and emotionally for the change of school" (page 113), including schemes of work and textbooks borrowed from the new school so the pupil would be familiar with the work they would encounter on arrival.

The importance of academic preparation for children returning to mainstream settings is supported by others (Include 2000a and 2000b; DfEE 1999a; Fisher 2001).

Tootill and Spalding (2000) comment on several points which they saw as important in the success of new placements. They note that the pupils were always returned to a different school than the one they had been excluded from, and new placements were always for a trial period. It is arguable that this last point reduced possible anxiety on the part of the new school, avoiding the feeling they had no control over things once the placement was secured. The authors also note that "in general, the least problematic transfers....were the younger pupils who returned to the more supportive, familiar, class-based environment of the primary school" (page 113). Taking the model described by Jacklin and Lacey (1993) earlier, this is possibly the result of the children having to make fewer relationships with teachers - the pressures for building 'networks' would be less. Another explanation could be that one class teacher (in contrast to several subject teachers in a secondary environment) is more able to take a lead role in supporting the child, acting as champion for him/her, predicting possible pressure points and helping the pupil avoid difficulties. Tootill and Spalding's conclusion (2000) that reintegration of younger children was less problematic is in line with other works (DfEE 1999a; Fisher 2001; Hayden and Dunne 2001).

Tootill and Spalding (2000) note several more features which they identify as important in the success of returning placements. Of critical importance is the availability of specialist support workers, available to the pupil and new school full time and flexibly during the early stages. It seems likely that such an arrangement would remove pressure from the receiving staff and also reduce anxiety for pupils themselves. The authors also point out, however, the need for the new school to provide pastoral support itself, in readiness for taking over this role. "Staff at the receiving school appreciated the extra pair of hands in the classroom and the advice the support teacher could offer through their prior experience with the children being reintegrated" (page 114). Another important aspect which Tootill and Spalding's study (2000) highlights is the preparation of others besides the pupil: receiving teachers were carefully prepared with "sufficient information about their individual needs"- this information was used to develop appropriate support strategies; parents were also given support, as the opportunity to build up a relationship with the

reintegration teacher was present. The support offered to parents included home visits and being accompanied to school visits and interviews.

Tootill and Spalding (2000) note some of the concerns raised about reintegration in their study. One, raised by pupils, was anxiety about fitting in socially and this echoes the point about building social networks raised by Jacklin and Lacey (1993) described earlier. Tootill and Spalding (2000) see this as a critical aspect and raise the possibility that the training of young people in peer mentoring and mediation "would address some of the difficulties reported by the pupils" (page 115). Micheline Mason (quoted in Fogell and Long, page 85) comments that "an inclusive education system will have to rate friendship at least as highly as spelling. Then we will be appalled at how little we know or understand about each other."

Another aspect which was seen as highly important, and possibly an area of difficulty for pupils, concerned lack of independence and organisational skills which "can prove irritating to staff in large schools and can serve to make the pupil unnecessarily conspicuous" (Tootill and Spalding, 2000, page 115); it is acknowledged that these are skills which may not be furthered in a special school setting, and therefore leave the pupils ill-prepared for the demands of a busy, mainstream environment. Curriculum gaps were another area of reported vulnerability for reintegrating pupils, particularly in modern foreign languages and science, and pupils experienced more difficulties outside of structured and supervised times. Tootill and Spalding conclude their article by saying:

> *The systems and attitudes, which saw the pupils excluded in the first*
> *instance, can be the same barriers to their inclusion on their return.*
> *Therefore...we have to challenge and improve these systems and*
> *find the vision and resources to change them if we really believe we*
> *should move towards a more inclusive education and society for all*
> *young people.*
> **Tootill and Spalding (2000), page 117.**

Garner (1996) acknowledges the need to see "how the social reality called education exists in the lived world" (page 189), and consequently investigated pupils' and teachers' views about experiences in off-site units compared to their experiences in PRU settings. In his study, Garner explores the views of pupils about return to mainstream and found that "both pupils and staff were pessimistic about the chances

of reintegration", though it has to be said that the author's questioning concerned the prospect of return back to schools pupils had left. Pupils in this study were reported to feel that their views were seldom taken into account, and Garner also reports that teachers in the PRUs "felt that their views, like those of their pupils, were frequently overlooked and that issues relating to placement were 'like battles of will – it's us against the school and the LEA'" (page 193). Another interesting aspect of this study concerns the resistance pupils had about returning to mainstream; this resistance is seen to result from views that relationships with mainstream peers would be problematic. Again, this echoes the points made earlier about the importance of peer preparation and the building of social networks in readiness for the new school context.

Hayden and Dunne (2001) carried out a lengthy and detailed study which investigated children and families' (80 families in all) experiences of exclusion from school from 1997 to 2000. "We wanted to know what the families could tell us about what worked, or might have worked in relation to going back to school or other educational provision, as well as in relation to preventing exclusion" (page 11). Sixty one of the families included in the study had been made available through the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) telephone helpline, and the remainder came from The Children's Society and one LEA. Obviously, there are questions which could be raised about how representative the sample was, given around three quarters came from the ACE help line. It could be argued that these informants would be more likely to have stronger feelings, be angrier, or more assertive than many, given that they had taken steps to find out about, and contact, the helpline. The authors acknowledge this potential criticism but comment that focusing on families' perspectives was important in ensuring the voice of children and families would be heard, in a context of teachers and professionals already having a voice.

The emphasis of Hayden and Dunne's study (2001) is largely placed on the experience of the process of exclusion for children and their families, which, though interesting, is not the primary focus of the present study. It is rather disappointing that it does not deliver in any detail that which was promised concerning what worked, or might have worked in relation to going back to school or other educational provision. However, in the process of exploring children's and families' views, some useful

points about reintegration emerge. The authors conclude several factors which need to be addressed in order to improve reintegration experiences and outcomes, including more advocacy, more planning and support at the point of reintegration and:

> ...*enough support when it is needed, in the way it is needed, by somebody who is skilled and to whom the child responds. At the moment such support is too often a matter of chance.*
> **Hayden and Dunne (2001), page 84.**

Perhaps the most comprehensive investigation to date of the reintegration of permanently excluded children and young people in England was carried out by Parsons and Howlett in 2000. This study aimed to provide well-founded data regarding reintegration rates, as well as:

> *Describe the involvement of other services in preventative and reintegration work; identify, describe and analyse good and successful practice; identify training needs; calculate costs*
> **Parsons and Howlett (2000), page 3.**

The study succeeds in its aims as stated, and gives detailed information about exclusion and reintegration rates, stating that "the evidence of this report is that reintegration rates are rising." The authors report that 62 percent of the excluded primary population reintegrate to new settings, though the variation between LEAs is found to be "great", which may be explained by the small numbers of excluded primary pupils in some LEAs. At secondary level, the reintegration rate was found to be 31 percent, again with wide variation. The variation at both phases is symptomatic of the difficulties in gathering such data; Parsons and Howlett point out that different LEAs employ different procedures (such as dual registering at the point of exclusion) which confuses the picture and makes inter-LEA comparisons difficult. The report also gives detailed recommendations which, if followed, should make reintegration more effective. These recommendations include: the need for an effective, integrated response from agencies across a local authority; the need for a "champion" to act for the individual pupil; frequent reviews of progress; willingness on the part of the receiving school to adopt a variety of strategies to work with the pupil; good communication between different agencies at the strategic and practitioner level; the need for the different agencies to understand one another's roles and responsibilities; the need for training; developing/maintaining high quality schools and specialist provisions which help avoid disengagement from mainstream learning. There is no

mention of preparing aspects of the peer and social environments that the reintegrating pupil will encounter.

Parsons and Howlett (2000) provide us with a large-scale study that contains a lot of data. The data generated, however, could be viewed as overly factual and 'dry'; it includes a great deal of information about exclusion and reintegration rates, but considerably less about the experience of exclusion and reintegration. This raises questions concerning the recommendations about improving reintegration, drawn together at the end of the report. The study could be criticised as including a narrow range of perspectives, with informants limited to Local Authority officers: 150 Local Authority areas were approached by questionnaire, including Social Services Departments, Youth Offending Teams and Local Education Authorities. The questionnaire only commanded a 35 percent return rate, and this raises concerns about the implications of the Local Authorities selecting themselves into the sample – it could have been the Local Authorities who felt they had developed services to be proud of who were keen to respond.

All the data in the first stage of the research was obtained by questionnaire, and examination of the content of the questionnaire shows that there was room for confusion. For instance, one question is addressed to LEAs and asks "Following the decision that they were eligible for reintegration, how many were successfully reintegrated in each Key Stage within the following time scales?" (page 45). However, no definition is given of how long a pupil should have continued to be successfully attending/on roll of the new school for the placement to have been considered "successful". This is an issue which is pertinent for the present study, as it seems that at least in my Local Education Authority many pupils who have been "successfully reintegrated" do not, in fact, remain in the new mainstream school context more than a year.

In the second stage of Parsons and Howlett's study (2000), 18 LEAs with noteworthy practice were approached, and interviews carried out with Behaviour Support Service, Social Service Departments and Youth Offending Teams. Health Services were consciously left out of the interview process as "their involvement is small" (page 11), though this decision could be criticised on the grounds that pupils with mental health

difficulties would be both highly likely to have involvement from Health Services and be over-represented in exclusion figures. This represents, therefore, an important omission from the picture.

Another criticism which could be levelled against the study concerns a pertinent omission from the list of information-givers: namely the pupils themselves, and their families. It is surprising that the authors felt that the aims of the research (especially "identify, describe and analyse good and successful practice") could be fully met without asking the "recipients" of the Local Authority services for their views.

Parsons and Howlett (2000) accurately state: "There is little reliable national data on how many pupils return to school, and little information on what constitutes effective practice" (page 3) and their investigation attempted to plug this gap. I would contend that the study leaves only partially answered questions concerning effective practice, particularly when considered from the perspectives of the participants themselves.

Children's Voices

Jelly, Fuller and Byers (2000) contend that pupils across the education system are becoming increasingly involved in school development, through the use of techniques and approaches specifically designed to elicit pupils' views about certain aspects of the school experience (eg school councils). The authors describe "a continuum of participation" stretching from the low participation end where pupils' views and opinions are gathered to inform decisions about school change (an example of this might be using circle time to elicit views on playground facilities), to the opposite end where pupils are given high-level participation in order to affect directly the decision-making process. The authors assert that "when the pupil voice is taken seriously there can be substantial gains in terms of the knowledge base and effectiveness of a school" (page 71).

I would argue that pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties may become involved in presenting their views at the "low participation" end of the continuum, but are highly unlikely to have their views represented further along the continuum, given that those presenting with behavioural difficulties are often construed as being rejecting of the school system, and those excluded are no longer

able to have a voice with the school from which they've been excluded. Brodie (NCB, 1998a) points out that "For the individual child, exclusion is often a difficult and confusing experience. Children will tend to have little voice in the exclusion process".

As previously noted, Jacklin and Lacey (1993) acknowledged the benefits of learning about reintegration from pupil perspectives, claiming that analysis of the problems these children experience "helped deepen our understanding of the process of integration, especially from the pupil's perspective" (page 51). They also contend that, in their study, one aspect of successful reintegration concerned giving consideration to the needs of the whole child, including the needs defined by the child him/her self. Gersch and Nolan (1994) recognised the potential contribution that could be made to understandings of the process of exclusion by pupils who had experienced it, and undertook a study to elicit their views. The authors report "there are good moral, pragmatic and legally supported reasons for listening to pupils, if plans are to be successful for them" (page 37). Similarly, Moore (2000) iterates the benefits to society of "developing insights into the experience of inclusions and exclusions within education" (page 1).

Despite the principle outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, that young people should be consulted about decisions that affect them, there are only a small number of studies investigating the views of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties about their own educational experiences (eg Hayden and Dunne 2001; Garner 1996; Osler, Street, Lall and Vincent 2002). This represents an unfortunate under-utilisation of a vast pool of insight and suggestion, though thankfully one which seems to be expanding (Goodenough et al 2003). Strong arguments can be made about the potential benefits of exploring children's perspectives on education, not least because, as the "consumers" of the education service, they are likely to have views about those services received. Pomeroy (1999) emphasises the importance of gaining pupil views about their educational experience:

> *As the recipients of policy-in-practice, they possess a knowledge of the educational system which is not necessarily known to teachers, parents or policy makers ... Too often, the viewpoint of the student remains unheard.*
> **Pomeroy (1999), page 466.**

The Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs (2001b) reiterated a point made in the earlier Code (1994) that "the views of the child should be sought and taken into account" (page 7). There are, in my view, even more compelling arguments to be made for seeking the views of pupils who have experienced such problems coping in the school environment that they become excluded. This group of children and their families, as well as their teachers, are highly likely to have relevant opinions and views about the aspects of schooling which presented particular difficulties to them, and aspects which did, or could have, helped them be more successful. Davies puts this well:

> *There are compulsive arguments for assigning importance to what children with EBD have to say about their experiences in the classroom. Traditionally, EBD practice has, at best, been patchy in its effectiveness on behalf of such children (HMI 1989). Is it not time, therefore, that a dynamic movement was set in operation to demonstrate the positive contribution that children can make?...Understanding what children think about their schooling promotes insights into our own practice.*
> **Davies (1996), page 158.**

Similarly, we should take the time to explore the views of pupils who have been returned to new schools following permanent exclusion, in order to learn from their experiences about the positive and negative forces in the process. Listening to child and family views, as well as the views of professionals involved, would inform future planning, policy and practice at the levels of the Local Authority, the school as an institution and individual professional practice.

Critical Factors in Successful Reintegration

Include (2000b) comments that studies evaluating reintegration programmes are few and that "further development is needed to ensure that we know "what works" in dealing with excluded young people" (page 26). There is general agreement amongst authors in the field that reintegration programmes, their operation and critical factors in success, have attracted little research so far, perhaps because it is a relatively new and relatively infrequent phenomenon (Hayden and Dunne 2001; Parsons and Howlett 2000; Parsons 1999; Fisher 2001).

The strategies and methods adopted by Local Education Authorities (LEAs), schools, and the other agencies which come into contact with excluded young people, have a significant impact on both the reintegration process and the wider process of preventing young people from disengaging from mainstream education in the first place.
Include (2000b), page 9.

Factors Influencing Successful Reintegration

The following issues have been synthesised from studies about reintegration (several of which have been described and discussed in earlier sections) plus a wider review of the literature on the subject. Conclusions in the field are few, as the literature is in the early stages of development; therefore, the following constitute a 'sweep' of factors that may have a bearing on the success or otherwise of reintegration placements following permanent exclusion from school. It has not proved possible, from the existing literature, to show the relative importance of these factors, simply that each has a potential part to play.

At the strategic level, it is important that the LEA has clear policies and procedures in relation to prevention of exclusion, early intervention and reintegration, with shared understanding across all LEA and Local Authority departments about what each provides. Systems need to be in place to allow the LEA to identify and secure new placements, and these should be operational within one term. The SIPS document suggests that "ideally permanently excluded pupils should rejoin a mainstream or special school within days or weeks" (in ACE, 2003, page 44). Alongside these policies and procedures, multi-agency systems such as data sharing, mediation and parent support schemes appear to be important. In order to permit the creation of individual packages to support reintegration programmes, the LEAs approach to budgeting needs to be flexible.

At the level of the school, there needs to exist effective multi-professional working with clarity and understanding of each others' roles and responsibilities, running alongside effective pastoral care/behaviour policies. The issues of school culture and ethos have emerged from the literature; these need to be conducive to learning and good behaviour, and provide the flexibility to adopt a variety of strategies to support reintegrated pupils.

At the case level, several issues arise from the literature as important. It appears that excluded pupils may need to be provided with support to ensure the maintenance of basic skills while not attending school, in addition to curriculum-support reintegration packages during the period of exclusion, at the point of reintegration and in the early stages of new placement to ensure curriculum access. On a related theme, liaison between previous placement (school, home tuition, PRU) and the new school also seems to be important; the quality of this liaison could affect the fluency of curriculum transition.

The theme of pupil involvement in decision-making and the importance of involvement in the process of reintegration also emerge as potentially critical issues, as does the quality of the working relationships between parent, school and support workers. A further factor seems to be the need for a nominated individual to champion the needs of the pupil, drive the process and coordinate professional involvement around the young person, ensuring frequent reviews of progress in the early stages of new placement.

Another factor arising from the literature is the nature of the support which returning pupils need to receive to make a new placement more likely to succeed. There are several strands to this; curriculum support has already been mentioned. In addition there is the need for emotional support from an adult in the early stages, as the pupil lets go of earlier networks; as the new placement progresses, the importance of peer support and acceptance grows, as the pupil creates new peer networks of social and emotional support.

Of critical importance to the present study is the longer-term success of reintegrated placements. The identification of the sample of pupils to be included in the present study revealed that the impressions of at least two participants in the study (myself and behaviour support teacher) about the number of pupils who had remained in their new placement for longer than a year had been incorrect – many "successfully" reintegrated pupils had, in fact, been excluded again within the first year of placement. The SIPS document recognises this vulnerability:

Quick and successful re-integration of excluded pupils into mainstream schools is a significant challenge. The LEA should provide intensive support for an initial period after admission to avoid further exclusion
DfEE (1999b), page 20.

Key Issues Arising from the Literature

Key points relating to the return to mainstream school of previously excluded pupils have arisen through this review of the literature. These will be crystallised and summarised here in order to draw the main issues of the chapter together. This will create a framework within which to locate the specific questions to be addressed by the present study.

Definition of 'Successful' Return to Mainstream Schooling

Studies investigating and evaluating the success of reintegrated placements following exclusion are thin on the ground, and those that exist are not specific in stating how long reintegrated placements should be maintained before being defined as "successful". Studies surveyed largely concentrate on the processes and experiences of exclusion, preparations for reintegration and experiences of the process of reintegration. Longer-term outcomes and experiences are not addressed in the literature. Parsons and Howlett (2000) report in their study that 62% of the excluded primary population was reintegrated to new settings, as was 31% of secondary pupils. However, the question of whether the pupils *remained* in these new placements was left unaddressed. If the pupils in question were excluded again or began non-attending within the first term/year of new placement, definition of these placements as successful is open to challenge. The issue of reintegrated pupils remaining in new placements for the longer term requires further investigation, especially given the possibility that initial experiences may be critical in establishing the success of the placement in the longer term.

The literature indicates that placement preparations have implications for the outcome of placements (eg Jacklin and Lacey, 1993; Hayden and Dunne, 2001; Parsons and Howlett, 2000). Omitted from the literature is the connection between these preparations and the period of successful reintegration. Do the characteristics of

placement set up have any implication for the length of time new placements will be successfully maintained?

Successful Return Rates

Parsons and Howlett (2000) recognise the huge variation in reintegration rates across LEAs in Britain, acknowledging that this variation is apparent, at least in part, due to the difference in data-collection procedures affecting figures (eg dual-registration at the point of exclusion). However, the literature gives little information regarding the variation or otherwise of the success of reintegrated placements and for how long such placements are successfully maintained.

Preparation for Return to Mainstream School

Parsons and Howlett's study (2000) identifies several factors believed to be critical to successful reintegration, based on the views of professionals. Other studies could make additions to this list (eg Hayden and Dunne, 2001). The literature is not robust, however, in addressing the question of what participants themselves regard as the important factors influencing the success of reintegrated placement, both in the early days and in the longer term.

Preparation for the returning pupil and the pupils with whom connections will potentially be made is an issue that has arisen as a critical factor in the success of a new placement – such preparation includes both social preparation for existing pupils and the new pupil, and academic preparation for the reintegrating pupil. Issues regarding the stresses of transition during the first year, in terms of loosening and building new social network ties, have been given little attention by researchers (Jacklin and Lacey, 1993), but may prove critical in determining the long term success of new placements. The literature provides few illustrations of studies investigating such aspects of reintegration.

Support Following Return to Mainstream School

The literature review highlights the importance of the support received by pupils, their families and schools following reintegration, raising issues about the nature of the support received, the timing of it, the duration of it and pupils and parents or carers accessibility to it. There has been little research exploring the important aspects

of such support, from the perspectives of the pupils, their families and receiving schools. Who are the people identified by pupils, their families and receiving schools that have made a difference to the outcome of the placement? Is the difference that they make due to the professional role they occupy, experience and skill in the role, personal qualities and characteristics, some combination of these or something else entirely? What effect do the procedures for setting up the new placement have? Do participants recognise any particular aspects of support before, during or after the reintegration process, that they regard as having a direct impact upon the success of the reintegration?

Participants' Views on the Process of Reintegration

There has been some, limited research carried out concerning the process of reintegration of excluded pupils (Hayden and Dunne, 2001; Parsons and Howlett, 2000). Such studies have focused more on the process of exclusion, with relatively little emphasis on the views of participants (pupils, parent/carers, receiving teachers, support services) regarding the factors and processes at work during reintegration. Even more limited is the coverage of pupil perceptions of the process of reintegration, despite growing acknowledgement that eliciting pupil views is an important process and one which can inform educational practice and reform. Other participant perspectives on reintegration are also barely covered by the literature, such as parents/ carer views. There is more coverage of professional views on the process of reintegration, but again, this is limited.

Children's Involvement in Decision Making

There is growing interest in furthering the involvement of pupils in their own educational experiences (eg DfES 2001b). LEAs and schools are encouraged to elicit pupil perceptions via several processes within the education system eg Annual Reviews, IEP processes, in order to empower pupils to have a voice in decisions made about them. Little has been achieved in terms of eliciting pupil perceptions concerning views about involvement in the decision-making process of exclusion from school and even less exists in the literature regarding pupil involvement in the decision-making processes inherent in return to mainstream following permanent exclusion.

Problem Definition

The literature review has outlined arguments concerning the relationship between emotional and behavioural difficulties and special educational needs. There remains much to learn about how problem definition may impact upon the success or otherwise of reintegration placements. Do teachers, schools and LEAs respond differently when a pupil is viewed as having "special educational needs", or an "emotional and behavioural problem" or "behavioural difficulty"?

Summary

The literature relating to the return of pupils to mainstream schools following permanent exclusion is not prolific; these are not uncharted waters, but as yet are little navigated.

This chapter has considered the political and educational contexts within which social and educational exclusion has altered over the last few decades, but particularly since the early 1990s. A brief journey into the reasons behind exclusion has been taken. There has been discussion concerning the labelling of the difficulties underpinning the behaviours resulting in exclusion; in addition there has been examination of the case for returning these pupils to mainstream educational settings after permanent exclusion. A number of empirical studies tracking pupils integrating into new settings have been examined. These raised interesting and important questions about listening to pupil views. Synopsis of the factors influencing successful return to mainstream school was undertaken, drawing from a wide range of literature in the area.

The key themes and issues arising from the current body of literature, synthesised together with this researcher's experiences and reflections working in the field, were drawn together in conclusion, in order to frame the specific context and key issues of the present study.

CHAPTER 2

KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH

KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH

The context of the present study

The local context

> *The LEA should make help available to ensure that the re-*
> *integration is successful. The nature of that help will vary*
> *depending on the policy of the LEA, but extra funding or access*
> *to central support staff are two strategies which have been*
> *shown to be successful.*
> **DfEE (1999a), page 35.**

In 1996, the LEA in which I work became a Unitary Authority, and prior to the new authority's existence, the shadow council successfully bid for DfE funds to finance a project to reduce the number of exclusions and improve schools' abilities to meet the emotional and behavioural difficulties of their children. One aspect of this project was the reintegration of children previously permanently excluded from LEA schools, and this was organised in a way which provided schools with both extra funding and access to central support staff, as described in the quote above. The day to day running of the project was the responsibility of a dedicated support team, which included behavioural support teachers, education social workers, pupil support assistants and one educational psychologist (myself). Although the funding for the project changed over time, as did some of the project team personnel, the project continued with similar aims over a period of three years. I was seconded to the project full time from September 1996 to August 1999. From 1999, the activity surrounding the return of permanently excluded pupils to new schools was almost entirely absorbed by the behavioural support service. Around the same time the possibility of using 'managed moves' to pre-empt permanent exclusion was introduced under the SIPS guidance (DfEE 1999a).

There was, within the period of the project and beyond, a commitment to return to new mainstream schools all permanently excluded pupils for whom such a course of action was deemed appropriate. The figures showing return rates are shown in Table 2 "Exclusions and Rates of Return to Mainstream Schools in the LEA", which is on the next page. For a small number (exclusively primary aged children), return to a new mainstream school was possible without interim education provided by the PRU. For the secondary aged pupils, most received interim education at the PRU, and from

there moved into new mainstream secondary schools where this was deemed the appropriate next step. For the secondary pupils, those returning to new mainstream schools would be assigned a key worker, usually from the Behaviour Support Team, and involvement from other professionals in the project team (educational psychologist, education social worker) would be available if the team felt this was appropriate. At the point of taking up placement at the new school, the need for additional support (provided by Pupil Support Assistants) would be considered and provided for specific lessons or periods in the day when the pupil might feel vulnerable or likely to behave in a non-compliant way.

Table 2: Exclusions and Rates of Return to Mainstream Schools in the LEA, 1995 – 2003

Year	Number of Permanent Exclusions	Number of Pupils Reintegrated to New Mainstream schools	Pupils Remaining in New Setting for 3+ terms
1995-6	45	*	*
1996-7	65	17	4
1997-8	40	12	8
1998-9	37	11	7
1999-2000	17	3	2
2000-01	14	4	4
2001-02	13	4	2
2002-03	14	5	*

* = data unavailable

It may be helpful to point out to the reader here that all cases referred to in the present study were pupils who had been permanently excluded from schools within the LEA, and were subsequently admitted to mainstream schools which were new to them; the terms 'reintegrated', 'returned' and 'admitted' are all used to refer to this process.

Issues Arising from the Literature

The literature review considered many aspects of exclusion and reintegration. The key issues arising from the literature can be summarised as follows:

- Definition of successful reintegration; the literature leaves unanswered the question of how long a placement should be maintained in order to be regarded as successful

- The literature also indicates that the current national picture about rates of reintegration may be confused, due to inconsistencies in data collection

- The literature provides us with a view of the factors that may be important in assisting the process of reintegration. However, these indications are drawn from a limited number of sources, and provide little in terms of relative importance or specific detail. An area particularly lacking relates to the perceptions of participants regarding the factors important to successful reintegration

- There appear to be no studies focused on sustained reintegrated placements

- National statistics do not yet provide us with information about the number of placements that are maintained over any period, the available data simply relate to the rates of reintegration. An area so far unexplored is the question of the factors influencing the longevity of reintegrated placement

- The literature indicates that provision of support is one element of reintegration that can impact upon the process. However, little appears to be known about the particular nature of that support in relation to its efficacy; ie what is important about the type of support at the point of reintegration, the people it comes from, the timing of it, the duration of it and accessibility to it?

- The literature provides some information about children's involvement in decisions that have an impact upon their own educational experiences. Little has been achieved in this area, however, in terms of eliciting pupil views about perceptions of involvement in decision-making processes related to return to mainstream. There are several possible decision-making points in the process of return, such as the choice of new school, the nature of support, the build up of placement time; all of which could potentially include the pupil's voice

- The literature provides a wealth of ideas about the issue of the relationship between special educational needs and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

This particular question has already been explored in the literature to a healthy degree. One aspect not yet been explored, however, relates to whether and how problem definition can influence the expectations and experiences of participants in the reintegration process.

Synthesising the key issues arising from the literature with the particular project I had been involved in as a primary participant (described above) led to consideration about the factors which resulted in some pupils being successfully admitted to mainstream schools which were new to them, while others were not so successful, particularly over a period of time. Questions emerged concerning the children who had succeeded in maintaining their new placements – what were their perceptions of who/how/what supported them or enabled them to reintegrate and then continue to be successful over a long period? What were the perceptions of adults directly involved at the time about these questions? These thoughts resulted in the following specific questions for this study.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THIS RESEARCH

Key Issue 1: **What are parents perceptions of the process of returning their child to a new mainstream school?**
   a) What do they feel were the important factors in making the process a successful one?
   b) What do they feel about the support available to themselves and their child before, during and after return?

Key Issue 2: **What are students' perceptions of the process of returning to a new mainstream school?**
   a) What do they perceive to have been the factors that helped them to successfully reintegrate into a new school?
   b) Who are the people (and their roles) they perceive to have helped them?
   c) What was it they did which helped?

Key Issue 3: What are students' perceptions about their involvement in the process of decision-making following exclusion?

Key Issue 4: What are the perceptions of key staff in receiving schools about the factors that were important in ensuring a successful return to mainstream education for the student?

Key Issue 5: How were the students' difficulties identified before, during and after return to a new school?

a) Did participants perceive this to have any bearing on the perceptions of receiving school staff?

Key Issue 6: What are the perceptions of involved professionals of the factors important in successful return to a new school?

CHAPTER 3a

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

*It is the task of methodology to uncover and justify research
assumptions as far and as practicably as possible, and in so
doing to locate the claims which the research makes within the
traditions of enquiry which use it. Equally, it is our task, as
researchers, to identify our research tools and our rationale for
their selection.*
Clough and Nutbrown (2002), Page 31.

And so, the aims of this chapter are described. Although it is hoped that the present
study will be evaluated according to the quality of the work as a whole, as argued by
Salmon (2003), rigour demands that questions about methodology and methods are
explicitly addressed. This chapter will have, woven throughout, the five points
described on the next page (Salmon, 2003). It will examine how the issues relating to
the research questions posed in the last chapter can be effectively addressed; several
questions about reintegration of pupils following permanent exclusion from school
have arisen. As a consequence, the author wishes to capture some of these issues
through the design and implementation of a research investigation focusing on the
experiences of participants who have been through such processes of reintegration.
Consequently this chapter will present:

- The author's arguments for choice of research paradigm

- Justification for choices made in terms of particular research methods
  ie the tools of the investigation

- Consideration of the arguments which can be levelled critically about
  these choices

- The design and implementation of the particular tools of the
  investigation

- The process of identifying participants

- The specific investigative questions

- Methods of analysis of data

- Consideration of the ethics of the research

- Re-consideration of the ideas raised by Salmon (2003) in order to draw
  the strands together

- The procedures of the investigation

Introduction

> *Psychology has evidently been vexed by qualitative research.*
> *Articles in 'The Psychologist' and elsewhere have passionately*
> *argued whether it will save the discipline from the perils of*
> *positivism, or herald its banishment from the community of*
> *sciences into subjectivity and obfuscation....*
> **Salmon (2003), page 24.**

In this same article, Salmon (2003) goes on to suggest that psychologists would more fruitfully spend time clarifying their thinking about how research is evaluated in general, both quantitative and qualitative, rather than the relative merits and problems inherent within each paradigm. The emphasis, he argues, should be placed on the *quality* of research rather than an epistemology of 'methodologism' ie that research quality is largely based on the detail of the particular methods used. Salmon argues that 'just as methodologism sustains the quantitative tradition in psychology, it is beginning to shape its qualitative work' (page 24).

So, what are the elements of good quality research? How can the merits of any piece of research be judged, whether based on an interpretive or positivist paradigm? Salmon (2003, page 25 -27) offers five pointers on which such judgement can be made. These can be summarised as follows:

   i)   The researcher should not try to mislead. There is a thin line between acknowledging the existence and degree of researcher effects/bias and engaging in work which is so far down this track that it is misleading - wilfully or otherwise

   ii)   Methods should be rigorous. Sloppy research should be avoided at all costs, and researchers should be painstaking in their description of choices, judgements and methods. This may be easier for research which is based within a quantitative paradigm (since there are more well-established conventions and clearly defined and accepted approaches), but is equally important for qualitative work

   iii)   Analytic processes should be carried out by the researcher. The reminder here is that it is the researcher's responsibility to offer some analysis of results in order to gain coherence and organisation for the reader – it should not be the reader's task

iv)   It should be possible to know when work is worthless. Perhaps qualitative researchers can sometimes be accused of being lured into feeling that, as long as no claims for generalisability are made, any piece of research should be acceptable as worthy if it claims only to bring a spotlight on one particular phenomenon, and thereby increase understanding of that particular circumstance/issue. Salmon argues that research should be deemed to have failed if it does not achieve, or assist in the achievement of, the development of new ideas, theoretical understandings and concepts

v)   The work should matter to others, not just the researcher. It is not enough for research to be 'exploratory', with attempt at justification based upon a particular interest of the researcher. Rather, what might be on offer to the receiver needs to be explicitly stated, even if this is merely a challenge to existing assumptions. Salmon argues that work that is never disseminated, not understood or is without impact on anything or anyone 'could not be regarded as research' (page 27)

Positivist or Interpretive Paradigms for research

> *It was Comte who consciously 'invented' the new science of society and gave it the name to which we are accustomed. He thought that it would be possible to establish it on a 'positive' basis, just like the other sciences…Social phenomena were to be viewed in the light of physiological (or biological) laws and theories and investigated empirically, just like physical phenomena.*
> **Oldroyd (1986), cited in:**
> **Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), page 8**

Psychology as a discipline aspiring to be accepted as a fully-fledged science was keen to embrace Comte's notion of scientific tradition, in order to become regarded as a profession constituted of 'true scientists'. The behaviour of psychological researchers mirrored this outlook for several generations. Psychologists wanted to be associated with the view that it is possible to describe accurately what is 'out there' in such a way that the elements described would reflect an 'objective truth'. The theoretical underpinning of this belief was empiricism: ie sense perception provides the basis for knowledge acquisition, and this proceeds through the systematic collection and classification of observations, including experiments. In other words, human beings receive information through perceptions (indeed the word 'empirical' means 'through

the senses'), and that meanings are transmitted via the characteristics or properties of that which is observed – processing the information through the human brain would not be considered to change this 'truth'. The truth would remain the truth, deemed attainable through the application of scientific rigour. Willig (2001) cites Kirk and Miller's (1986) definition of positivism as "The external world itself determines absolutely the one and only correct view that can be taken of it, independent of the process or circumstances of viewing" (Willig 2001; page 3).

