Eliciting Pupil Perspectives in a Partnership Project between a Mainstream and a Special School

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In memory of my father,
Jim Wood

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Abstract

The research aims to further an understanding of a partnership scheme between a special school and a mainstream primary school by ascertaining the perspectives of all the pupils involved. Giving pupils a 'voice' is currently high on social and educational agendas, with international and national legislation outlining the need to both listen to the views of children and act upon them (UN, 1989/ UNESCO, 1994).

Partnership schemes are significant within education, as they can contribute to the development of inclusive practices and are widely regarded as a dynamic for change. Whereas previous evaluations of schemes are predominantly adult-led, the current study provides a different insight, as it focuses on the perspectives of all the pupils taking part. Although the opinions of all participants are sought, the study pays specific attention to pupils with little or no speech and/ or significant learning difficulties, who are often neglected in research projects.

The study involved nine special school pupils, with a range of physical/ communication and learning difficulties taking part in a cycle of eight interviews over the course of an academic year. Fifty eight mainstream pupils also contributed to the research, each participating in a cycle of four interviews. Extensive piloting took place in both schools prior to the commencement of the study, to ascertain the most productive methods of eliciting pupils' opinions.

Interviews conducted in both schools demonstrate the success of the link arrangements and outline benefits for all the pupils involved. A common theme is that participation in the partnership scheme is fun, with the majority of pupils expressing their pleasure at taking part in activities in both venues and forming relationships with peers from their partnership school. The study indicates that pupils from both settings have the same range of preferences and fears and highlights the need for schools to fully prepare children for participation in partnership work, providing support, both prior to involvement and on an ongoing basis.

A key finding of the research is that that fluent speech is not a prerequisite for successful communication. The strategic use of questioning, combined with systems to augment communication (including photographs, symbols and examples of work), facilitated pupils with little or no speech in recalling information about activities, individuals and events. The study highlights that we must not underestimate pupils' abilities and that individuals with communication impairments and/ or significant learning difficulties are able to relate their views and make valuable contributions to research projects.

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Abbreviations

AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorders
BSL	British Sign Language
CSIE	Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulty
EBP	Education Business Partnership
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
ICT	Information Computer Technology
KS	Key Stage
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMSS	Local Management of Special Schools
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulty
MVDP	Makaton Vocabulary Development Programme
PCS	Picture Communication Symbols
PIVATS	Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting
PE	Physical Education
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulty
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
NFER	The National Foundation for Educational Research
NLS	National Literacy Strategy
NNS	National Numeracy Strategy
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulty
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Glossary

Term	Description
Augmentative and Alternative communication	The term AAC is used to describe the different methods that can be used to help people with disabilities communicate with others. As the term suggests, these methods can be used as an alternative to speech or to supplement it. AAC includes unaided systems such as signing and gesture, as well as aided techniques ranging from picture charts to sophisticated computer technology. AAC can be a way to help someone understand, as well as a means of expression
Big Mack switch	A single message communication device designed by Ablenet. The battery operated switch has 20 seconds of memory, which allows a message to be recorded and played back when pressed. Symbols can be attached using 'snap switch caps'.
Boardmaker	A software programme created by Mayer-Johnson providing symbol-based communication and educational materials. It combines a drawing programme with a graphics database and features more than 4,500 Picture Communication Symbols (PCS).
Dyna Vox	Dyna Vox Technologies manufacture a range of dynamic display speech output devices which allow users to select the words or phrases that they want to say from a series of customized pages on a touch screen. Many devices allow Boardmaker grids to be imported directly as communication pages.
Makaton	An internationally recognized form of communication run by the Makaton Vocabulary Development Programme (MVDP). It is the main programme of communication for those with any type of learning difficulty in the UK. It is a simpler form of communication than British Sign Language (BSL) and uses signs, symbols and speech. Although signs are standardized, in reality each sign can differ due to an individual's ability and motor skills.
One Step switch	This has the same features as the Big Mack but is smaller and has 75 seconds of recording time. The switch also has an angled surface, making it easy to see and access. It is also known as the Little Mack Communicator.
Talking Mats	A pictorial framework that has been used as a tool for individuals with communication difficulties to express their views. It uses picture symbols to represent topics, options and emotions.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter indicates the sources of influence for the study and provides information about the partnership scheme at the centre of the research. The main aims of the inquiry are outlined, together with the key questions that the study seeks to address. The final section of this chapter details how the thesis is structured.

1.1 Sources of influence

This section outlines my interest in conducting research which both involves and empowers children and my desire to evaluate a partnership scheme by means of eliciting the perspectives of all the pupils taking part.

1.1.1 Giving children a 'voice'

I have a long standing interest in special educational needs (SEN) having been a special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) in a mainstream school prior to teaching in a special school for pupils with physical difficulties. In order to extend my knowledge of the practice and principles of SEN, I embarked upon an Advanced Diploma and a Masters degree, whilst continuing in my current teaching post. Whilst the critical studies undertaken for these degrees presented me with an opportunity to investigate different perceptions of disability, they largely focused on ascertaining the views of staff and parents. As a consequence, I became keen to conduct an investigation in which ascertaining pupils' perspectives was paramount.

Accessing the views of children is currently high on both social and educational agendas. This growing trend towards giving children a 'voice' has certainly influenced my desire to conduct the study. Within education, Davie and Galloway (1996) and Ainscow (1997) stress how taking pupils' views into account can assist the development of effective schools and drives towards inclusion. In recent years, both international and national legislation has provided a growing recognition of children's rights to be heard, as seen in the following:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), with Article 12 noting a child's right to express opinions about all matters that affect them and Article 13 detailing the right to 'freedom of expression';

- The Children Act (DoH, 1989), with Sections 17 (8) 20 (6b) and 22(4a) placing new responsibilities on social services departments to engage children in planning their own futures.

Increased demands have also been made to reduce the marginalisation of children with SEN and increase their involvement in decision making, most notably:

- The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (DfE 1994:14/15, para 2.35-2.37) stresses that children have a right to have their views heard and that they should be encouraged to take part in all decisions that affect them;

- The revised Code of Practice (DfES 2001a: 28, para 3.9) outlines how children with SEN should be actively involved in all aspects of their education.

Although this section highlights aspects of recent research and policies that have encouraged me to undertake the study, a much more detailed discussion of relevant literature is offered in the following chapter (Section 2.3.1).

1.1.2 Eliciting the perspectives of all pupils taking part in a partnership scheme

As part of my current teaching role, I help to coordinate a partnership project between pupils from Berry House Special School and Oak Street Primary School.[1] Despite the partnership scheme between the two schools being subject to ongoing evaluation by staff from both settings, the pupils themselves have had little opportunity to express their perspectives about the experience. Concern that analysis of the scheme is adult-led is a significant factor in my desire to seek the views of all pupils taking part. Although vocal pupils from both schools have the ability to express their feelings about participation on an ongoing basis, I am especially interested in eliciting the opinions of those with little or no speech. Further details about the schools involved and the partnership scheme are provided below.

1.1.2.1 *The schools involved*

Both the special and mainstream schools involved in the study are in the same local education authority (LEA) on the outskirts of a large city in the North of England. The special school caters for children with physical difficulties, the vast majority being wheelchair users. Most pupils at Berry House also have attendant communication and/ or cognitive impairments. The learning difficulties of pupils range from moderate (MLD) and severe (SLD) to profound and multiple (PMLD), with numbers in the latter category increasing markedly in recent years. Berry House pupils reside throughout the city, with the majority being transferred to school via local authority transport. Oak Street school is situated approximately three miles from Berry House. Whereas Berry House has a mixed ethnic population, taking pupils from across the city, Oak Street is situated in a predominantly Asian area. At the outset of the research, 58 pupils (aged 2-13 years) attended the special school, whereas Oak Street had 420 pupils (aged 4-11 years) on roll.

1.1.2.2 *The partnership scheme*

At the time of the research, the partnership scheme between Berry House and Oak Street had run for three years. The scheme involved nine children from Berry House, aged 7-10 years, taking part in structured contact sessions with fifty eight Year 3 pupils at Oak Street for one afternoon session per week. Partnership sessions were rotated between the two schools on a half-term basis. Each of the two Year 3 classes, referred to as Cohort 1 and Cohort 2, were involved for half the academic year, with joint trips taking place at the end of each cycle.

Partnership schemes have been established in many local authorities to overcome the traditional divide between mainstream and special schools and enable children from both settings to join together for both social and curricular activities. Jowett et al (1988), Jowett (1989), Fletcher-Campbell (1994) and Fletcher-Campbell and

[1] To preserve anonymity the names of both schools have been changed.

Kington (2001) all note how such schemes are widely regarded as part of a dynamic for change and a move towards the full inclusion of all pupils with SEN within mainstream schooling, as discussed in the following chapter (Section 2.2.4).
At the time of the research, the partnership project between Berry House and Oak Street involved collaborative work between two teachers and two learning support assistants (LSA) from each school. Although links involved both team-teaching and an exchange of resources, Berry House teaching staff were responsible for the majority of the organisation and planning involved in the project, with the main source of funding arising from Beacon School monies attached to the special school. In addition to the partnership arrangement outlined above, two Year 6 pupils from Berry House had a dual placement with Oak Street. These pupils were previously involved in the partnership venture but, at the time of the study, attended Year 5 classes within the mainstream school for three days per week.

1.2 The aim of the study

The study seeks to provide an evaluation of the partnership scheme between Berry House and Oak Street by eliciting the perspectives of all the pupils involved. During the course of the inquiry, I intend to provide opportunities for children from both schools to discuss their personal experiences of involvement in the scheme and wish to address the following research aims:

- What is the mainstream pupils' knowledge and understanding of disability and does this alter through involvement in the partnership scheme?
- What are the attitudes and expectations of pupils from both the mainstream and special school settings towards the partnership scheme and does this alter over time?
- What are pupils' feelings about their experiences of the partnership scheme and does this alter over time?
- How can the views of all the pupils be best elicited, especially those with little or no speech and/or significant learning difficulties?
- Can changes in pupils' perspectives be tracked over a period of time?

These questions are elaborated upon within the methodology chapter (Section 3.1.2) and are addressed at various points throughout the thesis.

1.3 The structure of the research

Chapter 2 involves a review of current literature in order to situate the study alongside related policy and research. It closely examines the concept of inclusion and outlines challenges to the current dual system of education available in the United Kingdom (UK). It then considers the changing role of the special school and looks at the development of links with the mainstream sector, providing a detailed discussion of the rationale behind partnership schemes. The final part of this chapter focuses on the importance of listening to the views of children, with a particular emphasis on individuals with communication and/ or learning difficulties.

Chapter 3 reports on the methodology, reiterating the aims of the inquiry, the strategy, design and research questions. It provides further details of the pupils taking part in the study and closely examines the ethics involved in interviewing children.

This chapter ends by providing details of the interview and transcription process, highlighting how the data was both gathered and analysed.

Chapter 4 summarises the findings that resulted from the analysis of interview data relating to methodological issues. It investigates how pupils from Berry House and Oak Street communicated information during the interview process and considers how their views were best elicited. The chapter then outlines how changes in perspectives were monitored and investigates pupils' recall in nine different areas.

Chapter 5 outlines findings relating to the perceptions of pupils from both schools towards the partnership scheme. It further investigates their recall of activities and considers their attitudes, expectations and feelings towards the scheme during both initial and later stages of the research.

Chapter 6 relates the study to the current policy and research context and offers a discussion of the key research findings. It then reflects on both the scheme at the centre of the inquiry and the methodology used. Finally, it considers the overall merits of the study and provides considerations for future research

The concluding chapter demonstrates how the study goes some way to fill the gap in previous research. Most notably, it evaluates a partnership scheme from the perspectives of all pupils taking part and ascertains the views of pupils with communication impairments and/ or significant learning difficulties, who have been frequently neglected in educational research.

Chapter Two: Literature review

Introduction

This chapter aims to situate the study within a policy and research context. It contains three sections, focusing respectively on developments in inclusion, links between special and mainstream schools and research involving children. Although I recognise that there are multiple dimensions in each of these fields, I have only selected themes that are the most pertinent to the study.

The first section looks at the development of inclusion both in the UK and internationally and considers whether inclusion is an outcome or a process. A discussion of the challenges surrounding segregated provision follows, including a consideration of rights issues, academic and social factors and pupils with more significant needs. The practical aspects of inclusion are then addressed, looking closely at organisational change, teacher attitudes and the allocation of resources.

The second section investigates the changing role of the special school and considers the challenges that currently face this sector, including changes in pupil profile and staff support. A summary of developments in outreach support, specialist and co-located schools is then provided. Partnership schemes between mainstream and special schools are then assessed in detail and the findings of the three national surveys are summarised. The academic and social advantages of taking part in such initiatives are debated and factors facilitating the development of joint ventures are discussed. Finally, consideration is given to potential restrictions on partnership activities.

The final section looks at the rationale behind listening to children and investigates the reliability of research in this field. The challenge of achieving collaborative arrangements with pupils is then considered. A discussion of issues surrounding the interviewing of children with SEN follows, with particular emphasis on eliciting the views of pupils with little or no speech and those with significant levels of difficulty.

2.1 Inclusion

2.1.1 Inclusion: A developing concept

In this section, the terms 'integration' and 'inclusion' are considered and international differences and wider perspectives taken into account.

2.1.1.1 *The term 'integration'*

During the 1960s the term 'integration' first appeared on the public agenda in most Western societies and, as Lewis (1995) outlines, covered all areas of concern for disability groups, not just education. A shift of paradigm took place in this era, from an understanding of disability based in the natural sciences to one grounded in social sciences. As Vislie (1995) explains, integration emerged as a belief system and had a major impact on policy development. Substantive changes in the economy, society and culture took place in this decade, with society becoming more open and social relations less formal. There was an optimistic outlook and ambitious aims were

proposed for future societal developments. The ensuing general radicalisation of public opinion led to most Western countries placing more emphasis on democracy and becoming increasingly aware of inequalities and discriminatory practices. Demands for improved legal and civil rights followed and this led to an increased commitment to public policies and an expansion of the welfare state.

The 1980s saw a period of economic depression affecting most Western societies and new themes of efficiency, effectiveness and excellence emerged on the political agenda. However, as Vislie (1995) shows, it is difficult to determine the impact of the economic crisis on special education and the process of integration.

2.1.1.2 *The term 'inclusion'*

In the 1990s there was a shift towards the term 'inclusion', which, in the education context, signalled a change in perspective towards how schools could adapt to meet the needs of all pupils. Lewis (1995) suggests two reasons why the term integration was in need of refinement. Firstly, that it was too narrowly interpreted as placement without any regard to the quality of that placement and secondly, that the concept of normalisation was being critiqued throughout the world. Tilstone et al (1998) outline how the foundation of special education policy was previously based on a deficit model of individualisation, with disabled individuals being regarded as inherently flawed and requiring special instruction to meet individual need. In contrast, inclusive education is based on a social model and recognises the value of people with disabilities and the positive contributions that they make to society.

Inclusion emerged as a key international educational policy in the 1990s and most European countries changed their laws with regard to the education of pupils with SEN, encouraged by UNESCO'S 'Salamanca Statement'. This called on governments to adopt, as a matter of policy or law, the principles of inclusive education and enrol children in ordinary schools *'unless there were compelling reasons for doing otherwise'* (UNESCO, 1994, p 44).

2.1.1.3 *Inclusion: an outcome or a process?*

Whereas integration was previously seen in the narrow sense of 'placement', focusing on the location of a pupil's education, it is now increasingly seen as a 'process' and is linked to the nature of their learning experiences. The inclusion process involves whole school and systemic re-organisation. It is about all schools, plus advisory and support services, working together as part of an inclusive education service. The Index for Inclusion (Booth et al, 2002) views inclusion as a continuing process in which the school tries to respond to all pupils as individuals. As Tilstone et al (1998) note, the concept of 'total inclusion' provides an ideological vision which guides long term legislation, policies, planning and resources.

In addition to the macro-level, outlined by Tilstone et al (1998) and Booth et al (2002), there are dimensions of the inclusion process that operate at a personal and interpersonal level. Steele (1998) describes how the inclusion process is characterised by four stages, notably an anxiety stage, a charity stage, an acceptance stage and a true inclusion stage. I have found Steele's framework to be helpful when considering the findings of this study, as highlighted in Section 6.4.2.

2.1.1.4 *A wider perspective*

In recent years, many countries, including the UK, increasingly regard inclusion as concerning the learning and participation of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not just those with SEN, as highlighted by Pijl et al (1997), Meijer (1999) and Mittler (2000). Booth et al (2002, p14) observe a common source of *'intolerance to difference'* in racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, bullying and disablism. Apprehension that racism and SEN can function as twin tools of exclusion is also highlighted in Ferri and Connor's (2005) research of minority groups in the US and Chapman's (2006) study of those with cultural and linguistic differences in Australian society. Attempts to make direct comparisons between the movement towards more inclusive education and the process of racial desegregation can be seen in the work of Reiser and Mason (1990) and Lipsky and Gartner (1996). However, I support the view of Tilstone et al (1998) that although it is apparent that both individuals with disabilities and members of racial minority groups have suffered discrimination in society, any direct comparisons are difficult to make.

2.1.2 Challenges to segregated provision

This section investigates the various challenges that have been made against a 'dual' (mainstream and separate special) system of education and includes a discussion of rights based arguments, academic issues, provision for pupils with significant levels of need and social considerations. The stance of those taking the 'middle ground' in the inclusion debate is also outlined and discrepancies between philosophy and practice are highlighted.

2.1.2.1 *A focus on rights*

In the 1990s there was increasing rhetoric about the immorality of segregated provision, with Oliver (1992) Jupp (1992) and Thomas (1997) championing this as a key human rights' issue. All contend that a dual system is devaluing and discriminatory and propose that instead of a range of educational placements, all pupils can and should be educated with their peers in the same physical location. More recently, Kenworthy and Whittaker (2000) outline how special schools continue to create a system of apartheid and Tomlinson (2001) argues that this system not only plays a major part in creating unequal access to services and resources, but in turn perpetuates stigmatised labelling and the categorisation of disabilities.

Although I find many of the arguments challenging segregated provision both provoking and insightful, Jupp's (1992) pilot study of a group of pupils with SLDs in a mainstream classroom appears the most notable, as it provides detailed suggestions about how to overcome practical challenges. I also think that this study makes more comfortable reading for those of us working within the special school sector, for Jupp does not take the moral high ground on the issue, but acknowledges that there is another point of view. Both Llewelleyn (2000) and Hegarty (2001) suggest that the use of human rights' issues to support inclusion are naïve, arguing that mainstream schools in their current state are also discriminatory, as they do not allow pupils full access to the curriculum, resources or friendship networks.

The rights of children to be involved in choices about their schooling were championed in the 1990s, with many innovations and initiatives in this field

stemming from Scandinavia. Holm et al (1994) outline how intervening in the lives of others, on the basis of what was perceived to be in their best interests, was increasingly criticised in Denmark and efforts were made to involve all children, including those with a wide range of disabilities, in decisions about their education.

The notion of children's rights is complex, as they may have several conflicting rights and there may be disagreement about which should take priority. Smart (2002) highlights how attempts to protect children by holding information from them and safeguarding them from harm, can actually be in conflict with the principles of giving children a voice and encouraging active participation. Children may also have perspectives that differ sharply from those of their parents, as highlighted in the study by McConkey and Smyth (2003). To avoid conflict, Todd (2007) emphasises that schools should make genuine efforts to consult with both parents and pupils and ensure that the views of both are taken into account before any educational decisions are made.

2.1.2.2 ***Academic issues***

Hornby (2001), Farrell (2001), Lindsay (2007), Norwich (2007) and Tutt (2007) all question whether a simple focus on rights is justified and stress that the effectiveness of the education in each setting also needs to be investigated. Like them, I believe that a balance between each pupil's right to inclusion and to an education which fully meets his or her individual needs has to be carefully addressed.

Advocates of inclusion have frequently noted that mainstream settings provide a wider formal curriculum base than those traditionally offered in special schools and that lessons are more likely to be taught by specialist subject teachers. It is also argued that increased academic motivation and engagement in learning can be found within mainstream settings, with Tomlinson (1982) criticising special schools for having both lower status and reduced expectations. Rose and Shevlin (2004) however, regard a lack of ambition as an issue which affects both special and mainstream schools alike. They argue that teachers in both sectors can underestimate a pupil's ability or form stereotyped views of what is likely to be achieved.

Barton (1989) and Tilstone (1991) highlight personal accounts of former special school pupils with learning difficulties who have criticised the teaching profession for underestimating their abilities. Swain et al (2003) also provide examples of adults previously educated in segregated provision who now question the decisions surrounding their placement. Comparable accounts from individuals with SEN educated within mainstream are not available, although Low (2007) is of the opinion that pupils can be equally excluded in this sector by teaching approaches which do not give adequate consideration to individual needs.

Byers and Rose (1996), Carpenter et al (1996) and Tilstone et al (1998) all discuss innovative teaching practices deployed in many special schools, such as raising standards and expectations for those with learning difficulties and providing access to the National Curriculum for those with SLDs. However, Ainscow (1997) questions whether some of the instructional methods developed in special schools may be transferable to inclusive settings. Lewis and Norwich (2005, p 3) also suggest that pupils with learning difficulties may require different styles of teaching in order to learn the same content as their classmates. They argue that mainstream schools

could learn much from the holistic approach advocated by many special schools, which they refer to as a *'3D view of needs'*.

A review of literature conducted by Hegarty (1993) reports that pupils in special schools do not make greater academic or social progress than pupils with a similar level of SEN educated in mainstream settings. However, this conclusion does seem somewhat sweeping, for the studies referred to by Hegarty largely focus on pupils with physical and/ or moderate learning difficulties and pay scant attention to those with more severe needs. Research conducted by Manset and Semmel (1997) also testifies that pupils with SEN can make significant progress in mainstream if the curriculum is differentiated appropriately and specific teaching strategies employed. However, caution is again required when generalising such achievements, for this study also focuses on those with mild to moderate learning difficulties.

According to Connors and Stalker (2003), the academic success of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools is largely related to the availability and quality of appropriate support. Curtin and Clarke (2005) also suggest that pupils with SEN may face increasing difficulties at a secondary level, due to perceived skills shortages and a lack of time to adapt the syllabus. A national survey of participation in school activities by Simeonsson et al (2001) notes that some pupils do not have access to the entire curriculum within mainstream settings, with physical education (PE) being regarded as the most problematic area. Llewellyn (2000) also highlights that pupils with SEN can experience difficulties taking part in both school trips and extra curricular activities and laments that appropriate support rarely extends to activities taking part outside school hours.

2.1.2.3 ***Curriculum issues in relation to those with more significant needs***
Although advocates of inclusion argue that if special schools were to close, a more responsive mainstream system would emerge, many debates have taken place about whether this system would be able to cater for all pupils currently educated within the special school sector, such as those with PMLDs. Some authors debate the success that the special school sector has itself had in catering for such a wide spectrum of needs, with Ouvry (1987) referring to the *'double segregation'* pupils with PMLDs often experience, through being educated in special care classes within special schools.

Simmons and Bayliss (2007) welcome the fact that increased efforts have been made in recent years to include pupils with PMLDs within the 'mainstream' of special schools. However, they discuss an ongoing *'culture of faith'* (2007, p19) in special schools and caution that pupils with PMLDs should not simply be offered an inappropriate curriculum for those with SLDs. Although I support their criticism of the poor practice observed in some schools, such as pupils with PMLDs spending long periods of time in sensory areas when lessons are deemed too complex, I feel that they over emphasised negative observations and only reported accounts from teachers who had relatively low expectations of pupil progress. In addition, I am also surprised that this study does not offer any suggestions as to how pupils with PMLDs can be included within mainstream settings.

There continues to be widespread opinion that some pupils with SLDs and PMLDs will continue to require some kind of segregated provision, for there are limitations

to the extent to which the mainstream curriculum can be differentiated and made relevant. The Tory leader, David Cameron, is a staunch supporter of special schools and recently described their reduction in number as a *'national scandal'* (Lipsett, 2007). Like Lindsay (2007), Norwich (2007), and Tutt (2007), I also believe that it cannot be defensible to include all children in the current mainstream sector, if this means that some of them will not be able to receive the education most appropriate for their SEN. However, I feel that Low's conviction (2007 p 9) that the prospect of mainstream schools being able to address the individual differences of pupils with sensory or learning difficulties as *'something of a Utopian ideal'* is too harsh and undermines the efforts that many schools are making to include a wide spectrum of needs.

2.1.2.4 ***Social considerations***

Supporters of special schools frequently point to the positive social ethos found in many segregated settings, as schools are generally smaller in size than those in the mainstream sector and staff/ pupil ratios usually higher. Special schools are also viewed as something of a safety net, providing extra support to those with social and emotional difficulties, who may be unable to face the challenge of mainstream provision. Studies by Grolnick and Ryan (1993) and Mrug and Wallender (2002) focus on the self-concept of children with SEN in different school environments and highlight how these children often have low self-esteem and few expectations for their own future.

Many advocates of special schools note that such settings provide increased opportunities for pupils with SEN to develop relationships with peers with similar difficulties, which may both add to their sense of identity and develop their self-esteem. A number of pupils interviewed by Curtin and Clarke (2005, p 208) note that attending a special school allows them to develop *'close'* and *'true'* friendships with peers who accept and understand them. Two pupils also convey how they enjoy the peer support and sense of belonging that they gain from this setting.

Many concerns are expressed about special schools, for they can socially isolate pupils by taking them out of their local community. Pupils in segregated settings may have little opportunities to form friendships with peers from their local area, especially if no provision has been made for partnership schemes with mainstream schools. The accounts of two special school pupils interviewed by Curtin and Clarke (2005) bring the social advantages of mainstream provision to the forefront of the reader's mind, as both pupils lament how they are unable to see their friends during holidays, as they live some distance from their school and do not know any peers in their locality. Foreman et al (2004) further outline the wealth of peer interactions and positive role models available in mainstream settings, for such environments reflect real life.

Although several studies note how pupils with SEN are accepted by their mainstream peers in school based activities, few evaluate whether these relationships evolve into personal friendships or inclusion in activities out of school. Curtin and Clarke (2005) discuss a small number of pupils who successfully formed friendships with able bodied peers within mainstream settings, although it is not apparent if these friendships continued out of school. Despite such minor omissions, the authors are able to show the complexity of relationships between peers and highlight the

different strategies of individual pupils for developing relationships and forming friendships.

There are suggestions of high levels of social exclusion for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, with similar results seen in self-reports, peer reports and teacher reports. Research by Llewelleyn (2000) notes that mainstream pupils frequently perceive peers with disabilities as being different and concludes that this increases the likelihood of the latter being ostracised and lacking friends. Nabuzoka (2003, p 320) also notes that such pupils risk social rejection, with significant correlations between children having SEN and peer nominations for both being *'shy'* and a *'victim of bullying'*. The DfES report undertaken by Dyson et al (2004) likewise finds that pupils with SEN can experience rejection and bullying within mainstream settings. More recently, Frederickson et al (2007) indicate that pupils who have significant SEN, but no statements may be of greater risk of victimisation, since they are not usually the focus of positive intervention strategies. This issue is considered further in Section 2.2.4.4.

A recent study by Gibb et al (2007) focuses on a number of mainstream schools reporting a high level of social inclusion. Their investigation into peer group acceptance of former pupils (from a 'model' special school) reports that none were rejected by their classmates. However, the authors are keen to point out that this may be a result specific to the population of this study, with the vast majority being diagnosed as autistic. One aspect of this study that intrigues me is the large number of comments made by the teaching staff about the lack of social competence of the former special school pupils, compared to those made by the mainstream pupils themselves. Although the authors do not refer to this, I wonder whether previous intervention strategies may have encouraged pupils to make favourable responses.

2.1.2.5 *The 'Middle Ground'*

Baroness Warnock, the original architect of the integration policy in England and Wales in1978, has recently challenged the extent to which inclusion can be achieved for all and appears to take the middle ground in the inclusion debate (Warnock, 2005). She argues that the SEN framework[1] is disastrously failing some children and urges the government to set up a committee of inquiry to rethink their approach to SEN provision. A major review of special education took place from 2005-2006 (House of Commons Select Committee, 2006) and supports the general view that inclusive education may only go so far and that full-time mainstream placements for some children may be unrealistic. In response, the government clarified its policy on inclusive education (DfES, 2006a), outlining how it wants local authorities and schools to work together to build provision in mainstream schools, so that over time a mainstream place can be a viable option for all parents who want their child to be taught in such a setting.

Some authors also take the 'middle ground' on the inclusion debate and in doing so appeal to many teachers from both school sectors. Although critics may argue that such teachers are fearful of change and stuck in the past, it is still apparent that both advantages and disadvantages can be seen in special and mainstream schools as they currently stand. Hornby (2001) is frequently cited as taking the middle ground, for he

[1] The SENDA, SEN Regulations and the Code of Practice (revised) are sometimes referred to as the 'SEN Framework'

advocates a long term view of inclusion and argues that for some children with SEN, segregated placement may be the best means to the end of eventual inclusion in the community when they leave school. More recently, Spurgeon (2007) argues that the most inclusive settings for pupils are those that have the most impact on their learning, with similar views being welcomed in the press by teachers from both mainstream and special schools (Campbell-Barr, 2007).

As an extreme polarisation of views on inclusion and segregation may inhibit developments in both school sectors, I believe that a realistic way forward is to take account of both points of view. Skidmore (2004) explores the contested ground between the champions and sceptics in the inclusion debate. His study of two mainstream secondary schools portrays a rich mix of teaching staff, from the visionaries to the resisters of change and is of much interest to me as it appears to echo the diverse opinions held by individuals within my own school and those of the wider teaching community. However, one missing dimension in his debate on inclusion is the opinion of the pupils themselves.

2.1.2.6 *Philosophy versus practice*

The idea that those with SEN should have the same educational opportunities as others is now widely accepted. However, there is still much uncertainty about the practice. Nutbrown and Clough (2006) collated data from 452 early childhood educators from around the UK. They conclude that the term inclusion means different things to different people and that acts of inclusion vary from setting to setting. Although the ethical principles of inclusion are widely accepted, there appears to be significant disagreement about its nature and extent. Florian (1998) debates why there is so much philosophical agreement on rights, yet so much divergence in practice and argues that culture, competing policies, a struggle over limited resources and the prescriptive and centralised nature of special education are each to blame.

Implementing inclusion policies is not an easy task for schools and local education authorities. Commitment to inclusive practices appears to be somewhat sporadic and schools from both sectors have received criticism for being more positive in principle than in reality. Some accounts in the teaching press, such as those edited by Campbell-Barr (2007), note that drives towards inclusion have increased tensions between the two sectors, although it is not possible to verify such claims.

2.1.3 **Organisational change within schools**

This section focuses on drives to make schools more effective and inclusive for all. Facilitators and barriers to inclusion are discussed through an assessment of the views of parents and pupils, an investigation of the attitude of teachers, the deployment of teaching strategies, the allocation of resources and a consideration of within-child attributions and pupil support.

2.1.3.1 *Effective schools*

School effectiveness and improvement is championed by Reynolds (1992) as a way to improve academic outcomes, particularly in the mainstream sector. Ainscow (1995, 1997) takes a wider stance, linking school effectiveness with drives to make settings more inclusive. He outlines a link between the organisational conditions

required to facilitate school effectiveness and those required to carry forward inclusive education, arguing that effective leadership and the setting of clear procedures and structures are key.

The concept of inclusion has implications about how schools can develop and improve. The shift away from explanations of educational failure concentrating on the characteristics of individual children to an analysis of barriers to participation and learning in schools is referred to by Ainscow (2007, p 129) as *'school improvement with attitude'*. He argues that cultures, policies and practices of schools need to be restructured and that inclusion be seen as a continuous process. Mittler (2000) questions the relevance of government reporting via league tables and outlines how radical reform is required in order for schools to be more responsive to the needs of all children. He regards collaborative teaching and learning as the key to future developments and challenges schools to explore ways of working in closer partnership with both pupils and parents, as reflected in the sections below.

2.1.3.2 ***Parental and pupil perspectives***

The anxiety expressed by parents of pupils with SEN may be seen as a significant barrier to inclusion. Surveys of parents of pupils with SLDs conducted by Keller (2000) and Palmer et al (2001) highlight how the majority feel that a mainstream academic curriculum may not be educationally appropriate for their child. Concerns are also expressed that services they deem necessary for their children may not be available within mainstream settings. The lack of support among parents of existing mainstream pupils is seen as another barrier to inclusion, with incidences of parents objecting to their children being educated alongside those with special needs, especially those with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBDs) being reported to schools and the press (BBC News, 2002/ Lipsett, 2007).

The importance of listening to the voices of children appears to be crucial to achieving inclusion and is outlined further in Section 2.3. As a consequence, schools need to be committed to providing pupils with greater opportunities to be understood and to participate in the planning and management of their own learning. Allan (2003) and Nutbrown and Clough (2006) argue that many parents also have unique insights into successful inclusion strategies. Both studies note that teachers working in isolation are far less likely to have an impact than those who work in schools which have strong home-school links and value the contributions of both pupils and parents.

2.1.3.3 ***Teacher perspectives***

Tilstone et al (1998) stress the important role of special school staff in changing attitudes towards pupils with SEN by preparing communities to accept differences, especially through planned personal contact. MacLeod (2001) however, is of the opinion that such a role is untenable, arguing that many teachers within the special school sector lack conviction about suitability of change and may hold a possessive attitude towards pupils in their care. MacLeod's concern is that drives towards inclusion may fuel fears amongst teachers that their practice, values and jobs may be under attack.

Although MacLeod (2001) makes little reference to this, it is possible that much of the anxiety reported in her study may actually be linked to a fear of the unknown,

rather than outright dismissal of inclusion. The majority of special school staff taking part in the Head and Pirrie survey (2007) viewed developments with mainstream as positive experiences, once initial moves towards inclusion had been made. Many staff who took part in this research noted that increased links with mainstream influenced their thinking, that their roles had completely changed and that they had developed new skills and approaches.

Teachers within the mainstream sector have also been criticised for lack lustre support of inclusion. Lindsay and Thompson (1997) and Feiler and Gibson (1999) propose that mainstream teachers are more positive about physical difficulties and MLDs than other disabilities. Research by Allan and Brown (2002) suggests that many schools are unable and in a number of instances, unprepared to encourage inclusion. Reiser and Smyth (2007) also cite the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes as a significant reason why mainstream schools are failing to operate inclusively.

Reynolds (1992), Ainscow (1997) and Wolger (1998) all note the importance of personal vision and leadership, with the latter arguing that success depends ultimately upon the individual teacher and the close support provided within the organisational framework of the school, especially the classroom. Research by Pijl (1995) finds that when teachers have adequate time to familiarise themselves with the SEN of their class and differentiate materials appropriately, inclusion opportunities are increased. This study highlights how the preparation time available to teachers differs considerably between countries and that these fluctuations appear to correlate with the attitudes of teachers.

Robinson (1999), Mittler (2000), Bishop and Jones (2002) and Reiser and Smyth (2007) all note how staff training is widely regarded as an essential prerequisite for inclusion. In order to make schools more inclusive, Booth et al (2002) suggest that staff should examine their own practices and attitudes. Frederickson et al (2004) conclude that teachers with positive attitudes to inclusion have significantly higher levels of classroom satisfaction than those with less positive attitudes. Case study research into two mainstream secondary schools by Skidmore (2004) also illustrates how in specific school situations staff perceptions may lead to more favourable conditions for a reform of thinking and practice. He argues that an open and flexible discourse concerning a reform of the curriculum can influence teacher attitudes and values and consequently their pupils' experiences and learning. Skidmore then invites the reader to reflect on aspects of school organisation, curriculum and pedagogy and how these can contribute to student failure and disaffection.

Nutbrown and Clough (2006, p 27) demonstrate how practitioners can develop their practice of *'thinking inclusion'* when asked to consider scenarios based on real life situations in which inclusive issues are raised. Interviews conducted with staff from both sectors by Gibb et al (2007) lead the authors to conclude that negative teacher attitudes are a barrier to inclusion. There are also suggestions of some differences of understanding regarding the concept of inclusion. However, as Gibb et al (2007) outline, further research is required to ascertain whether teacher attitudes to inclusion result in specific teaching behaviours which may affect the way pupils with SEN are accepted by their peers. The Index for Inclusion (Booth et al, 2002) also seeks to support practitioners in the development of their own (and their settings)

responsiveness to the diversity of pupils. As Nutbrown and Clough (2006) indicate, some LEAs and schools have used the Index to great effect as an instrument of school change.

2.1.3.4 ***Teaching strategies***

The inclusion process may be hampered by inappropriate teaching strategies. Although Rose (1998) notes that the National Curriculum is seen as having brought benefits to pupils with SEN, he argues that when it is interpreted in narrow terms, it can actually inhibit inclusive practice. Gibb et al (2007) stress how both adaptations and instructions need to be focused on the needs of individuals, with emphasis on cooperative teaching strategies, peer-tutoring and in-class support.

A greater understanding of the different learning styles of pupils and an ability to adapt teaching approaches to address these differences are widely regarded as essential requirements to inclusion. Florian (1998) proposes that positive attitudes to the learning abilities of all pupils, teacher knowledge of learning difficulties and skilled application of specific instructional methods are essential. In my opinion, educational attainment is now more easily demonstrated, through the establishment of a National Performance Framework for SEN (DCSF, 2004) and the widespread use of P Scales (QCA, 2007).

2.1.3.5 ***The allocation of resources***

As Cigman (2007) notes, a two tier system of education increases the risk of unfairly sharing resources and expertise between the special and mainstream sectors. Criticism is largely focused on special schools amassing resources that could be used equally well in a mainstream environment. Tomlinson (1982), Barton (1988) and Norwich (1990) all suggest that the special needs 'industry' (ie those specialising in working with pupils with SEN) seeks to perpetuate the vested interests of those working within it and deprive mainstream schools of both human and financial resources. Competition over resources has caused tensions between mainstream and special schools. Within the mainstream sector, difficulties have also arisen due to the provision of adequate resources for SEN, as it would not be cost effective to duplicate specialist resources throughout all schools.

Collaborative arrangements have also caused difficulties, with Ainscow (2007) questioning whether it is sensible to invest staff time supporting individuals in mainstream if this reduces the quality of provision made for those within the special school context. MacBeath et al (2006) analysed the impact of inclusive education policies on key stakeholders (schools, teachers, parents and pupils) in 20 schools in England and call for more targeted resource provision.

2.1.3.6 ***Peer interactions***

An individual pupil's ability to cope within the mainstream sector and/ or their level of social competence appears to have some bearing on inclusion success. Guterman (1995) interviewed a number of special school pupils with previous negative experiences of mainstream education and highlights how individual attributes, such as shyness and low self-esteem often play a key part.

Pivic et al (2002) interviewed pupils with physical difficulties within mainstream schools and their parents about barriers and facilitators to successful inclusion. The

physical environment and physical limitations of the pupils involved in the study were discussed, alongside intentional attitudinal barriers (such as incidents of bullying or isolation) and unintentional attitudinal barriers (such as a lack of knowledge by teachers or peers). As a consequence, the authors stress that schools need to look at both real and perceived constraints in order to facilitate inclusion opportunities. Norwich and Kelly (2004) interviewed pupils with MLDs in both mainstream and special schools and conclude that although most expressed positive evaluations of their school and the teaching they received, a high incidence of bullying was reported. Although bullying was experienced by pupils in both sectors, a significantly higher number of incidents were conveyed by special school pupils.

A number of authors suggest that peer preparation may promote positive social behaviours, social acceptance and successful inclusion. Merrill and Gimpel (1998) and more recently, Gibb et al (2007) and Frederickson et al (2007) note that physical presence does not necessarily reduce negative social perceptions and recommend facilitating strategies to remedy this. Whereas the former two studies outline the benefits of cooperative groupings and the use of peer tutors, Frederickson et al (2007) focus on preparation workshops to highlight individual pupil strengths and enlist empathetic support for areas of difficulty. One interesting outcome of the latter study is that mainstream peers regarded former special school pupils as being significantly more popular as workmates than other pupils with SEN. Frederickson et al (2007) suggest that those taking part in the survey may have taken into account the level of support provided to the former special school pupils, seeking access to the help themselves or wanting to help others. The authors however issue a note of caution, as there appeared to be a trend for former special school pupils to be reported by classmates as victims of bullying.

2.1.4 Concepts of inclusion central to the study

This section has demonstrated how perceptions of inclusion have changed over time, with increasing regard given to the contributions of disabled individuals in all areas of society. Like Tilstone et al (1998) and Booth et al (2002), I regard inclusion as a process that concerns not only schools, but one that requires systemic re-organisation in all areas of society, to include all marginalised groups. However, during the thesis, my perspectives are focused on education, most notably the opportunities for inclusion offered by partnership schemes between special and mainstream schools.

Like Llewelleyn (2000) and Hegarty (2001), I regard children's rights to inclusion as being more complex than one based upon human' rights and believe that there are both advantages and disadvantages to the current dual system of education. I also support arguments by authors such as Hornby (2001) and Farrell (2001), who state that there needs to be a careful balance between each pupil's right to inclusion and to an education which meets their individual needs.