For many psychologists, Karl Popper's hypothetico-deductive paradigm continues to be of primary importance, forming the basis of modern experimental psychology. In this epistemological model, experiment or observation is used to test hypotheses, ie to test out claims, which result in either rejection of the hypothesis, or a decision to maintain it until such time as it becomes falsified. "In this way, we can find out which claims are *not* true and, by a process of elimination of claims, we move closer to the truth" (Willig 2001, page 4).

Such epistemological models, however, have been challenged by post-modernist thinkers. Post-modernist literature claims that the only possibility is of 'multiple truths' in social situations, not one absolute truth (Wellington, 2000). The arguments against positivist paradigms have also been supported by feminist critiques of 'male science', during the 1960s and 1970s. Burden (1998) describes this shift as a "paradigmatic revolution...led by philosophers of science, sociologists and curriculum reformers" (Burden 1998, page 15), a shift which, he claims, often goes unrecognised. Burden convincingly puts forward the idea of illuminative study as an alternative to the positivist paradigm.

Norwich (1998) discusses the interpretivist paradigm, stating that it:

> ...*represents an interest in how meaning is made, focusing on perspectives and personal and social meanings. It is therefore most suited to inquiry in everyday and complex practice settings where objectifying what is going on is impractical.*
> **Norwich (1998), page 13.**

And...of illuminative study:

*The aim of seeking objectivity, causation, and generality
are...given up for the alternative aim of seeking understanding of
the meaning of actions and describing the perspectives of those
involved in these practices. What we have here is an alternative
and rival model, and research methods which focus on
descriptions rather than causal explanations. The practical aim
of such interpretive research is to illuminate or enlighten rather
than to apply techniques to engineer change*
Norwich (1998), page 12.

In the present study, this researcher's epistemological position, combined with several
factors inherent within the area of study (not least the impossibility of objectifying
what is going on and the compounding difficulties of researcher as participant) it was
decided to follow the path of illuminative study. The present study adopts the
interpretive paradigm and the approach of illuminative study unashamedly and whole-
heartedly. Within the interpretive model, the researcher aims to throw light on a
situation "in a way that makes things clear for everyone concerned and is seen as
helpful by them" (Burden, 1998, page 16). Burden goes on to acknowledge that in so
doing, other questions arise, such as the relative value of different interpretations of a
situation, the legitimacy of the definer of the problem and the question of what
constitutes a useful outcome. Thus, Burden states, the "questions themselves raise
issues about the validity and reliability of evaluation as illumination" (Burden, 1998,
page 16).

Reliability and Validity

At their simplest, reliability and validity can be described as follows. Reliability is the
extent to which a test, method or tool gives the same results over different settings and
when applied by different researchers. In a sense it is similar to the idea of
replicability: the extent to which a piece of research can be replicated in a different
context whilst producing the same results. Validity is the degree to which a method,
test or tool actually measures what it claims to measure. Obviously the concepts of
both reliability and validity have different implications when applied to research
based on the interpretive paradigm. Having said that, interpretive studies do not create
a free-for-all for the researcher to do whatever s/he likes; science still demands
scientific rigour. It is possible to argue that, because of the very nature of the
interpretive paradigm, the rigour associated with reliability and validity become even
more significant and the researcher even more obliged to strive for them. However,

within this paradigm, reliability and validity become transformed into slightly different entities.

The interpretive researcher needs to be conscious of reflexivity; using this paradigm, reflexivity provides fuel for the journey towards scientific rigour. The need to acknowledge sources of bias, and recognise researcher effects are central to the concept of generalisability. "Qualitative researchers are quick to disown generalisability, but are often less clear about what stands in its place" Salmon (2003) page 27. Research is undertaken in order to inform the researcher, and others, of something important. For a piece of research to be important to others it needs to be to some extent generalisable. New paradigm research informs others about a particular situation or event, in a particular social or organisational context, at a particular time, in a particular set of circumstances and within a particular combination of social and political influences - these details suggest the findings are situation-specific. However, when prepared and handled with care, research will become generalisable to a degree and to an extent replicable, to other similar situations and contexts. In this sense it can be said to have reliability in that others could replicate aspects of it within their own particular situation, by applying the relevant aspects of the research findings to their specific circumstances. It is, therefore, essential that research is carried out and reported in such a way that the reader can draw out the pertinent factors with confidence that these *are in fact* the issues which are relevant for them. Such confidence is not possible if there is a question mark about whether the research findings have been polluted by other, unacknowledged, influences (such as researcher effects). Reflexive thinking processes, acknowledged sources of bias and painstaking construction of the research tools are the key to others having sufficient confidence in interpretive-paradigm research findings to generalise any conclusions to other situations.

Within the interpretive framework, validity becomes transformed to an entity which is concerned to ensure that the findings are valid. This would be manifest in several ways: that the complexity of the situation is acknowledged and mirrored - avoiding over-simplification, that alternative explanations have been thoroughly explored and considered, that the influence of the particular researcher has been recognised and

acknowledged, that triangulation of data sources has been used, and consideration has been given to existing theories and knowledge in the area under investigation.

New paradigm research can be seen as the process of exposing the 'realities' of a situation in a systematic and rigorous fashion. Within this paradigm, of central importance is the need to make the uncovering of realities as transparent as possible, using methods that focus on descriptive rather than causal explanations. As Wellington asserts:

> *The interpretive researcher...accepts that the observer makes a difference to the observed and that reality is a human construct. The researcher's aim is to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights into situations...*
> **Wellington (2000), page 16.**

Hence the critical importance of the methods of enquiry that are adopted to explore, or shine a searchlight on, the situation under investigation begins to emerge. In addition, the essential processes of acknowledging researcher effects and bias have become clear. It can thus be argued that the interpretive paradigm places great emphasis on the researcher's obligation to construct methods of enquiry that demonstrate careful consideration of the constructs of reliability and validity.

Constructing the Tools of Investigation

Any researcher could spend a great deal of time poring over research publications in order to unearth a range of previously used methods of investigation, in the hope of finding a "lift off the shelf" methodology appropriate for use in a specific situation. However, effective methodologies are not simply *selected* from a range in this way; rather they are *constructed* for purpose, "painstakingly custom built from other draughtsmen's cast-offs, which, whilst providing a general guidance, were not made *for this particular job.* " (Clough 1994, page 2). Methodological tools need to be individually designed to create an appropriate and effective investigative process to the particular topic under consideration, using the lessons learned by previous researchers as an aid.

> *Methods mediate between research questions and the answers which data partially provide to them; methodology justifies and guarantees that process of mediation...*
> **Clough (1994) page 6.**

Let me now refocus this chapter to the particular methods of investigation. In the following sections, the main strengths and limitations of each of the approaches playing a role in the present study will be examined, at the general level of critique as well as the specific implications for the study. Whilst doing so, it will be useful to bear in mind that all methods carry inherent limitations. "Acknowledgement of such limitations, however, encourages a reflexive awareness of the boundaries of our own and others' claims to knowledge and understanding" (Willig, 2001, page 151).

Researcher - Practitioner

> *The assumptive world a person brings to the 'now' of a concrete situation cannot disclose to him the undetermined significances continually emerging and so we run into hitches in everyday life...When we try to grasp this inadequacy intellectually and get at the 'why' of the ineffectiveness of our purposeful action, we are adopting an attitude of scientific inquiry*
> **Cantril et al (1949), page 12:**
> **cited in Burgess (1993), page 161.**

As suggested in the earlier part of this chapter, the researcher cannot achieve neutrality from the subject being researched. Inevitably aspects of the researcher are integrated with, and influence, the area under investigation. This starts at the outset, with the initial decision on the part of the researcher about the question to be addressed – the area to be focused upon is obviously one of interest to the researcher, one which is deemed to be of importance, one which is likely to elicit some emotional response; otherwise, why would it be chosen (Burden, 1997)? Already, researcher effects are impinging on the area of study; neutrality is already unattainable.

Wellington (2000) posits that researcher-practitioner is a notion that has received wide recognition in education. There is strength, asserts Wellington, in such naturalistic research, such as insider knowledge carrying with it improved insight into the situation and people involved, easier access, and possibly better personal relationships with information givers. Clearly there will be familiarity with the subject of investigation, which can offer potential advantages, but can at the same time be a challenge to the researcher's ability to be reflexive.

Wellington (2000) recognises several potential problems to the researcher-practitioner role, including preconceptions and prejudices, not being as 'open minded' as an outsider might, distractions and constraints of being 'known', lack of time if the researcher works within the context being studied, constraints resulting from reporting back to familiar audience (and one with which the researcher may continue to have long-term working relationships).

In the present study, my role as educational psychologist within the same LEA for a number of years meant that I was aware of several of the advantages and problems raised by Wellington (above). The very fact that I was so involved in the Standard Fund Project (which had the successful reintegration of permanently excluded pupils as one of its aims) in the first place made me a legitimate participant in the process, but at the same time brought with it an interesting mix of advantages and dilemmas as researcher.

It was *because* I had 'insider knowledge' of the rates of exclusion and reintegration and repeat exclusion that the research question was apparent – it may not have been to an outsider. The connections I had made over the years with the original Standard Fund project team, behaviour support team and administrative section within the LEA enabled me to have reasonably uncomplicated access to data which would inform the framing of the research question, and subsequent identification of participants. It was inevitable, however, that having personally invested so much professional time in supporting excluded students back into mainstream settings that I had and have an emotional response to the whole subject. There is the strong possibility that I would not want to see my efforts as in vain – an anxiety of which I have been, and remain conscious.

In addition, throughout the course of research I was acutely aware that I would eventually reach the point that any action researcher does - feeding back findings from this research to practitioners in the field. The audience will be people with whom I have worked in the past, work with presently and will work with in the future – the possibility of a change in these relationships as a result of the delivery of the findings of the research has never been far from my mind. At the more distant level. my

employer, the LEA, may have some reaction to the findings of this research, and again this is a potential aspect influencing my thought processes.

Researcher Effects

The following points illustrate possible and predictable researcher effects that need to be considered, in the general sense:

- Researcher paradigms. Researcher attitudes, views, philosophies and beliefs will permeate the design of any investigation, the analysis of data and discussion of findings (as will those of the whole cast of participants). The researcher therefore needs to unpack and make explicit the connection between his or her own position towards the particular topic under investigation, and the research process, in order to take steps to ameliorate potential effects. Henwood and Nicolson (1995) describe "subjectivities...as an integral, though not always uncomplicated – part of their research endeavour", brought to any piece of research (page 110).

- The researcher is likely to have expectations and hopes about the outcome of the investigation; again such views need to be explicitly accounted for and recognised.

- Amount of resource/time available. The researcher is often operating under limits of time and resource (such as personnel or finance), and this inevitably impacts upon the investigative process (Bell, 1998). For example, using a sample which, it is hoped, represents a wider population means that the researcher makes choices which will have an impact upon the data gathered etc. Such choices have to be made very carefully by the researcher, to ensure that the researcher's own implicit or explicit attitudes, beliefs or expectations are not driving the choices made.

- The researcher will bring many potential "pollutants" to the research process, by the very fundamentals of their being – gender, race, age etc. Similarly the same issues within the participant population will also have an impact upon findings (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000).

- The way in which the researcher describes the focus of the investigation to participants, and the explanation given about selection of participants will both inevitably have an effect on participants' attitudes and behaviours towards the

research process.

In order to minimise the researcher effects within the present study, the researcher audio-taped most of the interviews (with consent). This was undertaken in order to reduce the possibility of the researcher relying on rushed notes and memory of the points raised. In addition to avoiding simple error in remembering the points made, audio-taping also reduced the possibility of the researcher unconsciously filtering out those responses which were not consistent with her own views.

Allied to this, the researcher used triangulation of data in order to minimise researcher effects and sources of bias. Two or three perspectives around each 'case' acted as data sources (see Figure 1, "Schema of Case Sets"); using individual interviews and focus group interview brought an additional dimension. Cohen et al (2000) define triangulation as "the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour" (page 112). The authors cite six types of triangulation, namely:

i)   time triangulation; utilising cross sectional and longitudinal designs, in order to avoid ignoring the effects of time-related social change upon a process

ii)   space triangulation; using cross cultural designs to avoid limitations of being culture-bound

iii)   combined levels of triangulation; probing individual, interactive and organisational or societal levels in order to "characterise the collective as a whole", in order not to "derive from an accumulation of individual characteristics" (Cohen et al, 2000 page 114, citing Smith, 1975)

iv)   theoretical triangulation; intentionally pulling in competing theories

v)   investigator triangulation; using more than one observer (or participant) in a research setting

vi)   methodological triangulation; same method at different times, or different methods on the same issue

In the present study, aspects of combined levels of triangulation took place in that perspectives on cases were sought through individual interview, as well as perspectives about the *group* of reintegrated pupils at a wider level through the use of a focus group. Also, the perspectives selected and gathered 'around' each case fell

into the categories of pupil, teacher, learning support assistant, parent, other professional, thereby offering varied participant groupings. In addition, methodological triangulation, more specifically *between methods triangulation*, as referred to by Denzin (cited in Cohen et al, ibid, page 114) was used (individual and focus group interview) because it "involves the use of more than one method in the pursuit of a given objective".

It is acknowledged here that researcher effects in this study could have been greatly minimised by having the interviews conducted by someone other than the researcher, preferably unrelated to the Standard Fund Project. However, time constraints, and the inability to pay someone to do so, meant that these alternatives were not possible. A contradictory argument is possible, in that the advantages of being practitioner-researcher pointed out by Wellington (2000), discussed earlier, would have been lost.

It is worth reminding ourselves here that researcher effects are not limited to the tools of investigation such as interviews and focus group methods of data gathering. The researcher also inevitably and markedly affects the way that data is synthesised into discussion and conclusions once data collection is complete. The act of interpreting the data into points of discussion and conclusions is itself a potential researcher effect, one that is easily underestimated. It would be inadvisable to try to eliminate such researcher effects, as it is the *quality* of the researcher's synthesis that constitutes the quality of the research. To do away with the researcher effects which are manifested through interpretation of findings would result in little prospect of uncovering new theoretical frameworks and new perspectives – these are the result of the researcher's *involvement in and processing of* the data (a responsibility from which Salmon (2003) feels researchers should not shrink.)

Acknowledging researcher effects, in order to maximise validity of research, have been discussed earlier and the reader will be aware of the overlap between the points already made and those which could arise regarding bias. The same points shall not be re-stated, save to mention that, in the same way as is true of researcher effects, to acknowledge the sources of bias in a piece of research, is to take an important step towards addressing them. Sources of bias cannot be eliminated in qualitative research, and so the researcher must be mindful of making them explicit, so that others can then

make reliable judgements about the relevance of such research to their own situation. It is inevitable that a researcher will bring a whole host of potential biases to a piece of work, simply because researchers are humans and not machines (Cohen and Manion, 1980). It is also inevitable that those being researched will do the same.

Bias has been described as:

> *An attitude either for or against a particular theory, hypothesis or explanation, which unconsciously influences an individual's judgement; it may appear in experimental work as the so-called error of bias, the bias being due either to prepossession in favour of a particular theory, or previous judgements in the same experiment.*
> **Drever (1952), page 28.**

Bias arises from many sources. It can arise from personal characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, experiences, race, religion, social class, age etc of both the researcher and those people captured within the searchlight of the research. At a more detailed level, biases exist which arise from those "bigger issues" already mentioned – eg social class may affect verbal style, which may in turn affect the responses within an interview.

Assumptions Within the Present Study

In relation to the present study, the researcher needed to examine the assumptions she brings to this piece of research, which constitute possible influences:

- The researcher has held the belief for several years that permanently excluded pupils should, where possible and appropriate, be reintegrated to another educational institution – another mainstream school, or other setting such as college possibly combined with part time work experience. The researcher believes that mainstream education is generally an entitlement (a phrase which suggests something implicitly 'good' and to be strived for) that should not be denied a pupil simply because of previous exclusion. Implicit within the process of setting up this research project was the message that reintegration was worthwhile, that there were factors which would make it run smoothly and factors which would potentially make it problematic. Also, the existence of this research project carried the implicit assumption (which would inevitably be transmitted to participants) that the outcomes of reintegrated placements were worth asking

participants about at a later stage. This assumption would be inevitable as time is being given to asking adults and children for information about their views on the subject.

- This researcher entered into the process of undertaking research carrying the assumption that teachers, parents and pupils would willingly comply with her requests (a point discussed in some detail later).

- The researcher made the assumption that the individual and group interview data did, in fact, represent the actual views of the speakers. Burden (1998), however, points out:

> ...*the need to identify the match and mismatch between what people say and what they do. This relates, of course to Donald Schon's notion of the difference between espoused theories and theories in action.*
> **Burden (1998), page 17.**

Case study in Action Research

Case studies recognise the complexity and 'embeddedness' of social situations, allowing exposition of discrepancies or conflicts between the viewpoints held by participants. Bassey (1999) suggests that the best case studies are capable of offering some support to alternative interpretations, and this begins to make more sense when placed alongside the view expressed by Gillham that in a case study:

> *You do not start out with a priori theoretical notions (whether derived from the literature or not) because until you get in there and get hold of your data, get to understand the context, you won't know what theories (explanations) work best or make the most sense*
> **Gillham (2000), page 2.**

Gillham (2000) describes 'a case' as any unit of human activity embedded within the real world, merging with its context in a manner that makes boundaries difficult to draw. A 'case', he states, can be defined by the researcher as a multiple entity eg a number of single parents, or several schools (Gillham, 2000, page 1). He comments that the focus of a case study is only effectively understood within its context. Gillham goes on to describe 'case study' as activity which investigates 'a case' to answer specific research questions.

Stenhouse (1985, cited in Bassey, 1999) identified four broad types of case study: ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research. Ethnographic case studies are described by Bassey (1999) as an in-depth study of a single case by participant observation, and possibly supported by interview. It does not carry the explicit intention of feeding observations or explanations back to the participants *in order* to address practical needs raised by them, but this may result anyway.

Bassey (1999) describes evaluative case studies as single or multiple cases studied in depth in order to provide decision makers with information to judge merit or worth – ie there is an explicit evaluative component. Educational case study concerns many researchers using case study methods to enrich the thinking of educators in some way.

The fourth type, case study in action research can be described thus:

> *Case study in action research...is concerned with contributing to the development of the case or cases under study by feedback of information which can guide revision and refinement of the action.*
>
> **Stenhouse (1985), cited in Bassey (1999), page 28.**

Bell (1998) points out that there is nothing new about practitioners operating as action researchers, and that indeed there are many benefits to this "essentially practical, problem-solving approach" (page 7), especially when the researcher has little control over events (Cohen et al 2000). There is recognised strength in a case study approach, as the researcher is given the opportunity to concentrate on a specific instance or situation in order to identify the various interactive processes at work. The depth that is possible can provide a three-dimensional feel to the case and its data, bringing the relationships, micro-political issues and patterns of influences in a particular context to life. Proponents of this type of approach would argue that case study facilitates a 'product' (eg research report) which is accessible to a wide audience. Cohen et al (2000) point out that case studies can establish cause and effect, and can observe effects in real contexts, "recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects" (page 181).

On the other side of the argument, Willig (2001) points out that case studies, because they offer such a potentially versatile approach, carry hidden dangers. She claims that

it is not always possible to see whether a series of related studies constitute case study research proper, "or whether they are no more than a collection of studies concerned with similar questions" (Willig, 2001, page 81). Case study in action research can produce data which is 'strong in reality' but difficult to organise. It carries dangers of distortion (Bell 1998, page 9), as triangulation can be difficult. In addition, there exist concerns about generalisability due to the possible 'single event' nature of this type of investigation.

The present study has characteristics of a case study in action research because:

- Gillham (2000) defines what is meant by 'a case', exposing that the researcher can choose to study *multiple* cases eg a number of single parents. Multiple case study design is used in the present study, featuring 'case sets' around five pupils, as a way to explore reintegration processes in one LEA setting

- Multiple sources of data are used: individual interviews, group interview, participant observation over years, documentation regarding cases, records regarding patterns of exclusion and reintegration

- The aim is that the work will feed back into practice, at the level of the particular support services involved in the LEA, to extend understandings and inform developments in improving practice for supporting pupils returning to new mainstream school settings

- It is also hoped that the findings may have impact at a wider level; there may be scope to generalise the findings to other LEAs involved in the business of reintegrating previously excluded pupils. The possibility of generalisation to other settings, however, cannot be over-claimed; it is up to practitioners in other areas to determine whether the findings from this one are generalisable to their particular situation

Focus Groups

Focus groups can be described in the simple sense as group interviews, without the reciprocal nature of researcher's questions leading to responses.

> *The hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group.*
> **Morgan (1997), page 2.**

Focus groups have become increasingly popular as a qualitative research tool within the social sciences, used either as a self contained method in studies where they provide the main source of data, or as a supplementary source in studies which have some other primary data-gathering tool. They are also used in multi-method studies in which no one approach takes precedence over the others.

Morgan (1997) describes many variations for focus groups – their composition, selection, the manner in which topics are fed in etc, but essentially the key ingredient is that the actual process of group interaction may hopefully cause something more to happen than would do in 1:1 conversation or interview. So what distinguishes a focus group from other forms of group interview? Frey and Fontana (cited in Morgan, 1997) assert that the difference lies in the level of formality – participants in a focus group would usually be invited (as opposed to being present simply by being a member of a group) and the process of discussion would involve a moderator, who has a distinctive role. Morgan (1997) places a fairly flexible view of focus group processes in front of the researcher, urging caution however to think carefully about preparing and planning well first, in order to ensure that the method adopted is appropriate and effective for the task in hand. Others provide more concrete advice about how to organise a focus group; Greenbaum is unequivocal in stating that:

> *Focus groups are groups of 7 to 10 people, recruited on the*
> *basis of similar demographics, psychographics, buying attitudes,*
> *or behaviour, who engage in a discussion, led by a trained*
> *moderator, of a particular topic.*
> **Greenbaum (2000), Page 3.**

Greenbaum gives several other directives about how to run focus groups (eg room and facilities), but the point has been sufficiently made; there is variation in how researchers and practitioners view the processes involved.

Although Chioncel et al (2003) point out that there is yet only a small number of studies concerned with the methodological aspects, reliability and validity of focus groups, there is general agreement that one of the main advantages of the process is the ability to observe a large amount of interaction on a specific topic in a limited period of time (Morgan, 1997; Greenbaum, 2000; Fallon and Brown, 2002). This characteristic makes them relatively efficient in terms of researcher time. Another

major advantage of focus groups is that they provide an immediate opportunity to give direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences. Alongside this, Morgan (1997) suggests that there is also an advantage in focus group methodology when compared to individual interviews from the point of view of discussing habit-ridden subjects or ones that have not been thought out in detail, because the group process immediately draws out agreements and disagreements which prompt more detailed discussion.

There are different lessons to be gained by using focus groups at different points in a research process. At the preliminary stages they can be used as an exploratory tool, as an aid to make decisions about study design, or collection of the main data. In the closing period of study they can be used to interpret findings or to generate further perspectives for research (Chioncel et al (2003), page 496). Each application would bear different but potentially equally valuable fruits.

Though advocates would state the 'naturalistic style' of focus groups as a strength, it could be argued that this characteristic is, in fact, inaccurately described. The situation is not really naturalistic given that the topic is controlled by the researcher or moderator, rather than the group itself, as it would be in a truly naturalistic group discussion. A further disadvantage of focus groups is that they can be susceptible to 'group think' – conformity or the risk that some group members will acquiesce to the views of others (Chioncel et al (2003), page 496). The opposite of this can also happen, where some individuals might become more polarised in the views they express than they would be in a 1:1 interview. Of course, an additional point of criticism, which could be levelled at any form of interview, is that they carry inherent problems because they are restricted to verbal behaviour and self-report of participants.

In the present study, a focus group was used alongside individual semi-structured interviews, in a manner described by Morgan as a means to "supplement another primary method or combine with other qualitative methods in a true partnership" (Morgan, 1997, page 3). Some of the reasons for using a focus group alongside individual interviews have already been mentioned (eg triangulation) and will not be repeated here. Additional to those reasons stated, I wanted to have the opportunity to

observe specific discussion amongst the group of professionals most often involved with exclusion and reintegration – namely the LEAs outreach behavioural support team. A focus group arrangement appeared more efficient than individual interviews, and for the reasons outlined above, carried the prospect of generating more information than individual interviews might. It seemed reasonable to assume that this group would have more to say on the subject than any other group, and it was practical to organise the meeting, since the team are all based in one building.

An additional and important reason for using a focus group technique with the behavioural support team was to use the opportunity to feed some of the earlier information gleaned from individual interviews into the focus group discussion. This, then, constituted what Chioncel et al (2003) termed the closing period of study, in order to interpret findings or generate further perspectives for research.

In the application of the focus group technique in this particular study, there was a further potential problem beyond those identified above, which concerned the researcher's relationship with the participants. Group members would all have previously understood my role to be an educational psychologist rather than a researcher. I have long-standing professional relationships with most of the eight participants, and two of them were involved in the Standard Fund project team alongside myself. Although these issues did not *seem* to present any issues at the time of running the group, it is impossible to know whether the particular circumstances had any bearing on the group process, but the reflexive practitioner needs to raise the possibility.

The Use of Interviews.

Some of the points raised above about potential researcher effects and the use of focus groups will also apply to the interview process. Face to face interaction, in the form of an interview, by its very nature adds many more variables to the already complicated set of researcher effects. Any researcher engaging in interview discussions, whether individually or in a group setting, needs to give consideration to the following:

- There is much more likelihood of an interviewee feeling they should comply with the interviewer's (probably unstated) wishes, when the interaction is taking place face to face. Such social acquiescence is even more possible if there is a

relationship that will continue to exist outside the interview, between the interviewer and interviewee(s) (Cohen and Manion, 1980).

- The researcher may unwittingly give out signals to the interviewee that s/he needs assurances or approval about the topic in hand, or for the way in which the interview is being conducted.

- The space and surroundings in which the interview takes place will have an impact. A negative effect is likely if inadequate space and time is given to undertake the interview, not least because messages about the worth or value of the interview are inadvertently given (Bell, 1998).

- Bell (1998) concludes that the "rich material" which can be yielded from interviews makes them a worthwhile investigative tool, but acknowledges that their use "is a highly subjective technique and therefore there is always the danger of bias" (page 91). It is likely that the interviewer will give out verbal and non-verbal signals throughout the course of the interview, many of which are unintended; for instance the perceived value being placed on the interviewees comments will affect their readiness to tell more (for example nodding, utterances showing approval). The interviewer's tone of voice, facial expression, body posture etc will all convey (probably unintended) messages to the interviewee and influence the outcome of the interview.

- Recall bias: Hayden and Dunne (2001), page 12 point out that there will always be the possibility of "recall bias in questions after an event" and triangulation methods may not always hook into such inconsistencies.

- Subtle messages may also be given by the interviewer about views on the particular topic in hand – for instance checking out an answer may imply surprise that this view is held (Cohen and Manion, 1980).

- Certain messages will be transmitted to the interviewee by the interviewer's physical appearance, age etc, though unintended.

- Actual or perceived status issues between interviewer and interviewee may affect responses. This is particularly the case when the interviewee is a child, due to the inherent power difference between the participants.

- As mentioned, a particular set of potential problems arise when the interviewer also holds roles other than researcher, eg participant (Cohen and Manion, 1980).

<u>Insider Perspectives</u>

Given all that has been said already to justify this researcher's choice of paradigm and justify the choices of methodological tools, it would be very easy to re-visit old territory and repeat some of the same issues in relation to the decision to explore the perceptions *of participants* in the process of reintegration. There would have been other ways to explore issues of reintegration, but this researcher made a conscious decision to take the process through from the perspectives of those involved. The title of this study is about participant perceptions, and in a sense the whole study takes a phenomenological *style* to the subject of reintegration.

> *Phenomenology is interested in elucidating both that which*
> *appears and the manner in which it appears. It studies the*
> *subjects' perspectives of their world; attempts to describe in*
> *detail the content and structure of the subjects' consciousness, to*
> *grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences and to*
> *explicate their essential meanings...*
> **Kvale, (1996) page 53, cited in Willig (2000) page 52.**

Feminist critiques of research methodology argue for acknowledgement of the involvement of the researcher and those researched as well as "the adoption of an approach to knowledge creation which recognizes that all theories are perspectival" (Cohen et al, 2000, page 35), a point further amplified by Henriques et al (1998). I would argue that it is those people with experiences of reintegration who can offer the greatest insights into the process, when those insights can be mediated through a process of rigorous research. Those insights might come from being the child at the centre of the exclusion and subsequent reintegration, the parents of that child or the professionals supporting the process (from within or outside the new school). I would join Oliver (cited in Moore, 2000, page 7) in his declaration "I believe that insider perspectives are essential to our attempts to grapple with any social phenomena". Further justification for emphasising participant perspectives in this study comes from the fact that these perspectives are so under-represented in the current literature on reintegration, despite the fact that many authors acknowledge the potential benefits of canvassing the views of 'consumers' of the services of education.

Armstrong (1995 and 2003), argues that the idea of delivering the 'emancipatory voice' is much more complex than it appears. He posits a convincing argument that enabling participants to express their views via interview does not necessarily mean

that such voice is necessarily representing their own, true beliefs, attitudes and experiences, for at least these reasons:

   i)   The inherent constraints of the interview.

   ii)   The fact that the educational, political, social and cultural systems of the society permeate these views, they can not be free of them.

   iii)   The 'results' may be a reflection of the researcher's own understandings and beliefs, rather than representing the views of the participant. In transposing perceptions through the inevitable processes of selection, data-gathering, analysis and reporting the researcher inevitably filters through his or her own understandings and beliefs at every step. There may be other perspectives or mediating processes which would reflect the same data in a very different form.

Armstrong goes on to say that researchers using others' views to pursue a political stance or goal may be justified, but the issues above need to be honestly and clearly recognised as inevitable processes at work in the research.

<u>Summary of The Chapter</u>

This chapter has considered the options open to researchers in terms of the research paradigms applied to the process of study. The interpretive paradigm has evolved as the one which:

   i)   reflects this researcher's philosophical standpoint about the nature and value of research.

   ii)   is best suited to the topic of this dissertation.

though of course, these two points are in truth completely integrated with one another.

An attempt has been made to justify the choices made for methodological tools: the use of case study in action research, interview techniques (individual and focus group) and the employment of methods which emphasise participant perceptions. An attempt has been made to address issues of researcher effects and bias, aspects which demonstrate the researcher as a reflexive practitioner.

Let us now return to the points made by Salmon (2003) at the beginning of this chapter, concerning the characteristics of research that allow judgements to be made about the quality of it.

i) The researcher should not try to mislead. An attempt has been made to expose the effects of this researcher's own interests, motivations and role. This researcher was inextricably linked with the phenomena explored in this study, as she was part of the initiative to reintegrate children in her home LEA. However, it is intended that acknowledgement of these possible data 'pollutants' allows the reader to make realistic judgements about the reliability and validity of the data, and the degree to which it is generalisable to other similar circumstances.

ii) Methods should be rigorous. The choice of research paradigm has been debated and defended, as has the choice of particular methods of investigation. The integrity of the methods, and the degree to which the tools were 'fit for purpose' has been presented for the reader to judge.

iii) Analytic work should be carried out by the researcher. It has been proposed that data collected by the researcher will be analysed using initially content analysis, coupled with the application of grounded theory, the rationale and results of which are to follow.

iv) It should be possible to know when work is worthless. It is hoped that this qualitative study will raise issues that serve to question widely-held assumptions about the relative importance of the factors contributing to successful re-integration following permanent exclusion. Importance is attached to the notion of *sustained* success, ie lasting at least three terms, rather than success concerning initial reintegration. In this respect, this research will address a previously un-researched area, and thereby it is hoped, will generate new understandings regarding *sustained* success.

v) The work should matter to others, not just the researcher. In light of point iv) there are theoretical implications of this work, which demand dissemination. It is not claimed that the findings of this work are, in the present form, generalisable. 'What stands in its place' (Salmon, 2003, page 27) is that issues are raised which question previous assumptions about the apparent success of reintegrated placements, and the factors which may be

important in contributing to this success. Clough and Nutbrown (2002, page 156) quote Stenhouse (1975) as saying "Research…is systematic and sustained enquiry, planned and self-critical, which is subjected to public criticism and to empirical tests where these are appropriate". They go on to point out that "In other words, research is not complete until it finds a public."

CHAPTER 3b

PROCEDURES OF THE INVESTIGATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

THE PROCEDURES OF THE INVESTIGATION
and DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter will remind the reader of the key issues of this investigation. and outline the data that will be needed to address them. The methods of data gathering, including the development of the tools to do so, will be described. Detail will be provided concerning the process of identifying the participants, and the issues arising from this process. General procedures for completing the data-gathering process will be outlined, and the method of data analysis explained. Research and practice ethics will be debated in the latter part of the chapter.

The Specific Questions to be Addressed by the Data Gathered

The key issues arising from the literature review, and the contextual knowledge of this researcher led to the following key investigative questions for the study.

Key Issue 1: What are parents' perceptions of the process of returning their child to a new mainstream school? (for all cases, 'parents' proved to be the appropriate term, not 'carer'; therefore the term 'parent' will be used hereon).

a) What do they feel were the important factors in making the process a successful one?

b) What do they feel about the support available to themselves and their child before, during and after return?

Key Issue 2: What are students' perceptions of the process of returning to a new mainstream school?

a) What do they perceive to have been the factors that helped them to successfully reintegrate into a new school?

b) Who are the people (and their roles) they perceive to have helped them?

c) What was it they did which helped?

Key Issue 3: What are students' perceptions about their involvement in the process of decision-making following exclusion?

Key Issue 4: What are the perceptions of key staff in receiving schools about the factors that were important in ensuring a successful return to mainstream education for the student?

Key Issue 5: How were the students' difficulties identified before, during and after return to a new school?

    a) Did participants perceive this to have any bearing on the perceptions of receiving school staff?

Key Issue 6: What are the perceptions of involved professionals of the factors important in successful return to a new school?