This section has highlighted the academic advantages attached to both special and mainstream schools. However, the thesis primarily focuses on the social aspects of inclusion, closely investigating interactions between peers from both schools. Although I believe that, in order to become more inclusive, schools should value the contributions made by both parents and pupils and make genuine efforts to consult

with them, the primary focus of the study is to ascertain the views of all the pupils taking part in a partnership scheme.

2.2 The changing role of special schools

This section is structured in four main parts. The first investigates the changing role of the special school and the second considers the challenges that currently face this sector. The third part looks at developments in outreach support, specialist and co-located schools and the fourth part focuses on partnership schemes between mainstream and special schools.

2.2.1 Changes in provision

This section illustrates the wide variety of provision available within special schools and investigates the extent of restructuring and school closure.

Meijer (1999) links the success of inclusion to existing education structures and notes that throughout Europe, greater concern emerges in countries who have invested highly in special school provision. Although the whole of the UK falls into the latter category, there are still considerable local variations in special school provision. Whereas some LEAs cater for discrete groups of pupils with SEN, others have generic special schools in order to cater for a wider range of needs.

Much restructuring has taken place in recent years, as LEAs implement special school reorganisation (or plan to do it). As Ashdown and Darlington (2007) show, the drive behind this reorganisation is often twofold, notably the push for inclusion and the poor accommodation of many special schools. The special school sector has undergone significant changes, including changes in the curriculum and teaching and learning. Head and Pirrie (2007) suggest that the introduction of a mainstream curriculum within special schools has led to classes being organised more along mainstream lines. However, they do caution that the impact is not uniform across special schools. The increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) in special schools is also noted in this study, echoing earlier findings in this field reported by Brodlin and Lindstrand (2003).

A number of special schools have closed completely, with government statistics reporting that between 1997 and 2005 the number of maintained special schools in England and Wales had reduced from 1, 171 to 1,049 (House of Commons, 2006). It appears likely that schools that have closed only had relatively few pupils on roll, since Fletcher-Campbell and Kington's (2001) survey of special schools in England and Wales found a slight decrease since 1993 in the number of schools who had less than 50 pupils and a slight increase in the 101-150 band. Although Norwich (2007) highlights an overall national decrease in the proportion of children in special schools in England, Head and Pirrie (2007) indicate no clear trend in respect to an increase or decrease in roll in Scotland.

2.2.2 Challenges faced by special schools

This section considers perceived and actual challenges that the special school sector has faced in recent times. It investigates whether the profile of pupils on special

school rolls has changed, whether staffing levels have differed and whether any adjustments in classroom organisation and teaching styles has taken place.

2.2.2.1 *Pupil profiles*

Research suggests that there is a perceived increase in the range and complexity of conditions in the special school population, with Chamberlain (1991) linking this to the continued improvement of infant survival rates. The 1997 Green paper 'Excellence for all Children-meeting SEN' (DfEE, 1997) recognises that pupil populations have become more diverse and complex in relation to both types of SEN and ranges of ability. However, Fletcher-Campbell and Kington's (2001) survey of special schools in England and Wales notes that learning difficulties still predominate, echoing findings of the previous survey in 1993. Three significant studies have taken place in recent years to determine the current nature of pupil populations in schools for SLDs and PMLDs in the UK, with Male and Rayner (2007) focusing on provision in England, Hunter and O'Connor (2006) in Northern Ireland and Head and Pirrie (2007) in Scotland. All report an increase in pupils with SLDs and PMLDs, with the latter two studies additionally investigating an increase in autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), challenging behaviours and mental health problems.

Many schools taking part in the survey conducted by Head and Pirrie (2007) report that the changing demographic profile of their pupils places them in unfamiliar territory and several schools note that this is a threat to the nature of any specialism that they previously held. The ability of special schools to cater for a wider range of academic ability and a greater variety of SEN has caused problems for many in education, as it is not easy for a teacher to teach a class of pupils with disparate needs, even with good quality support. Tutt (2007) highlights challenges that schools may encounter by being asked to take on pupils outside their experience. As Rose and Coles (2002) warn, if special schools are perceived as providing a population of pupils *'too difficult'* to include, then there is a danger that they may become further isolated from the mainstream sector.

2.2.2.2 *Organisational changes*

Findings by Fletcher-Campbell and Kington (2001) and Male and Rayner (2007) suggest a change in staffing strategies since the 1993 study, which is possibly linked to the extension of local management to special schools. Both studies report a marked increase in the number of accredited teaching assistants, reflecting both LEA and government initiatives since 1993 of systematic training to LSAs. The study by Head and Pirrie (2007) suggests that the skills mix in Scottish special schools has likewise changed, with a significant rise in the number of LSAs being reported. A number of schools in the latter study, as with those surveyed by Male and Rayner (2007), indicate that provision for therapy services has been reduced in recent years, with individual schools attributing this to services being stretched to cover the mainstream sector.

2.2.3 Links between special and mainstream schools: The development of outreach support, specialist schools and co-located schools

In 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' (DfES, 2004) the government made clear that it seeks a vital and continuing role for special schools as part of the inclusive

education system. It notes the importance of special schools in meeting children's needs directly and working in closer partnership with mainstream schools *'to build expertise throughout the system'* (p 26, para.30). This section investigates how some special schools have contributed to the systemic change needed to make education more inclusive through developing outreach support, becoming more specialised and co-locating with mainstream schools.

2.2.3.1 *The provision of outreach support*

The development strategies of many special schools include providing various forms of outreach to support their mainstream colleagues in successfully meeting the needs of pupils with SEN. Effective outreach can raise the profile of special schools and help raise standards and achievement for pupils in both sectors. As Newport (2005) outlines, outreach may involve special school staff inviting mainstream colleagues to observe a range of good practice within their school and modelling specific teaching approaches and specialist resources. Both Ainscow (2000) and Tutt (2007) note how special school staff can also support individuals in mainstream regarded as being likely for possible transfer to special provision or who are vulnerable to exclusion, with Tutt (2007, p 6) promoting a *'revolving door idea,'* whereby pupils with SEN spend only some of their time in special education.

Studies by Bannister et al (1998) and Gibb et al (2007) detail how two former special schools have emerged as models in providing outreach support, achieving very high levels of pupil inclusion with a number of mainstream schools. The authors of both studies regard the specialist knowledge of each inclusion team as a major factor in facilitating inclusion. Staff successfully liaise with therapists, parents and outside agencies and provide both regular planned contact and hands-on support to their mainstream colleagues, with these skills being increasingly assimilated and owned by the mainstream staff over time. Although studies focusing on individual achievements give valuable suggestions for the development of outreach support, I feel that much more could be learnt if the researchers had been able to compare the model settings with other schools not including pupils as successfully.

LEAs in South West England have been instrumental in developing a self evaluation framework to enable specialist providers to review their arrangements for outreach support (Newport, 2004) and formulating guidance for special school colleagues (Newport, 2005). Newport (2005, p 4) argues that special schools are the *'natural providers of outreach,'* as they have effective and accurate systems to assess complex needs and determine appropriate intervention strategies. She outlines how outreach staff from special schools may have an advantage over central support services, as their teaching status gives them credibility with their mainstream colleagues.

In recent years the Department for Children, Schools and Families has set up eleven 'Regional Partnerships' in England and Wales to develop and promote inclusive policies in healthcare, education and social services, such as Facilitating Inclusion North East (DCSF, 2008). Newport's (2004) study aims to provide a snapshot of the South West regional partnerships during the Spring of 2004. Although the response rate from LEAs is good (81%), the response of special schools in the region is poor (16%). As a consequence, the study fails to provide a comprehensive picture of outreach from the perspective of special schools in the region. In my opinion, the

credibility of the research is also dampened by the author making some sweeping generalisations, such as linking the poor special school response rate to the pressures special schools are under at present, rather than considering any other factors. From my own experience, I would add that although there are some teachers who are keen to take part in research initiatives, there are many others who have insufficient time to do so, some who are suspicious of questionnaires and other surveys and some who simply lack interest in outreach initiatives.

2.2.3.2 *The formation of specialist schools*

New avenues include the formation of 'Trailblazer' schools which specialise on a particular disability or group of disabilities, as noted in a recent White Paper 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for all: More Choices for Parents and Pupils' (DfES, 2006b). The role of these schools is to educate children with disabilities and send teachers into mainstream to share their expertise. As Mortimore (2006) outlines, the government's aim is for numbers to increase from twelve to fifty in two years, whilst the number of specialist non-mainstream schools (former special schools specialising in particular curriculum areas) is set to rise from thirty to over fifty during 2008.

Wiltshire (1998) questions the ideas of creating 'centres of excellence', for such titles may imply that those who work in them have all the expertise, which runs contrary to the notion of partnership. Macbeath et al (2006) also question their place in an inclusive education system. They interviewed staff in a range of schools about their commitment to inclusive practices and compared this with data collated from parental questionnaires and pupil observations. Macbeath et al conclude that collaborative initiatives are currently being undermined by fragmentation of school types (such as specialist schools, academies and selective schools), competition for pupils and a reluctance to accept children who may be detrimental to a school's attainment profile. The authors call for a reappraisal of national education policy in order to enhance collaboration among schools and ensure the best services are delivered to all children.

2.2.3.3 *The co-location of special and mainstream schools*

Many local authorities are now seeking to co-locate special and mainstream schools in order to facilitate the merging of responsibilities and the sharing of resources. The recently opened Education Village in Darlington (Smith, 2007) is one vision for future development with an integrated leadership and management scheme. As Smith shows (2007), architecturally and educationally, the special school is at the centre of the process, rather than an adjunct. Ashdown and Darlington (2007) report on the situation in North Lincolnshire, where two co-located special schools have recently been built and opportunities for inclusion in mainstream activities have been planned from the outset. The special schools themselves are designed as resource bases, providing professional advice and support to the mainstream sector in order to develop inclusive practices for pupils with learning difficulties. In the future, it is hoped that specialist classes within mainstream schools themselves will be established as resource bases, offering specialised and intensive teaching and assessment opportunities.

2.2.4 Links between special and mainstream schools: The development of partnership schemes

Link arrangements between special and mainstream schools represent a transition between segregated and integrated education and can act as an effective model for promoting inclusion at a primary level. As Wolger (1998, p87) notes:
'The interaction between pupils with and without disabilities, and between the staff of both types of school, is a catalyst for more intense involvement between the schools'.

As the study is concerned with eliciting the views of pupils involved in a partnership scheme, an extensive review of such initiatives is offered in this section. The first section provides an overview of the development of partnerships in wider society, whilst the second summarises the results of three national surveys. Next, a discussion of the academic and social outcomes of partnership work between mainstream and special schools is provided. In the final section, factors that both facilitate and restrict the development of schemes are assessed.

2.2.4.1 *An overview*

'Partnership' or 'link' arrangements between special and mainstream schools have a history that spans over thirty years, although their popularity increased in the 1990s when interactive decision making and the search for cooperation was seen in all areas of society. Partnerships have been a central feature of British social welfare policy since 1997 when the New Labour government came to power. Current policy encourages partnerships between statutory organisations and professionals, public and private sectors, with voluntary organisations and local communities. However, as Glendinning and Powell (2002) reveal, an imbalance of power characterises many contemporary partnerships. A recent study by Powell and Dowling (2006) tries to establish whether partnerships that are mandatory are more successful than voluntary arrangements. Although the authors report that many of the partnerships enforced by New Labour are performing better than collaborative arrangements established prior to 1997, they conclude that more studies are required in order to provide definitive answers.

2.2.4.2 *National surveys of partnership schemes*

Following implementation of the 1981 Education Act (DES, 1981), a large scale study of support for mainstream schools in meeting SEN was undertaken by NFER and sponsored by the Department of Education and Science from 1983 to1986 (Moses et al, 1987). Links between special and mainstream schools formed part of a three tier investigation of support, which also included local authority support services and in-service training and professional development. The first survey was conducted by Jowett et al (1988) and involved questionnaires being sent to all special schools in a quarter of local authorities in England and Wales and a series of detailed case studies on nine well-established link schemes. In 1993 a follow up survey was organised (Fletcher Campbell, 1994), with questionnaires being sent to all special schools in England and Wales, plus additional discussions with the nine schools who were the subject of previous case studies. A further follow-up was undertaken in 2000 (Fletcher-Campbell and Kington, 2001) with questionnaires again being sent to all special schools in England and Wales.

2.2.4.2.1 *Numbers involved*

There has been a steady increase in collaborative arrangements in recent years. 89% of the schools taking part Fletcher-Campbell and Kington's (2001) review note some type of link with mainstream, highlighting a 6% increase in schools reporting links since the previous survey. Over half the schools involved in Head and Pirrie's (2007) research in Scotland also indicate an increased number of partnership arrangements with the mainstream sector. Schools in both these surveys report links with a large number of mainstream schools, reflecting the desire to reintegrate pupils into their local school to enable them to become part of their local community and acting as a reminder that special schools often serve a wide geographical area.

A comparison of survey data from England and Wales shows an increase in government funding of partnership schemes in recent years, as 11% of respondents in the 1993 survey confirmed that provision was available within their authorities Local Management of Special Schools (LMSS), whereas in 2000 this rose to almost a quarter of responding schools. However, it does not appear that financial support is a positive incentive for collaboration, since the majority of respondents in the latter survey (77%) give either negative or uncertain responses concerning funding.

2.2.4.2.2 *The movement of pupils between schools*

Fletcher-Campbell and Kington (2001) note that links are somewhat shorter in duration than in the previous survey and suggest that most schools are making arrangements for individual rather than group activities. When looking at the participation of special school pupils in different areas of the curriculum in mainstream schools, there is a notable increase in numbers taking part in English and mathematics, which may be linked to the influence of the National Literacy Strategy (DCSF, 1997) and National Numeracy Strategy (DCSF, 1998). However, the decrease in the number taking part in science, design technology, languages, physical education and drama is interesting, since some of these subjects need specialist facilities which some special schools do not have. Unfortunately, no comparison data is available for pupil involvement in ICT, as it was only added as a category in the latest survey.

A significant increase in the complementary movement from mainstream to special schools has occurred in recent years, which Fletcher-Campbell and Kington (2001) refer to as *'reverse integration'*. When comparing data from the second and third surveys, the authors report a two fold increase of mainstream pupils visiting special schools on a weekly basis. This leads them to suggest that the mainstream sector may be using special schools as a specialist resource or that collaborative arrangements are in place, allowing special school pupils the opportunity to learn alongside mainstream peers in a familiar environment.

2.2.4.3 ***Outcomes of involvement in partnership schemes***

This section investigates the numerous benefits that are claimed for partnership schemes. It focuses on both academic and social outcomes and the process issues required in order to make such ventures more effective.

2.2.4.3.1 *Academic outcomes*

Although Steele and Mitchell (1992) imply that increased academic achievement for pupils with learning difficulties is possible within inclusive settings, little research

has actually taken place to verify such claims. Both Hegarty (1993) and Florian (1998) note how 'no-difference' findings in educational achievement for pupils with SEN in inclusive classrooms are often interpreted as pro-inclusion and argue that a closer investigation of academic outcomes is required. Although the introduction of P Scales (QCA, 2007) has made it easier to assess the academic achievements of pupils with learning difficulties in both sectors, my literature search confirms the view that researchers continue to focus largely on social outcomes.

There is also some disagreement amongst researchers about the positive effects that involvement in partnership schemes has on receptive and expressive language development of pupils with SLDs. Shevlin and O'Moore (2000) emphasise how such arrangements allow pupils with SLDs to generalise their communication skills in a natural social environment. Dockrell (2004) also outlines benefits that can accrue from pupils having increased opportunities to communicate with more articulate peers. However, in her study of language development, Ware (2004) observes few advantages for pupils with SLDs involved in integrated sessions in terms of amount of interaction and notes that there seems be a higher level response to pupil language in segregated settings, which may motivate language use. She concludes that it is the type and structuring of activities, rather than the presence or absence of mainstream peers, that appears to be crucial in increasing response rate.

When investigating the broader curriculum, several authors outline benefits for pupils on special school rolls involved in partnership activities. Jowett (1989) and Noonan Walsh et al (1996) note how mainstream settings provide a wider range of curriculum opportunities, arguing that it is more likely that pupils will be taught by a greater range of curriculum specialist teachers and have opportunities to use more specialist facilities and resources. Both also outline the possibility that that being part of such a process may lead to full-time placement in a mainstream school.

A number of authors additionally testify how taking part in activities within special school settings can have advantages for mainstream pupils. Farrell (1997) and Gibb et al (2007) indicate that mainstream pupils may benefit from access to the specialised curriculum and small class sizes of the special school sector. They also discuss the positive ethos of many special schools and note how a more holistic approach to education and an emphasis on experiential opportunities have helped such schools create rich learning environments. Recent government initiatives are also encouraging mainstream schools to provide opportunities for experiential learning, as seen in the Primary Strategy 'Excellence and Enjoyment' (DfES, 2003).

Involvement in partnership schemes has many advantages for teachers from both school sectors. Noonan Walsh et al (1996) outline how schemes facilitate increased contacts between staff, lead to an exchange of ideas, an acquisition of new skills and sharing ways of planning a joint curriculum. Both Rose and Coles (2002) and Newport (2005) also note how collaboration can help raise expectations for all pupils and allow staff to overcome logistical problems, such as physical access to lessons.

2.2.4.3.2 *Social benefits*

Research concerning social relationships and friendships between pupils from the two school sectors has received far more coverage than academic outcomes. One explanation why studies have leaned towards social considerations may be that such

issues are considered more valuable and relevant by practitioners, teachers and pupils. However, as Frederickson et al (2007) outline, it may also be a factor that data from such studies may be somewhat easier for researchers to both collate and measure.

Several studies report social benefits for special school pupils taking part in partnership activities with mainstream schools. Jowett et al (1988) and Noonan Walsh et al (1996) note that pupils from special schools can gain a sense of achievement about their ability to mix with their mainstream peers and engage in cooperative learning. Partnership activities may also provide pupils with practical experiences of learning a range of social skills that have been taught in a more formal way in the special school. Benefits may also accrue by working alongside more able peers, for as Beveridge (1996) outlines, mainstream pupils who represent 'competent peers' can be powerful role models.

Many studies report some degree of social acceptance of disabled pupils by their able-bodied peers, although those which use ratings of social competence suggest that some children with disabilities are more popular than others. Farrell (1997) notes that younger, more able pupils are more likely to be successfully included. Hunt and Goetz's (1997) small scale research focusing on the placement of a small group of pupils with SLDs in a mainstream class indicates that positive interventions may increase social interactions and friendships. Their conclusions are more optimistic than those of Farrell (1997), for his study notes that interactions are generally limited, one-directional and didactic. Both these studies also emphasise the need for emotional and practical support to be offered to special school pupils engaging in partnership activities, for considerable social skills and self-confidence are required in order to socialise with mainstream peers.

Peck et al (1990) and Cheminais (2003) note an equal number of benefits for children from mainstream settings, such as the development of personal, social and communication skills. A number of researchers also indicate how involvement in partnership activities encourages the development of tolerant and caring attitudes. Jowett et al (1988) outline how mainstream pupils may develop a greater awareness and understanding of diverse needs, which can help modify stereotypes of those who are different. Helmsetter et al (1994) also report a range of positive attitudes towards those with moderate and severe disabilities following integration experiences. Likewise, a study by Marom et al (2007) highlights that disability related attitudes and '*specific self-efficacy*' (an individual's judgement of how well they can perform a behaviour) improved over time for mainstream pupils who participate in partnership activities with special school peers, yet similar results are not found for pupils in a control group not taking part.

Although some investigation has taken place into the attitude and perception of mainstream peers in partnership activities, such as the study by Shevlin and O'Moore (2000), few studies have attempted to elicit the views of pupils from both school sectors, with those of Beveridge (1996) and more recently, Whitehurst (2006) being notable exceptions. Consequently, there is a significant need for more studies focusing on collating the views of pupils with SEN. I believe that it is only through eliciting the opinions of all those involved in partnership work, that a comprehensive

picture of the academic and social advantages of taking part in such activities can be truly attained.

2.2.4.4 *Factors facilitating links*

This section looks at studies which have investigated individual partnership schemes and summarises recommendations for good practice.

Small-scale research projects undertaken by Steele and Mitchell (1992) and Marom et al (2007) provide many suggestions for both special and mainstream schools wishing to set up partnership schemes. Both studies urge educators to invest in partnership schemes during children's early lives at school, as they are a significant way of developing positive attitudes towards pupils with disabilities. Steele and Mitchell (1992) also contest that pupils should join the correct chronological age group, should receive support to ensure they are sharing experiences and working together and that a maximum of two or three children should join one class, as this appears to decrease the likelihood of pupils forming isolated groups. In his literature search on partnership activities, Farrell (1997) likewise recommends limiting the number of special school pupils involved in sessions in order to facilitate the development of relationships between pupils. As noted in Section 2.2.4.3.2, he also suggests that links involving more able pupils with learning difficulties, who do not present challenging behaviour, often have better chances of success.

Both Fletcher-Campbell (1994) and Shevlin and O'Moore (2000) conclude that structured activities (such as art and craft or physical education) are more successful than unstructured activities (such as free play or eating lunch) in fostering interactions between pupils. The need for good planning and evaluation strategies to be in place, with pupils having shared goals, is noted in research by both McConkey and McCormack (1983) and Fletcher-Campbell and Kington (2001), with the latter researchers warning that links can be hampered by mainstream timetables where there is insufficient flexibility.

Interactions between mainstream pupils and their special school peers may also need to be systematically guided and encouraged by teachers, for as Beveridge (1996) shows, positive social interactions do not tend to occur spontaneously between such groups. However, the amount of support given needs to be closely monitored, for as Lincoln et al (1992) note, excess support can actually be a hindrance, leading to fewer interactions between special school pupils and their mainstream peers.

Steele (1998) cautions that pupil involvement in partnership schemes does not inevitably lead to the development of positive attitudes and contends that mainstream pupils may have limited understanding and misconceptions about disability. However, several researchers note how staff from both school sectors can help pupils work through any reservations they may have about taking part. Shevlin (2003) and McConkey and Smyth (2003) outline how staff can help pupils to discover similarities between themselves and peers in their partnership school prior to involvement in projects and Germain (2004) notes how it may be helpful to provide explanations of different communication systems to mainstream peers.

2.2.4.5 ***Potential restrictions***

This section acknowledges the potential gains that can be made from taking part in partnership schemes, yet notes that such benefits must be seen in light of demands such contact makes on the schools taking part.

Establishing partnership schemes can cause innumerable challenges for both mainstream and special schools. As Jowett et al (1988) highlight, many practical difficulties need to be overcome, such as pupil selection, transportation, timetable restructuring and room allocation. Modifications may also be required in order to facilitate physical access to sessions and ensure that all pupils can fully participate in the planned activities.

Although special schools have traditionally been the drivers of partnership programmes, with expertise in providing creative learning environments, it appears imperative that staff in both sectors be involved in all stages of planning, delivery and assessment. There is a danger that unless goals are clearly identified and shared between the two settings, partnership schemes will lack direction. Several authors outline the need for a high level of collaboration and a sharing of resources and expertise between schools. Fletcher- Campbell (1994) stresses the importance of each school regarding its counterpart as having a positive contribution to make to the project. Likewise, Rose and Coles (2002) caution that partnership activities are unlikely to succeed without the commitment and practical support of teachers from both sectors.

The success of partnership schemes may also be hampered by restrictions on time and budgets. Both Wiltshire (1998) and Ainscow (2007) express concern that the culture of competition in education and the government's standards agenda may be leaving mainstream schools less space, time and resources to take part in such arrangements. As Cheminais (2003, p 6) cautions, it is essential that each school is 'up front' about what it wishes to get out of the relationship and the time and resources it wants to commit, for:

'Partnerships can break down quickly when just one school does not dedicate enough time to making it work'.

2.2.5 Summary of the changing role of special schools

This section has highlighted the variations in special school provision within LEAs and has considered the extent of both re-structuring and school closure. It has investigated both perceived and actual challenges that currently face special schools, including changes in pupil profiles and staffing levels. This section has looked at how special schools can be part of an inclusive education system (Removing Barriers to Achievement, DfES, 2004), with attention being paid to outreach support, specialised provision and the co-location of schools.

Detailed consideration has been given to partnership activities between special and mainstream schools, as these collaborative arrangements form the focus of the study. The results of three national surveys have been summarised, indicating a steady rise in partnership schemes in recent years. Both academic and social outcomes of partnership work have been debated, including the development of personal and communication skills. Factors facilitating links have been outlined, such as the

provision of appropriate support and the necessity of schools having shared goals. In addition, the potential restrictions of partnership activities have been highlighted, with attention paid to the practical difficulties of both establishing and running schemes.

2.3 Research involving children

This section investigates the rationale behind listening to children and considers the reliability of research in this field. The challenges of achieving collaborative ways of working in schools are then discussed. Following this, issues surrounding the interviewing of children with SEN are outlined, with particular emphasis on those who have communication impairments and/ or multiple difficulties.

2.3.1 Giving children a 'voice'

Listening to children is now seen as a key element in the development of effective schools and the process of inclusion. As a consequence, there has been a marked increase in recent years in research that seeks to find out children's perspectives, as seen in the work of Davie and Galloway (1996), Clark and Moss (2001) and Smart (2002). Gersch (1996) outlines three main interacting principles which underlie efforts to give children 'a voice', notably an *ethical* belief about children's competence, a *logical* belief about their rights and a *pragmatic* belief that societal improvements can be made through ascertaining their views. In this section, each principle will be discussed in turn.

2.3.1.1 *Ethical beliefs*

The 20th century saw a transformation in the philosophical concepts of childhood. Prior to this, children were perceived in a highly paternalistic fashion and their rights and status as separate from their parents were not seen as a worthy issue. Ethical views that all humans have the right to autonomy and an ability to determine what is in their own best interests became increasingly popular. Children were no longer regarded as passive recipients, but as individuals capable of taking an active involvement in events and situations. They were increasingly seen as having competence to understand, to reflect and to give accurate and appropriate responses. Recognising the validity of children's experiences was an initial step towards treating them with greater respect and a starting point for hearing what they have to say.

2.3.1.2 *Logical beliefs*

Although children do not acquire full autonomy to exercise freedom of choice in all areas that affect their lives until they reach the age of eighteen, recent decades have seen changes in their status and a growing recognition of their rights to be heard, to participate and to have control over their lives. The voice of the child has been acknowledged and supported by both international and national legislation. Article12 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) represents a culmination of shift from children as passive objects of parental rights to legal subjects in their own right, as it calls upon governments and agencies who work with children to both listen to their views and act upon them.

2.3.1.3 *Pragmatic beliefs*

Taking children's views into account has become an increased priority in health, social and educational agendas. The Children Act (DoH, 1989) places new duties on social service departments to involve children in planning their own futures and the revised Special Needs Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a) contains strong references to ascertaining children's views. The associated SEN Toolkit (DfES 2001b) recognises that positive pupil involvement is unlikely to occur spontaneously and that in order to give relevant and full responses, children need careful attention, guidance and encouragement. It stresses the importance of hearing the views of pupils with SEN and building a 'listening culture' in schools and includes material on enabling participation in statutory assessment, annual reviews and transition plans. Between 2000 and 2005, 'Commissioners for Children' have also been appointed in the UK, with the explicit purpose of enabling the voices of children to be heard. Although all these initiatives aim to give pupils with SEN a greater role in decision making and action taken about their school placement, actual achievements in this field appear to fall some way behind rhetoric and are subject to further discussion in Section 2:3.3.

An increased commitment to assisting children in articulating their experiences within an educational context is widely seen as bringing benefits to individual pupils and to schools as a whole, as discussed by Rudduck and Flutter (2000) and Ravet (2007). Rudduck and Flutter (2000) note that pupils' accounts of their experiences of being learners can lead to changes that enable them to feel a stronger sense of commitment to schools and to the task of learning and suggest that such commitment can lead to both enhanced levels of effort and attainment. However, the authors caution that difficulties can arise when eliciting pupils' views about some aspects of schooling, such as *'the curriculum'* (2000, p 75) and note that educators could do more to help pupils develop a language for talking about learning and themselves as learners.

Clark and Moss (2001) and Smart (2002) note how listening to children's educational experiences can help schools both accommodate and support individual needs. Involving pupils in decision making is also believed to increase an individual's self confidence and promote personal achievement. Research by Rose et al (1999) and Lewis (2002a) shows how pupils with SEN can gain much from being involved in setting their own targets, as increased involvement both raises self awareness and allows staff to develop their understanding of individual needs.

Ascertaining the views of pupils can also lead to wider improvements within schools, as staff and pupils often experience the same events or situations differently. Although I fully support Curtin and Clarke's (2005) argument that listening to what children with disabilities have to say about their educational experiences will help determine how best to support their needs and assist schools in developing inclusive practices, I feel that further developments could also be made in the field if the perspectives of all pupils affected by inclusion were sought. I therefore hope to build a more comprehensive picture of a partnership scheme in the current study by eliciting the views of both pupils with disabilities and their able bodied peers.

2.3.2 **The reliability of research**

This section looks at the reliability of children's accounts and considers the particular risks that researchers encounter when attempting to elicit the views of pupils with learning difficulties.

In the past, children were not directly involved in research, due to beliefs about their maturity and apprehensions over ethics. As Kenworthy and Whittaker (2000) discuss, longstanding concerns that children cannot make judgements, develop opinions or that their responses are unreliable hampered progress in this field. Over the past decade, debates have continued regarding the reliability of the accounts of young children and older children who function at a lower level of ability. Goodman and Schwartz-Kenney (1992), Beresford (1997) and Moore and Sixsmith (2000) all note how types of risk vary according to the age of the child, for younger children, with the least social power can feel very constrained by the wishes of adults around them, whereas older children are more vulnerable to threats to their self esteem. The vividness and creativity of children's imaginations has also been debated, although Keats (2000) warns that imaginary responses should not be interpreted as memory failure or error.

When looking at the particular risks of research associated with students with learning difficulties, Connors and Stalker (2003) note that such pupils may have a tendency to acquiesce to the suggestions of others and highlight how researchers can place significant cognitive and linguistic demands on respondents. Lewis and Porter (2004) argue that researchers need to pay greater attention to emotional demands, arguing that children need to have the self-esteem to believe that their views are valued and important. Lewis (2002b, 2004) laments that there is a lack of evidence concerning the authenticity, credibility and reliability of particular methods of exploring the views of children with learning difficulties. Although the vulnerability of involving children, especially those with learning difficulties, in research cannot be denied, like Lewis (2002a), I do think it is possible for researchers to aim to reflect their views authentically, while acknowledging that interviews with children can expose some limitations.

2.3.3 **Challenges facing schools**

This section looks at the difficulties that schools experience when attempting to gather pupils' opinions. It also highlights how both schools and the wider community need to make genuine efforts to respond to the views of children.

A major challenge for schools is to move beyond the rhetoric about attaining the opinions of pupils and achieve collaborative ways of working. Despite developments, the overwhelming reality is that children's voices still do not feature significantly in educational decision making. Rudduck and Flutter (2000, p83) stress how educators need to build more opportunities for pupil participation and pupil voice into the *'fabric of the school's structure'* and argue that school councils need to be at the centre of decision making, not merely an adjunct. Curtin and Clarke (2005) note how establishing a 'listening culture' within schools is not an easy task and highlight how restrictions on time and the fact that some children appear to be consulted more than others can hamper progress. A change of ethos is often required,

to ensure that pupils' perspectives are not simply assumed, but real efforts are made to find out individual opinions and that the views of pupils are taken seriously. However, as Todd (2007) laments, many schools still operate within an adult-centred framework and little research has taken place into the tangible outcomes of consultation and participation in services and schools.

As participation in decision making may be threatening for pupils, they need to have a clear understanding about the rationale for their involvement and an understanding of the consequences. Russell (1996) and Beresford (1997) stress the importance of establishing genuine consultations with children, as risks of tokenism and exploitation are high. Ward (1998) and Lewis and Kellett (2004) note that the level of vulnerability increases and the power relationship becomes more acute when attempting to elicit the views of children with SEN. The need for both reflection and sensitivity is shown by Smart (2002, p 307), who concludes that researchers will only have success in listening to children if they show empathy and attempt to place themselves *'in the shoes of a child'*.

The government has received criticism from some charitable bodies and researchers for not doing enough to involve children as genuine partners in developing services. A report by Save the Children (2002) notes that in the design of children's services adults continue to hold a dominant role, which is often of detriment to the perspectives of children. The report also argues that many initiatives place too much emphasis on pupil's disabilities instead of focusing on personal strengths. Both Jones (2005) and Curtin and Clarke (2005) stress the importance of remembering that pupils with disabilities are not a homogenous group and urge the government to consider them first and foremost as individuals. Lewis and Porter (2004) express concerns that the process of hearing the views of children could become over-formulaic and urge the government to respond to, not just hear, their views. Lewis (2004) champions a more constructive public policy direction to develop a stronger sense of community in the wider society, in which all people and all children matter.

2.3.4 **Involving children with special educational needs in research**

This section provides an overview of research involving children with SEN and discusses initiatives made by charitable and legal bodies in this field. It also highlights the challenges that researchers face when eliciting the views of children with more significant learning difficulties.

A number of charity funded projects provide guidance about undertaking research with children who have SEN. The *'Who Cares? Trust'* (Morris, 1996) and the *'Ask Us Project'* (Mitchell, 1999) both use multi-media approaches to involve disabled children in influencing policy development and argue that given appropriate support, all children, including those with severe difficulties and/ or challenging behaviour can express their views, wishes and feelings. *'Two Way Street'* (NSPCC, 2000) has produced a training video to assist practitioners in building confidence and skills in communicating with disabled children who are non-verbal.

Research within the criminal justice system provides a significant amount of guidance about interviewing children. Substantial changes in this field can be seen in the Memorandum of Good Practice (DoH, 1992), which outlines ways to obtain valid

accounts from children and reduce the stress of the interview situation. Despite improvements, it has been criticised by Aldridge and Wood (1998, 2000) for having insufficient guidance on questioning skills and a lack of information about interviewing children with disabilities. New guidance emerged following The Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act (HM Government, 1999), which increases the likelihood that witnesses with learning difficulties will have their evidence heard in court. Both Milne and Bull (2001) and Cooke (2001) show how developments in the use of cognitive interview techniques, intermediaries and video evidence can help retrieve accounts from witnesses with SEN.

Despite initiatives in both charitable and legal fields, the bulk of research into listening to the educational experiences of pupils with SEN focuses on pupils with physical difficulties and/ or mild to moderate learning difficulties, as their receptive and expressive language skills are generally higher than those with more severe needs. Studies by Connors and Stalker (2003) and Curtin and Clarke (2005) are typical examples, with participants being able to give comprehensive and often lengthy answers. Although both studies provide valuable insights into the educational experiences of individuals with SEN, I am left somewhat puzzled why such articulate pupils were placed in the special school sector at all.

Studies focusing on the first-hand experiences of children who function at lower developmental levels or who have communication difficulties are fewer in number, largely because the majority of professionals do not have the resources or experiences to conduct interviews. Both Beresford (1997) and Leicester (1999) express concerns that a lack of visibility in research has led to children with more significant disabilities forming a highly neglected group in society. However, efforts to redress this have seen a steady rise in recent years, with small-scale studies by Alderson and Goodey (1996), Morris (1998) and Moore and Sixsmith (2000) proving that even those with a severe communication and/or cognitive impairments can take an active part in research.

2.3.5 **Involving children with communication difficulties in research**

In this section, consideration is given to challenges researchers may encounter when attempting to elicit the views of pupils with communication difficulties. A more detailed outline of interview techniques in this area is provided in Section 3.3.3.

Communicating with children who have little or no speech can cause numerous problems for researchers, as many methods are relatively new and there is a wide variability between users and systems. Each interview needs to be carefully negotiated to ensure that pupils are supported by the correct communication method, have correct materials at hand and that questions are posed in a way they can understand. It is not surprising that teacher-researchers are often at an advantage in this field, for they are likely to have expertise in their pupil's unique Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). However, quality research is still possible by using an experienced facilitator, as seen in a recent study by Whitehurst (2006), who enlisted the support of a speech and language therapist proficient in each respondent's AAC system.

The use of low-tech visual aids in interview situations has become more widespread in recent years, with pioneering work being undertaken by both Beresford (1997) and Lewis (2002b). The former research demonstrates how researchers may be helped to elicit the views of pupils with communication difficulties via drawings, visual analogues (such as *'face scales'*) and *'symbol boards'*. Building on this, Cameron and Murphy (2007) demonstrate how *'Talking Mats'* can help those with communication difficulties express their thoughts. Studies involving users of high-tech aids are less well publicised, perhaps due to the level of skill researchers need in programming computerised systems. Although Beukelman et al (1991) and Hawkins (2002) urge researchers to familiarise themselves with the high-tech systems used by some pupils, only Burkhart (1993) and Crossley (1994) appear to offer detailed advice on how researchers can do this in practice.

2.3.6 **Involving children with profound and multiple learning difficulties in research**

This section focuses on children with PMLDs and debates whether it is possible to elicit the views of such pupils in an interview situation.

Serious doubts have been raised about the viability of ascertaining the views of those with the most significant level of needs, with the SEN Toolkit (DfES, 2001b, p10) noting that *'pupils with profound needs may be unable to make their views known directly'*. Both Lewis and Porter (2004) and Ware (2004) report on recent disquiet amongst researchers about what is possible or reasonable when interviewing children with the most significant level of need. Ware (2004) notes that those operating at a pre-intentional level may not be able to express views in the usually understood sense of the word and urges researchers to remember that expressing a view is not the same as expressing a choice or preference.

The use of extended and intensive intervention techniques can assist many pupils with PMLDs in inferring preferences in relation to straightforward choices and form an important first step in autonomous decision making. However, in order to express a view about abstract issues, it is probable that most will require the assistance of a proxy. The use of proxies however is highly problematic, for as Ware (2004) outlines, they are not able to divest themselves of their own values and attitudes. As a consequence of the limitations in interviewing pupils with PMLDs, Beukelman et al (1991), Lewis (2002b), Brewster (2004) and Ware (2004) all propose that instead of regarding an interview as a one off event, views should be accessed as part of an ongoing process. If multiple approaches are used, greater reliability may be offered, as the limitations of one can therefore be offset by another.

2.3.7 **Central issues to the study**

This section has highlighted how giving children a 'voice' is a key part of the development of effective schools and the process of inclusion. It has summarised the ethical, logical and pragmatic basis for such efforts, as outlined by Gersch (1996), and has considered the challenges that schools may face when establishing a 'listening culture'. Close attention has also been paid to the challenges that researchers may encounter when involving children with communication and/ or learning difficulties in research. The section has outlined the work of charitable and

legal bodies in involving children with SEN in studies and has highlighted how the bulk of research projects have focused on pupils with physical difficulties or MLDs.

Like Lewis (2002a), I believe that more needs to be done to explore the views of pupils who experience significant learning and/ or communication difficulties and find ways to increase the authenticity and reliability of their accounts. This section has highlighted small-scale projects by Alderson and Goodey (1996), Morris (1998) and Moore and Sixsmith (2000), who have all successfully included pupils with communication impairments and/ or SLDs. In addition, this section has evaluated the use low-tech visual aids, as promoted by Beresford (1997), Lewis (2002b) and Cameron and Murphy (2007) and high-tech systems, discussed by Crossley (1994), which I intend to utilise during the course of the study.

2.4 **Concluding comment**

When conducting a survey of recent literature, it becomes apparent that that few accounts of inclusion are available that have attempted to elicit the detailed perspectives of pupils who have any significant learning or communication difficulty, despite pioneering work in this field by Beresford (1997) and Lewis (2002b) and a proliferation of requests to do so in both government and charitable reports. Very few studies have evaluated joint projects between special and mainstream schools, by undertaking interviews with pupils from both sectors. Notable exceptions are studies conducted by Beveridge (1996) and more recently, Whitehurst (2006). My aim in the current study is to address this imbalance and provide a comprehensive evaluation of a partnership scheme by eliciting the views of all pupils taking part.

Many similarities can be found in the aims of my research and those of both Beveridge (1996) and Whitehust (2006). Like them, I aim to investigate how the perceptions held by mainstream pupils may change as a result of working alongside special school peers, how all the participants perceive the partnership experience and how inclusion may be implemented more effectively by listening to pupils' views. However, a significant difference is that my study also places emphasis on developing strategies for eliciting the perspectives of pupils with little or no speech and/ or attendant learning difficulties, not found in either of the previous studies. My research also appears to be larger in scope, with both a wider pupil base and longer cycles of interviews.

By attaining the views of each participant, both before the partnership sessions commence and at regular intervals throughout its duration, I plan to build a comprehensive picture of pupils' opinions about taking part in joint activities and working alongside peers from a different school. I am confident that we can both celebrate and learn from the experiences of the pupils taking part in the study and that their views will help inform future developments in partnership work. The research also intends to give children with learning and communication difficulties a voice in the field, for I am adamant that we cannot discuss inclusion if we do not embrace the opinions of all pupils. Further details of the aims of the study are outlined in the next chapter, alongside a discussion of how the research developed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides details about how decisions concerning the study were made and how data was both gathered and assessed. It is organised into twelve sections, providing a comprehensive account of how the research developed.