Data Needed to Address These Key Questions

The main area of study was located as participant perceptions of the process of successful return to a new mainstream school following permanent exclusion. The main participants in this process were regarded as the groups listed below. A conscious decision was made to leave out representation from the school that had been involved in the original exclusion as it was felt that this was outside the main area of focus as defined by the title question. It was therefore felt that, in order to address the key questions set out above, data would need to be collected from the main participants, namely:

    i)   Parents of children in the study

    ii)   Pupils who had been through the process of reintegration and remained in new placements for at least 3 terms

    iii)   Key member(s) of staff from the receiving school

    iv)   Non-school based staff involved in supporting the pupil at the time of return (support teachers, pupil support assistants, educational psychologists)

In order to address the key questions of the investigation certain data would need to be collected from each group.

From the parents, the data gathered would need to establish:

- Their perceptions of the process of reintegration
- Their views concerning the important factors in making the process of return a successful one, including any perceived obstacles to it
- Their perceptions about the support available to themselves and their child before, during and after reintegration

From the pupils, the data gathered would need to establish:
- Pupils' perceptions of the process of reintegration
- Pupils' perceptions of the factors that helped them to successfully return to a new school, and any perceived obstacles/difficulties
- Pupils' views regarding the people they perceive to have helped in this process
- Pupils' perceptions of the supportive actions taken by those people
- Pupils' perceptions of their involvement in the process of decision-making following exclusion

From key staff in the receiving school, the data gathered would need to establish:
- Their perceptions of the factors important in supporting the pupils' successful reintegration, and any perceived obstacles or difficulties
- Their recollections of how pupils' difficulties had been identified to them prior to, or at the time of, placement

From non-school based support staff, the data gathered would need to establish:
- The way in which pupils' difficulties were identified before, during and after reintegration
- Their perceptions of the factors important in successful return, and perceived obstacles/difficulties

The Design and Implementation of the Investigative Tools
General Points Regarding Individual Interviews

There were to be five case studies, making up the multiple case study 'set'; the cases were pupils who had been permanently excluded from schools in one LEA and returned to mainstream education, ie a school new to them, within a four year period (1999-2003). To be included, pupils must have sustained new placements for at least

three terms following reintegration. Each case study would include an interview with the pupil. The 'set' in each case could include parents, receiving school staff and support professionals. In fact four of the five parents were interviewed (Rachel's parents were not), three staff from receiving schools were interviewed, as were four support professionals (see Figure 1, "Schema of Case Sets"). A focus group interview with behaviour support service took place after all individual interviews were complete.

A decision was made fairly early on that, in order to elicit as much spontaneous dialogue from the participants as possible, the interviews would carry only a limited amount of pre-determined structure (there was slightly more for the pupil interview format, which will be discussed later). This decision was based on the previously described rationale of the researcher and the desire to influence the interviewees comments as little as possible. At the same time, the researcher felt the tension of retaining some control over the areas discussed in order that they remained focused on the research questions. (All interview frameworks can be found in Appendices 9, 10, 11 and 12).

For the interviews with parents (all were parents, not carers), receiving school staff and support staff a small number of main headings were used, with follow-up sub-questions should these be required. All (except two) interviews were audio-taped. In the two interviews that were not, (one parent and one pupil) there wasn't an issue of permission being denied, but I relied on memory and notes made straight after the interviews instead. In these two interviews, it did not feel appropriate to ask permission to audio-tape, each for a different reason. In the parent interview, the mother had become upset only minutes after my arrival, so although she affirmed that she would like to carry on with the interview, I did not feel it appropriate to ask if I could audio-tape it. I did, however, check that she was happy for me to make notes. For the pupil interview, I was at the boy's home meeting mum for the interview session with her. It had been difficult to arrange a time when the boy and I could meet (even though he had agreed in principle), partly because he had by then left school. He arrived home as I was finishing the interview with his mum and he was due to go out again, but agreed to talk to me before he left. He seemed to feel rushed and a little

uncertain (he kept leaving the room and returning) so I did not ask for permission to use audio-tape; he agreed for me to make notes about what he said.

The interview schedules for each group were developed from consideration of the key investigative questions and the data necessary to address them. The small number of participants available from each case study 'set' meant that pilot arrangements were difficult; the only process undertaken to provide some of what a pilot might offer took the form of asking course tutor and professional colleagues to look at the interview formats and make comment. For the pupil interview formats, three Key Stage 3 pupils, unrelated to the research were asked to go through them (I was seeing them as part of my work as an Educational Psychologist) and simply ascertained whether they understood the questions.

All adult interviews were undertaken at a place and time negotiated with the interviewee. Pupil interview time and place were negotiated with an adult (parent or pastoral staff in school). Parent interviews took place at home. Three pupil interviews took place at home (two with parents present, one without) as these pupils were no longer attending school, and two pupil interviews took place in school. All interviews with support staff and receiving staff took place in schools or support centres, at the convenience of the interviewee. Initial contact, giving an outline of the research, and describing the request for interview was made by letter for those people not already known to the researcher, and by 'phone to those already known to her.
(All interview frameworks can be found in Appendices 9, 10, 11 and 12).

<u>Parent Interviews</u>
The parent interviews started by my giving a brief outline of the research aims, and clarification that I was following up pupils who had been successfully reintegrated to a new school following permanent exclusion. The point was made that only pupils who had remained in a new placement for at least three terms were being followed up, as a particular area of interest in the research concerned the success of reintegration in the longer term. I explained that there was already research looking at the process of exclusion, but that I was interested in looking at the factors that helped the pupils who had succeeded in *returning* to a new mainstream school. This point was reiterated in order to try and set up the expectation that the focus of the discussion would be on the

reintegration, not exclusion of their child. Four parent interviews were undertaken, each lasted between one and two hours, at home. One interview was with both parents, the rest with mother only. The fifth pupil's parents agreed to an interview and I visited them twice, but each time they were not at home. They were not interviewed. All parents were reassured that the final write-up would not identify them or their child.

There were five areas of focus for the parent interviews, with sub-questions being used to prompt further when this felt appropriate. The first area located the time when their child was ready to reintegrate to a new school and asked about their feelings around this; the second related more directly to the people who helped their child make a good start and their actions; the third asked about the support they received as parents; the fourth asked about their perceptions of their child's involvement in decisions being made about them. Question five was a general sweep question to give an opportunity to add any further information.

<u>Pupil Interviews</u>

Five pupils were interviewed, four boys and one girl. The girl was the youngest, Year 9, two boys were in year 10 and two had recently finished school. Interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes, two took place in school and three at home. Of the two which took place in school, one was a Year 9 girl, and one a Year 10 boy. Of the three which took place at home, two pupils were beyond school leaving age and were in the process of deciding what to do next (vocational college courses were being considered by both of them). The other boy (Year 10) seen at home was no longer attending his mainstream school but was in the process of switching over to a college placement combined with work placement.

At the beginning of each interview, a brief outline of the research process was given and, for the three which took place without parents present, I checked out that the pupil was happy to continue, and happy for the interview to be tape recorded. Four pupils agreed to have the interview tape-recorded, and the fifth was not asked and therefore not taped. All agreed to my note-taking, and were assured data in the final write-up of the study would not identify them.

In order to cue in the pupils to the processes I wanted to explore with them, the interview schedules were constructed in a time-process format; the first question identified the school they had been excluded from. Then questioning moved onto the next provision they had entered; this was PRU for four pupils. The fifth pupil, Rachel, had been out of school for only a few weeks during which time a new primary school was arranged. The next block of questions related to the start at the new school and then two final sweep questions encouraged any further comments.

I did not know any of the pupils interviewed, although I had set up a Circle of Friends (Lown, 2001) for one boy five years before. I was therefore unclear about how readily or easily they would engage with the interview process. I therefore made a conscious decision to offer some structure to the pupil interviews because I felt it might be easier for them to provide information this way. This was particularly important because for some pupils the move to new school had happened up to four years before they were interviewed (range between one and four years). I included some scaling questions in order to offer more structure to the pupil responses, as I assumed this might help pupils who might be less comfortable expressing views verbally.

Key Staff from Receiving School Interviews

Staff from receiving schools were initially identified by myself and head of behaviour support as being the people who had played a key role in the pupil's reintegration to the new school. This process was sequential; pupils and families were identified and had agreed to take part in the process before the respective schools were approached. Receiving staff were then approached by letter and telephone call, and the question of whether they were the appropriate contact point was clarified. In two cases, the staff most directly involved had moved on, and alternatives were given. There were varying professional roles fulfilled by these people: one year-head, one head of inclusion support, and one school pupil support assistant. Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and were all tape-recorded. Interviews carried five areas of focus, with sub-questions only asked if it felt appropriate. The first area of focus concerned preparation for arrival of the pupil and definition of difficulties, the second concerned the point of arrival and the third concerned the external support services. The fourth and fifth areas were general sweep questions designed to prompt any further information the interviewee might want to give.

Support Staff Interviews

Consideration of file notes and documents was the process used to identify LEA support staff involved with the five pupils at the time of reintegration. These were then approached by 'phone (all were known to myself), and a brief description of the research given, as well as an outline of what was being asked of them. All staff approached agreed to be interviewed, and all agreed to have the session tape recorded. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and took place in one of two LEA support services buildings. Roles of support staff were: two behaviour support teachers, one educational psychologist and one teacher for traveller support.

There were six areas of focus for the support staff interviews. Firstly, definition of the pupils difficulties at the time of reintegration were explored, including preparations made for the pupils' arrival. The second area covered the factors and people that helped in the initial stages of reintegration. The third asked for ideas about any improvements that could have been made to the process. The fourth area explored the interviewees views about the role of support services, and the fifth about the role of the LEA. The final sweep question provided an opportunity to add any further comments, either about the particular case or in general about reintegration.

Focus Group Interview

The focus group interview came at the end of the individual interview data-gathering period. The reason for this timing was so that some of the themes emerging from the individual interview data could be fed into the last section of the group discussion. For the focus group, the head of behaviour support outreach team was initially approached, and she raised the possibility in a team meeting. Agreement was given and I attended a staff meeting, being given an hour for the interview. After discussion with the head of behaviour support outreach team, a figure of between six and ten people was felt to be appropriate for the discussion. Eight behaviour support teachers attended, one of which was the head of the team, and the meeting took place at the PRU in a classroom. The focus group was both tape-recorded and videoed (with consent). I explained that this belt-and-braces approach was due to the fact that I was acting as facilitator, and would therefore not find it easy to note down all that was

said. Neither did I want to run the risk of losing the content of the discussion; I wanted to transcribe the content afterwards and audio-tape might not pick up all contributors' voices; the video equipment would be more sensitive to voices from a distance. The video camera was fixed on a tripod, simply pointed at the table and left to run. Participants agreed to this, given the stated reasons. Participants were assured that contributions would remain anonymous in the final write-up: ie assigned to the focus group rather than to an individual.

The focus group interview went through four phases:

i) I spent about eight minutes giving the group a description of the present research, its rationale and the link with my role in the Standard Fund project some years before.

ii) The group were then given a piece of A4 paper, the contents of which I addressed. On one side there was just over half a page of information about focus groups, their purpose and protocol. On the other side there were two sentences, one asking for the names of one or two pupils they had been involved with at the point of transfer into a new school. These pupils would have been previously permanently excluded, and remained in the new school in the longer term. Participants were asked to write down as many factors as they could think of which may have contributed to the placement's success. The process was undertaken in this way as a result of Morgan's (1997) suggestion that such preparation can cue people in more readily to the ensuing discussion.

iii) Discussion was then provoked by my asking the group to talk about the notes they had written down as factors important in successful reintegration.

iv) In the last ten minutes of the focus group, I fed in four points that had emerged from individual interviews, and asked for any comments from the group.

Focus group format prompt sheets can be found in Appendix 13 and 14.

The Process of Identifying and Selecting Participants

The process of identifying participants for the focus group has already been explained, as has the process of identifying staff from receiving schools and support services: the rationale for these decisions need not be repeated here. However, selection of pupils and families for the individual interviews turned out to be a complicated affair; this is described in some detail below.

Participants: Pupils and Parents

The decision was made to focus the study on pupils who had been successful in remaining in reintegrated placements in the longer term, as has already been described. However, it was necessary to determine what was meant by the terms 'successful' and 'longer term', in order to select pupils to interview. Discussion with behaviour support teachers, and previous involvement in the Standard Fund Project enabled me to have 'insider knowledge' about the way reintegration placements generally happened. I knew, therefore, that direct support (Pupil Support Assistance, regular visits from the behaviour support teacher etc) would be to the fore in the first term of new placement, but would gradually phase down thereafter. This knowledge informed my decision to identify three consecutive terms after the date of reintegration as the period required to identify a placement as both successful and long term. I could find no precedent for such decisions in the literature, so could only develop my own rationale for this decision. Having done so, I then approached the head of behaviour support about identifying the pupils who had, since 1996, been reintegrated to new mainstream schools, following permanent exclusion and had remained in these new placements for at least one year (see table 2, "Exclusions and Rates of Return to Mainstream" for local context).

This process raised 27 names. Of the 27, four had left school in 1999, five in 2000, ten in 2001, one in 2002, two in 2003 and five were still of school age. Given the small numbers of pupils reintegrated across the period 1996 – 2003, a decision was made to contact all the pupils' parents initially to ask for their involvement in the research. This was carried out by letter, with an enclosed SAE. Addresses were obtained from pupil files, though it is not known how many families had moved since the file address information was stored, as 22 pupils had left school and, therefore, files would not have had this information updated. In the event, 27 letters were sent to

parents (see appendices 2, 3 and 4), and one was returned by the post office. Four replies were received all declining the invitation to discuss their child's reintegration to a new school. Of the four replies, one was a 'phone call to the office, to say that under no circumstances should I contact parents or son about this research again. One reply (on the reply sheet provided) said that their son had moved to live and work in France, so they did not want to take part. One reply came on the reply sheet, clearly saying "no" to possible involvement, with a lengthy note written by the parents to say that my records were inaccurate and their son had subsequently been excluded (in fact this happened after the three term period) and in their view had been treated very badly (this will be discussed again later in the results section).

Having removed the four names from the list, a second contact was made with parents by letter; a letter was also sent to those young people who had already left school (to parents address) requesting their involvement. This second contact produced five further replies of "no", making nine in total. One young person replied saying "yes", but he failed to turn up to the organised interview and didn't respond to follow-up calls. Another letter was received from the post office unopened, for another pupil. At this point I decided to take out any remaining pupils who had a date of birth prior to 1985, since it appeared unlikely they would respond to further contact, given so much time had elapsed since leaving school (so eight more pupils were removed). I also removed the pupils for whom letters had been returned by the post office. I was informed that another boy, a traveller, had left the area to go travelling with his family. I rang the school to confirm this, and was told the placement with them had only lasted a few days, even though LEA records showed he had remained there for three terms! I intended to contact schools about three more pupils (who had recently at the time left school) only to find that support service records had not documented where the pupils had continued in their education in the later period after reintegration; given I had not received any replies from parents or pupils I did not feel it appropriate to ring round schools to ask where they had received the latter part of their education.

Once all these steps were taken, I had five pupils who, at the time were in school (two were just about to finish Year 11) and for whom I had not received any replies from parents (the young people themselves had not received any letter from me, as the

'young person' letter had only gone to those who had already left school). By now I had started to realise how naive I had been in assuming that out of 27 pupils I would be able to 'select' a sample to follow up. It turned out that the potential sample were not behaving in the expected way! I was now in the position of having five possible pupils to follow up, with no positive agreement from parents – though parents had by now received two letters, the second of which 'assumed' their agreement for me to make contact with their children in school (see appendix 3). I decided to contact these parents by 'phone (one family were not on the 'phone, so this contact was made via the traveller support teacher), to complete the following tasks:

i)   Ensure that they were happy to give me permission to see their child in school, as indicated by 'non-response' to my second letter

ii)   Ask that they talk with their child, to ensure s/he was happy about the visit I planned to make

iii)   Give them a little detail about the research and my reasons for being interested in their child's progress

iv)   Request that they would agree to meet me to discuss their perceptions of the process of reintegration.

All these contacts were successful on all counts. Upon reflection, this made me wonder about the reasons behind the lack of response from others – would 'phone contact have elicited a different response? Were there other non-responders who felt similarly to the parent who wrote to say that her son had not really succeeded, and my information was inaccurate?

Having started out with the idea of a non-probability sampling process, with 'purposive sampling' (Cohen et al 2000) as the method of choosing cases to follow up, it emerged in fact that the sample 'selected' itself, since I approached the non-responding parents who remained following a process of elimination. The words of Bell (1999) ring true:

All researchers are dependent on the goodwill and availability of subjects, and it will probably be difficult for an individual researcher working on a small-scale project to achieve a true random sample. If that proves to be the case, you may be forced to interview anyone from the total population who is available and willing at the time. Opportunity samples of this kind are generally acceptable as long as the make-up of the sample is clearly started and the limitations of such data are realized.
Bell (1999), page 83.

Study Design

The data-gathering process, then, had to come after completion of the sampling process described above, since the pupils and parents needed to be engaged first, in order for the appropriate schools and support professionals to be identified. Once the step of securing which parents were prepared to be involved, and permission given for their children to be interviewed (five families in all) the interviews took place. The interviews with the pupils, parents, receiving school staff and support professionals took place in no particular order, save convenience for the participants. The intention then was to structure the research around these five pupils, interviewing them, and 'others' involved in their reintegration. This is represented in figure 1, "Schema of Case Sets".

For reasons stated earlier, the focus group interview came at the end of the individual interview data-gathering period.

Figure 1: Schema of Case Sets

⊙ = Pupil

⬡ = School staff

◇ = Parents

▭ = Support worker (Behaviour Support Teacher, Educational Psychologist, Traveller Education Support Worker)
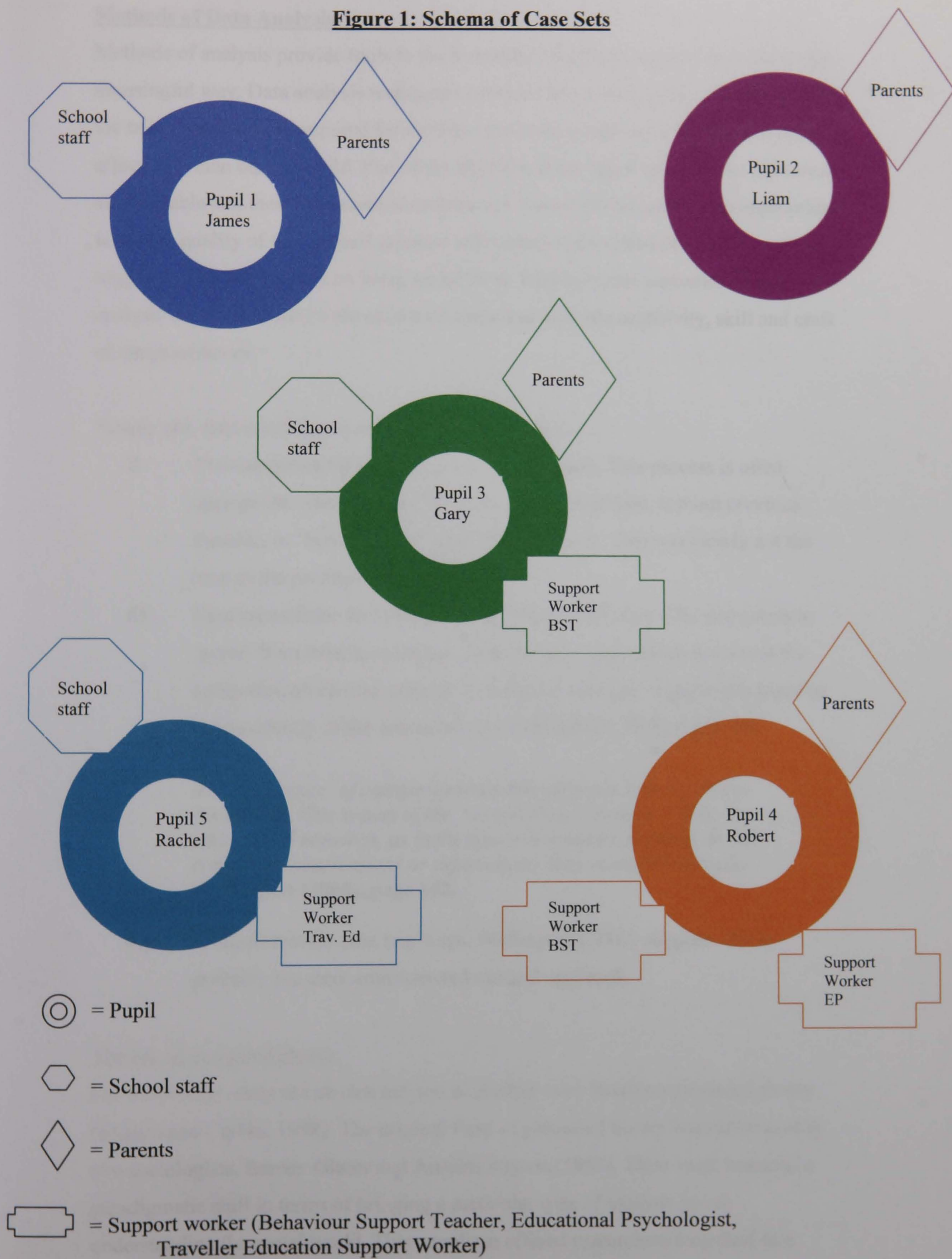
Methods of Data Analysis

Methods of analysis provide tools to the researcher in processing data in a useful and meaningful way. Data analysis techniques provide the scissors, cloth and thread for the tailor – ie the tools required for the job – and some tools serve the purpose more effectively than others would. Part of the skill lies in the tailor ensuring the right tools are available and their full potential understood. Once fully prepared with appropriate tools, the quality of the finished garment still relies on the craft of the tailor, and some might say that this borders on being an art form. Similarly, the outcomes of data analysis are determined by the choice of analytical tool, the sensitivity, skill and craft of the practitioner.

Simply put, data can be analysed in one of three ways:

i) The categories for analysis are pre-established. This process is often appropriate when a researcher is looking to replicate, test out previous theories, or 'borrow' them from other research. This was clearly not the case in the present study

ii) Data arises from the data-gathering process and allows the categories to 'grow' from what is collected; ie there are no preconceptions about the categories which may emerge. It would be wrong to suggest this happens independently of the researcher. As Wellington (2000) points out:

> *the 'emergence' of categories from data depends entirely on the researcher. This is part of the 'research act' (Denzin, 1970). In educational research, as in the physical sciences, theories do not come from observations or experiences; they come from people.* **Wellington (2000), page 142.**

iii) A mixture of the first two ways. Wellington (2000) suggests this is probably the most common and rational approach.

The use of grounded theory.

For the present study the chosen method of analysis was based on grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The original form of grounded theory was developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967). Their work heralded a paradigmatic shift in terms of bringing a particular type of analytic eye to understanding the social world. This paradigm offered researchers a method that

would allow movement between data and theory, so that new theories could become constructed – theories 'grounded' in the data *from which* they had emerged. The growing popularity of this approach to the analysis of qualitative data is testament to its usefulness. As Wellington (2000, page 88) points out, "The notion of ˙grounded theory'…now seems to be the foundation for a whole research tradition."

Grounded theory is a process involving the progressive identification and integration of categories of meaning arising from data. 'Categories of meaning' represents one of a number of key processes that are integral to the approach; others are 'constant comparative analysis' and 'coding'. Put simply, the process of grounded theory provides a framework within which the researcher will:

- identify categories present within the data (ie grouping together of instances or events or processes or occurrences)

- use codes (descriptive and analytic) to label these, through the identification of relations of similarity and difference

- make links between categories, establishing relationships between them. The researcher interacts with the data, in that s/he asks questions of it, and feeds the emerging answers back into the loop of analysis

- refine emerging categories and the relationships between them through constant comparative analysis

- continue to sample and code data through constant comparative analysis until no new categories can be identified; by now the identified categories and sub-categories will have captured all the issues arising from the data – this point is recognised as 'theoretical saturation'

- encourage 'theory building' as an inductive process

Willig (2001) describes the difference between the full and abbreviated versions of grounded theory. She explains that there is an additional loop of activity within the full version which is not present in the abbreviated version; this involves the collection of further data at the point of having established tentative links within the original data. This additional loop may be repeated, and each loop process will lead to more focused data-gathering, more focused because it has become informed by the emerging theory. The abbreviated version of grounded theory is more commonly used

when there are time or resource constraints, because it removes the additional loop of data gathering activity just described; instead the researcher works from only the original transcripts or documents.

The present study intends to expose participant perceptions of the process of returning pupils to mainstream schools following permanent exclusion. The study does not aim to replicate or test out previous theories, or 'borrow' them from other research. Rather, it aims to elicit participant perceptions, to expose the beliefs and attitudes of the pupils, parents and professionals actively and directly involved in the process of reintegration.

They key issues of the present investigation were framed to facilitate the identification of areas of focus and, therefore, offer a loose 'shape' to the structure of interviews. The intention was that participants' expressed attitudes and beliefs should not be constrained by having only 'tight' questions to which the researcher wanted the interviewee to supply the answers. Instead, it was hoped that the expression of attitudes and beliefs would allow linkages, connections and themes to *emerge*, and, through analysis, enable the construction of new, if tentative, theories about the process of returning pupils to new mainstream schools. For these reasons, grounded theory was felt to be the most appropriate method of structuring the analysis of the interview transcripts.

The way in which the present study was organised fell part way between what Willig (2001) describes as full and abbreviated versions of grounded theory. The transcripts of the individual interviews provided data that was analysed sufficiently to identify descriptive codes: these were then added into the framework of discussion for the focus group interview. This means that a stage beyond the abbreviated version of grounded theory was pursued. However, there was no further loop of activity in which emerging themes were fed back into the process of data gathering – if this had happened, it would have constituted the full version of grounded theory.

Consideration of Ethical Issues

The present research was undertaken in accordance with the revised British Psychological Society's 'Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human

Participants'. The following paragraphs will set out how these principles were manifest in the research process, grouped in terms of informed consent, protecting participants and confidentiality and anonymity.

Informed Consent

Issues of informed consent turned out to be far more complicated than I had originally foreseen. Initial contact with families of possible pupils needed to be made following decisions about which pupils met the selection criteria; obviously such decisions could only be made after looking at case details and discussing them with the head of behaviour support. This created something of a dilemma since the only reason I could get to this stage was because I was already an employee of the LEA, and therefore had access to all files. If I had been a researcher external to the LEA, I would probably have approached the Educational Psychology Service or Behavioural Support Service to request that they identify appropriate pupils and families. I was personally doing both steps in one. I attempted to resolve this issue by having a conversation with head of behaviour support and my own line manager, in order to make explicit that I was acting both as LEA employee and researcher.

All families were contacted prior to any approach to children, and this contact gave a clear message that any parent could withhold consent for their child or themselves to be interviewed. Initial contact by letter, and follow up letter, provided an opportunity to give an overview of the purpose of the research, and this was reiterated later during telephone conversation with those parents who took part. The initial two letters had not resulted in a group of willing participants – some had said "no" clearly and these people were not pursued further. However, some had not responded to the first or second letter at all, and the second letter carried within it the assumption that the parents were agreeable to my contacting their son or daughter's school. It did not feel appropriate to take this step without express permission, so I chose to telephone all the 'non-responders' before making such contact with the school. One family did not have a telephone, so instead I asked a support-worker colleague to ask them to convey permission: I was aware she knew the family well.

Parents were asked to discuss with their child the issue of their willingness to participate in the research; they were asked to give their child a brief description of

what this would involve. Goodenough (2002) raises some interesting issues about the fact that "children are being more widely consulted, using participatory research methods about many aspects of decisions and policies which affect their lives" (page 114) and discusses the need for researchers to be mindful of their own responsibilities towards children as participants. This researcher was mindful of her responsibility towards all participants, but particularly the children, in terms of consent, information, protection and confidentiality.

At the point of interview, participants (parents, pupils and professionals) were all given detail about how long the interview would be expected to take and were asked again whether they wanted to continue with it. All parties were given brief information about the structure of the overall research process, informed how participants had been selected and how the research would be reported. All parents expressed an interest in the outcomes of the research, and were accordingly sent a one-page synopsis of the main findings towards the end of the process of write-up.

An interesting issue arose at the point of contacting families initially to find out whether they would be willing to participate in the research. I was unsure which headed paper and title to use: whether to identify myself as an educational psychologist in the LEA, an Associate Tutor at Sheffield University, or an independent researcher. On the grounds that some families had known me directly or indirectly through the Standards Fund project, I decided the LEA educational psychologist role was the most straightforward way to identify myself. I did not want this to mislead potential participants, so I explained my research interest in the initial paragraphs of the letter. A further issue in this territory concerned the parents who responded to the letter saying they did not want their child to be included in the research. Some gave clear, written and pertinent reasons as to why. Although no further contact was made with these families or child, the reasons they gave for choosing not to be part of the research process have been (indirectly) included in the write-up (ie in the sample description). This felt appropriate as the information was valuable in terms of general points of interest raised by the researcher in write-up. More importantly, these general points did not directly involve the parents and in no way compromised their identity.

Another interesting issue arose about consent, in relation to young people who had turned 16 since the Standards Fund project had been involved with them. It did not feel appropriate to only contact parents about the young person's possible involvement, so I made a decision to contact both the parents *and* the young person in these circumstances.

Protecting Participants

Having given consent to participate, participants were engaged in the process of interview, and were not asked to do any activity or task which might pose a threat to them in any way. Inevitably, the topic of the study brought up some painful recollections about exclusion for some participants. All had been assured that they only need tell me what they felt comfortable in imparting, and when more negative experiences were recounted, these were met with respectful acknowledgement; when appropriate a reminder was given that the interviewee should only tell me what they wanted to, with no feeling of pressure or expectation.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Throughout the process of research, names of individuals, schools etc have been omitted from written material. The exception here is that when initial contact was made with schools to identify the most appropriate person for the researcher to speak with, the pupil's name needed to be disclosed. Families were aware of the professionals I would speak with about their child, as they had helped identify who might be approached. They were given an opportunity to object to my approaching school and support staff at this point. However, all participants agreed. All participants were assured that identity would not be apparent in the research write-up.

The point of Data Protection is pertinent in research these days, as discussed by SATSU (Science and Technology Studies Unit, 2003). What is relevant to the present study is that interviews were tape recorded then transcribed on word processing facilities of the researcher's personal computer. At the point when transcription took place, changed first names were used to save the interview data on personal computer, to secure confidentiality in terms of records kept electronically.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION

OF FINDINGS

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The word 'analyse' literally means to break something down into component parts (Wellington, 2000, page 135). In the present study, the analysis of raw, interview data is the first of several processes to be completed prior to the presentation of findings in this chapter. The second stage will be to highlight, carve, filter, categorise, and 'work' the many transcribed words in order to synthesise them into meaningful integration of ideas, remembering that "...chance only favours the prepared mind" (Pasteur, quoted in Miller, 1995, page 8). Several loops of re-work and refinement will have taken place before the data is ready to present. The task then remains to present those findings to the reader in a meaningful, fair, clear, interesting and attractive manner.

Throughout the processes described in the previous paragraph, this researcher's own understandings and perspectives will inevitably mediate the meanings drawn from the raw data, and this can only be acknowledged. As a reflective and reflexive researcher, every attempt will be made to analyse the data without judgement or preconception, though it has to be recognised that analysis of data inevitably carries inherent aspects of "the researcher's own conceptual framework, the technical literature, and the words and phrases of the informants themselves" (Miller, 1995, page 9), including the circularity of 'translation' of these into the researcher's conceptual framework. As Strauss and Corbin (1998, page 18) point out: "The descriptive details chosen by a storyteller usually are consciously or unconsciously selective, based on what he or she saw or heard or thought to be important".

In the forthcoming sections, the initial organisation of the themes emerging through analysis of the transcript data will be presented in relation to the key issues. It is hoped that this organisation will ease the reader's access to the results. These themes will then be supplemented by the additional theory-building concepts facilitated by the application of grounded theory analysis. Although this style of presentation gives the impression of two strands of data analysis (ie analysis in relation to the key issues, and separate analysis using grounded theory), in fact the researcher engaged in one continuous process, as follows:

    i)   All individual interviews transcribed

ii) All individual interviews analysed and descriptive coding labels assigned to emerging themes (level 1 coding)

iii) Identification of four themes resulting from level 1 coding, to be fed into the latter stages of the focus group interview process

iv) Focus group interview

v) Transcription of focus group interview

vi) Analysis and further analysis, of all interviews using grounded theory (identifying codes at levels one then two then three). Through repeated constant comparative analysis, the core variables capturing the underpinning social psychological processes were identified

vii) Re-organisation of the emerged categories and sub-categories through grounded theory in relation to the key issues, in readiness for presentation

At point ii) above, all individual interviews were analysed and at a later point (v) above), the focus group interview was also analysed. The analysis of the total transcripts using grounded theory methodology resulted in the following 29 descriptive labels, or level 1 codes:

- Academic work and support
- Adult pupil relationships
- Age
- Attendance
- Bullying or threat
- Confusion
- Family circumstances
- Friends and social networks
- Gender
- Goal motivation
- Graduated placement
- Historical factors
- Parent and school relationship
- Parental expectations re school
- Preparation for placement
- PRU

- Pupil behaviour
- Pupil characteristics
- Pupil control
- Pupil views
- School atmosphere and ethos
- School or class organisation
- Security/insecurity
- Statement
- Strategies
- Credibility or image
- Support to pupil
- Support service
- Teacher skills and confidence

To aid coherence in presentation of results, these level 1 codes will be discussed within the framework of key issues. The reader will recognise the level 1 codes as they emerge within the presentation of key issues and their sub-sections, even though level 1 'labelling' may vary slightly. This variation in wording occurs because the inter-related network of codes means that the profile of each may vary slightly according to the context within which it is discussed.

This chapter will be organised in the following way. After this brief introductory section, the data generated from the various interviews will be presented in relation to the key issues. Following on from this discussion of the level 1 codes within the context of the key issues, patterns emerging from the data, facilitated through continued analysis using grounded theory, will be presented. This will describe the progression on to level two and three codes, and the consequent emergence of three core categories.

Key Issue 1:

What are parent's perceptions of the process of returning their child to a new mainstream school?

Four sets of parents (one mum and dad, three mums) were interviewed at home; the fifth parents (Rachel's) were not at home on two pre-arranged visits. The information contained within this key issue is largely derived from those four parent interviews, though comments from other contributors have been included where relevant.

The Perceived Value of Education

A theme arising for all four parents interviewed was that they valued education sufficiently to want their children to be returned into the mainstream of it. All four parents expressed the view that they wished their children to successfully return to a new mainstream school in order to continue with their education. Following permanent exclusion, the children of the four parents had all attended the Pupil Referral Unit (known as 'PRU' or 'centre') for varying lengths of time, before going on to a new mainstream school placement. Comments made by parents about the prospect of their child going to the PRU before new mainstream school implicitly carried the idea that they would prefer their children to return to mainstream education. The following quotes refer to the parents' views about the prospect of leaving the PRU and returning to a mainstream situation:

> *I was relieved to find he was going to get some more*
> *education to be honest...I just wanted him back in education,*
> *that was it, top and bottom*
> **James' mum**

> *I wanted him to go there and there was no other school that I*
> *would accept...I knew that school and the teachers, so I put*
> *everything I could possibly put into it*
> **Gary's mum**

> *I was glad that he was going back to school because he*
> *needed his education*
> **Robert's mum**

> *We felt more positive about 'O' school from the beginning, but*
> *he couldn't go in the first place. We went to appeal...*
> **Liam's mum and dad**

Three parents were generally neutral about the intervening placement at the centre (PRU), though at the same time were positive about particular aspects of the educational experience their child had whilst attending. Particular subjects were mentioned by two parents as being ones their children enjoyed, while one of these parents also commented specifically about her positive perception of the behavioural management of the children at the PRU. One parent expressed negative views about her child's attendance at the PRU for the period between mainstream schools:

> *I didn't want him to attend the Centre [PRU]. I know that a few of his friends were there...it's just a joke. They see it as an easy option, what they don't see is that at the end of the day they're going to have nothing, no exams, nothing*
> **James' mum**

James' mum elaborated on this comment by saying she felt that, in general, it was not a good idea to put all excluded children together in one setting like the PRU centre, because they would have an adverse effect on one another.

There was a general feeling arising from the four interviews that parents had perceived themselves as having to battle for certain aspects of what they wanted educationally for their children. One parent described how she perceived she had managed to secure a Statutory Assessment for her son:

> *Well, I pushed for that you see...I was quite insistent, quite insistent. And I think if I hadn't pushed for it maybe that wouldn't have happened...I think as a parent you do have to push*
> **Robert's mum**

Robert's mum also described how it had been important to her to feel fully involved in the choice of new school for her son. She expressed this in such a way that indicated the importance she perceived there to be in her own commitment to the new placement as well as ensuring her son's voice was heard through hers. "I think we had three choices so I was very much involved" she said, and went on to explain how she had come up with a list of possible schools, with the behaviour support teacher, before making visits to see them in her own order of preference.

Liam and Gary's parents described how, at the point of their sons leaving primary education, they had gone through the formal appeals process in order to secure secondary school placements in schools of their choice. In both cases, these appeals had been unsuccessful and the children had gone to a secondary school that wasn't first choice. Both parents expressed some anger and frustration that the LEA had not provided their sons with the schools requested, and had resulted in them feeling that there was no other option than to appeal against the decision. Gary's mum expressed this as "I wanted him to go to 'O' school because I knew it was a really good school and I just felt like we were ignored completely." It was from these (second choice) schools that exclusion had then occurred. Interestingly in both cases, the schools to which the boys returned following permanent exclusion were the schools originally requested by the parents at the point of appeal.

Key Issue 1:

a) What do parents feel were the important factors in making the process a successful one?

Several themes arose in relation to this aspect of the key issue, namely:

- Initial welcome and ongoing communication with new school
- Ongoing school-parent relationships
- Management of arising difficulties
- Academic ability and need for support
- Adult support to child
- Support to parent
- Parents' perceived negative aspects or pressures

All of these themes are potentially important in understanding parental perceptions of the process of successful return of their children to new mainstream schools. Each one will, therefore, be elaborated in turn.

Initial welcome and ongoing communication with new school:

The issue of parental relationships with new schools emerged as a strong theme, with many references to it from all parents interviewed. Comments about school and parental relationships covered all aspects of communication with school about the placement, from initial welcome to communication about ongoing issues and

maintenance of the placement once established. Frequency of contact was one aspect of this, but more important seemed to be the quality of the interaction when it took place, starting with the initial contact with the new school.

Parents' feelings about the prospect of the new school placement being successful seemed to have been influenced by the manner in which they were initially welcomed by the school.

> *I thought it was good that Mrs J (head teacher) was enthusiastic, very positive... I liked the atmosphere, I liked Mrs J... She said 'We know R has had problems, but we're going to put them on one side and when he starts school here it'll be wiping the slate clean'*
> **Robert's mum**

Liam's parents similarly explained how they immediately liked the school when the head teacher showed them round in the first place. Gary's mum already knew the school that Gary was to start at, as she had attended it herself as a child, and had attended a general open evening for new starters. However, in addition, she had a telephone conversation with the head of lower school before Gary started, which enabled her to feel that channels of communication were open between herself and school:

> *When I put Gary's case across they listened to everything I said. They were very receptive to what I had to say... It was so straightforward and so supportive of everything and that just in itself really helped me. Mr F said if there's any problem or you're worried about anything, just ring.*
> **Gary's mum**

Although I did not manage to speak with Rachel's parents, the support teacher who knew the family well recounted the initial meeting when she took the parents to see the prospective school. She described how very warmly welcomed the parents were, and how they responded positively to this; the teacher saw this as a pivotal point in the future success of the placement:

> *We visited the school and they were so welcoming, it was so warm, it was almost a tangible warmth... there seemed to be an overriding feeling of friendliness when one went in*
> **Support Teacher, regarding Rachel's parent's initial visit**

In terms of on-going positive communication between parents and school, contact was valued by all parents. The implication of parents' comments was that the communicative relationship helped to support the continued success of placements. Robert's mum gave an illustrative example of this as she described how swift action from year head in the new school minimised Robert's growing attendance problem. She expressed pleasant surprise that the year head from the new school had called at home to see her:

> *One of the chappies, and I forget his name, got involved and said*
> *to me, he actually came for a home visit and said to me 'try and get*
> *R to go back to school'. He initiated things; R's got certificates*
> *and things upstairs...*
> **Robert's mum**

Similarly, James' mum felt that her relationship with the head teacher was a positive one, and had been from the start:

> *He tried his best, the head master, and I quite liked him myself, I*
> *thought he was fair...Things were explained to James – I went to*
> *the school also and we were included, people were available if I*
> *felt I had a problem. I've never had this before and I think it's a*
> *bloody good idea, you know what I mean.*
> **James' mum**

On-going School-Parent Relationships

Liam's parents clearly stated that their relationship with the new school in the early stages was a positive one, characterised by frequent and informative contact. This was illustrated by their description of swift action from school, within the first term, to address bullying problems. They described how they were kept informed and involved with strategies to address this issue. They felt, however, that the relationship between themselves and school was not sustained in the longer term, suggesting that the investment in the relationship waned as time went on. As Liam neared the end of Year 10, his parents felt the relationship had slipped even further, and they had the impression that school staff were beginning to be uncaring about Liam and their own feelings. They reported unanswered telephone calls in which they maintained they had requested information and personal contact. This perceived lack of on-going communication with Liam's parents was viewed by them as an obstacle to the continued success of the placement, even though contact had been positive at the outset of the placement:

[We needed] more contact from school; we were unaware when things were going wrong. Now we don't really have any contact and we don't know where and when he is supposed to be attending.
Liam's parents

However, Liam's parents' views were not representative of the other three. There were many examples of comments from parents about how the relationship between themselves and school had started out as a positive one, been maintained as such and was viewed by them as centrally important to the success of the sustained placement for their child. I mention here only a few examples to amplify that sentiment.

Robert's mum described her close working relationships with the school and how this had been powerful in helping the placement succeed. She said, "I will put the school supported me and I supported them"; she emphatically requested that I enter this in my records. When asked to elaborate on how this had worked she said:

Just going to meetings, and listening to my attitudes and my opinion, and would I agree? ...I mean sometimes I wouldn't look forward to these meetings because there were so many people there...and I'd feel a little bit intimidated, but I used to think well, I sort of know them all, and then there'd be his class teacher, and...this special needs chappie...he was really nice. I didn't used to look forward to the meetings but I used to think it was important for them to tell me how they think...
Robert's mum

James' mum echoed a similar point about the relationship between herself and school, in her case with the head teacher, and how this meant that issues were addressed quickly:

They needed you involved, I mean they were concerned about him. The head master used to send a letter or phone up and then I would be down at the school – so they let me know straight away.
James' mum

Management of Arising Difficulties

When asked about the important factors in making the placement in the new school a sustained success, swift and effective management of emerging difficulties was mentioned by three parents. James' mum talked about how helpful an anger management programme had been in the early stages of her son's placement. This

was instituted by the head of inclusion support in the new school, within the first half term, and she had been made aware of it.

Two sets of parents, Liam's and Robert's, were grateful that the new school had been quickly aware of, and swift to act upon, issues of bullying. Both parents said that they had been informed about the issues, and were encouraged to be involved in the strategies devised to address the difficulties in order to prevent escalation.

Robert's mum commented upon the use of targets and stickers to enable her son to be clear about behavioural expectations and recognition for sticking to them. Robert's mum went on to say how she had started using a similar system at home, having learned about it as a strategy in one of the meetings.

Key Issue 1:

b) What do parents feel about the support available to themselves and their child before, during and after return?

Academic Ability and Need for Support

Although it did not arise as a particularly strong theme, support for academic work was mentioned as an issue by all parents. Liam's parents mentioned that some individual support for learning had helped him settle in the new placement. Similarly, Gary's mum didn't feel Gary needed any academic support, as she sees him as a capable boy, but was grateful that he had received some 1:1 assistance in class in the early stages, until: "he caught up with his work; it was just in certain lessons because they didn't do them at the centre". Robert's mum commented that Robert got the academic help he needed. James' mum regarded James as a reasonably capable boy who just needed to have teachers explain matters to him; she implied this had happened when he started at the new school.

Adult support to children

Academic support was only one small aspect of a much bigger theme of adult support to children. Support in a wider sense was a strong theme, and was mentioned by all parents on several occasions and in different ways. Support was identified in parent interviews as coming from several sources, all of which were regarded as important.

Robert's mum felt that she had had to battle to have Robert's difficulties recognised – difficulties of concentration and behaviour in her view. She commented upon how supporting professionals (educational psychologist and behavioural support teacher), had supported her in enabling the new school to recognise and understand Robert's difficulties. She said:

> *I think they were supportive and understood and could see...making the school aware that R had these problems, the behaviour problems, the problems in school, that he was a bit different to other children*
> **Robert's mum**

James' mum made reference to the adult support that James received from family, as well as that which he received in school. She described this family support using the terms 'support' and 'pressure' in an interchangeable way; the sentiment she was expressing concerned the way she and her husband spoke to James about making a success of the new school placement. When asked to elaborate on what they were saying to him to help him succeed, she said:

> *I told him he had to...It was worse from his dad...and his granddad had set him a bribe... It would have took somebody absolutely stone deaf not to listen! We just kept driving it in that bit more. I just said if you don't buckle down you'll spend all your life around here...we tried to make him realise how important it was...*
> **James' mum**

Gary's mum spoke for some time about the important role that had been taken by a Learning Support Assistant (LSA), in Gary's early weeks in school. The LSA time had been provided by the behaviour support team, in order to assist transition to the new school:

> *I think at the beginning it was not so much that he needed her help but just to know that somebody was there who cared about him and they were there because they wanted him to do well and that if in any way, shape or form a problem did arise that there was support there for him.*
> **Gary's mum**

<u>Support to parent</u>

It was interesting to note that several comments were made by parents concerning the importance to them of support received from people other than from staff of the new school. Support for Robert's mum, from educational psychologist and behaviour support teacher has already been mentioned, as has family support for James.

Gary's mum mentioned how supportive she had found the help offered by a behaviour support teacher:

> *He was like my contact point there [at the PRU] and he was great.*
> *He kept me in touch with things and I could always phone him if*
> *there was any problem in any way*
> **Gary's mum**

James' mum had her own mental health difficulties at the time of James' exclusion and reintegration: "I had depression and had a thing about going out" she recounted, and talked about the invaluable support she received at the time from a social worker. She believed this support had helped her personally, but had also directly influenced her son's education, because it enabled her to be involved in decisions about James' education at a time when she could not have otherwise done this.

Parents perceived negative aspects and pressures

Although this study is involved with the perceptions of participants about the successful return of pupils to new mainstream schools, issues arose in the parent interviews that revealed factors perceived to have acted as negative forces to success. These issues will, therefore, be outlined here.

As has already been mentioned, Liam's parents commented upon the growing difficulties arising for them as a result of reduced contact between themselves and school. They described this as a reduction over time, and had reached a point where they perceived their contacts as resulting in no response from school. The interview with Liam's parents was an emotional one for mum and dad, as they regarded my visit as an opportunity to find out about his placement, as well as impart information about the issues I wanted to address. Interestingly, Liam's placement at the school he had returned to was changing into a Work Related Learning Package; his parents asked me about a letter they had recently received outlining the planned package Liam was to embark upon. They felt confused about whether and when Liam should be attending the mainstream school. Although my role at the time was as researcher, I followed up this conversation with parents by asking an Education Social Worker to make contact with the family (agreed with the parents at the time) in order to assist their understanding of the processes in which Liam was becoming involved.

104

James' mum commented upon the factors that she regarded as having put negative pressures on James' sustained placement in the new mainstream school. She mentioned that he took a dislike to the head teacher, interestingly the person she identified as the one keeping her informed of his progress. James himself mentioned this negative relationship when I spoke with him. James' mum also commented upon the fact that James was returned gradually to lessons in the new school, with build up to full time occurring over a long period. This, she felt, had been a temptation to James to 'bunk off' from some sessions in school.

Both James' and Liam's parents talked about the fact that they perceived their boys to have liked attending the centre (PRU) 'too much', and therefore not wanting to leave to start in a new school.

A theme occurring in all four parental interviews, and also reported by support teacher in relation to Rachel, was the issue of some form of pressure on the families at the time of the child's permanent exclusion from school. In all cases, the specific stressful circumstances had, to some degree, been ameliorated as each child returned to the new mainstream setting. In James' family, this had been around mum's mental illness, as has been previously mentioned. In Liam's family, the parents talked about being under pressure because of older sister's non-attendance at school, and also of some bullying towards Liam. Robert's mum talked at length about family problems she regarded as central to Robert's difficult time at school, including poor housing and lack of father figure. Gary's mum mentioned family problems and relationship difficulties between her and Gary's father, and also spoke about Gary having been on the receiving end of some bullying in the neighbourhood. Gary's family were also re-housed around the time of his exclusion. In Rachel's case, the support teacher talked about some difficulties within the traveller community that had impacted upon Rachel's exclusion from primary school.

Key Issue 2:

What are students' perceptions of the process of returning to a new mainstream school?

The findings in this section relate primarily to the interviews held with the children themselves. As previously described, the interview format with children included a combination of open-ended questions and some scaling questions (see Appendix 12 for interview schedule). The scaling questions were included to ease children's access to, and engagement with, the questions but were not regarded as essential – use of the scaling activity was determined at the time by each child's ability to articulate a response. Accordingly, not all children fully completed the rating scales. In Robert's case, such a long time had elapsed since entering the new school that he could not remember sufficient detail to assign number values to the dimensions. Consequently, the information arising from the rating scales is not detailed; rather it is mentioned in the following sections as a supplement to the information arising within each key issue.

Key Issue 2:

a) **What do students perceive to have been the factors that helped them to successfully reintegrate into a new school?**

b) **Who are the people (and their roles) they perceive to have helped them?**

c) **What was it they did which helped?**

There was a range of factors identified by children as helping them to return successfully to mainstream education. These were often difficult to disentangle from the people who helped them, and what these people did to support the placement. Consequently, I have chosen to address the three sub-sections of Key Issue 2 together. Several themes arose within these three sub-sections and these have been grouped into the following headings:

- Personal efficacy: goal motivation and pupil characteristics
- Social networks
- Adult and child relationships in school
- Family circumstances and support from parents
- Academic factors
- Support to pupil in school

Each of these themes will now be addressed in turn, and inevitably some of the content will encroach on areas covered by other key issues.

Personal Efficacy: Goal Motivation and Pupil Characteristics

All pupils made several references to their feelings about returning to a new mainstream school, their determination to make it work and aspects of their characteristics and skills that supported them in so doing.

In terms of motivation to make the new placement succeed, responses broke down into two distinct sub-categories, namely achievement motivation and personal satisfaction.

Achievement motivation was apparent in comments from four of the pupils, some more explicitly than others. The term 'achievement motivation' is used here to denote the idea of motivation to succeed in something presently in order to ensure success, or access to other opportunities, in the longer term. James identified one aspect of his motivation to succeed as being related to future prospects and the desire to go to college to do a bricklaying course. James knew that a further exclusion would prevent this from happening, and articulated that the decision to make the new placement work was his own. This comment strongly suggested that he perceived himself to be in a position of some control to make it succeed.

Gary's goal motivation was articulated in a way which reflected a similar sentiment to James:

> *I just knew that I needed to get through school. Otherwise, if I had been excluded or not been able to do it, I wouldn't have much of a life when I left school*
> **Gary**

Liam did not identify the same sort of goal motivation in relation to return to mainstream school as Gary and James. He saw himself as having to leave the PRU even though he didn't want that. However, he reports that he came to the conclusion:

> *I did want to get through it...because there was nowt I could do*
> *about it so I just might as well try my best... always had me mum*
> *or me dad to do stuff for me, it's only recently that I have been*
> *doing stuff for myself...I am seeing about getting a work placement*
> *and I would rather do that than go to school*
> **Liam**

Liam thus described how he had come to see himself as taking more personal control over events and the pursuit of his own goals. Robert too identified that although at first he wasn't motivated to succeed because of pursuit of his own motivational goals, this had in fact become an issue later on in his school career – he articulated that he wanted to be successful on a recently-started Work Related Learning Programme. This theme of pupils somehow deciding to make it work, was recurrent. The behaviour support teacher commented that Robert "seemed to put it right", and the year head said of Gary that when he first came into school it was apparent that "he's quite motivated as far as school is concerned". She speculated that "he just thought I may as well get on".

James was explicit in explaining his goal motivation in terms of personal satisfaction. He wanted to demonstrate that he could maintain his placement because:

> *I wanted to show them I could do it*
> **James**

Gary expressed a similar motivation to succeed:

> *I can say to people I can do that. I'm not just doing other stuff. I*
> *wanted to show them that I could get through school*
> **Gary**

This motivation arising from the need to satisfy the personal need to prove they could do it was picked up by the behaviour support teachers' focus group discussion (see later sections).

James described how he enjoyed being able to 'play the game' of risk: "I enjoyed being able to wind up teachers", describing that he knew how far to go to keep away from exclusion, but have the satisfaction of playing the system.

In relation to starting at the new mainstream school, pupils were asked 'How determined were you to make it work?' Three gave a numerical response to this, as well as open-ended answers. Given a scale of 1 – 10, with the dimension descriptors as:

Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Totally

determined   determined

pupil responses were 6, 7 and 9. The numerical scores from these three students seem to support the view that personal motivation to succeed in the new placement was on the whole positive and important.

Goal motivation for achievement and the personal satisfaction of showing they could do it combined with aspects of pupil characteristics to give a picture of personalities which were perceived as likely to succeed in new mainstream school settings. A strong theme arising in relation to pupils' perceptions about what helped them succeed in new mainstream placements relates to personal attributes: personal efficacy, goal motivation and personal characteristics, as perceived both by themselves and the adults who respond to them (discussed again later).

Social Networks

Probably the strongest theme, commented upon by all pupils and all adults, was the importance of social networks, even though in individual interviews there was no direct question about it. In other words, all individual interviewees mentioned the issue of social networks without any prompt to do so. Comments varied in terms of the degree of importance attached to the dimension, but nonetheless this was the only theme mentioned within every individual interview as well as rousing lengthy discussion in the focus group. The theme largely arose in the sense of how important supportive social systems were in helping maintain successful placements, but the other face of the same coin also arose in terms of how destructive negative social relationships could be in making placements vulnerable, for example when bullying occurred.

There were many comments from pupils about what they perceived to be the centrally important theme of social networks, and I select here a few to illustrate the point:

I had quite a few mates there. I liked break and lunch and that cos I had mates, and we used to play footie and that in summer when we were allowed on the field. I must have liked it
Robert

My mates were the main reason I stuck there
James

I had friends here, so that did help...and then through them I made other friends. All really good mates...Instead of growing apart from me we all stuck together...we stuck up for each other
Gary

A really friendly atmosphere at the beginning, all the pupils were well respected
Liam

In interview, students were asked to imagine someone who was ready to start in a new school, and asked what they would tell them are the important things in making the new placement a success. Gary said that he would tell them:

Make a couple of friends. Maybe not too many, or if you know somebody there, try and stick with them
Gary

Robert answered the same question with:

Don't act stupid and try and make mates. If no one likes you, you don't like the school do you? It's important that people like you and then you'll feel more comfortable
Robert

Gary talked about sharing troubles with his friends if things were going wrong at school, and cited his friendships as being important in supporting him throughout the time of starting at a new school.

Robert's mum explained that Robert's friendships in the new school were so important to him that he uncharacteristically chose to cycle to the school when they moved house, instead of moving schools. Robert had made it clear to her that this was due to the importance of his friendships and not wanting to start over again with making new friends.

Liam too had commented upon the strengthening aspects of friendships within a new school situation, but also commented about the other side of the coin. Liam felt that negative social networks had been responsible for making his placement start to wobble, after a lengthy period in the new placement. He said "It's just the pupils I didn't get on with", a comment echoed by his parents when they started to describe the recent break-down in his placement.

It seems from Gary's comments that friendships were very supportive of him, as quoted above. However he also commented upon trickier times earlier in the placement when he had got involved in fights, and had recognised the need to change his own behaviour in order to forge positive friendships:

> *I was taught to fight back twice as hard as you get fought, but I had to change that around, cos it wasn't working*
> **Gary**

Adult and Child Relationships in School

Another powerful theme emerging in relation to pupils' views about factors that helped them succeed in the new school placement concerned their relationships with adults in school. Pupils were asked who in school had helped the move go smoothly and then asked to indicate a numerical value to how helpful that person was, on a scale of 1 – 10:

Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Extremely

Helpful   helpful

In response, Gary gave 9, Rachel 10 and Liam 9, indicating that three pupils saw each person as being important in the early stages of the placement's success. Only a short step needs to be taken from here, to assume that the relationships between the pupils and these individuals were positive and important. Pupil views about the importance of their relationships with various adults in the new schools were amplified through their comments:

> *Knowing the teachers makes it easier to talk to them about anything you need to*
> **Gary**

*I liked the teachers there, they were great, because you respect them
and they respect you back...it was the way they talked to you and that
and they helped you with your work...if I am wanting someone to talk
to I just go and see Mr S (form tutor)*
Liam

In imagining a pupil ready to go to a new school, Robert thought about the advice he
might give, and said it was important that they should "Behave for a bit and if you
find out that the teacher likes you, you can try and get on their good sides".

Parents also commented upon the importance of the relationships they perceived to
exist between their child and adults at school.

*Just the fact that people were supportive of his background. They had
belief in him so he had belief in himself*
Gary's mum

Several parents made comments about how they perceived the relationships between
their children and the school to have been nurtured. James' mum spoke about how she
thought James in the early days felt 'victimised', in her view because teachers were
using a zero-tolerance policy to keep him on the straight and narrow. She describes
him as getting fed up with this, but she also describes the feeling of being victimised
as being balanced out by a positive relationship struck up with a male teacher (head of
inclusion support). James' mum felt that if this had not happened he may not have put
up with the rest.

Family Circumstances and Support from Parents

The issues of family circumstances and the support offered to pupils by parents have
already been addressed to an extent through Key Issue 1, and this information will not
be repeated here. What will be mentioned, however, are comments made by pupils
about how *they* perceived the importance of their parents' relationships with school.
For instance, Gary's comments illustrated how differently matters were seen by him
because his mum knew some of the teachers because she went there as a child. He felt
he could talk to his mum about what happened with them, and she would understand.
Gary commented that this helped him feel more confident about talking to those
teachers himself. He also felt that she would be able to ring school and help sort

problems out, indicating how supported he felt by his mum's relationship with adults in school.

The support to James from his family has already been discussed, and will not be repeated. In addition to the previous comments, however, it is interesting to note that when asked why he avoided getting excluded again, James responded simply "my mum and dad", though did not want to elaborate on why this was the case.

Academic Factors

Academic factors were raised by pupils, but not very often in comparison with comments from adults (parents and teachers). Pupils didn't talk about academic factors very much; Gary simply mentioned that he had fallen "a bit behind" with maths and that he asked for help if he had trouble with his work. Robert declared that he did not find the work hard, he "just didn't like school at all", though in contrast he was clear in saying that one of the reasons he perceived himself to have been successful returning to a new school was "decent lessons". Liam also commented upon the need to have access to academic support as and when needed, but this was stated in a matter of fact, low-key manner. Rachel was the one pupil who talked more about academic factors, not surprisingly because she was recognised as having learning difficulties through a Statement of special educational need. She made several references to the need for adult support to do her work, and commented that she didn't like doing art because that's the lesson when her support adult has some time off work.

As will be discussed in later sections, academic factors were regarded as far more important by the adults interviewed.

Support to pupil in school (non-academic)

Again, although the issue of support to pupils in school was regarded as important by parents and school staff, pupils themselves mentioned it only infrequently. Gary's comment was typical:

> *At the beginning of school there was someone who stuck with me*
> *when I started...[she helped] if I had trouble with my work...that*
> *was helpful*
> **Gary**

James was similarly vague about how the head of inclusion support had helped him, though he remembered him as being "cool and supported me". Robert also had vague recollections about someone being around to support him "she used to like help and that, and I had cooking with her". Liam commented more specifically about how his form teacher had given him direct support; he said:

> *Mr S. was always like keeping me behind and talking to me about my*
> *attendance and things like that and was always alright about it.*
> *Every time I used to get into trouble he used to see my side of the*
> *story first... He would listen to me and then put stories together*
> **Liam**

Gary commented that he felt supported by informal contact from members of staff around school, such as the head teacher and other teachers saying "hi" in the corridor, or just asking "how are you doing?" He also commented that he liked that his year head had a good sense of humour and was "just easy to talk to".

So, although pupils were generally aware of adults supporting their early stages in the new school, they tended to be rather vague in expressing how these adults supported them.

Key Issue 3:

What are students' perceptions about their involvement in the process of decision-making following exclusion?

Four children felt able to give a scaled score to the question of how involved they felt in the decisions being made about them around the time of exclusion and return to new school. The dimension was labelled as:

Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Totally

involved   involved

Gary and Rachel both rated this as 4. Robert as 5 and Liam as 9. Gary did not see his score of 4 as indicating negative feelings about how involved he felt. He elaborated on the score of 4 by saying that he was:

> *Not too involved but there were still my choices there... I don't think I would have been that good at being involved that much cos as I said, at that time I wasn't very confident*
> **Gary**

Gary went on to explain that he always felt he could make his opinion known through his mum, rather than more directly, and this suited him.

Robert felt his involvement in decisions made about him had grown over the years. He described feeling that events happened to him without his involvement concerning the placement at PRU and then the original return to a mainstream school: "They never told me, they just decided that I'm going there". He expressed some irritation at the lack of consultation over a change of form in secondary school, which he felt had a negative impact upon his social network:

> *Yeah, you've got to get involved in what happens to you...*
> **[Interviewer: How do you think you, or kids in general, could be more involved?]**
> *Getting told what's happened and asked whether you want that to happen. Cos when I got moved form they all made the decision I didn't get asked. They just did it.*
> **Robert**

Robert concluded by giving a score of 10 to his involvement in the process of getting started on a Work Related Learning (WRL) programme: "I got letters and everything".

Liam also expressed some mixed experiences in his involvement in the decisions made about him. He felt powerless to do anything about the decision to have him return to a new mainstream, even though he expressed the wish to stay at the PRU since he liked it there. He saw this decision to move him anyway as an indication that he "wasn't naughty enough" to stay at the PRU. However, he did feel very involved in the subsequent decision about which school he would subsequently attend, and this accounts for the rating of 9 overall. Liam also described similar feelings to Robert in

terms of his involvement in decisions about embarking upon a WRL programme. He felt he had taken an increasingly active part in determining his own future:

> *I had to do it myself – there was no one else to do it for me –*
> *always had me mum or me dad to do stuff for me, it's only*
> *recently that I have been doing stuff for myself*
> **Liam**

Rachel recounted that she had expressed her view that she wanted to return to her old school, "but they didn't let me". She remembered being taken on a visit to a new school, but didn't remember feeling very involved in the decision made for her to go there.

Some parents commented about how involved they felt their children had been in the decisions made about them, though these were few in number. James' mum felt that he wasn't really involved in the discussions, but that he just went along with the adults. Gary's mum could remember a specific discussion between PRU staff, herself and Gary about his readiness to return to a mainstream school, and felt he was involved in this decision.

In summary, then, the pupils gave a mixed picture of how involved they felt in the decisions made about them at the time of exclusion and return to a new mainstream school. They recounted little detail about the way they were involved in these decisions and none could suggest ways in which they could have been more involved. Robert and Liam were more positive about how they had been involved recently in decisions about WRL programmes, though of course, these processes were more likely in mind given the recency of their involvement.

Key Issue 4:

What are the perceptions of key staff in receiving schools about the factors that were important in ensuring a successful return to mainstream education for the student?

There were several strands to the perceptions of key staff in receiving schools concerning the factors important in successful return to a mainstream environment. These have been grouped together in the following categories; obviously there will be

some overlap with aspects raised within key issues 1 and 2 – where this is the case, information will not be repeated.

- Adult and pupil relationships and adult support
- Pupil characteristics
- Intelligence
- Social networks
- Preparation for placement

Adult/Pupil Relationships and Adult Support

This issue was seen as an important one by all groups interviewed, and has already been discussed in relation to parents' views and pupil views. The staff in receiving schools shared similar ideas about the importance of the development of positive relationships between the incoming pupil and key staff in the new school. James' head of inclusion support felt particularly strongly about the need for adults in the new school to take the time immediately to find out about, and take an interest in, new pupils, giving the message to the pupil that they are worth the investment of time. The same person also thought that there needed to be a specific link, too:

> *...a person...who will link with somebody who they think is worth their time...will fight their corner...set them safe boundaries*
> **Head of Inclusion Support, regarding James**

The theme of being proactive in forming a relationship with the incoming child was a repeated notion. It seems staff in receiving schools did not feel this could just be left to chance. Gary's head of year described how she purposely spoke a lot to him when he first arrived, being very proactive about offering contact:

> *I said that I've noticed that you are not coming to school and that I am always here for you to talk to, you can always talk to your tutor and there's room 1...So perhaps it steadily got through to him ... And that I wanted him to come to school no matter what. And I also said to him when he used to have these explosive things that if he feels it's going to happen he comes and finds me*
> **Head of Year, regarding Gary**

Focus group discussion echoed similar ideas; there was the shared recognition that for pupils to be successful in new settings, there would need to be action and time taken to give a sense of someone caring for them. The focus group debated that it might be

more effective if this was someone permanently in the school, rather than a visitor to it:

> *Someone currently in the school who is an emotional anchor...form teachers can do that often...its someone who's in the school already - that seems to be more effective as well, that person is already in the structure of the school and that can be a more effective way, and is always available*
> **Focus Group Discussion**

The focus group discussion also raised the idea that the particular relationship between pupil and the 'emotional anchor' also depended upon the "calibre, warmth and personality" of the adult involved, and that simply giving time and attention were not necessarily going to make a difference. The *quality* of the relationship on offer to the pupil, rather than just the offer of it, was considered as being of vital importance.

Three pupils (Gary, Robert and Rachel) returned to the new mainstream environment with some 1:1 assistance. The importance of this has already been mentioned in terms of the views of pupils and parents. Gary's arrival at the new secondary school was remembered as bringing with it some LSA hours by the head of year. She commented upon the fact that "he had this lady with him for a lot of the time. Initially she was there a lot". The head of year did not specifically mention how this support had assisted in making the placement start successfully, but raised it in relation to key factors that had helped the placement succeed.

Rachel's individual support was seen as important in establishing her start in a new primary school. The LSA support was also seen as important in assisting continued success as Rachel transferred from one teacher to another. The LSA from the receiving school felt that her knowledge of Rachel facilitated the continuity to effectively meet ongoing educational, social and emotional needs whilst new teachers got to know her. A similar point was raised in the focus group discussion, where people were speculating that success in returning pupils to primary settings might be easier than secondary settings, because only one new teacher relationship had to be made at a time – this was seen as perhaps easier both from the child and the adult points of view.

<u>Pupil Characteristics</u>

Factors about the children themselves were remarked upon by receiving staff, and other adults involved with them, as being important to the success of the placement in a new mainstream setting. Several nebulous comments related to personal characteristics of the pupils were made by the adults. Rachel was described as "such an engaging child" by her LSA; the support teacher smiled when she said, very positively, that there was just "something about her". Similar comments were made about Luke by his parents "he can be respectful and loving and lovely" and Gary was described as intelligent and mature by the new school's year-head. Similarly, James was thought to be "completely endearing because he was witty, sharp and very amusing and dry...I liked the lad" when described by the head of inclusion support in the new school. In a similar vein, the focus group discussion raised the issue of personal characteristics of pupils who succeed in new placements. Phrases such as "strength of character" and "charismatic" were used.