At the outset, the chapter details the main areas of research concern and illustrates the specific questions that the study aims to address. It then investigates various research strategies, before looking at different means of data collection. Findings from the pilot studies are then summarised and consideration is given to how the research design developed. Next, information is provided about the permission required to undertake the study and the research participants involved. Following this, ethical and other research considerations are examined. The latter part of the chapter looks at the interview and transcription process and shows how the research data was both gathered and analysed. The final section provides a summary of the key issues discussed in the chapter.

3.1 Areas of research concern

The study is concerned with eliciting the perspectives of pupils involved in a partnership scheme between a mainstream and a special school. It seeks to address the perceived gaps in literature outlined in the previous chapter, namely a lack of research which has evaluated joint school ventures from the viewpoint of the pupils taking part and a shortage of studies which have included pupils with significant communication and/ or learning difficulties. This section considers the main aims of the research and outlines the specific questions that it seeks to address.

3.1.1 Main research aims

The main focus of the research is to provide opportunities for children from both a mainstream and a special school to discuss their personal experiences of involvement in a partnership scheme. The study has five research aims, notably:

- To ascertain the mainstream pupils' knowledge and understanding of disability and consider whether this alters through involvement in the project;
- To establish the attitudes and expectations of pupils from both the mainstream and special schools towards the partnership scheme and investigate whether their views alter over time;
- To gather evidence on the feelings of pupils from both settings about their experiences of the scheme and consider whether these change over time;
- To determine how best to elicit the views of all the pupils involved in the project, with a specific focus on those with little or no speech and/or severe learning difficulties;
- To consider whether changes in pupil perspectives (including their attitudes, expectations and feelings) can be tracked over a period of time.

3.1.2 Research questions

This section outlines twelve specific questions that the study aims to address, six relating to methodology and six to pupils' perceptions of the partnership scheme. These are stated below, with Appendix 1 and 2 providing further details of questions highlighted in Section 3.1.2.2.

3.1.2.1 ***Methodology related questions (including communication issues)***

- How do pupils communicate information during interview situations?
- How can their views be best elicited?
- How is it possible to monitor changes in pupil perspectives? (if at all)
- How much can they remember of different experiences?
- Is evidence available to show that their answers are focused/ reliable?
- Does the interview context affect pupils' responses?

3.1.2.2 ***Questions focusing on pupils' perceptions of the partnership scheme***

- What do the pupils remember about different experiences from partnership sessions?
- What are their initial attitudes and expectations towards the scheme?
- What are their attitudes and expectations towards the scheme in later interviews?
- What are the initial feelings of the pupils about their experiences of the partnership scheme?
- What are the feelings of the pupils about their experiences of the scheme in later interviews?
- Do their perspectives (including attitudes, expectations and feelings) alter over time?

3.2 Research strategy

This section provides an overview of the three traditional research strategies outlined by Robson (1993), notably experiments, surveys and case studies and considers decisions made in light of the current study.

Experiments are frequently used to highlight causal relationships between two variables and help explain differences. The main advantage of experiments is that they are usually replicable, especially in laboratory situations. However, as such settings are somewhat unnatural, responses may also be artificial. As I did not seek an explanation of events through causal relationships, I did not consider this strategy to be appropriate to the current study. In addition, I also felt that it would be too difficult to control variables in either school if an experimental design was followed.

Surveys generally involve a small quantity of standardised data being elicited from a large group considered representative of a specific population. Individuals are each asked the same questions in the same order by means of interview or questionnaire. I regarded surveys to be unsuitable for the purposes of the study, as they only provide general analysis based on large samples, whereas detailed analysis was required in order to answer the research questions outlined in Section 3.1.2.

Case studies investigate a single phenomenon and allow researchers to intensively analyse the unique interactions that occur within it. Robson (1993) highlights how the strategy uses multiple sources of evidence and provides data that can be interpreted and used by other researchers. Cohen and Manion (1994) also identify several advantages to case study observation, noting that it is less reactive than other types of data gathering methods, is flexible and allows the identification of unpredicted factors. However, case studies have also received criticism for being susceptible to subjectivity and bias. To combat this, Robson (1993) stresses the importance of having a well defined research focus and cross checking evidence by use of more than one method of data collection. Cohen and Manion (1994) likewise note that higher numbers of case studies generally increase the credibility of any generalisations made. The authors also urge researchers to be aware that individuals may behave differently when they are watched and that *'observer effect'* may obscure findings.

A case study approach was considered the most appropriate strategy for the research, as it permitted a longitudinal study of partnership activities to take place over an entire school year and supported a parallel study of pupils from two settings. In addition, this method could accommodate the variations in approach required when studying such a diverse population. Whilst the main focus of the study was individual case studies at Berry House, with more research questions being focused on pupils from this setting, in order to fully answer the questions outlined in Section 3.1.2, I felt that the perspectives of the mainstream pupils also needed to be sought, thus providing a comprehensive account of the partnership scheme.

Much deliberation took place concerning the feasibility of conducting individual case studies with all the mainstream pupils taking part in partnership activities. Although I was initially apprehensive about the considerable amount of time needed to involve the entire year group in the research, I felt that I was better able to locate common issues and concerns if all the pupils were involved and therefore achieve what Robson (1993, p 167) refers to as increased *'credibility of generalisation'*.

3.3 **Methods of data collection**

This section considers the use of questionnaires and interviews in case study research and assesses the most suitable method for the study. It then looks at the extent to which AAC strategies can be used in interview situations and discusses the use of facilitators in research projects.

3.3.1 **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are frequently employed by researchers to elicit information on a given topic, as they collate data relatively quickly and may be self-completed. Questionnaires are not usually concerned with gathering detailed responses, as they tend to use single sentence statement and answers. Such methods frequently use attitude scales, with research participants ticking boxes to indicate their opinions about given subjects. When considering the current study, questionnaires were deemed inappropriate, due to the poor hand control of the majority of pupils from Berry House and the fact that pupils from both schools were still developing their

early literacy skills. In addition, questionnaires were ruled out as they did not permit an in-depth study of pupils' perspectives, nor allow their feelings to be explored.

3.3.2 **Interviews**

The main advantage of interviews is that they allow greater depth than other methods of data collection, although as both Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) and Cohen and Manion (1994) caution, this method is prone to subjectivity and bias on the part of the researcher. Interviews may be structured, semi-structured or unstructured in format. Structured interviews involve researchers asking a set of questions and recording answers on a standardised schedule. Semi-structured interviews are less formal, with the interviewer being free to modify the sequence of questions, change wording, provide explanations or add further questions. Unstructured interviews are informal in style and may involve the interviewer raising issues conversational style instead of having a set of questions.

After careful consideration, I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews as part of the research. Structured interviews were deemed unsuitable due to their rigidity and unstructured interviews were ruled out as they can yield irrelevant data and miss out important information As Robson (1993) outlines, semi-structured interviews offer greater flexibility, allowing researchers to introduce themes in any order and modify questions according to the perceived needs of individual pupils. They also allow researchers to adjust the pace and length of each interview to match the variable concentration levels of the pupils and use probes and prompts to develop individual responses.

In order to improve the credibility of the study, triangulation techniques were planned from the outset. These are regarded by Robson (1993, p 383) as *'an indispensable tool in real world inquiry'*. Accordingly, I planned to gather complementary data in the form of a research diary (as discussed in Sections 3.4.6 and 3.5.6), the use of photographs (as outlined in Sections 3.4.8 and 3.5.8) and by the provision of drawing material (considered further in Sections 3.4.9 and 3.5.9). As suggested by McNiff et al (2003), a second teacher-researcher was also involved in the validation process (with further details provided in Sections 3.4.7 and 3.5.7).

3.3.3 **The use of AAC strategies in research**

Communicating with pupils who have little or no speech can cause numerous challenges for researchers, as many methods are relatively new and there is a wide variability between users and systems. Further details of *'low-tech'* and *'high-tech'* strategies are provided below.

3.3.3.1 ***Low-Tech strategies***

In recent years, the use of low-tech AAC approaches in interview situations has become more publicised, with Cameron and Murphy (2007) promoting the use of *'Talking Mats'* to help those with communication difficulties express their opinions. This technique involves physically moving graphic symbols around on a mat to facilitate discussion of a topic. Such approaches can lead to an increase in response rates, greater reliability and more respondents being able to answer a larger number of questions. The main limitation of this approach, common to many other AAC

strategies, is its reliance on pre-selected vocabulary. Although where possible the pupils themselves should make decisions about what symbols or messages to include, advice can also be taken from family members and school staff who know the individual well. As Cannito et al (1998) outline, involving informants in the vocabulary selection process may help to draw on experiences that researchers do not have.

3.3.3.2 *High-Tech strategies*

Communication devices using additional technology range from a simple pre-recorded switch with a single message to computers offering large memory banks of words and phrases, able to print and orally record responses. Although Hetzroni and Harris (1996) and Schlosser and Raghavendra (2004) highlight how some research participants may use such systems when formulating responses, Burkhart (1993) and Crossley (1994) appear to offer the most comprehensive advice on interviewing high-tech AAC users. Both authors regard patience as the most significant asset for researchers, with Crossley noting that although we may talk at 150 words per minute, many aids cannot process 150 words per hour.

If the aid has a synthesised voice, it may take the researcher some time to tune into. Conversely, the child might not be *'speaking'* in the traditional sense at all and the researcher may have to read what the individual is pointing to on a chart or electronic screen. Some AAC users communicate using key words only, not full sentences, therefore the researcher may have to interpret or guess at the full meaning of what the user is saying (although they must always check that they have interpreted or guessed correctly). If the communication is typed it can be exact but will suffer from a lack of intonation. As Crossley (1994) highlights, communication aid users may suffer from being taken too seriously or be *'over-interpreted'*, because in our culture written communication is always given heavier weight than spoken. Equipment failure is also a common occurrence and reflects the need for researchers to be flexible and persistent and highlights the frustrations of life for the pupils concerned.

3.3.3.3 **The use of facilitators**

Researchers who are not directly involved in the teaching of pupils who are non-speech users may have to use facilitators in order to help overcome barriers to communicating with them. Using facilitators can cause innumerable challenges for interviewers, for they may vary widely in experience and expertise and may reduce the chances of individuals disclosing sensitive or confidential material. In addition, researchers need to rely on the integrity of facilitators and in many ways the research is in their hands. If a non-speaking person requires the assistance of a facilitator, the question often arises about the authenticity of responses. However, Burkhart (1993) urges researchers not to over-react about facilitator influence or *'cueing'* and argues that there should only be cause for concern when it appears that all of an individual's communication is created by cueing.

As I am both trained and experienced in each of the Berry House pupils' existing method of communication, I did not envisage the need to use a facilitator during the course of the research. The only potential difficulty foreseen was if a pupil changed their communication device or experienced difficulties using it in an interview situation. If such a situation arose, I planned to seek the advice of another member of staff or the child's parent/ carer to facilitate communication.

3.4 **Pilot studies**

In the academic year preceding this study, seven pilot interviews took place at Oak Street and four pilot interviews at Berry House, further details of which are provided in Appendix 3 and 4 respectively. Pilot interviews were conducted with one Year 3 class, consisting of 28 pupils, from Oak Street and thirteen pupils from Berry House. As in the main research, the special school participants were members of the two classes involved in partnership activities with Oak Street. Although six of the Berry House pupils involved in the pilot studies also took part in the main research, none of the Oak Street pupils involved in pilot work were re-interviewed. All had transferred to Year 4 by the start of the main research and, as a consequence, were no longer involved in the partnership scheme.

The main objectives of these pilot studies were:

- To develop my experience as a researcher in both school settings;
- To determine which strategies worked best for me as a researcher;
- To try out techniques to determine if it was possible to ascertain the views of pupils who have little or no speech in interview situations.

Permission to conduct pilot interviews was given by parents, Head teachers, class teachers and the pupils themselves. The duration of the interviews at Oak Street ranged from 14 to 35 minutes, whereas at Berry House they ranged from 11 to 50 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded with the pupil's permission, with additional details outlined in Section 3.4.5. As recommended by McNiff et al (2003), individuals were referred to by the allocation of numbers and initials during the transcription process, with further discussion of anonymity detailed in Section 3.8.5.

The pilot studies considered how the quantity and quality of data can be affected by the size and composition of groups, the physical environment, the choice of AAC approaches, the use of interview schedules and the recording of interviews. In addition, the pilots focused on the benefits of a research diary, the employment of a second teacher-researcher, the use of photographs and props and the provision of drawing materials. Preliminary findings in each of these areas are discussed below, with a summary of key issues outlined in Section 3.4.10.

3.4.1 **The size and composition of interview groups**

A series of pilot studies were planned to assess the merits of different interview compositions. Whereas pilots within the mainstream sector focused on group interviews, those that took place within the special school were largely concerned with one-to-one (1:1) and paired interviews, with further details outlined below.

3.4.1.1 ***Oak Street***

Group interviews are widely seen as a significant means of collating data from pupils within mainstream settings. Both Watts and Ebbutt (1987) and Lewis (1992) suggest that such interviews may help to reveal a consensus of views, may generate richer responses by allowing children to challenge each other's views and have the potential to enhance the reliability of children's responses. In addition, Watts and Ebbutt (1987), Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) and Lewis (1992) all note how it is often more practicable for researchers to interview large cohorts of pupils in groups.

However, group interviews do have a number of disadvantages, with Watts and Ebbutt (1987) noting that they can restrict the emergence of personal matters and do not allow specific questioning to individuals.

As outlined in Appendix 3, the first two pilot interviews at Oak Street investigated the optimum composition, size and sex of interview groups for Year 3 pupils within a mainstream environment. During Pilot 1, children were interviewed in groups of six, as recommended by Hitchcock and Hughes (1989), whereas in Pilot 2 smaller groups were studied. On reflection, I felt that four was a much more productive group number than six, as interviews were more manageable and transcription was far easier. As a consequence, pupils taking part in the remaining pilots at Oak Street were interviewed in friendship groups of three to four. On the whole, I found that pupils were calmer and more sensible during the later pilots, probably because of their increased maturity (being in their final term of Year 3) and the fact that they were more familiar with myself as a researcher and the format of the interviews. In addition, my own developing skills and confidence as an interviewer may also have affected pupil behaviour.

3.4.1.2 *Berry House*

Interviews were conducted on a 1:1 basis during Pilots 1 and 2 at Berry House, to allow questions and information to be presented using different media. Additional pilots took place to ascertain whether it was productive to interview children with physical and/ or communication and attendant learning difficulties in pairs or as a small group, with further details provided in Appendix 4.

The pilot studies had mixed results when taking children out of 1:1 interview situations. One group, consisting of the most articulate pupils, was particularly successful, as the children made equal contributions and on occasions bounced ideas off one another and re-affirmed viewpoints. Likewise, two pupils who both appeared nervous in initial interviews were more relaxed when interviewed as a pair, even though they did not directly communicate with one another during the interview itself. However, in two instances, paired interviews were not as successful as previous 1:1 interviews with the same pupils, as one interviewee tended to dominate the conversation and the other merely repeat their answers. Overall, the pilot studies indicated that 1:1 interviews were more suitable when interviewing pupils with significant communication difficulties, due to the length of time it took for individuals to reply and for the researcher to confirm and interpret the full meaning of what was communicated.

3.4.2 **The physical environment**

In all pilot interviews, I planned to interview pupils from both Oak Street and Berry House in familiar rooms within their own schools. As Crossley (1994) shows, this is doubly important for children with associated or secondary impairments, as they are especially vulnerable in testing situations. At Oak Street, both the library and the training room were used during pilot interviews. The former had the advantage of soft furnishings and better acoustics, yet interviews here tended to be frequently interrupted, due to the room being well used by both staff and pupils. Although fewer interruptions took place in the training room, much of the furniture was static and groups had to sit in a more formal arrangement. This room also proved less

conducive to interviews as it had a glass wall, through which pupils on one side of the table could view peers using the corridor.

At Berry House, both the Year 5/6 classroom and the art room were used in pilot interviews. Although interviews only took place in the classroom when lessons were conducted in other areas of school, there were significantly more interruptions in this location than the art room (despite well displayed notices to limit this). Although the art room proved to have a number of distractions, notably a proliferation of display material and a large window onto the outside play area, this was the preferred interview venue of all pupils questioned in Pilot 3. As one pupil explained, going to the art room added to the excitement of being interviewed, as it was away from their every day surroundings.

In order to maximise opportunities for individuals to see both materials and other pupils, close attention was paid to the visual environment during pilot interviews. At Oak Street, the lack of window blinds presented the biggest challenge, as pupils were frequently distracted by excess sunlight. To remedy this, seating arrangements were adjusted for each group and sugar paper placed at some windows. At Berry House, pilot interviews provided an opportunity to assess the use of different trays, height adjustable tables, angled boards and frames. Over the course of the pilot studies, I was able to determine which equipment best suited individual pupils.

3.4.3 The use of AAC strategies

The pilot studies at Berry House allowed me to develop skills in interviewing pupils with communication and/ or learning difficulties. As Milne and Bull (2001, p 97) stress: *'The focus should be on the abilities of the interviewer rather than the capabilities of the interviewee'.*

In order to facilitate discussion with AAC users at Berry House, I piloted a technique similar to that used by Cameron and Murphy (2007), whereby pupils were encouraged to place photographs or symbols under appropriate emotion symbols (such as *'happy'*, *'sad'* and *'unsure'*) to indicate how they felt about certain people or events. Although I had previously used this method with individuals in a classroom context, I had no experience of using it within an interview situation. In early pilots, I felt that the technique was more successful with pupils who were physically able to move the symbols independently. However, as the technique became more familiar to all, positive results were increasingly noted in pupils who required my help in moving symbols for them. As I was uncertain about the responses of certain individuals in Pilots 1 and 2, I took steps to check that my actions correlated those intended by the pupil in subsequent interviews, by ensuring that I asked them to confirm their choice. As Bloomberg and Johnson (1991) suggest, I also made modifications to some symbols and photographs during pilot interviews, such as altering the number of items presented, their position and size and the speed at which they were shown.

In Pilots 3 and 4, pre-recorded switches displaying *'yes'*, *'no'* and *'unsure/ maybe'* were additionally used to assist individuals in answering questions and provide non-verbal pupils with a *'voice'*. As outlined by Cohen and Manion (1994), the provision of fixed-alternative items can provide greater uniformity of measurement and

therefore greater reliability. However, there is a danger that responses may be superficial, that respondents may be irritated if none of the criteria are suitable and that researchers may force inappropriate choices. To overcome this, Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest that researchers use such questioning in conjunction with other probes. Overall, I found the fixed-alternative switches to be successful during the pilot studies, as most pupils taking part were familiar in using them in a range of classroom contexts. However, one pupil, who had little previous experience of using the switches, spent a considerable amount of time randomly hitting switches, with little apparent intent.

Pilots 2 and 4 gave me the opportunity to interview Ricky using his specialist computer, a Dyna Vox 3100, which was able to both print his replies on screen and give a verbal response. Although Ricky was involved in all four pilot interviews, he had to rely on low-tech methods in Pilots 1 and 3, as on the former occasion the device was not working and in the latter he had left it at home. In the first interview in which he used his Dyna Vox, difficulties arose as insufficient choices were available on the device for Ricky to discuss the interview topic fully. As this proved very frustrating for Ricky, I took steps to ensure that a wider range of choices was available concerning the focus of the subsequent pilot interview. However, Pilot 4 was also problematic, as the device kept cutting out, despite being plugged into the mains electricity supply.

3.4.4 **The use of interview schedules**

During the first two pilot studies at Oak Street questions were focused around a pre-determined interview schedule, consisting of a set of thematic areas. These broad areas of research interest were communicated to participants at the beginning of each interview session. Constructing a schedule for interviews was useful as it provided guidance for topics to be covered and allowed relevant information to be gathered. However, due to mistakes highlighted in Pilot 1, when it was found that looking at the information schedule both interrupted and inhibited communication, the schedule was subsequently hidden and I strove to familiarise myself with the list of questions before the interviews commenced.

As Pilots 5-7 at Oak Street and Pilot 4 at Berry House were concerned with partnership activities, I was able to revise questions that I intended to use in the main study and improve their wording and format. These pilots assisted me in eliminating ambiguous questions from the interview schedule, as well as generating useful feedback on the structure and flow of interviews concerning partnership activities.