A notion discussed within the focus group explored whether this "something about him/her" concerned the need that some pupils seemed to have to prove that they could succeed. One group member had commented about a pupil wanting to prove the excluded school teachers wrong, and this was responded to by another focus group member:

> *Quite a few kids are like that...I can think of a couple of Key Stage*
> *4 students who were very keen to get their GCSE's and take them*
> *across to their old head and say 'there you are!' That did happen*
> *quite a lot – set out to prove something. 'You said I would never*
> *amount to anything – I have done!' That lad who pops in, that's his*
> *sole reason for succeeding the way he has done – he has goals!*
> **Focus Group discussion**

The focus group discussion also evolved into debate about students wanting to feel they have some control over their own destiny; the link between personal control or personal efficacy and having the satisfaction of 'showing 'em!' as described above was a topic of prolonged discussion.

<u>Intelligence</u>

Related to the area of pupil characteristics were several comments made about the level of pupil's intelligence, and the implied importance of this in relation to success

in a new educational mainstream setting. The head of inclusion support saw this as an important factor in James' successful placement: "he was a lot cleverer lad than his peers...He's a loads brighter lad". Similarly, Gary's head of year saw his intelligence as a central aspect of his success in returning to secondary school. When asked what she saw as the factors of success in Gary's placement, her first words in interview were:

> *My opinion would be that its got a lot to do with Gary's average intelligence; he's quite motivated as far as school's concerned anyway, whereas I have seen other children we've had...and they are often in the lower end of the year academically. He knows that he is going to get over 5 GCSEs out of the place and he's got enough intelligence to realise this is how he's going to get on in life, not by kicking up, whereas the others are very often very disaffected with school...*
> **Year Head, re Gary**

This sentiment was also expressed by the behaviour support teacher working with Gary at the time. She assigned some of the success he experienced as being due to the fact that his intelligence prevented the added burden of academic struggle in lessons: "he is quite an intelligent boy, lessons wouldn't have been daunting for him".

The focus group discussion explored this issue of the role played by the intelligence of the pupil in successful return to mainstream school, and the consensus was that it may be an important factor. This general feeling was echoed by one participant who said: "brighter helps, it does – it helps you fit, doesn't it?" This met with several nods and murmurs of agreement. Towards the end of the focus group discussion, one participant summed up the feelings that had been shared about the part played by intelligence, when he said:

> *For most [return to mainstream] is an anxious time, and if you're not very bright its going to add to your anxieties; you're worried about whether the teachers like you, but if you have to worry on top of that that you're going to find the work hard and look incredibly stupid, that's a tough one*
> **Focus group discussion**

Social Networks

The fact that social networks were raised in all interviews has already been mentioned in relation to other key issues. Suffice here to include additional comments particularly reflecting the views of receiving mainstream staff in this regard.

Gary's year head recognised the importance of Gary's establishment with a group of friends early in his school transfer: "He got in with the right people. he got some nice friends". She talked about this in relation to the immediacy of support they were able to give to him, a point raised by Gary himself, too. It was clear that this year head was mindful of the need to provide some organised social network to new pupils, as she described to me her usual practice of making sure all new pupils were assigned a 'buddy' to be with in the first few days of arrival at school.

Establishing social networks was seen by the head of inclusion support as a necessary but not necessarily pleasant process for James, in comparison to the nurturing process mentioned regarding Gary. James mentioned the importance of his mates, seeing them as one of the main reasons for being at school. The head of inclusion support saw James' early days in the new school as his opportunity to establish himself in the pecking order. He observed that James had "to state his claim of who he is, right, what he is, you know and where he is going to fit".

Rachel's new placement was also regarded as having some of its success assigned to the social networks of support established early in the placement:

> *Everybody was very supportive and she had lots of help. The children in the class were superb. She had a friend, C, straight away. C didn't seem to have many friends herself and she seemed to latch on to Rachel and they became inseparable really*
> **LSA re Rachel**

Preparation for Placement

My involvement with the Standard Fund Project in this study meant that as the educational psychologist working with excluded pupils I was often central to the preparations made with new schools for the arrival of pupils from the PRU. In my direct experience, the contact point would often have been the head teacher, deputy, year head or SenCo. It therefore came as quite a surprise to me that the preparation for new placements was only infrequently mentioned by staff interviewed in receiving schools. It is worth remembering here, that in making the request to the school to nominate someone for interview, staff were asked to identify someone closely involved with the pupil's initial transfer into the school.

In comparison to the staff in receiving schools, preparation for new placements were mentioned much more frequently by support staff from the Local Education Authority. This point will be returned to later in the discussion.

The LSA in Rachel's receiving school was unaware of any preparations made for her arrival, apart from a meeting between parents, head and support teacher, which she was not invited to attend. She could not remember being made aware of the content of this meeting in terms of preparations with which she was to actively engage. A similar message was given by the year head of Gary's school. She speculated that initial contact and visit had been made through the head teacher and she was therefore unaware of any preparations herself. She did say, however, that she would have liked some direct support in preparation for the placement, from the PRU staff or support workers: "We could have done with techniques as well as information".

The head of inclusion support maintained that no preparations had been made with him regarding the arrival of James, and again he speculated that initial contact and visit would have been made with head or deputy head teacher, rather than himself. He was not aware of anything he was expected to do in preparation for James' arrival. He also expressed the view that he did not necessarily want there to be prior information about children he received into the inclusion support centre, as there may be some benefit in the idea of a fresh start.

Key Issue 5:

How were the students' difficulties identified before, during and after return to a new school?

    a) Did participants perceive this to have any bearing on the perceptions of receiving school staff?

Even though this question was explicitly asked of receiving teachers and support staff, there was surprisingly little information arising from it. On the whole, the question of how students difficulties had been defined prior, during and after return to a new mainstream situation had been, by implication, an irrelevance to those asked. Two people suggested they would be able to find out if it was something I needed to know,

but this response told me what I had wanted to find out anyway – ie that the question of the definition of difficulty had not been in their thinking at the time.

It seemed that on the whole, receiving staff knew little about the history of the difficulties of children who were transferring in to their schools. It is not being implied here that they *should* have known about the child's history, simply that they didn't. Some had vague understandings of the children having behavioural difficulties, and that was why they had been excluded. The question of whether the difficulties had been viewed as a special educational need was not something of which people were aware. The exceptions to this were: the educational psychologist involved with Robert (Robert had a Statement of special educational needs), who offered the explanation that "the primary aspect of R's special educational needs were his emotional behavioural difficulties"; the behaviour support teacher involved with Gary said that from memory, Gary was defined as having a behaviour problem, but not a special need.

Key Issue 6:
What are the perceptions of involved professionals of the factors important in successful return to a new school?

Many of the themes that were raised by the involved professionals as important to the successful return of students to new mainstream placements have already been covered under other key issues. I will restrict this part of the chapter to findings that are additional to or different from those issues already raised. A summary list, however, will inform the reader of new issues, as well as remind of the range of responses covered in earlier sections:

- School and parent relationships
- Pupil characteristics
- Adult and pupil relationships
- Adult support
- Social networks
- School systems and processes
- Preparation for new placement

School and parent relationships

As has already been acknowledged, school and parent relationships were regarded as particularly important by parents and to a lesser extent pupils and receiving schools. This was also mentioned as an important factor by behaviour support teachers, traveller support teacher and educational psychologist. This was captured by the educational psychologist involved with Robert, when he said:

> *Mum found M school approachable and that helped her ... at no point were they writing him off and I think she found that quite supportive and reassuring*
> **EP regarding Robert's mum**

Pupil Characteristics

Aspects of pupil personal efficacy have already been mentioned as important, as perceived by pupils and receiving schools. The point was further echoed by LEA support staff. Several professionals made comments about personal strengths and positive characteristics they saw in the pupils, or changes they observed in them; for example, the educational psychologist commented on Robert's development in secondary education:

> *he seemed to me to become a gentler, softer person as he matured and therefore those kind of things I have been talking about in terms of what the school was doing, R was more receptive to. And he smiled a lot more as he got older*
> **EP regarding Robert**

Adult and child Relationships in school

Support staff tended to see the development of positive adult and child relationships in receiving schools as central to the success of the placement. This point has already been covered, but I would like to add here some additional comments that were raised, along similar lines.

Robert had proved to be a boy who the SenCo in his new school liked, and the educational psychologist thought this had transmitted an important message to Robert:

> *[the SenCo] seemed to like R and he wasn't backward in coming forward in saying that to him or about him and was quick to seize on things that he did well and didn't over egg the things that didn't go well*
> **EP regarding Robert's mum**

The educational psychologist thought this same positive message of acceptance had been transmitted to Robert by a number of teaching assistants who had got to know him well, and invested in their relationships with him.

Adult Support

As previously mentioned, adult support was viewed as an important factor in placement success, but this was more of an issue for the adults than it was articulated as being by the pupils. One behaviour support teacher pointed out that support wasn't necessarily something that the child should be aware of, and recounted how Robert had been helped by an LSA who was able, through observation, to see other pupils purposely winding him up and causing incidents which may result in a poor response from Robert. This proved critical in preventing further troubles, observed the behaviour support teacher.

In a similar vein, Robert was seen by the educational psychologist as being helped in his peer relationships because his Statemented time resulted in LSAs in class who were popular with other children: "he managed to get a good relationship with people who were his mates and were saying 'oh she's nice'".

The focus group debated the question of the importance of adult support at some length. It was generally accepted that support needed to be deployed flexibly in schools, being available to incomers, without necessarily being fixed to certain times of day or lessons. The discussion group seemed to reach the conclusion that it was more sensible to have the source of such additional support located within the mainstream school, rather than delivered through 'visiting' services, for reasons described earlier. The focus group also raised the need to give students a say in how the support would be deployed.

Social Networks

Again the importance of social networks in successful return to mainstream school has already been described in relation to other key issues. It arose as a strong theme for support services and within the focus group of behaviour support teachers, too. Similar points were raised by support professionals about the central importance of social and friendship networks, and how these could make or break new placements.

"A lot of it, successful reintegration, is about how that individual is perceived by the peer group," said one member of the focus group. There ensued more detailed discussion about the importance of social networks and how these are often a question of chance. In debating how this might be changed, the following chain of comments occurred:

> ...*Social engineering might be in order*
> ...*Especially if their peer group outside of school is a negative presence*
> ...*Most kids are reluctant to have their friendship groups socially engineered, though*
> **Focus group discussion**

School systems and processes

Professionals from support services had something to say about school systems and processes that were important in ensuring successful reintegration. These ideas were echoed by several individuals and the focus group members. The following factors were raised:

- The need for schools to have effective pastoral systems to keep tabs on progress and possible emerging problems for individual pupils

- The need for open and fluid channels of communication between subject teachers and pastoral staff to ensure timely and effective information-sharing and understanding about pupils' needs, the deployment of supportive strategies and any other special arrangements

- The need for flexibility in school systems, giving particular pupils leeway as appropriate and changing arrangements for support, etc as necessary and with speed

- The benefits of having activities in school at lunchtime, eg clubs, so that children can access support in a 'normal' way in the school day, if they feel they need it

Preparation for New Placement

This issue was an important one in the perceptions of support professionals, but received little mention from pupils, their parents and receiving school staff. Of course, this may well be a result of the fact that support professionals are so often in the

position of negotiating preparatory arrangements, but that these are relatively 'invisible' to others.

One of the issues raised as important for preparation concerned the need to return excluded pupils to new mainstream schools as speedily as possible. This was felt to be important so that children would not lose familiarity with the characteristics, demands, pressures and advantages of a mainstream environment. It was also felt that pupils should be kept informed of progress about the identification and return to new placements whilst they were outside a mainstream setting, so they would know the situation kept moving, avoiding a feeling of being stuck.

The benefits and costs of graduated placement were raised by several professionals. Graduated return was felt to reduce the risk of the placement falling apart in the early stages; this was argued to balance against the benefits of immediate full time return such as pupil investment in the new placement, and sense of belonging. The focus group raised the idea that this may be related to age – younger children may need more of a 'drip feed' to the new situation in order to feel more secure in the early stages.

Support staff raised another issue of preparation for new placements, which concerned the availability and quality of LSA support within new mainstream school settings. It was felt that 'visiting' support may not be the most appropriate way to support newly returning pupils as this would often not be available at the times needed, and would not necessarily add to the 'pool' of knowledge and expertise existing within the school. On a related issue, maintaining involvement from behaviour support service for a longer period than is presently the case was felt to be important, rather than re-involving the service if problems occurred. This was raised as a possible way of assisting the school staff to develop expertise in maximising the chances of success for new pupils, ie by discussing strategy developments with the visiting behaviour support teacher. Allied to this was the perceived need for careful behaviour management planning with staff from the new school before placing a child in the new situation, including responses to positive behaviour.

Curriculum planning was felt to be another important aspect of placement preparation, in readiness for the arrival of a new, previously excluded, pupil. One behaviour support teacher felt that in her experience of working with a particular child returning to mainstream, the situation was helped by "Cracking planning for the individual's timetable and groupings; sympathetic to that individual's needs from the outset."

Support staff commented upon the importance of preparing the returning pupil in ways such as visits prior to admission to the new school, scripts in readiness for predictable difficult circumstances, training in de-stressing techniques, strategies for how to opt out of a lesson, where to sit etc.

A behaviour support teacher in the focus group commented upon the 'invisibility' of the preparations prior to a child taking up placement in a new mainstream school:

> *Because of all that preparation their experience is good. And they think they did it all, but actually, everybody else has...*
> **Focus Group Discussion**

Attendance

One of the themes arising outside the scope of the key issues was related to attendance. Actual or potential attendance difficulties were raised by receiving school staff, support services or parents about all of the five pupils. Gary's head of year mentioned explicitly that she worked with mum and Gary to encourage him to come to school at times when his attendance level was beginning to slip. She talked about planned acceptance of late arrival rather than him not coming at all, and a system of immediate telephone call to mum. Similarly, Robert's mum described his growing difficulties in attendance, and the consequent home visit from year head to discuss ways of breaking this pattern.

In relation to James, the head of inclusion talked about his patchy attendance – he would sometimes disappear for a couple of weeks, but be accepted back with no questions asked. James' mum also commented upon James' temptation to non-attend.

Liam told me that he had chosen to attend less and less following a rising problem in social relationships in school. He described how bullying had started, and resulted in him being pursued at the end of school by a gang. Despite efforts by school staff and

parents to deploy strategies such as changing school-leaving time etc, he himself had responded by reducing the days that he attended school. In Rachel's case, the support teacher commented upon how Rachel's attendance had always been better than other traveller children from the same traveller site, but that her attendance deteriorated as she had got older.

The nature of the relationship, if there is one, between return to mainstream school and attendance is not being speculated here; the issue is simply being raised that the five pupils involved in this study were all found to have had actual or potential difficulties in attendance at school.

Additional Emerging Themes and Summary of Chapter

The 29 descriptive labels arising from level 1 coding using grounded theory have been discussed thus far in relation to the key issues that have guided the structure of this study. Some have suggested that the structure of written reporting of data using grounded theory may follow a path that does not necessarily involve the formulation of key issues and subsequent structuring of findings and discussion in relation to them (Miller, 1995; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). However, after careful consideration of the possibilities, I decided to use this 'hybrid' method of reporting, as I felt it would offer the most coherence to the reader. This decision was taken in part because of the breadth of emerging themes; retaining key issues offered a sensible way of capturing this breadth in a coherent and useful form, before moving on to look at the more abstract levels of emerging theory.

Integrating the themes emerging from grounded theory within the organisational structure offered by the key issues, then, offered me a way of analysing and organising the wide-ranging issues emerging from the data. It was felt that further information related to progressing level 1 codes into level 2 and 3 codes, followed by the evolution of these into core categories would facilitate a structure for summarising the findings of this study. Level one analysis of the data resulted in 29 descriptive labels, or substantive codes, as listed on pages 94 to 95.

Through the application of constant comparative analysis, level two codes were derived. Analysis of the data resulted in some categories at level two that functioned at a more abstract level. The process engaged in to reach this point involved the technique of constant comparative analysis, during which similarities and differences within and between categories are examined, and decisions made about amalgamating, abandoning and re-defining codes by starting to link the data together. For example, closer examination of the lines of text flagged under the level 1 codes: 'academic work and support', 'Statement', 'support to pupil', 'adult and pupil relationships' and 'security and insecurity', facilitated amalgamation into a new level 2 code heading 'support'. Specific elements within each code additionally became re-allocated into other substantive codes.

The codes identified at level 1 therefore became re-labelled as themes at level two under the following 10 category headings:

- Adult and pupil relationships
- External support services
- Family circumstances
- Friends and social networks
- Goal motivation
- Parent and school relationships
- Placement preparation
- Pupil characteristics
- School context and ethos
- Support

See **figure 2** (below) for a visual representation of how the re-labelling process progressed.

Figure 2: Level One Codes to Level Two Codes

Level One Codes	Level Two Codes
Adult and pupil relationships ⟶	Adult and pupil relationships
Support service ⟶	External support services
Family Circumstances + Historical factors ⟶	Family context
Friends and social networks + Bullying or threat ⟶	Friends and social networks
Goal motivation + Pupil views + Pupil control ⟶	Goal motivation
Parent and school relationship + Parental expectations of school ⟶	Parent and school relationships
Preparation for preparation + Behaviour strategies + Pupil behaviour + Graduated placement + PRU + Teacher skills and confidence ⟶	Placement preparation
Pupil characteristics + Pupil views + Pupil control + Confusion + Age + Gender ⟶	Pupil characteristics
School and class organisation + School atmosphere/ethos ⟶	School context and ethos
Support to pupil + Academic work and support + Security and insecurity + Statement + Adult and pupil relationships ⟶	Support

Please note: some level 1 codes were amalgamated within more than one level 2 code.

At level three, analysis continued until all instances of variation were captured, and the point of 'theoretical saturation' reached (Willig 2001, page 35). Although this sounds like a term of completion or finality, Glaser and Strauss (1967) remind us that in fact the process could continue almost infinitely.
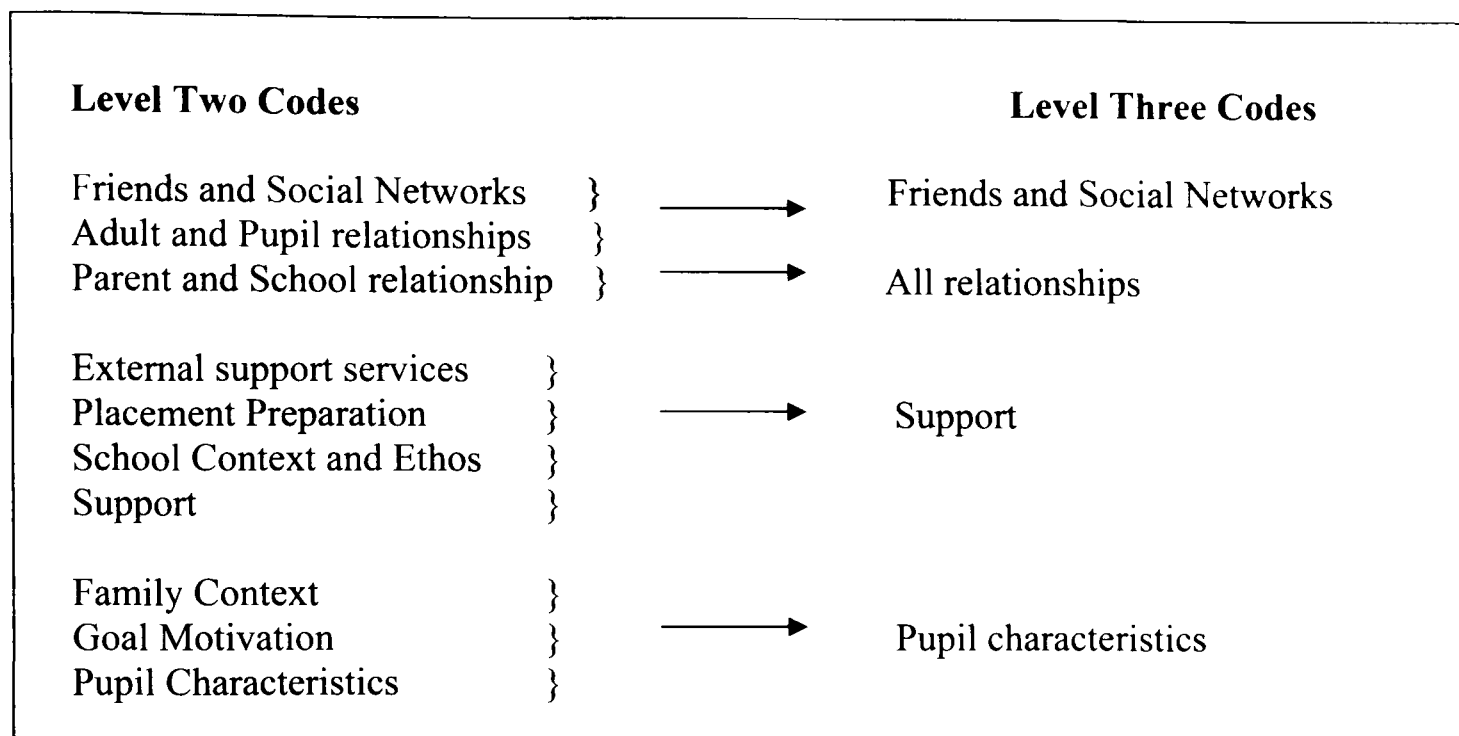
> *Emergent perspectives... can easily occur on the final day of study or when the manuscript is reviewed in page proof: so the published word is not the final one, but only a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory.*
> **Glaser and Strauss (1967), cited in Willig (2001), page 35.**

Inevitably, the researcher who has reached the point of data analysis at level 2 to 3 of grounded theory is in a position of being knowledgeable about the theoretical underpinnings of the topic under scrutiny; in fact he or she will probably have been immersed in books and articles concerned with the area for some time. It is likely that data analysis will have been preceded by a great deal of information-gathering, critical thought and prolonged consideration about the topic of study. Therefore inevitably, the theoretical constructs that form level three codes will have been supplied by the processes undertaken by the researcher, of applying academic and professional knowledge to the data to bring meaning to the relationships embedded within and between the level one and level two codes "weaving the fractured data back together again" (Miller 1995; page 10).

Through this process, the 10 category codes at level two resulted in the following codes at level three, represented in **figure 3** (below):

Figure 3: Level Two Codes to Level Three Codes

Level Two Codes		Level Three Codes
Friends and Social Networks }	⟶	Friends and Social Networks
Adult and Pupil relationships }		
Parent and School relationship }	⟶	All relationships
External support services }		
Placement Preparation }	⟶	Support
School Context and Ethos }		
Support }		
Family Context }		
Goal Motivation }	⟶	Pupil characteristics
Pupil Characteristics }		

Careful consideration of the four codes at level three led to thoughts about whether and how the ideas contained within each could become usefully further coordinated and collated together. Many overlaps and interconnected issues continue quite rightly to exist between them, but nonetheless the final decision was made to identify **three** core categories:

- **Relationships (adults, pupils and peers)**
- **Support (adults and pupils)**
- **Pupil characteristics**

Following the application of grounded theory, this chapter has presented the findings of the present study in relation to the key issues as set out earlier. The raw interview transcript data had been analysed, using grounded theory, and the twenty nine codes that emerged were re-organised in relation to the structure offered by each key issue. The twenty nine labels at coding level one evolved into ten codes at level two, which subsequently evolved into four codes at level three. From here, three core categories emerged, and these will largely form the structure for discussion of the issues pertinent to this study. The key issues were not abandoned, but were felt to be less conducive to coherent discussion than would be provided by use of the three core categories.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Application of grounded theory to the interview transcripts meant detailed examination of the data: analysis, re-analysis, collapsing, expanding, collating, connecting, labelling and re-labelling. As mentioned earlier, the way that the data have been presented in the previous chapter echoes the previously held frameworks, understandings and interests of the researcher. This is inevitable and can only be acknowledged. A reflexive researcher strives to be aware of such influences, be honest about them and will attempt to identify how these influences leave their mark on the reader's experience. It is acknowledged that the following sections represent this researcher's understandings of the meanings transmitted by the data gathered and the processes to which they were subjected. The application of grounded theory provided the vehicle for this, and supplies the structure for the forthcoming discussion. Of course, the reader too is not an empty vessel, but brings his or her own previous knowledge, experiences, expectations and biases to the process of reading.

The key issues, as set out towards the beginning of this study, served the researcher's purpose in focusing the nature of the investigative process. Using the structure of the key issues for the presentation of findings of this study was intended to allow the reader smooth and logical access to the research process undertaken, facilitating coherence. Towards the end of the last chapter, the progression of the twenty nine level one codes into level two and three codes then three core categories, was described. These three core categories were labelled:

- Relationships (adults, pupils and peers)
- Support (adults and pupils)
- Pupil characteristics

It is important that these three core categories are not regarded as separate, self-standing entities. There are many points of direct overlap between the three, and they are all thoroughly interconnected, with varying degrees of interdependence.

Perhaps it is useful to think of this interconnectedness as a three dimensional model: a multi-layer cake made from sponge infused irregularly with twenty nine different colours signifying the descriptive labels at level one. As the layers of the cake have been prepared and baked, the infused colours have combined to form patterns that have only taken on recognisable shapes and meanings as a result of the final assembly of the layers of the cake. Some shapes and meanings are small and connect with one or two others; some combine with other small shapes to make larger ones. The connections and patterns are identifiable only when the cake is in its complete form, because of the very existence of all the interconnected colours and their relationships to one another. Nonetheless, in the present study three major, overarching themes emerged, substantial enough to temporarily extract and examine. These represent the core categories.

A decision was taken to structure the discussion around these three core categories, as it was hoped that this format would now have relevance and coherence for the reader – after all, the reader has seen the ingredients of the cake and the baking of it, and can appreciate how these processes have resulted in its final form. Discussion of the core categories will follow after a few general points of discussion. The structure of this chapter will be as follows:

- General points for discussion
- Core category 1: Relationships (adults, pupils and peers)
    a) Adults with adults
    b) Adults with pupils
    c) Pupils with peers
- Core category 2: Support (adults and pupils)
    a) Academic support to pupils in school
    b) Emotional support to pupils in school
    c) Support to pupils from parents
    d) Support to parents
    e) Support to mainstream staff
- Core category 3: Pupil characteristics
- Additional points for discussion
- Summary of the chapter

General Points

Sample Identification

This study has been 'solution focused' in the sense that it has been concerned with pupils who have returned to mainstream education, following permanent exclusion, and remained within a new school for a minimum of three terms. Pupils who were returned to mainstream education within the same authority and during the same time frame who did not remain within the new setting beyond three terms have not been included, raising several issues concerning sample definition and selection. Additional issues relate to information coordination and data recording, definitions of 'success' and the idea of comparative study.

Information Coordination and Data Recording

The behaviour support team leader had kept manual records of pupils permanently excluded and returned to mainstream schools over the period to which this study relates. These records were primarily the data source from which potential pupils were identified, and ultimately families contacted. Potential pupils were regarded as those who met the criteria of:

- Having been permanently excluded
- Having returned to a new mainstream school
- Having remained in the new school for at least three terms

Twenty-seven names were raised as being the total group of pupils within the LEA who met the criteria above within the period 1996-2003. Of these, it transpired that several had addresses listed in behaviour support service records which did not tally with the addresses held in educational psychology service files, where these existed. In addition, there was inconsistency between these records and central data kept within the education department. This might have been complicated by the fact that the majority of pupils (22) had left school by the time of initial contact, though some had left relatively recently (within the last year). It was therefore difficult to know how many of the initial postal contacts were not received by the families at all: only four replies resulted. This process raised the importance of accuracy in record keeping, both within support services and within the LEAs central information system. These pupils, after all, would constitute one of the groups most likely to have

inter-agency involvement; inaccurate and inconsistent pupil details could have caused problems in providing coordinated support to the pupils and their families (Lord Laming, 2003). Perhaps such difficulties will be minimised in future with the implementation of more coordinated and reliable data systems, as proposed within the Children's Act? (Children Act, 2004). Of course, this issue left me with concern about whether there were other pupils I had not become aware of, who perhaps should have been included in the study, or who would have featured in the figures as being ones who had not succeeded in remaining in new placements, thereby making the contrast between the numbers returned and remaining in new placements beyond three terms even more noticeable (see Table 2,"Exclusion and Rates of Return to Mainstream").

Definitions of 'success'

Through the processes described earlier, several of the parents I contacted responded either in writing or through telephone communication to my request for their involvement in the study. Of the 27 initial letters, four replies said 'no' to the request. In one of these replies, the parents made it very clear that they did not regard the placement as a success in the way the authority's records did, even though their son had been on roll in the new placement beyond three terms. The parents felt that simply being 'on roll' for that time did not constitute 'success' and they explained in writing, in strong terms, why this was the case. Similarly, another pupil who met the criteria for selection was found in fact to have attended very little in the new placement, even though central LEA records showed the placement to have been a success. Further investigation through discussion with the special needs coordinator revealed that the placement had only lasted a few days before the boy went travelling (he was a member of a traveller family) and his name had remained on the roll of the school 'in case he returned'.

These experiences raise important questions about how 'success' was defined by parents, as well as whether and how this differed from definitions by school staff, support service staff and LEA staff. Even more importantly, the process raised questions about whether any of the 'non-responding' parents similarly felt that their children had not 'succeeded', but ignored my letter based on perceptions of irrelevance; perhaps there were other parents who felt the data-systems that had resulted in my contacting them were erroneous, but didn't choose to inform me of

this? In such circumstances, if I had realised and actively contacted them in order to explain, consequently including them in data gathering, the picture of findings of this study may have been quite different.

On a wider issue, the process described above also raised queries for me about the reliability of other data held by the authority (an authority which gives no reason to suspect is untypical of other LEAs). My previous experience in working as nominated educational psychologist for pupils 'looked after' in the same authority had heightened my awareness of the inherent difficulties faced by LEAs in ensuring accurate, up to date and relevant information is kept about children and shared appropriately (Lown, 2000; Lown, 2004). As mentioned above, one particular school had not informed the LEA that a 'reintegrated' pupil simply hadn't attended for a period of nearly a year after initial entry. What if this pupil had been 'looked after'? What if this pupil had 'gone missing' rather than 'gone travelling' and the LEA were left with the impression he was still attending school? The theoretical possibilities are quite frightening (Lord Laming, 2003). Complacency for any authority about accuracy of pupil information kept within, and shared between, LEA services and Local Authority agencies is dangerous; hopefully reliability and transferability of such data will be improved by national initiatives, promoted by the Children Act (Children Act, 2004).

Comparative Study

The present study was formulated as a 'solution focused' exploration of a particular process involving a number of pupils in one authority, as already described. Pupils who returned to new mainstream placements following permanent exclusion, but did not remain in them for a minimum of three terms, were not included. In retrospect, there were several issues that could have usefully been discussed by identifying factors in relation to the group who 'succeeded' in comparison to the group that returned but did not remain in new placements for up to three terms. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the importance of the discussion to follow about the themes arising within the core categories for the pupils who *were* included in the study. Suffice to remind the reader, that these themes are not arising *in relation to* or *in contrast with* the group who could have provided comparative study: this is an issue for future investigation.

Core category 1: Relationships (adults, pupils and peers)

For some considerable time, the issue of quality of relationships between adults and pupils in school has been recognised as an important one in relation to positive school experiences. As far back as 1987, Galloway and Goodwin recognised that, in contrast to the then widely held view of emotional and behavioural difficulties residing within the pupil, "the problem may lie in the child's interaction with teachers and peers at school" (Galloway and Goodwin, 1987, page 142). How pertinent this is viewed to be by this researcher, for it captures central findings of the present study.

Many authors have echoed the sentiment of Galloway and Goodwin (1987) in recognising the importance of adult and pupil relationships in schools (eg Pomeroy, 1999; John, 1996; Osler et al, 2002; Blyth and Milner, 1996). Wallace (1996) found that amongst secondary school students, teachers' subject teaching skills and approaches were less important to the students than the relationships that teachers forged with them. Time and again, when the time is taken to explore pupils' own views about how they regard school experiences, the issue of relationships with teachers and other adults is raised (Jacklin and Lacey, 1993; Garner, 1996; Pomeroy, 1999). Tobbell (2003) discusses the particular difficulties inherent in establishing new relationships at the point of transfer from primary to secondary school, concluding that "the structure of the secondary school seems to work against the development of effective learning relationships".

Turner (2004) reminds us that the relationships within schools extend beyond the level of teacher and pupil:

> *Relationships underpin the functioning of any organisation and the school is no exception to this. There are complex sets of relationships at work between senior management and staff, between departments, between teaching and non-teaching staff and so on. Layered on top of this are the relationships between staff and different pupils' groupings*
> **Turner (2004), page 137.**

Perhaps added to that list of relationship networks within schools could be the relationships between pupils themselves, and the complex array of additional relationships which exist beyond the direct school network: for example between

school staff and parent or carers, between staff working within external agencies and the Local Authority. The following sections discuss various aspects arising from the data in relation to the core category of relationships; for ease and clarity, these have been organised into the relational processes between adults, between pupils, and between adults and pupils.

Core Category 1: a) Relationships: Adults with adults

The data gathered within the present study suggests that adult to adult relationships around the reintegrating child are pivotal in enabling a smooth and sustained return to the mainstream setting. It is important to note that the communication systems being referred to here are in any of the following directions, not simply between school and parent:

Figure 4: Relationships and Communication flow
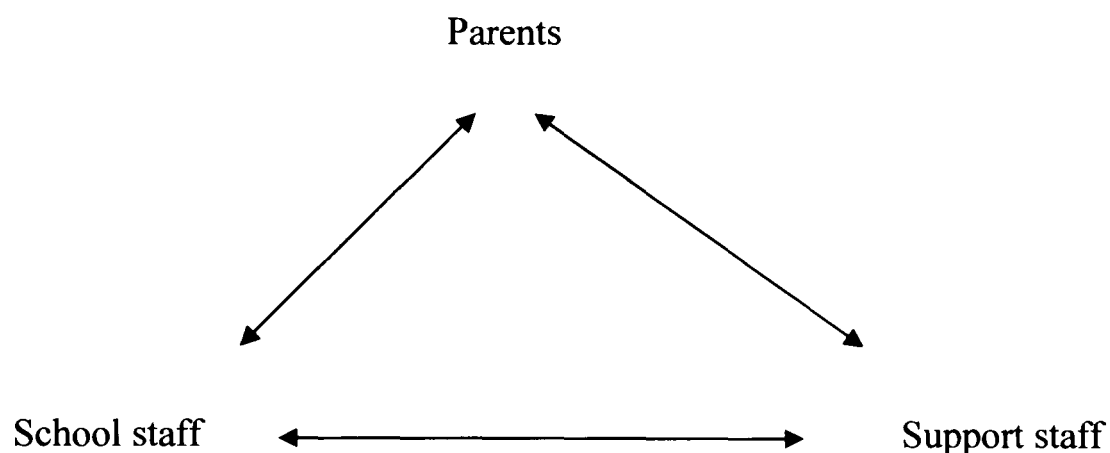
The importance of these processes in initial reintegration success has been recognised by other authors (Hayden and Dunne, 2001; Toothill and Spalding, 2000). In the present study, several interviewees made comments concerning the importance of the initial encounters that parents had with prospective new schools. Liam's parents seemed surprised, and were impressed that the head teacher had herself shown them around the school: "We met the head teacher and she showed us round. She showed us around the classes herself." Robert's mum echoed similar sentiments about her initial reaction to the head teacher who showed her round the prospective new school: she said, "I liked the atmosphere, I liked Mrs J [head teacher]... I liked the meeting. She was very positive and enthusiastic". Similar feelings were echoed by other

parents, or were perceived to be in existence by support staff. These comments reflect the importance of the *initial* relationships made between parents and school staff; in the present study, the comments related to initial contact were all positive, indicating potentially secure adult relationships at the outset of new placement. Parents were generally pleased their children were to start attending a new school. It seems reasonable to assume that the sentiments of these early, positively perceived relationships are likely to have been transmitted to pupils in some way from their parents.

An additional issue, which has far less coverage in the existing body of literature, concerns ongoing adult relationships, once a previously excluded pupil has entered a new setting. Findings in the present study suggest that *sustained* placement may also be affected by adult to adult relationships, determined by the quality and effectiveness of continuing channels of communication. These channels need to, at the outset, provide secure pathways for information flow between parents, school staff and support staff; this is likely to heighten the quality of placement preparation and initial information-sharing. In addition, the communication channels need to remain effective and open as the placement progresses in order to facilitate processes such as: rapid response to emerging difficulties including non-attendance, the facility to make adjustments and alterations to arrangements, sharing strategies and making strategy changes, and information exchange regarding emerging vulnerability in the placement.

The need to ensure systems are in place to facilitate effective management of arising difficulties, involving parents, takes on particular significance when considered in the light of the comments made by several parents, school staff and support staff about particular stresses and traumas apparent within families at the time of permanent exclusion or continuing into the early stages of the new placement. Clearly at times of family stress, it will be extremely important to ensure regular contact and open, comfortable communication processes between the adults involved with a child starting out at a new school. Effective information exchange about the particular stresses being felt by the child and family may have a profound impact upon a pupil's performance in school; the preparedness of the adults in school and support services to offer appropriate and timely support becomes an issue of paramount importance.

The point about initial and ongoing adult to adult relationships and communication processes raises a question about children within the LEA who made a successful transfer into a new mainstream school but did not sustain the placement in the longer term: were there some pupils whose placements were not sustained, for whom there was growing neglect of the adult to adult relationships between parents, school and support staff over time? Liam's parents talked about the demise of their relationship with school staff and how this coincided with the breakdown in Liam's placement at the new school, which they had 'fought for' through the appeals process years previously. They talked about how initially they had been in close contact with pastoral staff, and this had enabled coordinated and rapid responses to issues of bullying and non-attendance. However, they felt that over the twelve months of Liam's placement, school staff had reduced investment in the relationship with them, in terms of time and effort. When asked how they would have liked to see this relationship continue over time, they commented:

> *More contact from school; we were unaware when things were*
> *going wrong. Now we don't really have any contact and we don't*
> *know where and when he is supposed to be attending.*
> **Liam's mum**

The data in the present study suggests that the initial welcome and ongoing relationships and communication processes between parents and the new school are of critical importance. The question is raised, therefore, as to whether these relationships are as important as the relationships established with pupils (discussed later). This matter of adult relationships in the circumstances of reintegration has less coverage than the relationships between pupils and teachers in the existing body of literature, and I wonder whether we overlook the initial and *continued* importance of these adult relationships at our peril? There were in fact several references made by parents about the importance they placed on their feelings of being listened to by school staff, and their feelings of involvement in the process of education for their children. From their continued relationships with school staff, parents reported feeling involved, reassured, informed. This was captured by James mum:

> *I went to the school also and we were included, people were*
> *available if I felt I had a problem. I've never had this before*
> *and I think it's a bloody good idea, you know what I mean... I*
> *mean if there was a problem I know for a fact that you could*
> *make an appointment and go up and see him* [head teacher], *I*
> *know for a fact that you can do that.*
> **James' mum**

There were several other comments of this type; it seems reasonable to assume that if parents' feelings were affected by their perceived relationships with school staff, then there would be indicators of these feelings apparent to their children. It may be that there is initial and ongoing significance in terms of the messages transmitted to pupils about the value placed on school by parents and the value placed on the family by the school, as evidenced to pupils by the quality of the continuing relationship between the adults around them. Are there issues here about reflected messages of worth and value? (Lawrence, 1996; Lown, 2002a)

Parents made little reference to their relationships with support staff, though these were positive when made. The flavour of these comments tended to be about the support they received, and therefore will be raised within the section about support. Comments relating to the relationships between support professionals and school staff were also few in number, and have been included in other sections of this chapter, so won't be covered here.

<u>Core Category 1: b)</u> Relationships: Adults with pupils

The present study revealed strong feelings about the importance of adult and pupil relationships, from both the perspectives of the adults and the students. Students talked about the importance to them of feeling liked by adults, supported by them, having an adult there for them. Robert said:

> *If no one likes you, you don't like the school do you? It's important*
> *that people like you and then you'll feel more comfortable... Behave*
> *for a bit and if you find out that the teacher likes you, you can try and*
> *get on their good sides*
> **Robert**

Many authors, over several decades, have recognised the critical importance of adult-student relationships within students' educational experiences (Davie and Galloway, 1996; Lloyd-Smith & Davies, 1995; Cullingford,1990). Pomeroy (1999) recognises

the "prime importance of the teacher-student relationship to young people's experience of school"; she reaches this conclusion through in-depth interviews with 33 young people who have been excluded from school. The article recognises that the critical importance of the teacher-pupil relationship is already well established in the literature. Pomeroy, however, goes on to suggest an alternative model which contrasts with the manner in which such relationships are often lived out in schools:

> *This model revolves around mutually respectful treatment*
> *between individuals in a working relationship. The model*
> *recognises that the roles and responsibilities of the two actors*
> [students and teachers] *are different and unequal, but maintains*
> *that this difference does not form a justifiable basis for*
> *interactions which transmit a message of disrespect or de-*
> *valuing.*
> **Pomeroy (1999), page 480.**

Pomeroy's messages are certainly borne out by the findings of the present study, even though there is a difference in the 'status' of the pupils interviewed. In Pomeroy's study, the students were permanently excluded, whilst in the present study the students have progressed through that point and returned to new schools. All the students interviewed in the present study made reference to their relationships with adults in school, and regarded these as important, thereby supporting Pomeroy's initial claims concerning the importance of this relationship-building process. Liam commented specifically on the nature of the positive relationships he built up with some teachers in the new school, echoing Pomeroy's point quite clearly:

> *Yes, I liked the teachers there, they were great, because you*
> *respect them and they respect you back; that's what they are like*
> *at O. school*
> **Liam**

Khan (2003) suggests a model whereby pupils who have become disaffected from school and become excluded, have become disaffected as a direct result of a history of unsatisfactory relationships between themselves and adults in school. His research leads him to claim that students who are disaffected explain their relationships with teachers in largely negative terms, and this is seen as a major cause of disaffected behaviour, as well as other issues such as curriculum. Perhaps the students in the present study were ones who were open, and able, to forge new, positive relationships with adults in a new school, and this is why they succeeded? Perhaps they formed a group of pupils who, unlike the ones in Khan's study, had experienced previously

positive relationships with adults in schools? Maybe, therefore. the capacity to form positive new relationships in a new school environment was a factor critical in their success? Again, it would prove interesting to look at the relationships formed in school for those pupils who did not succeed in, or sustain, new placements. by way of comparison.

Cullingford (1990) discusses the potentially stressful process that students have to undertake when joining a new social institution such as a school: "the fear of new circumstances, a new class or a new school comes from the fear of meeting new people, from the unfamiliarity of forming new roles with other people" (Cullingford, 1990, page 123). Though referring to reintegration of pupils with physical disability, Jacklin and Lacey's comments are pertinent at this juncture:

> *A framework of personal relationships must be built in order to*
> *maintain and support the child within the [new] school, as it is only*
> *through this that integration can go beyond placement. The*
> *relationships are made with staff and other pupils, but most*
> *importantly with the child's peer group. To be supportive the*
> *relationships must be positive and rewarding.*
> **Jacklin and Lacey, (1993), page 55.**

Many of the adults in the present study recognised the critical importance of the adult-pupil relationships in school, and the benefits of being able to form these relationships quickly in the new school. Rachel's LSA echoed this point, when she said: "I said I was Jean and would be working with her and she smiled so lovely at me...we hit it off straight away". She smiled when she told me this, and recognised the importance of this early start to her relationship with Rachel. Some school staff also recognised the need for the adults to be proactive in building relationships with students, rather than waiting for them to 'make the first move'. Gary's year head recognised that she needed to take steps to encourage Gary to connect with her, let alone forge an effective relationship with her. She commented that:

> *I started working him and I said that I've noticed that you are not*
> *coming to school and that I am always here for you to talk to, you*
> *can always talk to me... I mean I used to find him*
> **Gary's year head**

The head of inclusion support made many comments to reflect his belief that the quality of the relationship that was forged between himself and James was pivotal in

James' successful placement. He made several comments such as "I really liked that I could have a bit of banter with him and it would be nice": he reiterated points about their positive relationship several times. What was common between James' head of inclusion support and Gary's year head was that not only did they recognise the value in establishing positive relationships with the pupils, but they also acknowledged that it was *their responsibility* to make this happen and be proactive about it.

The comments about the importance of adult-pupil relationships lead me to question whether there is almost an element of chance in the successful return to new mainstream schools for pupils previously excluded. It may be that there are pupils who take with them to the new situation an ability to forge quickly positive relationships with adults in school and this may provide some resilience to any emerging pressures or strains; in this case there is not an element of chance, because that facility resides within the child. However, it is possible to hypothesise that the element of chance is present in whether or not the adult who will become a day-to-day contact for the child in the new school shares the views of those cited above - that it is important for the adults to be proactive and take responsibility for forging these relationships with the child.

<u>Core Category 1: c)</u> Relationships: Pupils with peers

> *I don't care how much preparation you give them – if you give them six foot worth – a 15 year old lad from a school just around the corner, right, what preparation can you have – he has to state his claim of who he is, right, what he is, you know and where he is going to fit in in the pecking order. So in order to do that he has to do something or behave in a certain way otherwise you are right at the bottom of the food chain and you don't want to be that because you think I've got this bit of an edge because the kids know me and I'm from just around the corner and I got kicked out of there – you know.*
> **Head of inclusion support regarding James**

As a mother myself, I have to agree with these sentiments. From a parental perspective I have seen the increasing importance and influence that the peer network has on growing adolescents. I also feel compelled to agree with these sentiments as a direct result of working as an educational psychologist for many years and witnessing both the powerful and constructive, and destructive, elements of peer networks

(Newton et al, 1996; Lown, 2001; 2002b). Cullingford and Morrison (1997) point out that: "Peer groups can have both positive and negative effects. They can prevent or support disruptive behaviour" (page 64).

This core category, concerning pupil to pupil relationships and social networks, was the strongest theme emerging from the data gathered in the present study. All students interviewed raised the critical importance of their friendships in assisting (and sometimes jeopardising) new placements. Such issues were also raised by all adults involved and were discussed at length within the focus group interview.

Jacklin and Lacey's study (1993) is concerned with the integration of pupils with physical disability to mainstream schools, and has as one of its central themes the pupils' perceptions of the critical nature of establishing friendships: "relationships are made with staff and other pupils, but most importantly with the child's peer group" (page 55). Tootill and Spalding (2000) echo similar findings in their study of children from specialist provision for emotional and behavioural difficulties transferring to mainstream settings: "all of the pupils interviewed commented on the need to feel accepted by their peers but this proved to be more difficult for the older secondary pupils breaking into long-established friendship groups" (page 115). The authors suggest, as a result of their study, training in peer mentoring and mediation as a method of addressing such difficulties.

The pupils in the present study have given insights to the 'force field' created around them by social networks, and how these can work to support them in new placements or alternatively shake the stability of the placement. Gary talked at length about how he felt he had been helped by knowing children already at the school to which he was to integrate, because he had known them from church and living nearby. He regarded the placement as having started well because of this: "I had friends here as well so that did help". The other side of this same coin was that the only factor in his view that had jeopardised the placement was his involvement in fights with peers; in addition he had been the subject of some bullying. He had managed to work through these threats to the placement by drawing upon the support of his friends and supportive adults, a sentiment echoed by other students interviewed. Rachel talked about her friendship with a particular girl, made immediately in the new placement,

and how important this was to her. Robert also talked at length about how friendships had been a real source of strength to him, and were valued enough by him to continue attending the same school even though his family moved house. The advice he said he would give to a pupil starting in a new placement revealed how important he saw this element as being: "Don't act stupid and try and make mates".

Liam too had something to say about the central role of friendships in his return to mainstream school. He felt some vulnerability about starting at a new school "because I didn't know anyone there so, I don't know, I suppose it was quite difficult". Even though he had these anxieties, initially he felt that the placement was going well, including the prospect of creating a social network in the new school. He reported that there was: "a really friendly atmosphere at the beginning, all the pupils were well respected". He had been coping well with the work and reported getting on well with the adults who were supporting him directly and indirectly. However, several months into the new placement, Liam started to be subjected to bullying, and he also reported that peers were making accusations about him and wilfully getting him involved in fights. This was the beginning of the end, in his view. Liam did not see any problems in other aspects of the placement itself, or the preparations for it - he put its demise down entirely to the breakdown, and lack of matured, social connections with peer group.

> *I liked the teachers there, they were great, because you respect them and they respect you back that's what they are like at O [school]. It's just the pupils I didn't get on with....It just kept building up inside me and I just exploded.*
> **Liam**

Robert also alluded to a time when his placement became vulnerable. He made several comments about how social networks had assisted him in getting on at his new school, but also discussed a time when he was moved from one year-group half to another. He was irritated about the fact that this had not been discussed with him; he wanted people in school to know that being split up from his friends had a serious impact on him: "when I got moved form I was a bit unsettled"

Khan's study (2003) identified vulnerability in excluded pupils in PRUs regarding teacher and pupil relationships. This raises for me the question of whether there is a

related vulnerability for some students in relation to social relationships. If Khan's model described earlier is accepted (relating to long-established negative pupil-teacher relationships leading to disaffection) it is possible that these same students also have vulnerability in social relationships and have less ability to access and maintain social networks that are supportive (a possibility raised by Cullingford and Morrison, 1997) . Perhaps that is why the students in the present study did manage: either they brought more social and interactive skills into the new school compared to those who might have failed, or they just happened to form supportive social networks by chance, rather than by skill or design. This is another potentially interesting issue of comparison.

The pervasive and persistent influence of peers has been recognised by several authors (Osler et al, 2002; Hay, 2000; Carroll et al, 1999). The issue is recognised in a study by Hufton et al (2002) which explored, though interviews with adolescents, key factors underpinning educational motivation and engagement. The authors draw attention to the way in which academic success of peers was viewed by English children, and the complexities around the levels of perceived effort (overt and covert) which students put into their work, and the resulting peer acceptance or ridicule. They say, of English and American students that:

> *Trying too hard was seen in a poor light. To be seen to work too*
> *hard, and succeeding, particularly where this reduced engagement*
> *in other adolescent pursuits, threatened one with the risk of*
> *condemnation, even if this did not lead to being labelled a 'geek', a*
> *'swot' or a 'nerd'*
> **Hufton, Elliott & Illushin (2002), page 283.**

The core category of student to student relationships and social networks was a highly important aspect of the present study. It was commented upon by all pupils and adults, even though in individual interview there was not a direct question about it. In other words, all individual interviewees mentioned the issue of social networks without any prompt to do so. Comments varied in terms of the degree of importance attached to the dimension, but nonetheless this was the only theme mentioned within every individual interview as well as rousing lengthy discussion in the focus group. The theme largely arose in the sense of how important supportive friendship systems were in maintaining successful placements, but the other face of the same coin also arose in

terms of how destructive negative social relationships could be in making placements vulnerable, for example when bullying occurred.

Having discussed the importance of pupil relationships and social networks, it needs to be recognised that this was one of least prepared aspects of the Standard Fund project of which I was part. Many detailed planning processes were undertaken to minimise the possibility of new placements breaking down, involving parents, students, receiving teachers; however, the issue of preparing social pathways was left largely unaccounted for, and largely unplanned. This may have been due to the fact that its importance was not fully recognised, or it may have been that adults perceived such social networking to 'just happen incidentally' for students. The literature in the area of reintegration shows a similar dearth of recognition of the importance of this issue. Where it is recognised, suggestions of strategies to intervene are thin on the ground. Jacklin and Lacey (1993) talk about peer preparations through peer mentoring and mediation training. Other work in the peer support area comes to mind here (Cowie and Wallace, 2000; Newton et al, 1996); though not specifically intended for use with pupils reintegrating to mainstream settings, it is possible to see how such peer support strategies might have meaning in these circumstances.

Core Category 2: Support (adults and pupils)

There are many overlaps between issues that could have been raised within this core category, and those that would fit just as neatly into the core category of relationships. An attempt has been made to organise these in terms of which category they fit into most coherently. The overlap is therefore acknowledged; however, issues with such flexibility are not repeated unnecessarily and will only appear in one section.

Core Category 2: a)   Support: Academic support to pupil in school

Most of the students interviewed in the present study did not express particular views about the way their return to mainstream school was supported in terms of academic preparation and support. Perhaps this indicates that they generally regarded themselves capable of coping academically with the mainstream curriculum (with the exception of Rachel who clearly viewed LSA support as essential to her ability to cope with the work). Perhaps if the other four students had not felt so apparently

unconcerned about academic matters, they might have spoken more about the issue. Another possibility is that, as advised by several publications on reintegration (Include 2000a; 200b; Fisher, 2001), curriculum transition was so well planned and prepared that the students were largely protected from potential difficulties and were unaware of the efforts put into this process. One focus group member, put this nicely when she said: "Because of all that preparation their experience is good. And they think they did it all, but actually, everybody else has..." Another possible explanation can be considered here: maybe, in contrast, the children who couldn't cope academically are over-represented in the group who did not succeed in, or maintain, reintegrated placements, and who, therefore, were not included in this study.

Parents viewed the preparation and support of academic processes for their children as important. The general feeling reflected was that parents did not want academic pressure to jeopardise placements, and therefore wanted academic support available as a matter of course, in order to avoid problems. Robert's mum felt it was even more important than other parents had, since she viewed Robert as having some areas of academic weakness.

Receiving staff in new schools made some comments about the need for academic support but these were few in number. The general feeling was that academic support (eg through LSA time) was helpful 'just in case' rather than a necessity. This difference in perspectives on the 'same' situations is interesting. Galloway points out that:

> *The significance of an event can vary from individual to individual*
> *depending on his part in it. The fact that pupils and teachers may*
> *describe the same event in different ways does not mean that either*
> *description is false.*
> **Galloway et al (1982), page 48.**

Core Category 2: b)   Support: Emotional support to pupils in school

Within this section, the issues pertaining to social networks could have been repeated, on the basis that emotional support from peers was at the heart of the positive elements of social networks. However, it will not be repeated, suffice to bring this point to the forefront of the reader's mind. There is also a great deal of overlap with issues raised within adult and pupil relationships.

Parents recognised, on the whole, that where their children received supportive adult time early in the placement, especially when this was 'guaranteed' through allocated LSA support, it reduced potential stresses and strains:

> *I think at the beginning it was not so much that he needed her help but just to know that somebody was there who cared about him and they were there because they wanted him to do well and that if in any way, shape or form a problem did arise that there was support there for him.*
> **Gary's mum**

The focus group discussion raised the point that when LSA intensive support at the beginning of a placement was provided by the LEA, its impact wouldn't 'permeate' the school systems and embed change for the future. The behaviour support teachers within the focus group saw more potential benefits in schools arranging their own support pool, so that expertise could be built up and retained within the school staff. Comments from others (parents, school staff), however, did not support this view, and saw 'visiting' support as removing some strains from the transition process, both in terms of pupil support and support to receiving teachers. Another possibility here is that the 'temporary' and 'visiting' support person may offer an opportunity to bridge the process of relationship-building that would be necessary for the pupil at the beginning of the placement, and may in itself be stressful. Jacklin and Lacey (1993) talk about the need for pupils to loosen old, and re-form new, ties with adults and peers in the new school, but I wonder whether having at least one person who is perhaps known to the pupil, and offering easily accessible support (if desired by the pupil) in the early stages takes the heat out of the processes of forming a whole tranche of new relationships with speed?

Core Category 2: c)   Support to pupil from parents

A theme which arose for all four parents interviewed was that they valued education sufficiently to want their children to be returned into the mainstream of it. The parents perceived education as important and wanted their children to go to a mainstream school; some had been willing to fight for this right through appeal processes at the point of transition from primary to secondary education. The parents expressed that they wanted their children to return successfully to a new mainstream school to continue with their education. This present study was not comparative, but there is the

possibility that perhaps children who didn't succeed longer term did not have families who were transmitting this same message of high regard for education?

Two parents had taken appeals out against LEA decisions for school placements for their sons at the time of secondary transfer. These appeals had been unsuccessful and the children had gone to a secondary school that was not first choice. It was from here that exclusion had then occurred. Interestingly, in both cases, the school returned to, following permanent exclusion, was the school *for which* the appeal had originally been made. The two boys involved (Liam and Gary) both reported they had wanted to go to these schools in the first place – and now they had and were successful. This raises a question about whether some of the success was due to the boys' 'buying into' the new placement, as the school accessed may have been experienced as attaining a desired goal.

Core Category 2: d)   Support to parents

Inevitable overlap means that certain issues within this core category have already been raised within the section relating to adult to adult relationships. Perceived support to parents regarding initial welcome to the new school, as well as the importance of ongoing supportive relationships between the adults involved with pupils were the main points covered. These will not be repeated here, but additional ideas will be outlined.

Liam's parents were relieved when I initially rang them to request their involvement in this research. This sense of relief was due to their worries, at the time of the 'phone call, about Liam's crumbling placement; I inadvertently provided them with an opportunity to talk to someone about this. This need arose because the placement had gradually fallen apart as a result of the school's growing disinterest in maintaining it, according to the parents' perception. They told me that they had not known who to go to in order to ask for help in ameliorating the growing difficulties. I made enquiries and found that several professionals were involved with the family and felt they had offered support. This raised an important issue about differing perceptions of support, and parents' ability to create an understandable and memorable 'road map' of who provides support in what way, how, when, and how it is accessed – questions to which Liam's parents did not seem to have the answers. They were vaguely aware of

someone who was to do with attendance; this was the education social worker. So, although records demonstrated that Liam's parents had received support from (at least) school pastoral staff, educational social worker and behaviour support teacher. this was inconsistent with the parents' understanding of what support had been offered.

Arising from this, I wonder what 'support' would have needed to look like to Liam's parents, in order for it to have been recognised as support? Of course such a question raises the relevance of a symbolic interactionist perspective here. Derived from the work of Mead (1934, cited in Cohen et al, 2000) this view carries the following concepts within its foundations: that individuals act towards things on the basis of the meanings they have for them; that individuals exist within the 'natural' world which exists independently of them and is largely dictated by drives and instincts; that individuals also exist within a 'social' world, in which meanings are attributed to objects through the use of symbols such as language. This attribution of meaning, or interpreting, leads to humans expressing different views about the same event or process. Liam's parents had assigned meanings to contact with professionals in such a way that their perspectives were inconsistent with the views of others about the same processes. Of course a study of participant perception, such as this dissertation, is by definition one which focuses on the world of subjective meanings and the symbols by which they are produced and represented, and so the theme is repeated several times in this discussion. As Willig points out:

> *...the meanings people ascribe to events are the product of interactions between actors in the social world. This means that people's interpretations are not entirely idiosyncratic and free-floating; instead they are bound up with social interactions and processes that are shared between social actors.*
> **Willig (2001), page 67.**

Other parents felt they had received support from a range of sources, and were generally positive about what had occurred. They cited educational psychologists, behaviour support teachers, family workers, school staff and family as offering them emotional support at times of difficulty and stress. What seemed to be important was that parents felt that they could call on others for support, if they felt they needed it. This may not be called upon, but there was recognition that the availability of support, if needed. gave reassurance. Typical comments of this nature came from Gary's mum

when she said "I already had peace of mind because I knew what Mr F [year head] was like", and Robert's mum, when in reference to the educational psychologist, said: "We had a couple of meetings more with him through M. school as well, and he was really positive. So I think everybody was really supportive". James' mum explicitly noted that she could call for support from school as and when required: "people were available if I felt I had a problem".

Core Category 2: e) Support to mainstream staff

Few references were made concerning support available to school staff from support professionals, apart from a general flavour of there being little preparation done directly with the members of school staff with most day to day contact with the returning pupils. It seems the initial preparation for placements tended to be done with head teacher, deputy head teacher or occasionally pastoral head. Preparation of placements, it transpired from the data, was generally done with someone other than the person I had been given contact details for as the person most involved with the pupil. This is interesting, because the literature in the field consistently stresses the importance of placement preparation with receiving staff (Include, 2000a, 2000b; Fisher, 2001).

Gary's year head knew that she had not been the person who had been involved in placement preparations, and commented that: "It would normally be the head that would do the visit and the initial meeting...And it might have been head of lower school then".

I had the firmly held belief myself, as an EP participant in the process of reintegration, that meticulous preparation of placements was essential to future success. The present study, however, suggests this may not be so simply the case: placement preparation does not seem to have been of primary importance from the perspectives of those parents, pupils and mainstream school staff interviewed (although the issue was raised energetically by support professionals). Perhaps the dynamic at work here is more to do with how those who *did* have initial contact about the prospective pupils' readiness to reintegrate transmitted this message to those who would work with them day to day? For instance, initial contact with head teacher from the LEA support staff could result in the head teacher transmitting the message to teachers that here was a pupil

ready for return to mainstream school. Perhaps the manner in which such a message transfers from head teacher to pastoral staff can have an impact upon how the pupil is received into the school by those at the 'chalk face'?

Perhaps, given that the present study relates to pupils who made a 'successful' and sustained transition to a new mainstream school, the issues about placement preparation were 'invisible' to school staff interviewed precisely because they had been done so effectively? Or were not so critical due to other factors enabling success? Maybe when pupils are not successful, the preparation for the return has not been done well enough? Maybe the placement preparation is only one element of a complicated critical mass of other factors with varying levels of importance? Perhaps school staff in receiving schools would only think to mention these factors related to placement preparation if they were perceived as obviously problematic?

Gary's year head was the only person to raise the issue of support from support services. She had assumed that placement preparation had occurred with the head teacher, who had carried out the initial visit and meeting, though the content of this had not been communicated to her. She thought about how additional preparation would have been useful, and commented: "Just to talk to somebody about him…like you, say…any techniques that they used [at the PRU] that worked…we could have done with techniques as well as information".

This view of virtually non-existent support to front line-staff, in terms of placement preparation, was shared by the head of inclusion support at James school:

> *You're not really told until you go in one morning and are told*
> *that there is a new pupil starting so you don't have any time, you*
> *don't get any information so you work on the fact that you haven't*
> *got nowt and build it from there and then at least you know that*
> *all the information you get is accurate*
> **Head of inclusion support regarding James**

It is ironic that, at the time, the Standard Fund team I was part of prided itself in the meticulous preparation carried out to ensure schools were well-prepared to receive pupils returning to new mainstream schools following permanent exclusion. It raises the possibility that the function of the contact from the support team was interpreted by the new schools (ie the head teacher) as a time to facilitate contact between the

head teacher, key support worker, pupil and parents, rather than with the staff who might in the future have day to day contact with the pupil (ie pastoral staff. year head). I wonder, then, whether this initial point of contact from support services was interpreted by receiving schools (ie head teacher) as an opportunity to find out more about the prospective pupil and his or her family, thereby raising the possibility of making judgement about the pupil's suitability for the school? This would, of course, legitimise the placement as a managerial decision in the eyes of those who would subsequently need to be 'prepared with' on day to day matters.

Two members of receiving school staff mentioned the support 'dowry' that came with pupils – Rachel and Robert had support available through a Statement of special educational needs; resources, in the form of teaching assistance, therefore entered the new schools with them. Gary was allocated temporary LSA time to support the initial stages of reintegration, funded by the LEA through behaviour support budget. These resources were positively commented upon by receiving school staff; it seems possible that having such assistance with the pupils at the time of initial entry to the new school took away some of the possible feeling of 'burden' to school staff, and maybe also removed the potential stress of feeling responsible for the pupils' initial success or failure – ie it could be due to (lack of) resources if the placement didn't work out? Again, it would be interesting to see if and how these experiences compare to placements which did not succeed or were not sustained.

Core Category 3: Pupil characteristics

The first two core categories, concerning relationships and support, are in reality very much intertwined. The third core category, pupil characteristics, had some overlap too, though less than the other pairing. I have chosen to include in this section only points that have not already been raised elsewhere. 'Pupil characteristics' in this sense refers to those aspects of the pupil that largely come into the new school with them: for example abilities or aspects of personality. Of course, it is acknowledged that circumstances and contexts have their part to play and will undoubtedly impact upon the manifestation of 'within child' characteristics. What is interesting here, is that this theme came out strongly as an important aspect in successful return to mainstream school, and yet allows the least possibility for assigning success to matters within adults' control.

I have already mentioned that pupils themselves did not make many comments about the need for academic support, apart from Rachel. On the whole this was not an issue for them. However, other perspectives, ie those from adults, raised the possibility that having good intellectual ability might in fact play an important part in facilitating a successful and sustained transfer to a new school. Gary's year head, when asked about what might lie behind Gary's successful placement, commented that: 'My opinion would be that it's got a lot to do with [Gary's] average intelligence, he's quite motivated as far as school's concerned". James' year head similarly felt that James had been a more resilient 'returning pupil' because of being brighter than others who had not succeeded. He said of James: "he was a lot cleverer lad than his peers. He's far too clever for the jokers that he hangs around with and I found him completely endearing because he was witty, sharp and very amusing and dry".

Similar comments were made about the resilience offered by intellectual ability within the focus group discussion. The comment "brighter helps, it does.... it helps you fit, doesn't it?" raised several nods and murmurs of agreement amongst the group.

There are at least three offers here, then, of possible explanations as to why being brighter helps a pupil succeed in a new placement after permanent exclusion. Gary's year head linked Gary's intelligence with a positive aspect of motivation. James' year head seemed to be suggesting a link between James' abilities and liking him, and subsequent support offered to him. The focus group raised the possibility that intelligence helps pupils to understand and fit into social and academic aspects of school life – to know how to play the school game successfully.

Another major issue within this section on pupil characteristics relates to goal motivation. Hufton et al (2002) state:

> *Perhaps the answer to increasing student motivation, engagement and, ultimately achievement, particularly in areas of disadvantage, lies not primarily in school reform initiatives that tinker with practice, or that place greatest responsibility for learning upon teachers, but by convincing children, their families and communities that working harder will produce gains that have both meaning and value.*
> **Hufton et al (2002), page 284.**

Goal motivation has been recognised as an important aspect of self-efficacy and educational performance (Galloway et al, 1998; Hufton et al 2002; Elliott et al, 1999). Khan's study (2003) puts forward a model that children need positive relationships with adults in school in order to be motivated and successful; however, he points out that some children may be able to survive without this 'emotional nourishment' consistently available. Those with motivation related to task goals, ie those who want to get the best out of education for intrinsic value, rather than for external reward, are more likely to succeed, muses Khan. This raises a question for me about the pupils in the present study. Perhaps they have naturally had, or acquired, different priorities? Perhaps they have more resilience about returning to a new school situation because they don't rely on these relationships so much as others? Maybe this is why they have been able to sustain their success. Maybe at one time they did rely on it, but have created different motivational goals along the lines of 'blow the teachers, I'll do it for me!' which illustrates an outlook of self-efficacy. Again this raises a comparative question. Are the students in the present study different from those who have not succeeded in transferring or sustaining new placements? Could it be that the ones who fall by the wayside after reintegration have more reliance on the emotionally nurturing consequences of speedily constructed positive relationships?

Liam commented that he was aware he had decided to take control of events for himself, in order to impact upon what happened to him in the future: "it's only recently that I have been doing stuff for myself". Similar comments were made by other students, indicating that they had somehow consciously decided to have increasing involvement in, or take increasing control over, their own destinies. In relation to his feelings about transferring into a new mainstream situation, Gary said: "I was really determined to make it work. And I am now even more determined to get through". Robert and James made similar comments. Maybe these examples are simply reflecting maturational processes; or could such changes reflect an evolving, adaptive response to previous experiences, processes and situations? I am reminded here of the work by Luthar et al (2000) in which the authors debate the nature of the construct of resilience and its usefulness in understanding the processes affecting at-risk individuals. They define the term resilience as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity."

It appears that goal motivation for achievement and the personal satisfaction of being able to feel successful, combined with aspects of pupil characteristics such as intelligence, suggest a pupil profile encompassing characteristics of individuals likely to succeed in new mainstream school settings. In the present study, such characteristics were often remarked upon by adults in their comments about the students. This reveals the notion that it may have been the initial adult assessment of these pupil characteristics that resulted in the adults responding to the pupils in the early stages in a particular way – ie transmitting 'I like you' messages, messages of worth and value. Examples of comments capturing such sentiments have already been given in earlier sections. At its simplest, could there be a dynamic here of such students having personal characteristics or attributes which are 'attractive' to staff in receiving schools (eg intelligence, sense of humour) and these attributes elicit the adults' motivation to help and support successful transfer through a range of means?