Question and answer data was closely analysed following initial pilot interviews and all instances of prompting, questioning, agreeing and disagreeing were noted. On reflection, I found that more natural conversations took place in Pilot 2, as I moved away from asking each pupil questions in turn to a more informal approach, in which the pupils were encouraged to speak out of turn and ask questions both of myself and each other. Despite the fact that certain mainstream pupils did at times dominate the conversation, overall more full and open discussions took place with this *'free for all'* approach. It was also notable that as my confidence as an interviewer increased, the interviews tended to flow better and pupils were able to both complement and challenge each other's views.

3.4.5 **The recording of interviews**

As memory can considerably distort reporting and it is easy to mishear, both video and audio recording are frequently used in research interviews to help ensure the accuracy of data. Both also relieve the researcher from the burden of note taking and allow them to listen, observe and respond more attentively. Although there is a danger that both video and audio recording may intimidate interviewees, it is likely that this will reduce over time, especially for participants involved in repeated cycles of interviews. As Powney and Watts (1987, p 124) outline:
'Most people quickly become accustomed to the presence of tape recorders, which are overall less obtrusive than inefficient note takers'.

In order to assess which of the two means of recording was of most benefit to the study, the first pilot at Berry House recorded interviews via a video recorder and the second used an audio recorder. Although video recording had the advantage of being able to capture changes in pupil behaviour, audio recording was the preferred option, as the equipment was easier to set up, portable and less obtrusive. The combination of the tripod and large video camera was also highly distractive and on one occasion, actually caused a hazard, with a pupil's involuntary movements knocking the equipment over. Audio recording however also proved to be a novelty in both school settings, as several pupils professed that they had not heard themselves on tape before and requested the tape be rewound so that they could hear themselves speak. In subsequent pilots, I placed the tape recorder in different locations, in an attempt to make the equipment as unobtrusive as possible.

3.4.6 **The use of a research diary**

During Pilots 6 and 7 at Oak Street and Pilot 4 at Berry House, I completed a research diary, providing a detailed account of weekly partnership sessions. This diary highlighted key ideas and possible areas requiring further observation and analysis. In addition, it acted as a record for questions asked to colleagues and pupils and provided a summary of their responses. The process of diary writing often helped to stimulate thought and as a consequence, personal feelings, speculations and explanations were also noted. In order to provide as complete a record as possible, observations were written up immediately after each partnership visit. When analysing the data collated in the pilot interviews concerned with partnership activities, I found it useful to refer back to previous diary notes and in many instances reflected that observational data both complemented and challenged that gathered during interviews.

3.4.7 **The employment of a second teacher-researcher**

In order to provide some critical analysis of my skills as a researcher, I enlisted the help of a teaching colleague from Berry House. She observed two interviews during Pilot 2, providing feedback on the use of fixed alternative questioning with Scott and assessing my use of prompts when interviewing Ricky using his Dyna Vox. In both instances, I found her comments and suggestions to be extremely useful. In addition, she checked the transcripts from the above interviews against the audio recordings and confirmed that I had provided an accurate account. As I had initially hoped that my colleague would additionally act as a second interviewer in the main study, I

asked her to independently question three pupils during Pilot 2, using an identical interview schedule. However, in this latter task, I felt that she had difficulty stepping outside her role as a teacher, for her desire to produce an answer resulted in her prompting and leading far more than was appropriate in order to elicit a response from all three pupils.

3.4.8 **The use of photographs and props**

Photographs, props and other stimuli have been used in research with children to help engage their interest, foster thought and reflection and make interviews more *'child-friendly'*. In order to analyse their potential effect, specific pilots were conducted at both Oak Street and Berry House. As suggested by Walker and Wiedel (1985) and Collier and Collier (1986), I hoped that such images would act as reference points for discussions of both the familiar and the unknown and enhance both the quantity and quality of interview data.

On reflection, I felt that conversation was more natural and spontaneous with the focus being the props or photographs, rather than the questions or the (hidden) interview schedule. Both photographs and props had the advantage of promoting curiosity and conversation amongst interviewees. It is notable that the photographs introduced at Berry House were more productive and yielded more data than those used in Pilot 3 at Oak Street, possibly due to the fact that they directly involved the children concerned and were not abstract.

3.4.9 **The provision of drawing materials**

Following suggestions made by Lewis (1995), Beresford (1997) and Cameron (2005), drawing materials were provided in both Pilots 5 and 6 at Oak Street to help facilitate communication within groups and provide an additional source of data. However, due to the poor hand control of the majority of Berry House pupils involved in the pilot studies, drawing materials were not provided in the special school. I was deliberately vague about what individuals might draw in the Oak Street pilots, in order to allow pupils to explore any route they wished. Participants were also given the choice of producing individual contributions or working alongside other peers. A selection of paper and colouring pens were provided during Pilot 5, although in the subsequent pilot this was limited to white A4 paper (for individuals), A3 paper (for paired/ group drawings) and black pens, as many pupils taking part in the previous interview spent more time selecting materials than taking part in the task.

Although there was no pressure upon the interviewees to produce a piece of work linked to their partnership experience, the majority of pupils did complete a drawing or produce some writing. On reflection, I felt that although the interviews were often longer in length (as it was sometimes necessary to wait for pupils to complete the task before discussion could take place), the benefits outweighed the time increase, for the drawings both provided a focus for group discussion and helped create a relaxed atmosphere. Interviews including provision for drawing tended to have a more balanced number of pupil contributions, as each child was able to discuss their work. In addition, the drawings themselves provided a useful record of partnership work.

3.4.10 A summary of key findings from the pilot studies

The pilot studies allowed me to fulfill the objectives outlined at the beginning of Section 3.4, notably to develop my experience as a researcher and assess the use of different research strategies. The main findings of the pilots were as follows:

- Pupils from both schools were overall very accepting of participating in the pilot interviews and being asked questions on a range of issues;
- All the interviews were informative and yielded a considerable amount of data;
- Pupils with communication and/ or learning difficulties did appear capable of discussing a range of issues during interview situations;
- Data provided in later pilots provided tentative indications about how pupils from both schools felt about partnership activities.

3.5 Development of the research design

This section offers a critique of the research decisions that were made on the basis of the pilot studies outlined in Section 3.4 and is structured in an identical format. Consideration is initially given to the size and composition of interview groups, the physical environment, AAC strategies and the development of interview schedules. Following this, attention focuses on the recording of interviews, the use of a research diary, the employment of a second teacher-researcher, the use of photographs and props and the provision of drawing materials.

3.5.1 The size and composition of interview groups

In this section, decisions relating to the mainstream and special schools are discussed in turn.

3.5.1.1 *Oak Street*

Although numerous advantages were seen when interviewing pupils in groups of 3-4, including positive effects on participant behaviour and an increase in the quality and quantity of data gathered, plans to replicate such groupings in all research interviews proved problematic. Due to restrictions on time, two options were open to me; to focus on a sample of pupils and repeatedly interview them in this optimum group size, or include all pupils, by forming larger interview groups on occasion. As I aimed to elicit the views of all pupils involved in the partnership scheme, I decided to opt for the latter. As a consequence, group sizes varied between 6-10 pupils during interviews 1 and 4, whilst interviews 2 and 3 involved groups of 3-5. In order be better able to make generalisations across the year group, I repeated the sequence of interviews with the two Year 3 classes involved in the project, with further details provided in Table 2 (Section 3.10.1.2).

Following successes outlined in the pilot study, I conducted interviews with mixed-sex friendship groups. Prior to the commencement of the research, I sought the advice of each cohort's class teacher, who gave careful consideration to inter-relationships between pupils, thus limiting the potential of disharmony within interviews. A joint decision was made to interview pupils in the same groups as those used during partnership sessions. This allowed all group members to take part in identical partnership activities and work alongside the same Berry House pupils. In

addition, a replication of groupings made interviews easier to organise for both myself and the Year 3 teachers at Oak Street.

3.5.1.2 *Berry House*

The pilot studies at Berry House demonstrated the time consuming nature of 1:1 and paired interviews, especially for a researcher with a full-time teaching post. As a consequence, I made the decision to limit the main study to the nine Berry House pupils involved in partnership activities with Year 3 pupils at Oak Street and not include the views of the two Year 6 dual placement pupils, Shab and Kelly.[1]

As six of the Berry House pupils who took part in the main research had been involved in pilot interviews, it was possible to assess their experiences of both 1:1 and paired interviews. The pilot studies highlighted the advantage of 1:1 interviews for pupils who used high-tech communication devices and for those who were easily distracted by the presence of their peers. Consequently, I decided to interview four of the pupils involved in the study on a 1:1 basis. As the success of paired interviews in the pilot studies was somewhat mixed, I planned to investigate this further in the course of the main research, assessing outcomes on an ongoing basis. Although positive results were seen in the pilot involving a group of three pupils, similar interviews were not planned in the main research. The success of this pilot group was probably linked to the fact that all three members were articulate, were friends and were used to working as a group in class. In addition, as only one member of this group was involved in the main study, it could not actually be replicated.

3.5.2 The physical environment

As the library at Oak Street and the art room at Berry House were the preferred venues during pilot interviews, I secured access to these areas during the main study. In order to reduce the number of interruptions in both settings, I made all staff aware of the location of the interviews by placing reminders in staff rooms and outside the venues themselves. At Berry House, I also avoided interviewing when the outside play area was in use, thus reducing potential distractions.

As six of the Berry House pupils involved in the study took part in pilot interviews, I was able to assess how two thirds of pupils from the special school could best access interview materials. Whilst some pupils preferred to have resources placed on trays attached to their wheelchair, others favoured height adjustable tables. Angled boards also proved to be useful for some individuals, whilst others found it easier to make choices when photographs and symbols were attached by *'Velcro'* to a stick.

3.5.3 The use of AAC strategies

I extended the use of emotion symbols and pre-recorded switches to the main study, as both proved useful in helping to elicit responses from pupils with communication impairments. The three emotion symbols used in the pilot studies provided opportunities for individuals to express their feelings about people and events through sorting photographs or symbols. Switches indicating positive, negative and

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[1] Further discussion of the use of pseudonyms is provided in Section 3.8.5

uncertain responses also proved useful in giving non-vocal pupils an audible *'voice'* with which to confirm their responses.

When using these strategies in the main study, I ensured that when physical assistance was required to sort symbols or access switches, I double checked that my actions reflected the intentions of individual pupils. In order to reduce incidences of pupils *'playing'* with the resources used in interviews, I ensured that sufficient time was given before the interviews commenced for individuals to practice using the switches and view any symbols and photographs shown. Prior to taking part in the interviews, dedicated pages about partnership activities were set up on Ricky's Dyna Vox. In order to eliminate problems of pre-selected vocabulary, these pages were formed as part of a joint venture between Ricky and an LSA competent in programming this device.

3.5.4 The use of interview schedules

Following the success of semi-structured questioning in the pilot studies at Oak Street, initial interviews with each of the two cohorts were conducted in the same format. I developed a funnelling technique, as highlighted by Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003), starting with general opening enquiries to help pupils relax and develop a logical and comfortable progression to their responses, followed by more specific and focused questioning. As pupils built up a relationship with me as an interviewer, conversation became more fluid, with pupils asking questions of each other and opportunities arose for me to ask further probe questions. As Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) outline, the success of semi-structured interviews heavily depends upon the relationship that develops between the researcher and the pupils.

By undertaking a series of interviews with the pupils from Oak Street over half an academic year, I was able to build up a significant level of empathy and rapport with them and create a more equal relationship between us. In order to avoid the stilted questioning that was apparent in Pilot 1, when a copy of the interview schedule was used directly, I familiarised myself with the questions, outlined in Appendix 5, and conversed with pupils without the aid of a prompt sheet. However, as questions were asked from memory, I was aware that their sequence could alter from this schedule and that there was a potential risk that some may be omitted altogether.

In order to ascertain the most productive way of eliciting the views of pupils from Berry House, I continued with the flexible approach adopted during the four pilot studies. Although I hoped to address a common set of key questions noted in Appendix 6, each question was flexibly adapted and tailored to suit individual children. The pilot studies also provided opportunities for me to develop many interview skills, including prompting, the simplification of questions and the inclusion of multiple-choice opportunities to facilitate pupils with communication and/ or learning difficulties.

3.5.5 The recording of interviews

During the main research, I produced a complete record of each interview through a combination of tape-recording and the writing of field notes after each interview had taken place. As pilot attempts to video conversations with pupils from Berry House

were unsuccessful, due to the high visibility of the equipment, I regarded audio recording as the preferred option. As in the pilot interviews, I placed the tape recorder in as unobtrusive locations as possible and limited problems of interference by selecting suitable interview venues.

3.5.6 **The use of a research diary**

As the use of a research diary proved to be successful in recording details of the weekly partnership sessions, I continued writing similar notes and observations throughout the main study period. The diary also aided triangulation, providing data that both challenged and complemented disclosures during interviews. Following the good practice established during the pilot studies, I wrote up observations and reflections immediately after each partnership session.

3.5.7 **The employment of a second teacher-researcher**

My colleague from Berry House, who had provided critical analysis of my interviewing and transcription techniques in Pilot 2, also volunteered to monitor a selection of interviews during the main research. As this second researcher had full-time teaching commitments at Berry House, observation arrangements were on a flexible basis and it was only possible for her to analyse interviews within the special school setting. As my main concerns as an interviewer lay with the pupils who had communication impairments, we made the joint decision that she would observe one interview with each of the six pupils identified in Appendix 7 as having limited speech and check subsequent interview transcripts for accuracy. However, I made the decision not to ask her to interview pupils independently as part of the main study, as reflections on her involvement in Pilot 2 suggested that she would require a considerable amount of support to develop the skills necessary to undertake this role successfully.

3.5.8 **The use of photographs and props**

Due to success of using both 2D and 3D materials in the pilot studies at Oak Street and Berry House, I extended the use of both photographs and props to the main study. In order to encourage discussion about disability issues, I took a manual wheelchair and other physical aids to initial interviews in the mainstream school. Photographs were used extensively in interviews at Berry House, to allow individuals to make clear choices between their peers in both settings, make distinctions between the two schools and act as a record of partnership activities. As personal photographs prompted such curiosity in the pilot studies, I built up a portfolio of photographs for each Berry House pupil. Due to time restrictions at Oak Street, it was not possible to use photographs within interviews, although I did make an album for each Year 3 class, including snaps of partnership sessions and joint trips.

3.5.9 **The provision of drawing materials**

As the provision of drawing materials proved beneficial in the mainstream pilots, allowing pupils to express themselves in a non-threatening way, I was keen to use them in the main study. Pupils were given the option of making a drawn or written

contribution during Interviews 2 and 3, when interview groups were smaller and extra time was available to discuss contributions. Due to lessons learnt in the pilot studies, I provided paper of uniform size and pens of one colour, directing pupils' focus to the content of their work, rather than the style. In order to encourage more pupils to take part in this task, I reiterated that written or drawn materials would not be assessed for their quality (thus reducing any stress of completing *'best'* work) and offered pupils the option of producing a joint piece of work.

3.6 Obtaining permission to carry out the research

Having determined the research objectives, permission was required to carry out interviews in both schools The Head teacher of Berry House, who took a personal interest in the study from the outset, first approached the Head teacher at Oak Street to provide information about the research. Following a positive response from the latter, I then outlined the research objectives in letters to the governors in both settings. The Head teachers of each school then granted me written confirmation that I could undertake the research and agreed that I could present further information to colleagues during staff meetings and to parents in the form of a letter. The issues of access and acceptance are considered further in Section 3.8.3, whilst additional detail concerning permission is summarised in Section 3.8.4.

3.7 The research participants

This section provides detailed information about the pupils from both schools involved in the main study.

3.7.1 Berry House pupils

The five girls and four boys who took part in the research varied in age from 7 to 10 years. The pupils were members of two vertically grouped classes at Berry House, with five being in Years 3/ 4 (taught by the second teacher-researcher) and four being in Years 5/6 (taught by myself). Both classes took part in weekly partnership activities with Year 3 pupils at Oak Street for an entire school year. Six of the pupils participated in sessions during the previous year, whereas three were new to the scheme. All nine pupils had physical difficulties and required the use of a wheelchair, although three pupils were able to walk short distances with some support. Most of the pupils had attendant learning and communication difficulties, with further details provided in Appendix 7. In this table (and throughout the study), the pupils are ordered from left to right according to their school-assessed cognitive ability at the start of the interview process, with Jason scoring most highly in National Curriculum/ PIVATS (Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting) testing and Lucy scoring at a significantly lower level.

Three of the pupils were fluent speakers, with the remainder having varying degrees of communication difficulty, with a detailed account available in Appendix 8. Four pupils had Urdu as a home language (44.4% of the Berry House sample), although each of these had a good understanding of English. Of the six pupils identified as having communication impairments, four were able form short phrases although each of these pupils generally gave single word replies and one pupil, Sophie, had additional difficulties through being a selective mute. Two additional pupils had very

limited vocal skills, generally limited to 'yes' and 'no', although each attempted to vocalise other single words on occasion.

The majority of pupils were either partially or totally dependant upon AAC strategies, with further details provided in the glossary. Two pupils were frequent users of Makaton sign language and a further three pupils used this occasionally. Most pupils also required the use of *'low-tech'* communication aids (not involving an additional piece of technical equipment), such as boards or books with photographic or pictorial representations of key vocabulary. All the special school participants were familiar with Boardmaker symbols, a bank of graphic symbols to support individual words or entire phrases. Although two of the pupils were able to make selections from multiple symbol or photograph options, the remainder required a much narrower focus, with between two and six options presented at any one time. The majority of pupils were able to finger point to individual symbols. Scott however, frequently used eye pointing when making selections or required his communication partner to point to each in turn, whilst he made a yes/ no response to indicate his choice.

Three of the pupils also used *'high-tech'* communication aids (which require the use of additional technology). Pre-recorded symbol switches, such as *'One Step'* and *'Big Mack'*, were the most frequently used high-tech devices at Berry House at the time of the study. These consisted of a simple message recorded onto a switch, with a corresponding Boardmaker symbol attached. Individuals were then able to make an auditory response, by selecting and pressing chosen switches. As highlighted in Section 3.4.3, Ricky additionally used a specialised computer, a Dyna Vox 3100, to communicate.

3.7.2 **Oak Street pupils**

The 58 mainstream pupils who took part in the study were all members of two Year 3 classes at Oak Street, referred to as Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 throughout the research. None of the pupils contributed to the pilot interviews attached to the study, nor participated in any previous partnership sessions. The 28 pupils in Cohort 1 and 30 pupils in Cohort 2 were involved in partnership sessions with Berry House for half a school year, with Cohort 1 joining sessions from Autumn to Spring and Cohort 2 from Spring to Summer.

In contrast to my knowledge of pupils at Berry House, I had very little information about the mainstream pupils involved the study. From brief discussions with the two class teachers, I was aware that all the pupils were mobile and able to communicate using speech. Two pupils, Sadia in Cohort 1 and Aisha in Cohort 2 were identified as having SEN, with the former having a sensory impairment (requiring the use of dark glasses and a hearing aid), and the latter a heart condition. From school records, it was evident that 52 of the pupils (89.7% of the sample) had Urdu or Bengali as a home language, although both class teachers reported that the majority had a good understanding of English.

3.8 Ethical considerations

This section aims to place the current study in the wider field of disability research and investigate the ethical considerations which underpin its design. In the first instance, my role as a teacher-researcher is examined, including a discussion of how to limit the adverse effects that may accrue from this role. Next, issues of access and acceptance are highlighted, followed by a discussion of how informed consent is best established. Focus is then placed on issues surrounding privacy, confidentiality and the need to preserve anonymity, before considering how trust, honesty and respect can be established.

3.8.1 Teacher-researchers

This section initially outlines my role as a teacher-researcher before considering how any negative effects from involving teachers in research studies may be diminished.

3.8.1.1 *My role as a teacher-researcher*

In adopting the role of a teacher-researcher in the study, I aimed to capitalise on my knowledge and status in both school environments. As Simons (1981, p74) notes, there are distinct advantages for researchers working within a known culture, for they have both *'insider knowledge'* and *'insider status'*. However, as Nesbitt (2000) outlines, there are also a number of limitations to the teacher-researcher role, for individual pupils may respond differently to working alongside a teacher in an interview situation and there is a risk that the teacher-researcher involved may over-interpret the disclosures of pupils.

Through my teaching role at Berry House, I gathered a significant amount of information about the pupils involved in the study and established a level of rapport with them over a substantial period of time. I also built up a long-standing relationship with many key adults in the pupils' lives, notably parents or carers and other school and outreach staff. Four of the pupils who took part in the partnership venture were members of my class and the remaining five attended some of my lessons, with further details provided in Appendix 9.