Additional Points

Examination of the existing literature in the field of returning pupils to new mainstream settings throws up a list of commonly cited factors which are believed to help pupils in reintegrated placements succeed (eg Include 2000a; 2000b; Fisher 2001). These were précised in the literature review. It appears to me now, however, that these factors may translate the concerns and values of those most usually asked about these processes ie teachers, support professionals, Local Education Authority staff. Existing literature largely takes a managerial perspective to reintegration and consequently this has major implications in terms of the limitations of the messages conveyed. The literature does not reflect the perceptions of pupils and families about the particular theme of successful and sustained return to new mainstream schools following exclusion. If these views had been included more comprehensively in the existing literature, it seems likely that the balance would swing rather more towards the importance of adult and pupil relationships and support than is currently recognised.

The present study reflects participant perceptions of the process of reintegration and consequently brings an additional dimension to current understandings in this area. This is an important extension to the current research and literature concerning

reintegration. Indeed, feminist critiques would argue that this is a major purpose of research study – that is, to empower oppressed and otherwise invisible groups.

> *Feminist research seeks to demolish and replace this [positivist research] with a different substantive agenda – of empowerment, voice, emancipation, equality and representation for oppressed groups.*
> **Cohen et al (2000), page 35.**

The process of research has been a journey for me in recognising that the existing, limited literature related to reintegration is driven largely by this managerial perspective; I have become increasingly aware of the inherent limitations of this model. The journey travelled through this research has resulted in challenges and changes to my own thinking, understanding and practice in terms of children entering new school settings. Although I am no longer part of a team such as the project described in this dissertation, I continue to practice as a generic educational psychologist and therefore casework includes children moving into new school situations for a variety of reasons, including previous permanent exclusion. At one time, my practice in supporting such reintegration processes would have been driven by the managerial perspective described above. As a result of this research, my practice in supporting reintegration is now focused upon networks and structures for relationships and support as well as upon issues of pupil involvement in decision-making and goal motivation. The factors previously recognised by the literature in the field continue to be considered, though no longer drive my practice. Along similar lines to those described concerning my own development in terms of practice change, the present study presents implications for the practice of others individuals, services and LEAs involved in reintegration processes and reintegration projects.

One aspect given a high profile in the literature concerning successful reintegration to new settings following exclusion concerns preparation for new placement. It seems to me that this has a high profile because it has been largely viewed and reported through processes concerned with capturing the perspectives of involved professionals. In fact the issue of placement preparation arose within the focus group discussion in the present study – ie a group of professionals. Many of the factors important in successful reintegration raised by the focus group and supporting professionals fitted

with existing research - the list of factors thrown up proved very similar. Including the perspectives of families and children in research processes about reintegration may qualitatively change the factors identified as being important; it appears to me that it would, at least, change the relative importance of these. Paucity of research that includes the views of direct participants such as pupils and families in the process of sustained reintegration is responsible for academics not having yet fully 'learned' the importance of issues raised by the present research.

Comments from several professionals related to the fact that reintegration processes sometimes feel like a game of chance. Views were reflected that strategic interventions at the level of LEA may be hit and miss or unpredictable. For example one professional felt that success in new placements sometimes seemed to him to be a matter of the "right personnel, right place, right time" rather than a consistently-applied, tried and tested policy or strategy. The particular professional commented:

> *Not all kids get exactly the same deal as it does depend on who's*
> *doing it, time available and the receiving school, so I think there*
> *could be improvements, but a start would be to learn from what has*
> *happened and gone well or gone wrong, often gone wrong and*
> *develop it so there is a good practice guide*
> **Educational Psychologist**

Maybe this particular LEA, and others, could become more proactive in setting out what is expected from officers in terms of reintegration processes and procedures. This raises the wider issue of children who are not actually excluded from school but for whom a decision is made to go for school transfer to avoid the escalation of difficulties (for example, managed moves). Similar, organised processes of transfer might also secure more consistently positive outcomes for these children too.

LEAs could also become more proactive in setting out the essential preparations for schools themselves to make, when a new pupil is to be received into the school, such as:

- Consistent, good, close communication with parents or carers, which is maintained over a long period
- An identified member of staff to be proactive in forging a strong personal link with the pupil, again sustained over a period of time – at least three terms

- Good, clear communication systems within school to allow for preparations and modifications to placements to be effectively transmitted to all staff and communicated with parents and pupils themselves
- Direct involvement of pastoral teacher or support assistant in pre-placement preparations
- An ability to predict and address the in-coming pupil's needs for access to social networks

It is a short step from here to the notion that the themes emerging in this study probably have relevance for pupils returning, or transferring into, new schools for any reason: inclusion from any type of segregated special provision, after long periods of illness or absence, children from refugee families etc. The understanding raised in this study concerning the importance of relationships (adult, child, peer, social networks), emotional and academic support and pupil characteristics could help in appreciating the pitfalls and resilience-building factors inherent in inclusive processes for many groups of children, thereby informing interventions for inclusive practice in a wider sense.

Little has been said in this discussion section about students' perceptions of their involvement in the processes of decision-making, even though this was directly asked in interview. This is because little mention was made of it, though when it was mentioned it was generally positive, with three students recognising the importance of feeling involved. One commented that he preferred indirect involvement in decisions made about him (through his mother), and two others commented that it was only as they had got older that they had felt they wanted to be involved in decision-making processes. This leads me to raise the issue that involving pupils in decision-making is not simply a question of pupils being present at meetings about them; neither is it a one-size-fits-all entity. Perhaps the pupils in this study have raised important issues about feeling able to exercise some element of choice in questions about if and how they become involved in such processes? Though there was a general feeling that involvement in decisions being made about them might be a 'good thing', not all pupils wanted this to be shaped in the same way. In addition, the students in this study have raised the idea that perhaps there needs to be recognition amongst adults that

processes of involvement need to be age-appropriate, allowing for maturation and views that may change over time.

This last point raises important questions about the practice of including pupil views in decisions made about them: if, how, when. The views expressed by pupils in this study, as far as they went, seemed to indicate that pupils saw their own involvement positively, even though they did not think the process of involving them should be done in just one way. The literature tells us quite clearly too that pupils' involvement in decisions made about them increases the chance of success in those decision-outcomes (Jelly et al, 2000; DfES 2001b). In discussion about the core category of pupil characteristics, aspects of the pupils in this study were commented upon, such as intelligence, sense of humour, determination to succeed. At the time of data gathering and analysis, I initially started to label such comments as 'the magic ingredient' because this term captured the vague way in which some adults expressed nebulous views about pupil characteristics or personality, which they regarded to have helped them succeed. Rachel's LSA, for example said: "there was just something about her". I now find myself hypothesising whether the pupils were somehow transmitting "I'm ready and determined" messages to the adults, and these messages were then labelled in this nebulous way. If this hypothesis has validity, and somehow adults were 'picking up' on the child's own readiness and wish for the placement to succeed, it leads me to further hypothesise that we should perhaps take greater care to include pupil's views much more centrally in determining their own readiness to return to a mainstream setting, perhaps using techniques such as solution focused conversation to involve them fully in the decision about when, where and how they will transfer.

On a related issue, the parents who were interviewed talked at some length about their involvement in the process of their children's exclusions and reintegrated placements. The main points around these issues have been subsumed within the discussion related to the core categories of relationships and support. However, the impression I formed over the period of data analysis was that essentially parents reflected similar sentiments about their involvement as I had anticipated would arise in discussions with pupils. They generally reflected an appreciation of being involved in decision-making, and feeling they had some control over the decisions made about their sons (Rachel's parents were not interviewed). When this was not their experience, for

example school choices were denied at year 6 transfer, the parents affected by this chose to go through appeals procedures. There were several comments (reported within other sections) related to the value they placed on being listened to by head teachers and other school staff, and professionals from support services.

An issue that unexpectedly arose within the present research study concerned attendance. In one way or another, attendance presented as an issue for all five pupils. There is not space to debate this at any length here, but suffice to raise the overlap between attendance vulnerability and return to new schools following exclusion. It seems from the five cases involved in this study that attendance difficulties had been responded to very speedily in order to avoid escalation. It seems reasonable to assume that children returning to new schools following a period of permanent exclusion simply will be more vulnerable to attendance difficulties, for all the reasons included within the strands of discussion in the core categories. Awareness of this is important in ensuring that processes exist within schools to offer speedy response to ameliorate escalation of such difficulties.

One of the original key issues that has not arisen so far in this discussion concerns the question of definition of students' difficulties before, during and after return to a new school. This was asked specifically in adult interviews but did not reveal any level of assumed importance with those who responded. Many adults were simply unaware of how the pupils' difficulties had been defined or labelled. For those who did know, there was felt to be little relevance apart from the fact of resource allocation via statement. This last point is consistent with others' findings (Gross, 2001). The question concerning whether participants perceived the labelling of difficulties to have had any bearing on the perceptions of receiving school staff, therefore, became irrelevant.

The focus group, constituted of behaviour support teachers, together with a few comments from other professionals, raised several points about characteristics of schools as organisations that help or hinder pupils' return following permanent exclusion. Some of these have been mentioned in passing as part of the generally accepted factors recognised as assisting in the process of reintegration in the existing literature. Additional issues that were raised by the professional participants in the

present study include: issues to do with pupil preparation such as the use of particular cognitive and behavioural techniques to deal with predictable difficulties; the need for effective and responsive communication channels between pastoral and subject staff to ensure timely response to emerging difficulties; flexibility in school systems such as access to support; the benefits of having organised activities at lunchtimes so that pupils can access 'normal' support systems in school.

Critique of Methodology

Hindsight allows me to examine and question methodological aspects of this study. Gillham (2000) defines what is meant by 'a case', exposing that the researcher can choose to study *multiple* cases. The methodology applied in the present study was a multiple case study approach, involving five pupils. Each of the five pupils was used to make up a case study 'set' of information–givers, drawn from parents, receiving school staff and support staff from the LEA. This arrangement offered some triangulation to each case set. The multiple case study sets were used to illustrate reintegration practice within one LEA; an LEA in which I had worked within a Standard Fund project related to reintegration. Data was gathered from individuals in the multiple case study sets by individual interview. In addition, a focus group interview took place with members of the behaviour support team from the same LEA; though not discussed individually, all pupils included in this study would have been known to the behaviour support team members who made up the focus group. The pupils had taken up placements in new mainstream schools between 1999 and 2003, and in order to be included in the study, had sustained new placements for at least three terms following reintegration.

It could be argued that generalisability from this setting to others might have been more convincing if I had chosen to use *reintegration processes in one LEA* as the subject of case study, rather than focus on multiple individual case studies. Had I pursued the journey of research with an LEA focus, I may now be claiming to have exposed issues of LEA processes and practice that may be pertinent to other LEAs in similar circumstances to the ones described. However, the decision about multiple individual case studies was made because, as the process of research carried me on a hitherto unknown journey, aspects of individuals' perceptions of what had happened

to them and around them became an increasingly central aspect of my interest in the area. I considered that individual experiences and perceptions may offer perspectives of at least equal interest and value to the body of knowledge in the area of reintegration following permanent exclusion.

Willig (2001) points out that case studies, because they offer such a potentially versatile approach, carry hidden dangers. She claims that it is not always possible to see whether a series of related studies constitute case study research proper, "or whether they are no more than a collection of studies concerned with similar questions" (Willig, 2001, page 81). Case study in action research can produce data which is 'strong in reality' but difficult to organise. It carries dangers of distortion (Bell 1998, page 9), as triangulation can be difficult. In addition, there exist concerns about generalisability due to the possible 'single event' nature of this type of investigation.

I have not claimed, therefore, that this study was directly generalisable to other LEA settings. The similarity between the context of this study and the reader's own circumstances is a question for the reader to address. Instead, I have suggested that the core categories, synthesised from the data gathered as described, may have meaning for other individuals in similar circumstances; in this way, the core categories may provide a framework within which pupils, parents or carers, receiving schools, professional support workers and LEA staff can understand the possible perspectives of participants, in order to assist in predicting the factors that may, if addressed, increase the likelihood of sustained success in a new school placement. This is the value of the study. It is possible, however, that the findings could be extrapolated to suggest process and practice changes within LEAs, support services and schools.

The benefits of hindsight also allow me to explore several methodological questions related to this study:

Did the methods, as applied, achieve the stated aims?
The multiple case study method did facilitate successfully achieving the stated aims. However, as suggested, the focus could have been nudged towards LEA practice rather than individual perceptions, with different claims made as a result. Other

methods could have been used to achieve the aim of exploring participants' perceptions of reintegration following permanent exclusion. For example, instead of case sets, the study could have focused on pupil perceptions, or parent perceptions, or professionals' perceptions. In this way greater numbers of any one group could have been included, and interviews could have taken place 'in a vacuum' from others' perspectives about the same circumstances. This would have given some advantage in terms of numbers in each grouping, but would have lost an important aspect of the case set approach – namely multiple perspectives on each situation.

If this study were to be repeated, how might I amend the methods?
Aspects of this question will be addressed later, in the section titled "Study Limitations", but for now, I will address the question of methodological changes I would make, if the study were to be repeated.

- The numbers included in study are small, and should be increased. I refer here to the numbers of pupils and the perspectives around each one – ie the case sets. The limited numbers occurred due to unforeseen difficulties in gaining agreement from parents and carers. Lessons have been learned about how this might be done more effectively, for example making contact by telephone initially, rather than letter.

- The inclusion of pupils who did not continue in new placements for at least three terms would be part of a repeat study. The potential benefits of this has been alluded to several times in the study, and these reasons will not be repeated, except to say that alternative or additional themes may have arisen from the data due to the comparison that would have been facilitated.

- This researcher had not used focus groups as a method of data collection prior to this research. The benefits of its application in terms of the behaviour support team discussion became apparent during the data gathering for the present study. If the study were to be repeated, I would consider using focus groups (in addition to individual interviews) for pupils and parents and staff in receiving schools.

- Due to the potential complexities of the multiple-roles I had occupied in the LEA, I would seriously consider the use of an 'independent' researcher should this study be repeated, given access to such a resource.

Did the advantages proposed for the multiple case study approach occur in practice?

The advantages of the multiple case study approach were manifest at the stage of analysis of data using grounded theory. It is difficult to imagine how the same core categories could have emerged so strongly, had the data not been gathered using this multiple case study approach. The process of connecting interview fragments allowed me to see that the core categories were perspectives held 'in the round' by participants. Had they not been important to all case sets, they would not have continued to be 'in the running' to reach the final version of core categories. There were many connections and similarities in the data from pupils, parents, professionals (for example the importance of relationships to all) that might not have emerged were the study to have been designed differently.

<u>Summary and Conclusions</u>

At the outset of the study, this researcher had conceptualised the research process as one in which the focus was determined by identifying and clarifying key investigative issues, based on the existing literature and the researcher's previous direct experience in the area of returning pupils to new mainstream schools following permanent exclusion. The use of grounded theory to handle and analyse the data had been part of the planned process, in order to facilitate the emergence of new frameworks and perspectives. It was felt that reporting the research process primarily around key investigative issues would enable coherent access to the write-up for the reader. Indeed this format was used successfully in framing the reporting of results; firstly by describing the arising themes in relation to the key issues, and then in explaining the additional aspects arising from the application of grounded theory. The three core categories emerging from the application of grounded theory were then used as the basis to organise the discussion section, since by now this structure would be far more meaningful to the reader and would allow appropriate emphasis to be placed on certain aspects of the data.

The three core categories that had emerged from the application of grounded theory were outlined in the discussion chapter, and detailed discussion took place around the particular aspects within each. The first core category allowed us to see the central

importance of relationships within the process of returning pupils to new mainstream schools successfully. The relationships that mattered were not only those between adults and pupils in schools, an area which already carries an abundant literature, but other combinations between adults too. In the literature, we can see that the territory of parents' and carers' perceptions about *exclusion* has been given some, if sparse, coverage, but their role and perceptions concerning reintegration has to date attracted little research interest. In relation to *sustained* new placements, this researcher was unable to locate any studies similar to the present one. Within the present study, it emerged that the relationships between school staff, parents and support professionals were important in the process of returning pupils to new schools. Important issues arose concerning the relationships between adults; one aspect of this was the initial and ongoing relationships between parents, school staff and support professionals. Another aspect concerned information flow and open and effective channels of communication to facilitate rapid response to difficulties emerging in the placement.

The nature of adult and pupil relationships was debated in relation to the existing literature, and issues surrounding the development and maintenance of these newly forming relationships were explored. Questions were raised about the personnel who happened to be in the new school and the messages they gave to the pupil directly or indirectly about how they perceived their worth and value. The responsibility taken for forging new relationships by the personnel in the new school was considered. Pupils' readiness and need to forge and maintain new relationships was also considered, and the question of the possible connection between these and pupil goal motivation was debated.

Probably the strongest core category to emerge from the data was the powerful nature of relationships between pupils and their peers. Pupils included in the present study, who by definition maintained new placements for at least three terms, had a lot to say about the importance of finding and fitting in to social networks and maintaining these over time. Adults too had many observations about the critical importance of friendships and the power of this dimension in relation to placement success in the short and longer term. Both the positive influence of social relationships with peers and the potentially destructive element of the same was debated in relation to the literature and the particular experiences of the pupils in this study. It seems to me that

this aspect of peer relationships and social networks is one to which the existing literature and current professional practice pays little attention. Given the high profile it has gained in the current research, I feel it merits much closer attention in terms of future understandings and professional practice. Perhaps adults have tended to think that the difficulty of adult intervention means that social networks can be little influenced? Perhaps adults have tended to think that these matters should be left to natural, undetermined social process? Perhaps questions about possible interventions to prepare and maintain this aspect of new placements just have not been considered before? The strength of this theme in the current research leads me to feel that educators should carefully consider the ways in which interventions can be used, or created, to facilitate development in this area of practice. It seems educational psychologists' understandings of social and psychological processes would place them centrally in terms of such innovations.

The second core category of 'support' facilitated discussion about several aspects of this dimension. Support was considered in terms of both academic support to pupils and emotional support to them, both initially and as the placement progressed. Academic support was seen as less of an issue by pupils than it was viewed by parents; parents tended to see it as necessary 'insurance' against the curriculum creating strain on the placement. It seemed that academic support, perhaps provided by an LSA, may act in some ways to 'unburden' staff in the new school, according to their perceptions. Emotional support had a higher profile than academic support in the comments from all individual interviews and the focus group discussion. Of course this is the element that most closely mirrors the issues raised within the core category of 'relationships', for it is from the quality of the relationships that the quality of emotional support is determined. A particularly pertinent aspect of this, however, is that it seems to be the qualities inherent within *all* combinations of these relationships, and their consequent emotional support, that have an impact upon sustained successful placements, not just the emotional support provided to the pupil in school by adults. The emotional support provided to the pupil by parents (in relation to education), the emotional support provided to the parents by the relationships they have with school staff and other professionals, support to school staff from school systems and professionals all proved important, to varying levels, alongside the emotional support arising from pupil relationships with school staff and peers.

The third core category, labelled 'pupil characteristics' brought to the fore discussion about those aspects of successful placement that were seen by adults, in some way, to be about the pupil him or herself. Although this theme came out strongly, particularly amongst school staff and support professionals, it is in fact the element that is least within the direct control or influence of adults. Of course attempts can be made to equip pupils with the skills that are recognised as being necessary to survive in secondary school, in academic, behavioural, emotional and social aspects. However, the sorts of factors that were being raised in the comments from adults in the present study were much vaguer – intelligence, sense of humour, determination, 'something about him or her' – and, therefore, difficult to see how they would be impacted upon or influenced by the adults around any pupil. Pupil goal motivation and self-efficacy was raised in this section as perhaps having an impact upon the relationships formed between pupils and adults in new schools. The possibility was raised that these aspects of pupil outlook and approach by the nature of their transmission, related in some way to the response elicited from adults within school. Maybe what adults labelled as intelligence and determination, for instance, could be viewed as their perceptions of, or response to, the manifestation of a pupils' goal motivation or self-efficacy?

Literature related to reintegration of pupils following permanent exclusion is thin to say the least. None appears to relate to *sustained* success of new placements. It has to be stressed that the literature related to the factors surrounding preparation and early stages of reintegration of pupils to new schools following permanent exclusion is limited; however, what does exist gives a fairly consistent view of the critical factors in success (see literature review). These, in brief, relate to: clear and effective policies and procedures at the strategic level to prevent exclusion and provide effective reintegration practice; effective multi-professional working at the school level; effective and flexible pastoral and behaviour policies in schools; careful preparation of the placement; the provision of support to pupils to maintain basic skills whilst excluded from school; pupil involvement in decision making; quality of working relationships between parents, schools and support workers; a nominated individual to act as champion for the child; speedy return to a school setting following exclusion; frequent reviews of progress; support to the pupil.

The issues set out in the previous paragraph are not set out in order to be challenged by the matters discussed in this chapter. In fact, several aspects are confirmed as being ones that were important to the participants in the present research. However, the profile of relative importance found in this study is unique and specific, when viewed in relation to existing literature about reintegration. In the present study, the variables connecting with the core constructs of relationships, support and pupil characteristics appear to relate most strongly to sustained success in new placements. Others, such as placement preparation, hardly featured. Differences of this type could be accounted for by the fact that the present research was concerned with sustained placement; of course preparations for placement would have occurred in some cases years before. There may be other aspects of difference between the existing literature in the area and the findings of the present study that are related to the fact that time has passed since pupils first entered new schools. These differences may have emerged *because* the present study explored instances of *sustained* placement; this is an area that has not before been engaged with by research, judging by the literature currently in existence.

It seems appropriate at this juncture to summarise the main points that can be concluded from the findings of the present study, in terms of strategies which may be employed to strengthen the likelihood of reintegrated placements being successfully maintained. This will be done through summary of the understandings and actions that can be applied by receiving schools, LEAs and support professionals.

The present study indicates that there are several aspects of practice that schools receiving pupils following permanent exclusion could develop, such as:

- Consistent, good, close communication with parents or carers, which is maintained over a long period, certainly more than three terms. Communication channels would need to be clear and explicit, and ideally school staff should be proactive about maintaining contact with parents and carers, rather than waiting for contact from them.
- Identifying a member of staff to be proactive in forging strong personal links with the incoming pupil, again sustained over a period of time – at least three terms. As with parent communications, time would need to be invested into

the relationship, and the member of staff should be proactive in seeking out the pupil in order to make investments in it, thereby strengthening the connection between pupil and adult.

- Good, clear communication systems within school to allow for preparations and modifications to placements to be effectively transmitted to all staff and communicated with parents and pupils themselves.
- Direct involvement of pastoral teacher or support assistant in pre-placement preparations.
- An ability to predict and address the in-coming pupil's needs for access to social networks. Receiving schools may need to be proactive in developing access routes to social networks for new pupils, for example 'Circle of Friends', buddy systems, befriending schemes (Cowie and Wallace, 2000).

LEAs and support professionals could support the process of reintegration for pupils following permanent exclusion by ensuring a number of processes are given attention. LEAs and support staff should ensure:

- Pre-placement preparation is undertaken with LSAs and pastoral staff (for example year head) as well as with senior managers or head teacher in the new school.
- Sources of emotional support, and academic support if necessary, are identified for the pupil; the significance of the quality of such relationships needs to be understood by those identified as providing such support.
- Effective communication systems are facilitated between school staff and parents or carers at the beginning of the placement, as well as sustained over a longer period.
- That the significance of pupil opinion and choice in school factors is understood, for example choice of school, and acting upon these views where possible and appropriate.
- That the significance of entering new peer networks is understood and that all possible methods to ease entry to them are acted upon by the school. In addition, the importance of maintaining social networks needs to be understood and assisted in any way possible.

- That systems are in place between the school staff, parents and carers and support professionals to recognise emerging difficulties quickly, thereby raising the possibility of amelioration, for example attendance difficulties, bullying issues.

- Support processes such as those above are maintained for a period of at least three terms.

New Theoretical Understandings

The present study has broken new theoretical ground in terms of its direction and coverage. Literature in the area of reintegration currently exists, though is not abundant. The existing literature in the area was carefully examined and explored. This exploration, together with my own professional experience working within a Standard Fund project related to returning pupils to new mainstream schools following permanent exclusion, created and harnessed the energy that shaped the present study. The coverage and direction taken differed from existing work in the field in three distinct ways:

- Some of the children I had been involved with via the Standard Fund project had, I knew, returned to mainstream schools and subsequently been excluded again, or had 'excluded' themselves. This left me interested in exploring, from a solution focused perspective, the factors protecting or enabling pupils who had successfully returned to new mainstream schools.

- Again from my involvement in the Standard Fund project, I was aware that many aspects of initial preparation and support for new placements took place before and at the point of reintegration. Direct action, monitoring and support from agencies external to the school would often reduce then fizzle out entirely after a term or so, if the initial transfer into a new school had apparently gone well. I was aware of the issues thrown up by the literature about what reduced risk and increased the likelihood of success in these early stages. I became interested then in understanding the processes at work for those pupils who managed to sustain their successful transfer beyond the first term, having become aware that some pupils did not continue in new placements for that long.

- The existing literature relating to the reintegration of permanently excluded pupils was found to have been formulated largely on the basis of data gathered from professional perspectives: LEA personnel, support professionals, school staff. A small number of studies included the perspectives of pupils and parents or carers, but these were very definitely in the minority. In recognition that the perspectives of parents and pupils should be *at least* as central to research about pupils' return to mainstream education, the present study aimed to redress this imbalance. As such, the present research was formulated to include parents and other adults involved with particular pupils who had successfully returned to mainstream school settings, incorporating the perspectives of pupils and parents with equal weighting to those of professionals. This dimension of the research brought an additional element to the existing body of knowledge around factors likely to improve the success of new placements.

In approaching the point about sustained placements, it was necessary to address the question: what should be regarded as a reasonable time to maintain a new placement before considering it a 'success'? This resulted in my growing awareness of having created a 'new' question. My own LEA, other LEAs, the DfES or the literature did not seem to have addressed this question and furnished an answer, or even formulated it as a question. Statistics about exclusions and reintegration to new settings following permanent exclusion have been collected by LEAs and provided to the DfES for roughly a decade; yet, as far as I am aware the question just raised about how long before deemed 'successful' is simply not addressed in this data-gathering process. Perhaps it is possible that the government's bias is towards looking for short term gains, which are easier to achieve, rather than longer term outcomes?

The factors outlined above make this study unique; they have facilitated the emergence of new ideas for theory construction. The study has confirmed areas of existing theoretical understanding and supported certain aspects of existing practice concerning return to mainstream school following permanent exclusion. This study has added to the existing theory and practice however, by raising the profile of the core categories in terms of their importance in *sustained* success for reintegrated placements. When pupils return to new mainstream settings, certain aspects appear to

be undeniably important in facilitating sustained success, namely: relationships, support and pupil characteristics.

The quality of the relationships between the adults who are communicating in direct relation to the pupils, the nature of the relationships the adults have with pupils themselves, and, most importantly, the way that the pupils access social networks and form and sustain relationships with peers all form the central themes within the element of 'relationships'. In terms of support, it seems that the emotional support arising from the quality of those relationships is critical in sustained placement success; this matter permeates relationships between many participants, not just the adults directly with pupils. Academic support to pupils formed a further aspect of the core category of support. Pupil characteristics clearly have a part to play in the way that relationships are built and maintained with adults and peers, and it appears that this may then have implications for the quality of emotional support that consequently ensues for the pupil. These core categories provide new insights and frameworks for understanding the perceptions of participants in the successful return of pupils to mainstream settings following permanent exclusion. Consequently this study raises implications for professional practice, for educational psychologists as well as support professionals and school staff. An exciting element of my own, and hopefully others', future professional development, will involve the incorporation of these new understandings into future practice.

CHAPTER 6

STUDY LIMITATIONS, DEVELOPMENTS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

STUDY LIMITATIONS, DEVELOPMENTS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Study Limitations

The chapter concerning methodology contained lengthy consideration of the arguments surrounding an interpretive paradigm and these will not be repeated here. However, it is probably useful to remind ourselves that the aim of this research was never to prove pre-determined hypotheses and claim the findings could be generalised into other settings with confidence. In contrast, the aim of this research was to cast a searchlight upon a particular process or event, namely that of pupils' return to mainstream settings following permanent exclusion, from the perspectives of participants in the process. The findings arising from it relate only to the specific situation in which the research was undertaken. However, the reader may choose to examine the structure, process and findings of this research and take from it any aspects which they feel are likely to apply to another setting or context. The decision about what, if anything, is generalisable to the reader's own context is a decision for him or her. However, the reader needs to be thoroughly informed about the processes undertaken in the present research in order to make confident choices about what in their view applies to another situation, and what does not. Consequently, utmost care has been taken in the present study to inform the reader about why certain choices were made, for example methodological ones, and how these choices then translated into actual research practice. In addition, the critical importance of the researcher's own belief systems, attitudes and outlooks has been acknowledged as having an inevitable and profound impact on the way this study has been conceptualised, formulated, carried out and interpreted to formulate findings and draw conclusions. It is up to the reader to judge, from the honest account of the research process undertaken, whether these issues change their own views upon what is generalisable to other situations.

There are aspects of the present study, which, due to the particular research paradigm and methodological tools selected, allow its' limitations to be pointed out. Some have already been raised within the methodology and discussion chapters. The following constitute additional points.

This research could be criticised as being limited in terms of numbers of participants. Five pupils were interviewed, as were eleven adults connected in some way to the pupils' reintegration: four parents, three members of staff from the receiving schools, and four support professionals (two behaviour support teachers, one support worker for traveller education, and one educational psychologist). In addition, eight support teachers attended a focus group session. The number of 24 participants in total, could be described as small in comparison to other studies, and is therefore open to criticism in this respect. One of the difficulties encountered concerned the willingness of families to become involved in the research process, and this had a profound effect on the final numbers.

Related to the point above, sample identification became a difficult process, due to the reluctance of a number of parents to be involved. This occurred by non-response to contacts via letter or clear declaration of not wanting to be involved. There were other questions about whether the records within the LEA central services, within the educational psychology service and the behavioural support service were accurate; this raised concerns for me about whether some parents had not received letters from me at all. In addition, it became apparent that definitions of 'success' may not have been viewed in the same way by parents, and therefore could have resulted in some parents not wanting to take part. These issues reveal the potential limitations of this study in terms of being unclear whether those families who 'selected' themselves out of the research did so knowingly, intentionally, and based on adequate understanding of what they were being asked to become involved in. If more had selected 'in' then the findings of the study might have been different, even though the research questions remained the same.

There have been several references in this study, particularly in the discussion section, to the temptation to look at the data arising as if it was comparative data. One major limitation of the study, it now seems, is that the opportunity to look at a group of pupils who had not succeeded in maintaining new placements in schools has been missed. Comparative study would have allowed comparison and contrast between those included in the present study with those who were recognised as having unsuccessful reintegration packages, ie immediately unsuccessful, or those who stayed in new placements for less than a year.

A further limitation of this study is that although pupils and parents were included as important participants in the process of data gathering, these interviews all took place within individual conversations. A focus group process was used with the behavioural support team and the dynamic of group discussion allowed several issues to be raised that were not brought up in other interviews with support professionals. This raises the question of whether additional or different data might have arisen if pupils and parents, either together or separately, had been involved in a focus group format as well.

The issue of power relationships when interviewing children and young people has been mentioned previously, but is probably worthy of a reminder. I interviewed three pupils at home and two in school. The context might have had an impact upon the interview, but probably more importantly, the pupils' perceptions of myself and my role would have had some impact. I identified myself as both educational psychologist and researcher, and neither of these 'labels' would be in common usage amongst young people. So, the sense they made of myself, my role, my purpose and my connections with the schools may well have had an impact upon what they chose to tell me about the areas explored. This might have also been true, to some extent, of the parents I interviewed.

A further complication in this area was the multiple-role I occupied in the particular LEA at the time of data gathering for this research. Some professionals would have known me directly as an LEA educational psychologist, some would have known me directly through work with them in the Standard Fund project and therefore been aware that I had invested time and energy into reintegration programmes, some were already aware of my role at Sheffield University and others I told. All were professionals who would be aware of the fact that they would be highly likely to work with me again within the relatively small education authority. Obviously, there are questions, then, about whether and how this might have had an impact upon the nature of what was shared with me in interview. One effect could have concerned the interviewees' reluctance to criticise a process with which I was very much identified, and seen as a central player in the creation and deployment of the team which supported reintegration -- I shared decisions about the deployment of LSA time, which

would have been understood by some schools. On a related point, I was often involved in placement preparation with schools, and this was an issue that was discussed in interviews. In fact, the two of the three receiving school staff felt they were not involved in the pre-placement preparations, so did not need to 'hide' any feelings about it in order to avoid hurting my feelings. The third person had similarly had no contact, though expressed a wish that she had.

Developments and Further Research

Several of the points raised above lead directly into matters that could inform areas of future study, and some of these have already been mentioned. An important aspect of future research already mentioned concerns the need to undertake comparative study with groups of pupils who have not succeeded in new mainstream placements, or else have not maintained placements in the longer term. Such an undertaking would provide a highly useful comparative aspect to those students who make and maintain successful new placements, and would therefore allow clearer analysis of the critical factors. There is the possibility that future study could include a much larger sample of case 'sets', and take a much more focused view of the variables for further exploration, ie using the three core categories identified as critical in this study. It seems likely, however, that the nature of these variables would make further qualitative study more feasible than moving towards a more quantitative paradigm.

It is hoped that the work undertaken within this research will feed back into practice within my own LEA in several ways. Firstly, my own personal development in terms of having furthered my understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the social and psychological processes involved for participants in circumstances of reintegration will inevitably already be having an impact upon my own practice. This personal development has already begun to translate into discussions held within the educational psychology service within which I work. Inevitably, other professionals with whom I work (such as education social workers, behaviour support teachers) ask about the findings of the research, and this then hopefully translates into extending other professionals' understandings of these same processes. At the level of the LEA I hope to be able to somehow influence future developments in terms of policy, practice and procedures which can better meet the needs of pupils, families and schools in circumstances of reintegration.