At the outset of the study, I had what Simons (1981, p 75) describes as *'partial insider knowledge and status'* in the mainstream setting, as I had been involved in partnership work with Oak Street for three years and made frequent visits to see the two dual-placement pupils in Year 5. Over a six-month period, I developed my relationship with each Year 3 pupil involved in the partnership scheme, both during the weekly partnership sessions and the cycle of four interviews. I also capitalised on the relationship that I had built up with key staff from Oak Street. This enabled me to access pupils for interview purposes, seek advice about the composition of interview groups and involve staff in the verification of interview data, when any anomalies arose. Despite my attempts to establish closer links with the staff and pupils at Oak Street, I was aware that my role in the mainstream setting was very different to that at Berry House and that this may have implications on the data gathered.

3.8.1.2 *Reducing negative effects*

A researcher's personal and social values undoubtedly affect how data is perceived, as it is virtually impossible to undertake qualitative analysis in an entirely self-

removed and objective way. Teachers undertaking research with pupils may encounter additional difficulties in remaining objective and serious consideration needs to be given to the relationship between the teacher-researcher and the research participants, As Alderson and Morrow (2004) note, difficulties may occur if pupils are unable to make a clear distinction between the interviewer as a teacher (perhaps checking to see if their answers are *'correct'*) and the interviewer as a researcher (with impartial views). Nesbitt (2000) likewise argues that even when studies are centred on different settings, pupils are likely to regard any researcher as a *'teacher'* and the interview as a kind of *'test'*.

From the outset of the study, I took steps to analyse the extent to which I may influence pupil responses in both schools and reduce what Robson (1993, p 67) refers to as a *'desire to please'*. Before any interviews commenced, I met with each class of pupils taking part in the research and explained that I wanted to find out what they really thought of the partnership scheme and was interested in both their positive and negative experiences. I made clear that my role as a *'researcher'* was a very different one to that of a *'teacher'* and that everything they told me during the cycle of interviews would be well received. As an ongoing priority, I was also mindful to examine the nature of any of my own values or prejudices, which may have influenced the study. In particular, I had to hold back on expressing my personal views on occasions when Oak Street pupils discussed Scott's behaviour (Section 5.2.8) and questioned links between disability and religion (Section 5.3.1).

3.8.2 **Disability research**

As one of the main aims of the study is to elicit the views of a group of pupils with a combination of physical, communication and/ or learning difficulties, consideration needs to be given to the wider field of disability research. The increased participation of disabled people in research studies is pioneered by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, who stress that the active involvement of disabled individuals is required throughout the research process. Authors such as Oliver (1992), Stalker (1998) and Shakespeare (2006) take a stronger stance, challenging whether able bodied researchers should be undertaking disability research at all, as their beliefs, values and dispositions towards the social world may differ from those of disabled individuals. They contend that empowerment is not a gift, but is something that individuals must do for themselves. However, a counter argument notes that disabled researchers cannot effectively represent all populations of disabled people. Lewis and Kellett (2004) highlight a danger that those with the most severe disabilities might become disenfranchised by power shifting to the less disabled.

The involvement of disabled people in research has a much longer history than the involvement of pupils with SEN. Whilst my study is concerned with listening to the voices of all pupils taking part in a partnership scheme, eliciting the views of the Berry House pupils is its main focus. From the outset, the research was designed to empower pupils from the special school, by seeking their views about working alongside able-bodied peers, their thoughts about partnership activities and their aspirations for their future. I made genuine attempts to involve the pupils in all stages of the research, through participation in the pilot studies, on going evaluations of the interviews and by providing summaries of relevant findings in an accessible form.

3.8.3 **Access and acceptance**

Cohen and Manion (1994) outline the importance of achieving goodwill and cooperation with gatekeepers who give access to a research field, especially when the study extends over a period of time. Homan (2001) warns of the danger of teacher-researchers acting as their own gatekeepers and highlights how they should share full information about the aims, nature and procedure of the study. In order to receive the acceptance required to conduct my research and ensure that interview sessions ran as smoothly as possible, I organised a number of formal and informal meetings with staff from both schools. During these meetings, I summarised the main aims of the research and provided details about methods of data collection and how interviews would be conducted. The meetings also provided opportunities for questions to be both raised and answered.

3.8.4 **Informed consent**

Research participants need to be made as fully aware as possible of the purpose of the study and what an agreement to take part will entail. As highlighted by Homan (2001) and Alderson and Morrow (2004), the age a child can be considered competent to give consent is a matter of debate and many schools require parental permission before any independent research takes place. Despite the fact that the principle of informed consent arises from an individual's right to freedom and self-determination, Alderson and Morrow (2004) urge researchers to consider that parental permission itself may not be wholly free from coercion, as parents may feel under pressure to give consent, in order to maintain good relations with professionals and appear reasonable and cooperative.

At the outset of the study, I wrote to the parents of all pupils taking part in the partnership scheme, providing information about myself and a summary of what the research entailed. Parents were required to contact me through the school if they did not want their child to participate or if they required additional information. Only one parent from Berry House asked for further clarification and no parents refused permission for their child to take part. Prior to the commencement of the research, informal meetings took place with the two classes from Berry House and the two classes from Oak Street involved in the partnership scheme. During these meetings, I outlined the aims of the study and informed pupils that participation in the research was voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. In addition, I was also able to address a number of concerns raised by pupils, such as those relating to the duration, recording and location of interviews.

Following the advice of Begley and Lewis (1998), at the start of each interview I invited, but did not assume, the participation of individual pupils, as this offered them more control and increased the validity of the data collected. In addition, I reminded them about their right to withdraw from involvement at any stage, clarified their role in the interview and provided details about intended outcomes. At all times I was respectful of an individual's right to choose and sought their consent before recording conversations or removing any written or drawn materials.

Beresford (1997), Morris (1998) and Cameron and Murphy (2007) highlight how it may be difficult to gain informed consent from children with severe learning

difficulties, although all urge that researchers need to balance this with not excluding them from taking part. During the course of the study, I was able to capitalise on my role as a teacher-researcher, by noting positive and doubtful indicators for consent, as outlined in Figure 1. In addition, I maintained an open dialogue with key adults involved with each pupil, both at home and at school, to help ascertain whether they continued to assent to involvement.

Figure 1: Positive and doubtful indicators for giving consent

Positive indicators for giving consent:	**Doubtful indicators:**
• High levels of engagement (eg eye contact, body language) • Relevant elaboration (eg verbal comments indicating a willingness to take part) • Positive non-verbal responses (eg nodding)	• Low levels of engagement (eg lack of eye contact, indifference body language) • Concern that the response was overly acquiescent (eg agreeing without clear understanding) • Ambivalent non-verbal responses (eg negative facial expression)
Adapted from: Cameron, L. and Murphy, J. (2007) Obtaining consent to participate in research: The issues involved in including people with a range of learning and communication difficulties. *British Journal of Learning Difficulties,* 35 (2) p 115	

3.8.5 Privacy, confidentiality and preserving anonymity

Sieber (1992) makes distinctions among the three terms, outlined below:

- *Privacy*: control over others' access to oneself and associated information; preservation of boundaries against giving protected information or receiving unwanted information;
- *Confidentiality*: agreements with individuals or an organisation about what will be done (and may not be done) with their data;
- *Anonymity*: lack of identifiers, information that would indicate which individuals or organisations provided which data.

As Sieber notes, issues of privacy are often subtle and surface only when there are unexpected reluctances, or an outpouring of information beyond what an individual meant to say, or a confidence overheard by others. In contrast, confidentiality and anonymity are usually promised in initial agreements with research participants.

Throughout the course of the research, the issues of confidentiality and anonymity became a routine part of the discussion that took place prior to each interview. With the exception of the Berry House pupils highlighted in Section 3.5.7 who were observed by the second teacher-researcher, I informed pupils that no one else would listen to recordings from interviews. I also informed all participants that I would not reveal anything of a personal or compromising nature. Although I assured pupils that they would not be identified by real names in the completed research, I made it clear that they may *not* be anonymous to adults within schools who may read the study.

Lewis (2002b) stresses the importance of anonymity in written documentation. As a result, I changed the names of the schools and referred to all staff and pupils by pseudonyms. This is against the advice of McNiff et al (2003), who recommend the allocation of numbers, initials or other symbols to identify participants and warn against the use of fictitious names. Although I used a combination of numbers and letters to identify pupils in the pilot studies, I had difficulty recalling individual pupils using this system. The second teacher-researcher also confirmed that transcripts were far more readable when pupils were referred to by pseudonyms. However, anonymity may not always the issue we think it is, for as with the findings of Morris (1998), a number of pupils involved in the study noted their disappointment at their real names not being used in the printed research.

In order to involve pupils as fully as possible in the research process, I invited them to choose their own pseudonym. The majority of pupils were able to do this unaided, although four individuals at Berry House required a list of alternatives to assist with their selection. Although the majority of pupils appeared to take great delight in choosing a pseudonym, difficulties did ensue, for many Asian pupils chose European heritage names, some pupils chose identical names, several girls selected my name and a number of pupils asked to change their pseudonym in subsequent interviews. In order to avoid confusion in the write-up stage, I asked pupils who used my name or a name previously selected by another pupil to choose an alternative and did not permit pupils to change their pseudonyms at will. For ethical reasons, I did not ask the Asian pupils who chose European heritage pseudonyms to provide alternatives. As a consequence, readers of the study should avoid making any cultural judgements based on pseudonyms.

The ownership and publication of research material is a hotly contested issue. Authors such as Josselson (1996) regard the account and interpretation as belonging to the orator, while others argue that professionals need to retain some level of control over emergent material. In order to achieve a compromise, Moore and Sixsmith (2000) suggest joint ownership between the interviewer and interviewee. To this end, I returned the original drawings and photographs discussed in the interviews to the pupils concerned. In addition, I sent a letter of thanks to each class of pupils taking part and informed them that I have kept photocopies of all written and drawn contributions for research purposes, thus alleviating Lewis's (2002b) concern that if material is sent back to pupils then they may interpret this as rejection or failure.

3.8.6 **Trust, honesty and respect**

Research involving children necessitates trust, especially if pupils are to be interviewed on a 1:1 basis. Trust is reciprocal, as the researcher trusts the pupil to cooperate and give honest responses within their own competence and the pupil places trust in the researcher to treat them with respect and question them in a fair manner. I regarded trust and honesty as ongoing priorities in the study and at the start of each interview, provided pupils with a truthful account of the research aims, at a level appropriate to their understanding.

Throughout the study, I have treated both the gatekeepers and pupils with courtesy and respect. I adopted a flexible approach when negotiating interview times with

colleagues, in order to minimise demands on their time and fit in with existing schedules. In addition, I showed sensitivity to differences in culture, age and status between myself and the research participants. As Alderson and Morrow (2004) outline, researchers must be respectful of all information supplied and be non-judgemental in their responses. Although difficult at times, I was determined to '*detach*' myself from my role as a teacher, by not having personal expectations of individual participants, especially of pupils within my own class.

Lewis and Porter (2004) note that respect for participants does not cease when the cycle of interviews is over. In order to extend my respect to the pupils involved in the study, I provided feedback about its main outcomes in a letter addressed to each class taking part. In addition, I supplied token gifts to each class, as recommended by Lewis (2002b), in recognition of their time and efforts.

3.9 **Further research considerations**

This section outlines further research considerations. In the first instance, it discusses the importance of rigour and looks at how bias can be eliminated from studies. It then investigates how reliability and validity can strengthen research.

3.9.1 **Rigour**

Throughout the study, I aimed to collate and represent pupil views as accurately as possible and minimise my personal impact on both the schools taking part and the data recorded. All personal reflections and interpretations were noted in a research diary, which was completed after all partnership sessions and each cycle of interviews. A central concern for rigour is that sufficient time is spent in the field and that an extensive body of evidence is gathered as data. I aimed for consistency throughout the research process and spent an equal amount of time gathering and analysing data. I took the views of all pupils taking part in the research seriously, although naturally gave more weight to contributions made by individuals from Berry House, as pupils from this setting took part in twice as many interviews and were questioned independently or as a pair, rather than as a group.

3.9.2 **Bias**

As both Cameron (2005) and Schostak (2006) suggest, I ensured that controls and safeguards against bias in data were in place throughout the research process. When formulating my (hidden) interview schedule, I tried to ensure that questions were kept as simple and concrete as possible and that both abstract concepts and double negatives were omitted. When transcribing interviews, I identified all leading questions and noted if an emotional tone was used to elicit certain responses or if questions were linguistically slanted to ensure a specific response.

A second teacher-researcher sat in on six interviews at Berry House and monitored all prompts and non-verbal behaviours that encouraged children to communicate about an issue. I found her feedback particularly useful, as it would have been impossible to monitor my use of small sounds (such as mm) and gestures (such as head movements) through audio tape analysis alone. As Cameron (2005) highlights, both prompts and non-verbal behaviours can encourage free narrative if usefully

applied, yet constant nodding or repetition of a sound or word can be distracting to participants.

3.9.3 **Reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity are both regarded as bringing confidence to research. Reliability refers to methods which will produce similar findings if used in similar conditions to the original research, whereas validity is concerned with how successfully the interview questions measure what they are intended to measure. In order to enhance the reliability and validity of any research, a clear outline of the main aims is required, alongside details of how it was undertaken and explanations of any decisions made. Establishing good relationships with all research participants is seen as another key factor, as a free discussion of issues will enhance the validity of accounts. Steps should also be taken to eliminate what Robson (1993, p 221) refers to as *'observer error'*, by not conducting interviews when tired or over stretched, ensuring that sufficient time is available for transcription and that this takes place as quickly as possible after each interview, thus reducing possibilities of mis-hearing responses.

Two main options are open to researchers when validating interview materials. It may be possible for them to check complete interview transcripts with the individuals concerned, or provide a summary of the main themes and issues discussed. Alternatively, participants could be re-interviewed and become engaged in subsequent re-analysis. Both of these will offer pupils the opportunity to add further information and the researcher the opportunity of checking the data collected. Validating interviews conducted with non-speech users is extremely problematic. This could be achieved in a formal manner by asking research participants to discuss the same topic on different occasions or with a different researcher. However, such demands may be complex, time consuming and stressful for the individual concerned. As Lewis (2002b) argues, it may be more advisable for researchers to instead look for evidence in everyday interactions and use intuitive reactions to identify lack of consistency, potential errors or comments that are simply untrue.

During the course of the study, I confirmed my accuracy of reporting facts and content, especially with pupils who used little or no speech, by restating part or all of their response, with further details provided in Section 3.11.2. As highlighted by Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003), restatement can clarify what has been said and enhance the validity of research findings. In addition, I gave each pupil the chance to check the validity of key disclosures, by providing feedback during subsequent interviews and checking that they held the same opinion. The repeated cycle of interviews allowed pupils to add further information and helped ensure that sufficient data was gathered on each of the key research questions. During subsequent interviews, I was therefore able to focus questions upon both themes and issues which emerged and on areas which required further clarification.

Triangulation of data was also applied by comparing information gathered during interviews with observational evidence noted in my research diary. As outlined by Denzin (1978), I used this diary as both a question-generating device and a validity check. My role as a teacher-researcher also allowed me to draw on informal discussions with colleagues from both schools and from some parents of pupils at

Berry House. The involvement of a second teacher-researcher in observing a number of interviews and checking the relevant transcripts also permitted additional validity checks to take place.

3.10 Interviews and transcription

This section provides details of the research interviews and information about how each was transcribed.

3.10.1 The Interviews

Interviews conducted in the special and mainstream settings are discussed in turn.

3.10.1.1 *Berry House*

A cycle of eight interviews took place at Berry House over the course of an entire academic year. The first four interviews related to partnership activities with Cohort 1 at Oak Street and the latter four to work with Cohort 2. In the majority of instances, interviews took place on the day following partnership sessions. The only exception to this was if pupils were absent and it was possible to re-arrange interviews in the same week. As detailed in Appendix 9, participation ranged from 63-100%, with Jason and Lucy both missing one interview and David missing three. Four pupils were interviewed independently, whilst all other pupils had a combination of 1:1 and paired interviews. Interviews varied in length from 12-45 minutes, with further details outlined in Table 1.

3.10.1.2 *Oak Street*

A repeated cycle of four interviews took place at Oak Street. Cohort 1 worked with pupils from Berry House for the first term and a half, whilst Cohort 2 was involved during the latter part of the school year. In the majority of instances, interviews took place on the day following partnership sessions. However, two interviews at Oak Street took place during the following week, due to staff requests in this setting. On occasions when the mainstream pupils were absent from school, it was not possible to re-arrange interviews, as time was limited and rooms had already been allocated for interview use. All interviews took place in mixed-sex friendship groups, identical to those used in partnership sessions. The total number of groups differed in each cohort, as staff shortages in the second half of the year meant that fewer activities could take place during the weekly sessions. As with Berry House interviews, participation was high, ranging from 89.3-100%. Interviews varied in length from 14-37 minutes, with further details outlined in Table 2.

Table 1: An overview of interview data from Berry House

*	Jason	Ricky	Ikra	Shamim	Sophie	Ayesha	Scott	David	Lucy
1	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **15 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **45 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Sophie#** Length: **30 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **23 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ikra** Length: **30 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **14 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **34 mins**	**absent**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **12 mins**
2	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **16 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **38 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Shamim** Length: **40 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ikra** Length: **40 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **18 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **12 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **30 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **12 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **14 mins**
3	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **14 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **37 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **18 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Sophie** Length: **33 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Shamim** Length: **33 mins**	Type of interview: **I:1** Length: **15 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **25 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **16 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **14 mins**
4	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **19 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **42 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ayesha** Length: **25 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Sophie** Length: **27 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Shamim** Length: **27 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ikra** Length: **25 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **34 mins**	Type of interview: **I:1** Length: **18 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **25 mins**
5	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **17 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **21 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Sophie** Length: **23 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ayesha** Length: **27 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ikra** Length: **23 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Shamim** Length: **19 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **30 mins**	Type of interview: **I:1** Length: **16 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **16 mins**
6	**absent**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **36 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ayesha** Length: **30 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Sophie** Length: **26 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Shamim** Length: **26 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ikra** Length: **30 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **30 mins**	**absent**	**absent**
7	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **24 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **40 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ayesha** Length: **25 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Shamim** Length: **33 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Shamim** Length: **33 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ikra** Length: **25 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **17 mins**	**absent**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **28 mins**
8	Type of interview: **Paired / Sophie** Length: **23 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **24 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ayesha** Length: **30 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **16 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Jason** Length: **23 mins**	Type of interview: **Paired / Ikra** Length: **30 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **20 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **22 mins**	Type of interview: **1:1** Length: **16 mins**

Notes: *Figures in first column denote the cycle of interviews
#In paired interviews, name of second interviewee given

Table 2: An overview of interview data from Oak Street

	Cohort 1			Cohort 2		
Inter-view	**Size of cohort**	**Group formation**	**Inter-view length (mins)**	**Size of cohort**	**Group formation**	**Inter-view length (mins)**
1	**28*** (16G + 12B)	Group 1 (Tigers): 4G + 3B Group 2 (Chimps): 4G + 3B Group 3 (Snakes): 5G + 3B Group 4 (Parrots): 3G + 3B	25 27 30 25	29 (14G +15B)	Group 1 (Oranges): 5G + 4B (1B absent) Group 2 (Apples): 5G + 5B Group 3 (Pears): 4G + 6B	35 35 37
2	**28** (16G + 12B)	Group 1a: 1G + 2B Group 1b: 3G + 1B Group 2a: 2G + 1B Group 2b: 2G + 2B Group 3a: 2G + 2B Group 3b: 3G + 1B Group 4a: 2G + 1B Group 4b: 1G + 2B	22 19 24 25 26 20 18 17	**30** (14G+ 16B)	Group 1a: 2G + 3B Group 1b: 3G + 2B Group 2a: 3G + 2B Group 2b: 2G + 3B Group 3a: 2G + 3B Group 3b: 2G + 3B	25 23 22 30 24 20
3	**25** (15G + 10B)	Group 1a: 1B (1G + 1B absent) Group 1b: 3G + 1B Group 2a: 2G + 1B Group 2b: 2G + 1B (1B absent) Group 3a: 2G + 2B Group 3b: 3G + 1B Group 4a: 2G + 1B Group 4b: 1G + 2B	25 25 23 24 23 20 19 22	**28** (13G + 15B)	Group 1a: 2G + 3B Group 1b: 3G + 2B Group 2a: 2G + 2B (1G absent) Group 2b: 2G + 3B Group 3a: 2G + 3B Group 3b: 2G + 2B (1B had transferred schools)	24 28 21 28 25 23
4	**28** (16G + 12B)	Group 1: 4G + 3B Group 2: 4G + 3B Group 3: 5G + 3B Group 4: 3G + 3B	15 17 14 16	**26** (12G + 14B)	Group 1: 3G + 5B (2 G absent) Group 2: 5G + 4B (1B absent) Group 3: 4G + 5B	16 17 15

Key: *28=28 pupils/ B-boys/ G-girls

3.10.2 **Transcription**

Interviews in both schools were audio taped with pupil permission and transcribed almost verbatim. This was a lengthy process, taking an entire school year to complete. All tapes and transcripts were clearly identified for ease of reference. Recordings were subject to repeated listening, for both familiarity and reflection and all inaudible responses were marked accordingly. Transcriptions were checked for typographical errors whilst audio recordings were replayed. Pauses in conversation were transcribed by the use of ellipsis and each speaker was introduced via a new line. To preserve anonymity, pseudonyms for all pupils and staff were used in the edited transcripts, which were then printed as a hard copy. A total of six completed

transcripts were checked by the second teacher-researcher against audio recordings of the interviews and in all instances, accuracy was confirmed.

The importance of gaining a thorough familiarity with interview material is stressed by Hitchcock and Hughes (1989), who note that the process of reading and re-reading materials will engender a sense of coherence as a whole. Following their suggestions, I re-read edited transcripts, whilst listening again to the audio recordings. This enabled me to gain a better appreciation of the subtle features of tone, pitch, intonation and other crucial aspects such as pauses, silences and emphasis.

3.11 **Data analysis**

This section highlights the five stages of data analysis that followed transcription. It first illustrates how transcripts were marked, then considers how they were reformatted. It then looks at how themes were identified and how Berry House data was further categorised. Finally, it describes the comparative analysis of data from the two schools.

3.11.1 **Stage 1: Marking transcripts**

At the outset of the analysis process, all transcripts were copied and material relating to each of the main research questions was highlighted in different colours. Pencilled annotations were written in a separate margin, including paralinguistic and non-verbal dimensions. All lead and follow-up questions were identified in the transcripts, with the former referring to the main research questions outlined in interview schedules and the latter to any additional questions asked.

Any prompts, probes or re-phrased questions were also identified in the copied transcripts. Prompts refer to suggestions made by the researcher or other interviewees to indicate the type of response anticipated. Prompts were typically used if pupils offered no response, requested information or had difficulty responding. One example is offered below:

> Question: *Tell me about sessions that you have enjoyed?*
> Prompt: *Perhaps you liked doing art, baking or outside games?*

Probes were used to gather more information about specific topics, as seen in the following example:

> Question: *Have you made any new friends?*
> Probe: *Why is (name of pupil) your friend?*

Re-phrased questions were used when pupils did not appear to understand a request for information, as highlighted below:

> Question: *What did you think of the outside games?*
> Re-phrase: *Did you enjoy taking part in the races outside?*

3.11.2 Stage 2: Re-formatting transcripts

In order to give further consideration to the responses made by pupils from Berry House, all question and answer data from transcripts was re-formatted into grids. This allowed me to reflect on how individual pupils answered questions, as all vocal, signed or gestured responses were identified and their use of symbols and other AAC systems was outlined. An example of this is provided in Table 3.

Table 3: A re-formatted transcript of Question 1/ Interview 1 (Ricky)

Interviewer question	Prompts, probes or re-phrases	Vocal response	Signed/ gestured response	Dyna Vox response	Notes
Do you remember which group you have been in at Oak Street?[2]		Tried to vocalise answer (unclear)			
	Could it be tigers, chimps or snakes?		Shook head	Opened farm animals	
	Could it be in zoo animals?	*Yes* (clear)		Opened zoo animals and selected *'monkey'* (audible response)	Need to ensure that 'chimp' available in Dyna Vox memory
	A monkey?		Nods head		
	Were you in the chimps?		Nods head		

A closer investigation of the questions asked to individual pupils also took place during early stages of analysis. All lead questions, prompts, probes and re-phrases were placed in table form, to allow comparisons to take place across interviews. An illustration is provided in Table 4.

[2] All italicised words/ phrases used in tables denote spoken or signed responses

Table 4: A re-formatted transcript of researcher questions/ Interviews 1-4 (Ricky)

Interview	Area of questioning	Recall of group
1	Lead question	*Do you remember which group you have been in at Oak Street?*
	Prompts, probes or re-phrases	*Could it be snakes, chimps or parrots?* *Could it be in 'zoo animals'?* *A monkey?* *Were you in the chimps?*
2	Lead question	*Which group are you in Ricky?*
	Prompts, probes or re-phrases	*Do you remember the name of your group at Oak Street?* *Is it tigers, snakes, chimps or parrots?*
3	Lead question	*Can you remember which group you've been working with?*
	Prompts, probes or re-phrases	*Can you remember?* *Are you looking at my symbols?* (shows symbols) *You've been in the chimps?*
4	Lead question	*Which group are you in?*
	Prompts, probes or re-phrases	*I think it's in zoo animals*

Detailed information about question and answer data from all research participants was collated in a rigorous manner. As suggested by Bernard (2000), word, phrase and sentence counts are useful as they allow general patterns to emerge and assist researchers in making comparisons across texts. This can be seen in the example offered in Table 5.

Table 5: Detailed information about question and answer data/ Interviews 1-4 (Ricky)

	Interview 1	**Interview 2**	**Interview 3**	**Interview 4**
Interview length	45 mins*	38 mins	37 mins	42 mins
Lead questions asked	19	15	15	16
Probe questions asked	29	39	63	51
Re-phrased questions	14	3	5	5
Repeated questions	4	2	2	10
Responses to Lead questions	**Total: 19** Vocal (clear)-2 (unclear)-6 Nod/ shake-3 Sign/ gesture/ symbol-5 Dyna Vox (new message)-1# Dyna Vox (memory message)-1 Dyna Vox (points to screen)-1	**Total: 14** Vocal (clear)-1 (unclear)-1 Nod/ shake-5 Sign/ gesture/ symbol-7 Dyna Vox –N/A*	**Total: 14** Vocal (clear)-4 (unclear)-0 Nod/ shake-3 Sign/ gesture/ symbol-4 Dyna Vox (new message)-1 Dyna Vox (memory message)-2 Dyna Vox (points to screen)-0	**Total: 15** Vocal (clear)-2 (unclear)-0 Nod/ shake-5 Sign/ gesture/ symbol-3 Dyna Vox (new message)-4 Dyna Vox (memory message)-0 Dyna Vox (points to screen)-1
Responses to Probes/ Repeats/ Rephrases/ Confirmations	**Total: 57** Vocal (clear)-23 (unclear)-0 Nod/ shake-15 Sign/ gesture/ symbol-11 Dyna Vox (new message)-2 Dyna Vox (memory message)-5 Dyna Vox (points to screen)-1	**Total: 54** Vocal (clear)-13 (unclear)-2 Nod/ shake-20 Sign/ gesture/ symbol-19 Dyna Vox –N/A	**Total: 102** Vocal (clear)-28 (unclear)-1 Nod/ shake-38 Sign/ gesture/ symbol-21 Dyna Vox (new message)-7 Dyna Vox (memory message)-5 Dyna Vox (points to screen)-2	**Total: 74** Vocal (clear)-10 (unclear)-7 Nod/ shake-37 Sign/ gesture/ symbol-9 Dyna Vox (new message)-6 Dyna Vox (memory message)-0 Dyna Vox (points to screen)-5
Questions/ issues raised by pupil to interviewer	**Total: 2** Sign/ gesture-2	**Total: 7** Sign/ gesture-7	**Total: 16*** Vocal-1 Sign/ gesture-9 Dyna Vox (new message)-4 Dyna Vox (memory message)-2	**Total: 1** Dyna Vox (points to screen)-1
Notes	*Includes 15 min toilet break # Different Dyna Vox messages are outlined in Section 4.1.1	*Ricky had left his Dyna Vox at home on the day of the interview	* Ricky raised lots of issues concerning his prospective new school	

3.11.3 Stage 3: Identification of themes

A thematic analysis of key research issues was undertaken, with further details provided in Appendix 10. Issues relating to disability, individual differences, relationships, inclusion and the development of partnership work were considered, alongside personal reflections about the data. All interviews were summarised in an identical manner, with repeated phrases, comments and perspectives identified and tabulated in relation to their relevance and meaning. In addition, notes made in the research diary were amalgamated into these summaries. As suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990), I found tables to be extremely useful when organising text and summarising qualitative data among multiple dimensions (rows and columns).

Key themes were identified by pulling together examples from each transcript, as noted in examples from both schools provided in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: A thematic summary of Question 2/ Interview 1 (Cohort 2) Oak Street

Key theme	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Knowledge of disability **Question 2:** *Do you know anyone who has a wheelchair?*	Naha, Bini and Sophia- all named *'Shab'* (dual placement) with latter two referring to it as *'electric'* Bini- volunteered *'Ayesha'* (Bini had identified this name on a label attached to the wheelchair I had brought in) Munib- was keen to know how Ayesha could manage without her chair *'How can she walk if she hasn't got it?'* and asked if she was ok about me borrowing it Rabeena- referred to her neighbour *'A girl in my street has got a wheelchair'*	Mohammed and Samira- named *'Shab'* and referred to it as *'electric'* Adil- added *'You don't turn it. They've got a gear on'* Mohammed- explained reason for electric models *'It's because they don't have many strength'* Razeeda- discussed her mum *'My mum has a wheelchair...She can't walk properly'* When asked by peers, she confirmed her mum's chair was manual, adding *'I push her'*	Jolene-*'I know someone who had her legs chopped off and she's got a wheelchair'* (No details given at time of interview- later found out her cousin was involved in a road traffic accident) Alarna-*'My auntie has an electric wheelchair and my grandma's got another wheelchair'* Chloe-*'One of my auntie's can't walk and one of my nan's broke her leg'*/ also uncle has an electric chair as *'he broke his leg'* She later added-*'I sometimes push em. Sometimes they give me a ride'* Fazad- referred to both *'Shab'* and his neighbour Shenaz- named her aunt David- said that grandma has wheelchair *'because she nearly broke all her leg'* and later said *'my auntie has too'* Paul-*'My grandad's got one. He's got an electric one that takes him upstairs'*

Table 7: A summary of answers concerning one key theme/ Interviews 1-4 (Ricky)

Key theme	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Interview 4
Recall of friend-ships	When asked how he could make friends, answered (tell them) *'about me'*, reciting name, age, hobbies and information about his friend Jason Also located messages *'Could I join this group please?'* and *'Do you want to work with me today?'*	Selected photo of Juke when asked if he had made any friends in his group- confirmed there was no one else Twice found photos of Michael in the Tiger group- agreed he was a friend Agreed he liked Michael and that he was funny	Very keen to find photos of Juke, whom he agreed was his friend Also added that *'Jason'* was his friend Later said that he had made *'5'* friends	Said that he had made *'40'* friends in Emma's class-when I told him that there were only 28 pupils in her class, he quickly said he had made *'28'* friends! When asked if he had made any special friends in his group, selected photos of Juke and Polly

3.11.4 Stage 4: Further categorisation of Berry House data

In order to triangulate data from various sources, further analysis took place. This resulted in the creation of individual profiles for all Berry House participants, an illustration of which is provided in Table 8.

Table 8: A summary of evidence relating to one key research question (Ricky)

Research question	Supportive evidence	Any discrepancies	Code
How does Ricky access information during the interviews?			
Ricky has good understanding of all questions asked	When on task, his listening and comprehension skills are in line with his age	Ricky can be easily distracted	I/C
Ricky has limited vocal responses, but tries extremely hard to make himself understood-using sign and gesture alongside speech	He has a clear yes/ no response and makes good attempts at some other words He is able to use key Makaton signs to aid speech	He is often frustrated that he cannot quickly communicate his answers	I/C
Ricky uses an AAC device to ask and answer questions	He uses his Dyna Vox at school and in all interviews except 2 (left at home) He uses it sporadically at home	He is frustrated in 4-in his search for key words In 5 he does not have enough patience to use his Dyna Vox successfully in the interview In 6 and 7 technical difficulties arise-although more acute in former	I/C/F
Ricky can make choices using symbols, photographs and simple text	Using real objects or Dyna Vox display	After problems with photos being torn/ screwed up in 2-future photos were laminated	C/F

Key: I - Interview/ C - Classroom observation/ F- Field notes

3.11.5 Stage 5: Comparative analysis of Berry House and Oak Street data

The final stage of analysis involved a systematic comparison of data gathered from both schools, with detailed example provided in Appendix 11. This stage was undertaken to highlight attitudes, expectations and feelings that were common to pupils in both settings and detail those that were distinctively different.
This comparison is illustrative, highlighting both similarities and variations in answers from participants in both schools. However, it is not an exact comparison, as pupils from the two schools were not asked identical questions.

3.12 Concluding comment

This chapter has clarified the main aims of the research and detailed the specific questions that the study seeks to address. It has provided a clear rationale for the choice of a case study approach and the use of semi-structured interviews as the principal means of data collection. It has evaluated current literature outlining different AAC strategies and has investigated the use of low-tech and high-tech systems and the deployment of facilitators in research.

Detailed consideration has been given to the extensive pilot work that took place at Oak Street and Berry House prior to the commencement of the main study. The significance of these pilot studies cannot be over-stressed, as they helped me to develop experience as a researcher and determine which strategies were most suitable for interviews conducted at each school. Most significantly, the pilots allowed me to undertake a practical investigation of different interview techniques to enable the views of AAC users to be successfully elicited.

This chapter has examined my role as a teacher-researcher and reviewed how informed consent was established in the study. It has also debated many other ethical issues underpinning the research, including the key issues of reliability and validity. Information about the interview process in both settings has been summarised, alongside details of how the interviews were transcribed. Finally, this chapter has offered exemplar excerpts from re-formatted transcripts, highlighting the subsequent five stages of data analysis. A comprehensive account of the findings which resulted from this analysis is provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter Four: Findings concerning the communication of pupils during the interview process

Introduction

This chapter addresses the six key questions relating to communication issues highlighted in Section 3.1.2.1. It first illustrates how pupils from both schools communicated information during the interviews and how their views were best elicited. It then describes how changes in perspectives were monitored and considers how much the pupils can remember of different experiences. Finally, the chapter looks at whether the answers of participants were focused and reliable and investigates the extent to which the interview context affected responses.

4.1 How do pupils communicate information during the interviews?

In this section, the communication skills of the pupils from Berry House and Oak Street are considered in turn.

4.1.1 Berry House pupils

There was wide variation in how the special school pupils communicated during the interviews. Whilst Jason, Ikra and Shamim were able to answer questions fluently, the vocal responses of other pupils were much more limited. Ricky, Sophie, Ayesha and Lucy were able to formulate some short phrases, whereas the vocal contributions of Scott and David were limited to single words. Although Ikra, Shamim, Sophie and Ayesha had Urdu as a home language, all had a good understanding of English.

As outlined in Section 3.7.1, six of the pupils interviewed were either partially or totally dependent upon AAC strategies. Each of these pupils used a combination of aided systems (involving additional equipment) and unaided systems (not involving additional equipment). The simplest form of communication aid used to help elicit pupils' perspectives during the interviews was a board containing photographs or Boardmaker symbols, with or without written text. Most pupils were able to accurately point to individual symbols, although Scott often found it easier for me to do this, whilst he made a yes/ no response to indicate his choice.

'High tech' systems were also used during interviews, ranging from simple message devices to Ricky's specialist computer. The least elaborate systems were used by Scott and David (and Ricky on occasions when he had forgotten his Dyna Vox or experienced difficulties with it). Three pre-recorded message devices ('*One-Step*' switches), with the attached Boardmaker symbol for *'yes'*, *'no'* and *'maybe'* or '*like*', '*dislike*' and '*unsure*', were used in several interviews. Both Ricky and David were able to press the switches to answer questions, although Scott required some assistance with targeting. Once Scott had made his selection through *'eye pointing'*, I was able to help him access the chosen switch by providing hand-over-hand support, being sure to always double check that the correct switch had been located.

When using his Dyna Vox, Ricky was able to access *'symbol'*, *'link'* and *'command'* buttons via a touch screen, with up to thirty buttons per page. Symbol buttons were

programmed on his device to represent words, phrases or entire messages consisting of one or more sentences, link buttons made connections between the different communication pages (allowing Ricky to search through different pages) and command buttons performed specific, predefined operations (such as *'speak'*, *'clear'* and *'shut down'*). During the interview situation, Ricky predominantly formed new messages on his Dyna Vox to both ask and answer questions, as previously outlined in Table 5 (Section 3.11.2). However, in three interviews he also used his memory bank to retrieve stored responses and on a number of occasions simply pointed to words and symbols on the screen, without using the voice activation control.

Table 9: Type of question asked to Berry House pupils

	Jason	Ricky	Ikra	Shamim	Sophie	Ayesha	Scott	David	Lucy
Inter-view length (mins)	**14-24***	**21-45**	**18-40**	**16-40**	**18-33**	**12-30**	**17-34**	**12-22**	**12-28**
Lead quest-ions asked	1:1 (6)# **12-15** Paired (1): **9**	1:1 (8): **12-19**	1:1 (1): **11** Paired (7): **8-25**	1:1 (2): **9-18** Paired (6): **8-17**	1:1 (1): **10** Paired (7): **10-26**	1:1 (3): **12-18** Paired (5): **7-17**	1:1 (8): **11-20**	1:1 (5): **6-11**	1:1 (7): **9-16**
Probe quest-ions asked	1:1: **13-47** Paired: **8**	1:1: **29-91**	1:1 : **24** Paired: **4-41**	1:1: **32-46** Paired: **5-24**	1:1: **26** Paired: **14-38**	1:1: **15-18** Paired: **8-18**	1:1: **26-50**	1:1: **12-34**	1:1: **21-51**
Re-phrased quest-ions asked	**Nil**	**2-14**	**0-7**	**0-5**	**0-4**	**0-4**	**1-8**	**0-2**	**1-7**
Re-peated quest-ions asked	**Nil**	**2-10**	**0-2**	**1-5**	**1-8**	**0-4**	**1-9**	**0-5**	**2-9**

Notes: *Where two figures are shown, a range of response is provided
Figure in brackets refers to total number of interviews of this type

As outlined in Table 9, Berry House pupils were asked between six and twenty *'lead questions'* during 1:1 interviews. Lead questions refer to questions specified in the (hidden) interview schedule. Additional *'probe questions'* were also asked, ranging from 12-91 during 1:1 interviews. These questions were supplementary to those outlined in the interview schedule and were used to gather further information about specific issues. As previously noted in Table 1 (Section 3.10), the length of interviews varied from 12-45 minutes, with Ricky and Scott having the longest 1:1 interviews overall. In order to ascertain an informed response, both pupils required a larger number of probe, repeated and rephrased questions, plus additional time to access AAC devices. In contrast, interviews with Jason and David were the shortest in length. Whereas Jason gave fluent responses and did not require questions to be rephrased or repeated, David's comprehension difficulties meant that fewer lead questions were asked overall.

Individual responses to lead questions are detailed in Table 10, with responses to probe questions, repeats and confirmations outlined in Table 11.

Table 10: Pupil responses to lead questions

Jason	Ricky	Ikra	Shamim	Sophie	Ayesha	Scott	David	Lucy
Total responses: 10-15 **Total vocal:** 9-13 **Clear vocal:** 9-13 **1 word:** 3-6 **2-5 words:** 2-6 **6-10 words:** 2-6 **10+ words:** 2-3 **Nods or shakes:** 0-3 **Object of reference:** 0-1	**Total responses:** 12-19 **Total vocal:** 0-8 **Clear vocal:** 0-4 **Unclear:** 0-6 **1 word:** 0-4 **2-5 words:** 0-1 **Nods or shakes:** 3-9 **Sign or gesture:** 2-7 **Total DynaVox:** 0-5 **New message:** 0-4 **Memory message:** 0-2 **Points to screen:** 0-1	**Total responses:** 7-19 **Total vocal:** 6-19 **Clear vocal:** 6-19 **1 word:** 2 **2-5 words:** 4 **6-10 words:** 3 **10+ words:** 2 **Nods or shakes:** 0-1 **Object of reference:** 0-1	**Total responses:** 8-18 **Total vocal:** 6-18 **Clear vocal:** 6-17 **Unclear:** 0-1 **1 word:** 2-4 **2-5 words:** 4-9 **6-10 words:** 1-4 **10+ words:** 0-1 **Nods or shakes:** 0-2 **Object of reference:** 0-1	**Total responses:** 5-10 **Total vocal:** 3-8 **Clear vocal:** 3-7 **Unclear:** 0-1 **1 word:** 4 **2-5 words:** 1 **Nods or shakes:** 2-4 **Object of reference:** 0-1 **Sign or gesture:** 0-1	**Total responses:** 4-14 **Total vocal:** 1-8 **Clear vocal:** 1-8 **Unclear:** 0-