An ideal extension to this work, and one which would benefit from future research, concerns the application of the identified issues to inclusion processes for children who have some vulnerability in a variety of circumstances: managed moves, children transferring to mainstream schools from segregated provision, children increasing time in mainstream environments from enhanced provision or units, children coming into new schools because their families have moved to live in the country, etc.

An exciting development of the present research would be the development of materials that could draw upon the present findings and result in the creation of guidance for professionals involved in integration and inclusion processes. This guidance could pull together the 'knowledge' that already exists in the literature about the factors that assist in making new placements succeed, but could also include consideration of the aspects which are likely to enable *sustained* successful integration: areas relating to the three core categories of relationships, support and pupil characteristics.

Another area for future research, which suggested itself through the process of the current study, concerns parental involvement in decision-making; whether and how this has an impact upon successful placements in schools in circumstances where the pupil is vulnerable in some way. On a related theme, the way in which pupil perspectives are invited into decision-making processes is also relevant here: questions such as how this is best achieved, and whether certain processes are more effective in pupils of different ages and maturities, or who have particular vulnerabilities. This question is already researched to an extent, but little is in existence concerning pupils who have been permanently excluded and then returned to new mainstream settings.

REFERENCES

.

ACE (The Advisory Centre for Education) (2003) Children Out of School ACE Publications

Armstrong, D (1995) Power and Partnership in Education London: Routledge

Armstrong, D. (2003) Seminar delivered at Barmoor on 17/10/03

Audit Commission (1996) Misspent Youth…Young People and Crime London: Audit Commission.

Baker, K., and Baldwin, P. (2001) Towards Inclusion: Setting the Context London: The Education Network (TEN)

Bassey, M. (1999) Case Study Research in Educational Settings Philadelphia: Open University Press

Bell, J. (1998) Second edition Doing Your Research Project Philadelphia: Open University Press

Billington, T. (2000) Separating, Losing and Excluding Children London: Routledge Falmer

Billington, T. & Pomerantz, M. (Eds) (2004) Children at the Margins Stoke: Trentham

Blyth, E., and Milner, J. (1996) Exclusion from School London: Routledge

Booth, T., Ainscow, M., Black-Hawkins, K., Vaughan, M., and Shaw, L. (2000) Index for Inclusion Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education

British Psychological Society (2000) "Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines" at www.bps.org.uk/documents/Code

Burden, R. (1997) "Research in the Real World: An Evaluation Model for use by Applied Educational Psychologists" in Educational Psychology in Practice Volume 13, Number 1, pp 13 – 20.

Burden, R. (1998) "Illuminative Evaluation" in Educational and Child Psychology Volume 15, Number 3, pp 15 – 24

Carroll, A., Houghton, S., Hattie, J. & Durkin, K. (1999) "Adolescent Reputation Enhancement: Differentiating Delinquent, Nondelinquent, and At-risk Youths" Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry Volume 40, Number 4, pp 593 – 606

Children Act (2004) www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts2004

Children's Society, The (1999) Reintegration: The role of schools in government guidance Leaflet produced by Children's Society, London

Chioncel. N.E., Van Der Veen, R.G.W., Wilemeersch, D.. & Jarvis. P. (2003)
"The validity and reliability of focus groups as a research method in adult
education" in International Journal of Lifelong Education
Volume 22, Number 5, pp 495 -517

Clough, P. (1994) Of Methods and Methodology: An Introduction Division of
Education, Sheffield University.

Clough, P. and Nutbrown, C. (2002) A Student's Guide to Methodology
London: Sage Publications

Cole, T., Visser, J., and Upton, G. (1998) Effective Schooling for Pupils with
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties London: David Fulton

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000) Research Methods in Education (5th
Edition) London: Routledge Falmer

Cooper, P. (1996) "Giving it a Name: The Value of Descriptive Categories in
Educational Approaches to Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties" in
Support for Learning Volume 11 Number 4, pp 146 – 150

Cowie, H., & Wallace, P. (2000) Peer Support in Action London: Sage

Cullingford, C. (1990) The Nature of Learning London: Cassell

Cullingford, C. & Morrison, J. (1997) "Peer Group Pressure Within and Outside
School" in British Educational Research Journal
Volume 23, Number 1, pp 61 –80

Davie, R. & Galloway, D. (Eds) (1996) Listening to Children in Education
London: David Fulton

Davies, J.D. (1996) "Pupils' views on special educational needs practice" in Support
for Learning Volume 11, Number 4, pp157 – 161

Department of Education and Science (1988) Education Reform Act: 1988
London: HMSO

Department for Education (1994) Pupils with Problems London: Department for
Education

Department for Education (1994) Code of Practice on the Identification and
Assessment of Children with Special Educational Needs London: DfE

Department for Education and Employment (1996) The 1996 Education Act.
London: HMSO

Department for Education and Employment (1997) Excellence for All Children
London: HMSO

Department for Education and Employment (1999a) <u>Social Inclusion: Pupil Support</u> Circular 10/99. London: DfEE publications

Department for Education and Employment (1999b) <u>Social Inclusion: the LEA role in Pupil Support</u> Circular 11/99. London: DfEE publications

Department for Education and Skills (2001a) <u>Schools achieving success</u> London: The Stationery Office

Department for Education and Skills (2001b) <u>Special Educational Needs Code of Practice</u> Annesley, Nottingham: DfES publications

Department for Education and Skills (2001c) <u>Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs</u> Nottingham: DfES publications

Department of Education and skills (2002) <u>National Statistics Bulletin</u> www.statistics.gov.uk/

Department for Education and Skills (2003a) <u>Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units</u> Nottingham: DfES publications

Department for Education and Skills (2003b) <u>Working Together on School Exclusions</u> Nottingham: DfES publications

Department for Education and Skills (2003c) <u>The Green Paper: Every Child Matters</u> Norwich: The Stationery Office

Donovan, N. (Ed) (1998) <u>Second Chances: Exclusion from School and Equality of Opportunity</u> London: New Policy Institute

Drever, J. (1952) <u>A Dictionary of Psychology</u> London: Penguin books

Elliott, J., Hufton, N. & Hildreth, A. (1999) "Factors Influencing Educational Motivation" in <u>British Educational Research Journal</u> Volume 25, Number 1

Fallon, G., and Brown, R. B. (2002) "Focusing on focus groups: lessons from a research project involving Bangladeshi community" in <u>Qualitative Research</u> Volume 2 (2) pp 195 - 208

Fisher, D. (2001) <u>Lost and Found: Effective Reintegration Programmes for Excluded Pupils</u> Slough: EMIE (NFER)

Fogell, J. and Long, R. (1997) <u>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</u> Tamworth: Nasen Enterprises Ltd.

Galloway, D., Ball, T., Bloomfield, D., & Seyd, R. (1982) <u>Schools and Disruptive Pupils</u> London: Longman

Galloway, D. & Goodwin, C. (1987) <u>The Education of Disturbing Children</u>
London: Longman

Galloway, D., Armstrong, D., Tomlinson, S. (1994) <u>The Assessment of Special</u>
<u>Educational Needs. Whose Problem?</u> London: Longman

Galloway. D., Rogers, C., Armstrong, D., Leo, E. (1998) <u>Motivating the Difficult to</u>
<u>Teach</u> London: Longman

Garner, P. (1996) "A la Recherche du Temps Perdu: Case-study Evidence from Off-
site and Pupil Referral Units" <u>Children and Society</u>
Volume 10 pp 187-196

Gillham, B. (2000) <u>Case Study Research Methods</u> London and New York: Continuum
Books

Gersch, I.S., and Nolan, A. (1994) "Exclusions: What the Children Think"
<u>Educational Psychology in Practice</u> Volume 10, Number 1 pp 35 – 45

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967) <u>Discovery of Grounded Theory</u> Chicago: Aldine

Goodenough, T., Williamson, E., Kent, J. & Ashcroft, R. (2003) "'What Did you
Think about That?' Researching Children's Perceptions of Participation in a
Longitudinal Genetic Edipemiological Study" <u>Children and Society</u>
Volume 17 pp 113-125

Gray, P., Miller, A., and Noakes, J. (1994) <u>Challenging Behaviour in Schools</u>
London: Routledge

Gray, P. and Panter, S. (2000) "Exclusion or Inclusion? A Perspective on policy in
England for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties" <u>Support for</u>
<u>Learning</u> Volume 15, Number 1, pp 4 – 7

Greenbaum, T. L. (2000) <u>Moderating Focus Groups</u> California: Sage Publications

Gross, J. & McChrystal, M. (2001) "The Protection of a Statement? Permanent
exclusions and the SEN code of Practice <u>Educational Psychology in Practice</u>
Volume 17, number 4, pp 347 - 360

Hay, I. (2000) "Gender Self-concept Profiles of Adolescents Suspended from High
School" <u>Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry</u> Volume 41, Number 3,
pp 345 - 352

Hayden, C. and Dunne, S. (2001) <u>Outside, Looking In</u> London: Children's Society

Henwood, K. and Nicolson, P. (1995) "Qualitative Research" <u>The Psychologist</u>
March, 1995 pp 109 – 110.

Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C. and Walkerdine, V. (1998) Changing the Subject London: Routledge

Hufton, N.R., Elliott, J.G. & Illushin, L. (2002) "Educational Motivation and Engagement: qualitative accounts from three countries" British Educational Research Journal Volume 28, Number 2, pp265 - 289

INCLUDE (2000a) Investigating the Reintegration of Permanently Excluded Young People in England Ely: Cambridgeshire

INCLUDE (2000b) This Time I'll Stay Ely: Cambridgeshire

Jacklin, A. and Lacey, J. (1993) "The integration process: A developmental model" Support for Learning Volume 8, Number 2, pp 51 – 57

Jelly, M. Fuller, A. and Byers, R. (2000) Involving Pupils in Practice London: David Fulton

John, P. (1996) "Damaged Goods? An interpretation of excluded pupils' perceptions of schooling" Blythe, E. & Milner, J. (Eds) Exclusion from School London: Routledge

Jones, R. A. (2003) "The Construction of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties" Educational Psychology in Practice Volume 19, Number 2, pp 147 -157

Khan, K. (2003) Teacher-student relationships and motivational goals: the evidence for a simple view of disaffection gained from the perceptions of a small sample of excluded students Unpublished MSc dissertation: Sheffield University

Kinder, K., Wakefield, A. and Wilkin, A. (1996) Talking Back: Pupil views on disaffection Slough: NFER

Lawrence, D. (1996) Enhancing Self-Esteem in the Classroom Second Edition. Paul Chapman: London

Lloyd, G., Stead, J., and Kendrick, A. (2001) "Hanging on in there: A study of inter-agency work to prevent school exclusion in three local authorities" summarised on Joseph Rowntree Foundation Website on www.jrf.org.uk

Lloyd-Smith, M. & Davies, J.D. (Eds) (1995) On the Margins Stoke: Trentham Books

Lord Laming (2003) Victoria Climbie Inquiry, the Summary Report Norwich: HMSO

Lown, J. (2000) A Consideration of Open Systems Theory as a Means of Constructing the Potential Contribution of Educational Psychologists to Services for Looked After Children (Unpublished Essay): Sheffield University

Lown, J. (2001) <u>Circle of Friends</u> Merseyside: PBM

Lown, J. (2002a) <u>Promoting Self Esteem</u> Merseyside: PBM

Lown, J. (2002b) "Circle Time: the perceptions of teachers and pupils" in <u>Educational Psychology in Practice</u> volume 18, number 2, pp 93 -102

Lown, J. (2004) "Children in need of services and in public care: Opening up systems for effective joint working" in Billington, T. and Pomerantz, M. (Eds) <u>Children at the Margins</u> Stoke: Trentham

Luthar, S.S., Cecchetti, D. & Becker, B. (2000) "The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work" in <u>Child Development</u> Volume 71, Number 3, pp 543 - 562

McSherry, J. (2001) <u>Reintegration</u> SENJIT. Special Educational Needs Joint Initiative for Training, Institute of Education, University of London

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1984) <u>Qualitative Data Analysis</u> California: Sage Publications

Miller, A. (1995) "Building grounded theory within educational psychology practice" <u>Educational and Child Psychology</u> Volume 12, Number 2, pp 5 – 14

Miller, A. (1996) <u>Pupil Behaviour and Teacher Culture</u> London: Cassell

Miller, A., Ferguson, E. & Moore, E. (2002) "Parents' and pupils' causal attributions for difficult classroom behaviour" <u>British journal of Educational Psychology</u> Volume 72, pp 27 -40

Moore, M. (Ed) (2000) <u>Insider Perspectives on Inclusion</u> Sheffield: Philip Armstrong Publications

Morgan, D.L. (1997) <u>Focus Groups as Qualitative Research</u> Second Edition California: Sage Publications

NASEN (1997) <u>Inclusion or Exclusion: Future Policy for Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</u> Tamworth: Nasen Enterprises Ltd

National Children's Bureau and Barnados (1998a) "Exclusion from School". <u>Highlight Sheet No. 161</u> London: NCB

National Children's Bureau and Barnados (1998b) "School Standards and Framework Act, 1998". <u>Highlight Sheet No. 162</u> London: NCB

National Children's Bureau and Barnados (2001) "The Human Rights Act 1998 and children: Part 1". <u>Highlight Sheet No. 182</u> London: NCB

National Children's Bureau and Barnados (2001) "The Human Rights Act 1998 and children: Part 2". <u>Highlight Sheet No. 183</u> London: NCB

Newton, C., Taylor, G. & Wilson, D. (1996) "Circles of Friends: An inclusive approach to meeting emotional and behavioural needs" in Educational Psychololgy in Practice Volume 11, number 4 pp 41 - 48

Norwich, B. (1998) "Research methods in educational psychology: traditional and new paradigm" Educational and Child Psychology Volume 15, Number 3, pp 8 –14

Ofsted (2005) Managing challenging behaviour HMI Report 2363

Osler, A., Street, C., Lall, M., and Vincent, K. (2002) Not a Problem? Girls and School Exclusion London: NCB

Parsons, C. (1996) "Permanent Exclusions from Schools in England in the 1990's: Trends, Causes and Responses" in Children and Society Volume 10 (3) pp177-186

Parsons, C. (1999) Education, Exclusion and Citizenship London: Routledge

Parsons, C. and Howlett, K. (2000) Investigating the reintegration of permanently excluded young people in England Include. Ely: Cambridgeshire

Phinn, G. (2001) It Takes One to Know One London: Puffin Books

Pomeroy, E. (1999) "The Teacher-Student Relationship in Secondary School: insights from excluded students" British Journal of Sociology of Education Volume 20, Number 4, pp 465 – 482

Salmon, P. (2003) "How Do We Recognise Good Research?" in The Psychologist January, 2003. pp24 – 27

SATSU (Science and Technology Studies Unit) (2003) A Review of Ethics and Social Science Research for the Strategic Forum for the Social Sciences Commissioned by the ESRC, produced by SATSU, Department of Sociology, University of York

Searle, C. (1996) in Blyth, E., and Milner, J. (Eds) Exclusion from School London: Routledge

Smith, C. (1996) "Special needs and pastoral care: Bridging a gap that shouldn't be there" Support for Learning Volume 11, Number 4, pp151 – 156

Social Exclusion Unit (1998) Truancy and School Exclusion London: The Stationery Office

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998) Basics of Qualitative Research California: Sage Publications

Tobbell, J. (2003) "Students' experiences of the transition from primary to secondary school" <u>Educational and Child Psychology</u> Volume 20, number 4, pp 4 - 14

Tootill, R. and Spalding, B. (2000) "How effective can reintegration be for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties?" <u>Support for Learning</u> Volume 15, Number 3, pp111-117

Turner, L. (2004) "Turning up the volume: Pupils' voices on school improvement" in Billington, T. & Pomerantz, P. (Eds) <u>Children at the Margins</u> Stoke:Trentham

Wallace, G. (1996) "Relating to Teachers" in Rudduck, J., Chaplain, R. & Wallace. G (Eds) <u>School Improvement: what can pupils tell Us?</u> London: David Fulton

Wellington, J. (2000) <u>Educational Research</u> London and New York: Continuum

Willig, C. (2001) <u>Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology</u> Philadelphia: Open University Press

Woods, P. (1990) <u>The Happiest Days?</u> Basingstoke: Falmer Press

APPENDICES

APPENDICES

List of Contents

Appendix 1
Pupil Detail Form

Child's Name:

Date of Birth:

Parent/carer name:

Address:

Telephone No:

School last Attended:

Current Year Group:

Year Head/form tutor etc; key link in school:

SenCo

Behaviour Support teacher:

ESW

EP

Appendix 2

Letter to parents (i)

25th April. 2002.

Dear Parent,

I work for the Educational Support Services in [LEA], and I am involved in doing some research about pupils in the City who returned to new schools after permanent exclusion. I understand that [your child] was permanently excluded and then made a successful move to a new school.

I am interested in finding out what it was that helped children, like your son, to make a successful start in a new school, with the hope of using this information to help others to be similarly successful. To find out what people thought helped, I would like to interview some of the pupils who, in recent years, were permanently excluded and then started at a new school. I would also like to interview some of the adults involved to find out what they felt helped. The adults I would like to interview are:

- A small number of willing parents
- Some teachers from the schools the pupils went to
- Some involved support workers (eg behavioural support teacher, educational psychologist)

I am writing to ask you three things:

i) To ask your permission to talk to teachers and support workers about your son, to find out what they thought helped him to change schools successfully

ii) To ask your permission to talk to your son directly about his experiences (this would take place at school, if he is still there; otherwise I would arrange to see him somewhere else, maybe home). Obviously your son will also have a choice in this.

iii) To ask you if you would be willing to talk to me (at home if you choose) about your views on what helped your son make a successful change of schools

If you agree to i) ii) or iii) I will contact you to let you know the arrangements. Please return the following slip in the envelope provided, by 10th May, 2002.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Lown.

i) Will you give permission for me to talk to teachers and support workers about your son, to find out what they thought helped him to change schools successfully?

Please circle   **YES**   **NO**

ii) Will you give permission for me to talk to your son directly about his experiences? Obviously your son will also be given a choice.

Please circle   **YES**   **NO**

iii) Would you be willing to talk to me about your views on what helped your son make a successful change of schools?

Please circle   **YES**   **NO**

Name of Young Person:

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s) PLEASE PRINT:

Telephone:
Address (if different to that on this letter):

Signed:

Thank you for your anticipated help with this research.
Please return by **Friday 10th May**, 2002, in the envelope provided.

Letter to Parents (ii)

14th February 2003

Dear Parent/Carer,

Exclusion from school is stressful for children and their families, and starting at a new school can also be an anxious time. I am doing some research to find out how children and their families felt about exclusion and starting at a new school. I know this research can no longer directly benefit you or your child, but your thoughts and feelings could help improve things for parents and children who will go through similar experiences in the future. I therefore hope you feel able to support it. I work as an educational psychologist in the City and also at Sheffield University and will write up the findings as a research report.

I would like to talk to pupils who have been excluded in the past, and a small number of willing parents. Some of the pupils I want to talk to are now young adults, but I would still like to ask them what they remember about exclusion and starting at a new school, in particular the things that helped them at the time. Everything that is said to me will be treated as strictly confidential – all pupils and parents will remain anonymous in the research report.

Initially, I will contact pupils who are still at school in order to make a time to talk with them; I will arrange this through the school. Please contact me if you **do not** want me to talk to your child. I am often out of the office, but a message can be left with the secretary. If I don't hear from you by the end of February, I will assume you are happy for me to arrange to see your son/daughter.

I will contact you again in the near future, to give more details and to ask a small number of parents if they will be willing to talk to me. If you would like to talk to me, or have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to ring me on[ ] . If I am out of the office I will return your call as soon as I can.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Lown

25th June, 2003.

Dear Ms [   ],

I have written to you once or twice before about R's successful transfer into M school, but I now realise I may have sent the previous letters to the wrong address. M. school did not have a contact telephone number for you, so I thought it would be easiest to write again.

I am doing research about the factors that helped children and young people to transfer into new schools, and what was difficult for them. Yours and R's experiences will be valuable to the findings, so I hope you will talk to me about what you can remember.

I could call at home to see you on **Wednesday, 9th July, at 9.00 am** if this is convenient. If you prefer, I could meet you at M. school, or at the education office in G Street.

Unless I hear otherwise, I will assume that Wednesday, 9th July at home is suitable for you, but please don't hesitate to contact me if it is not, and we can arrange a different time and place to suit us both. I can be contacted on [   ]. I am often out of the office, but the secretaries will take a message; please leave your telephone number so that I can call you back.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Lown.

Appendix 5
Young person letter i

26 February 2003
«Name»
«Address_1»

Dear «Name»,

I am doing some research to find out how pupils and their families felt about exclusion and starting at a new school. Exclusion from school is stressful for everyone involved, and starting at a new school can also be an anxious time. I know this research can no longer directly benefit you, but your thoughts and feelings could help improve things for parents and children who will go through similar experiences in the future. I therefore hope you feel able to support it. I work as an educational psychologist in the City and also at Sheffield University; I will write up the findings as a research report.

I would like to talk to people who have been excluded from schools in the past 6 years or so. Some are now adults, but I would still like to ask what they remember about exclusion and starting at a new school, in particular the things that helped them at the time. Everything that is said to me will be treated as strictly confidential – all participants will remain anonymous in the research report.

I would be grateful if you would complete the slip below, and return it in the pre-paid envelope. I can then contact you to arrange to meet at your convenience. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to ring me on [   ]. If I am out of the office I will return your call as soon as I can.
Yours sincerely,

Jackie Lown

Please select: I am / am not
willing to meet with you to talk about my experiences of exclusion from school.
I can be contacted at:

Address:_____   Phone:_____
Name:_____

Please return to: Jackie Lown [address]

Appendix 6

Young person letter ii

Dear

I'm not sure whether you received my last letter, about research I am doing to find out about the process of starting at a new school, following exclusion. I am hoping to improve this process for pupils going through it in the future. To do this, I want to find out things from pupils in the past about what helped them settle into a new school, and what got in the way, or created problems. I know it is a while since this happened to you, but your thoughts and feelings are still very important.

I am therefore contacting you to find out whether you would be prepared to meet with me for about 45 minutes to talk about your experiences of school. I will come to your home, if you wish, or I can arrange for us to meet somewhere convenient for you.

If you agree, everything you say to me will be in strictest confidence, and your name will not be linked in any way to the final research. I would be very grateful if you would complete and return the slip at the bottom of this letter by **30 April 2003**. I can be contacted on [   ] if you want to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Lown

Please select: I am / am not
willing to meet with you to talk about my experiences of exclusion from school.

I can be contacted at:
Address:_____   Phone:_____

Name:_____

Please return to: Jackie Lown [address]

29th April, 2003.

Dear [ ]

A couple of weeks ago I wrote to you about the research I am doing, about starting at a new school following exclusion. Thank you very much for agreeing to meet me to talk about your experiences at school.

I can meet up at a time and place to suit you. We could meet at the [   ] Street Education Office, or [   ] Road Support Centre, or I can come to your home.

Could you meet me at 4.30pm on Thursday, 15th May? Would you be kind enough to let me know if you can make this time, and where you would like to meet? If the date is not suitable, please let me know and I will arrange another.

I am often out of the office, but you can ring [   ] to say whether you can make the date, and where you would like to meet.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Lown.

Appendix 8

Letter to SenCo

14th May, 2003.

Dear S [senCo],

I am an educational psychologist working in the City; I cover the [   ] Schools patch, though I used to be attached to your school.

I am currently doing some research about reintegration of permanently excluded pupils, on behalf of the City [   ] LEA and Sheffield University. I am interested in identifying the factors which make new placements likely to succeed. I have been locating pupils who were reintegrated to new placements and remained in them for a year or more, and I think you currently have such a pupil – [name]. I would like to meet up with [   ] to discuss what she can remember about her transfer to [   ] and why this was successful. I will 'phone you in the near future in the hope we can arrange a time for this interview to take place.

I understand that two of your past pupils also transferred into [   ] for new placements following permanent exclusion – [   ], and would have left Year 11 in the summer of 2001, I think. Although both boys have left school, it would still be very useful for me to talk to either yourself, or year head or another person who you think might be able to discuss their transfer into [school] with me. The person most involved at the time of reintegration would probably find this easiest.

Would you be kind enough to identify who I should arrange to speak with? I can then contact the person directly and explain the reason why I would like to meet for about 45 minutes. I will give you a ring in the next week or so, to make arrangements to see R.

My contact number at [   ]   Thank you in anticipation.

Kind regards,

Jackie Lown
Educational Psychologist
City [ ].

Appendix 9
Parent/Carer interviews

Area 1:
Following your child's period of exclusion, s/he started attending a new school. -----. in 199-.
a) How did you feel about your child's reintegration to the new school?
b) What do you think eased the process?
c) What do you think made the process feel difficult?

Area 2:
About your child...
a) What *happened,* do you think, to help your child make a successful start at the new school?
b) Who were the particular *people*, if any, that helped your child in making a successful start?
c) What do you think s/he/they did that helped?
d) *How* did these actions help?
e) Is there anything more that could have been done to help your child during that time?
f) Was there anything that helped him/her stay in the placement in the longer term?

Area 3:
About you...
a) What *happened,* do you think, to help you to support your child in making a successful start at the new school?
b) Who were the particular *people*, if any, that helped you to support your child in making a successful start?
c) What did s/he/they do that helped?
d) *How* did these actions help?
e) Is there anything more that could have been done to help you during that time?

Area 4:
Before your child started at the new school, decisions were being made, such as the schools to be approached, start dates, transport etc.
a) How involved did *you* feel in those decisions?
b) Could anything have been done to make *you* feel more involved?
c) How involved do you think *your child* felt in those decisions?
d) Could anything have been done to make him/her feel more involved?

Area 5:
Sweep question:
Is there anything else about your child's reintegration that I haven't asked you about, which you'd like to say?

Appendix 10
Receiving School interviews (SenCo/Year Head/LSA)

Area 1
Preparation for arrival:

a) What did you know about the reasons for the pupil's permanent exclusion from the previous school(s)?
b) How were his/her difficulties defined?
c) How was this background information used, if at all, prior to the pupil coming?
d) What preparations, if any, were made in readiness for the pupil's arrival?
e) Was the child placed on the SEN register for this school, on entry (or before or since)?
Why/why not?
f) What were your feelings, initially, about the likely success of the placement in the longer term?

Area 2
On arrival:

a) What factors do you think helped in making the pupil's integration successful?
b) Who were the particular people, if any, that helped in making the reintegration successful?
c) What was it s/he/they did which helped?
d) *How* did these action(s) help?
e) Was there anything in particular that helped to sustain the placement in the longer term?

Area 3
External Support Services:

a) What are your perceptions of the support the school received from external agencies before and during the reintegration process
(as individual caseworkers, and as external agencies working together)?
b) What are your perceptions of the role of the LEA in supporting the process of reintegration, before, during and after?

Area 4:
What more do you think could have been done to improve the process of reintegration for this pupil?

Area 5:
Sweep Question:
Is there anything else, I haven't already asked, which you would like to add?

Area 1 Background:
a) What were the reasons for the pupil's permanent exclusion from previous school(s), as far as you can remember?
b) How were those difficulties defined (offer choice, if necessary, of SEN or EBD or both)?
c) What were your feelings, initially, about the likely success of the placement in the longer term?
d) How did the prospective school prepare for the pupil's arrival?
e) Do you know whether the child was placed on the SEN register for the school, on entry (or before or since)?
Why/why not?

Area 2 Initial stages:
a) What factors do you think helped in making the pupil's integration successful?
b) Who were the particular people, if any, who helped in making the reintegration successful?
c) What was it s/he/they did which helped?
d) *How* did these action(s) help?
e) Were there particular things which helped to sustain the placement in the longer term?

Area 3
What more do you think could have been done to improve the process of reintegration for this pupil?

Area 4
Relate this to particular case, if other agencies were involved. Phrase in a general sense if not.

a) What are your views about the support offered by external agencies to pupils and their families before, during and after reintegration to a new school?
b) How well do you think the various agencies coordinate with each other to offer support to children and their families?
c) How, if at all, do you think the support received from external agencies, by children and their families during reintegration, could be improved?

Area 5 General – role of LEA
a) What are your perceptions of the role of the LEA in supporting children and their families, before, during and after reintegration?
b) How do you think this could be improved?

Area 6
Sweep Question:
Is there anything else, I haven't already asked, which you would like to add?
(either case specific or about reintegration in general)

Introduction: remind of who I am, with a brief outline of the research. and how they were selected for interview.

Question 1
History:
After you were permanently excluded from ---------- school, you were out of school for a while, though you were attending the pupil support centre for some of that time. Do you remember how you felt, then, about being out of school?

Question 1
You started at ----- school in (date). What can you remember about starting there?

Question 2
Can you remember how ready you felt to start there?

| Not
Ready | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Totally
Ready |

Why do you think you felt like this?

Question 3
How determined were you to make it work?

| Not at all
Determined | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Totally
Determined |

Why do you think you felt like this?

Question 4
How easy or difficult did it feel to make the start at the new school?

| Extremely
Difficult | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Extremely
Easy |

Why do you think you felt like this?

Question 5
a. What do you think happened that helped you make a good start here?
b. What did, or could have got, in your way?

Question 6
School personnel:
a. Who *in school* helped your move go smoothly?
b. How helpful was s/he/they?

| Not at all
Helpful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Extremely
Helpful |

c. What did s/he/they do which helped?
d. How did this help?

Question 7
Home support:
a. Who, from home, helped you?
b. What did s/he/they do?
c. How did this help?

Question 8
Outside school support:
a. Do you remember anyone else, from outside the school, who helped you settle in successfully?
b. How helpful was s/he/they?

Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Extremely
Helpful   Helpful
c. What did s/he/they do which helped?
d. How did this help?

Question 9
Is there anything more that could have been done to make your move into the new school easier for you?

Question 10
Longer term:
You have managed to carry on being successful in this school for a long time now. What do you think has helped you to stay here as time has gone on?

Question 11
Involvement:
Around the time of choosing which school you would go to, decisions were being made about which school, when you would start etc.
How involved did you feel in those decisions?

Not at all   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   Totally
Involved   Involved
Why do you think you felt like this?

Question 12
How could you have been made to feel more involved in those decisions?

Question 13
Imagine you were talking to a young person who was ready to start in a new school, after some time out of any school.
What would you tell them are the important things in making the new placement a success?

Question 14
Sweep Question:
Is there anything else, I haven't already asked, which you would like to add?

Appendix 13
Focus Group Format

Information give:

- city - v. good track record reintegrating pupils after permanent exclusion
- Most kids who return to m/s because felt right thing, do so successfully
- Some kids don't stay – other placements, stop attending, exclusion, 'invisible'
- Majority stay, but the ones staying successfully longer than a year are small gp

- I'm following up sml number of small number, and those around them, to see what enabled the placements to be successful in the longer term

These are:
[List of kids and destinations]
Anyone involved with any of these at point of transfer in to new school?

Phase 1: Preparation for Discussion

i) Ask them to note down one or two kids they have been involved with at the point of transfer into new school, when they felt the process was successful (longer term)

ii) Note down all the points you can think of which you felt made the placement successful. Please be over inclusive.

Outline process of focus group including purpose of having discussion as a group
CAMERA

Phase 2:

Let discussion arise from the points made in writing.

Phase 3:

Additional questions to address, if not already raised:
i) What are the important factures to ensure reintegration is successful in terms of:
- Preparation for new placement
- At the time of starting attending
- Maintaining the placement in the long term
ii) What is the role taken by the behaviour support worker, and how is this important?

Phase 4:

From the data collected so far, certain things are beginning to emerge as possible factors. What do you think about these?

- Pupil characteristics seem to feature.
    Ability cropped up as important.
    Pupil's own attitude and determination to succeed
  Raised question of the extent to which supporting adults believe themselves to have an important role in long term success. They seem to see dimensions which are outside of their control as very important.

- There is a suggestion in the literature that pupil/teacher relationships are central to success in school, and that some kids are more vulnerable if these are not good. Alongside this is the idea that disaffected pupils, feeling that this emotional need has not been met, look for sources of self esteem from elsewhere eg peer group, and this can be an important source of maintaining attendance. Indeed kids I spoke to all mentioned this.

- Person involved in direct support to pupil not always the one who involved in initial visits and meetings – first line might involve head/deputy/year heads. Actual support might well concern year head/class tutor/LSA.

- Who's definition of 'success'? Several of the parents I contacted did not regard the placement as a success in the way the authority's statistics did. Raises important questions about how 'success' is defined and also raises queries about the validity of other data held by the authority. Ie some schools had not informed the LEA that 'reintegrated' pupils simply hadn't attended for a period after initial entry. Some were attending but parents viewed the placement as other than successful.

Focus group research is based on the idea that through the process of talking with one another, data will be generated that would not otherwise emerge. Individual interviews would raise particular issues, but the very act of sharing these ideas, leading to participants' comparing and contrasting emerging viewpoints, results in a dynamic which takes the debate to a deeper level.

The intention of this group discussion is to encourage the ideas-generating process to progress as far as possible.

Remembering certain points about how to engage in focus group discussion will help get the most out of the session
(based on ideas in D.L. Morgan 'Focus Groups as Qualitative Research'):

- Feel free to manage the discussion yourselves. If the discussion is going off track, someone can pull the group back to the issue

- If it feels like the discussion is running dry, remember that the purpose is to bring in as many different perspectives and possibilities as you can; please raise issues even if they feel as if they are different from others' experiences and ideas – this is how new concepts will emerge

- Hearing about actual experiences is just as helpful as hearing about ideas/ concepts. So feel free to tell 'stories' as well give opinions.

- All your contributions will be valued. It would be good to feel that everyone has said all they can think of within the time allowed. There are no right or wrong answers, this is exploration.

Thank you very much for taking part.

Jackie

Please write down the names of one or two pupils you were involved with, who successfully reintegrated into a mainstream school following permanent exclusion:

Now jot down as many factors as you can think of which may have contributed to that placement being successful: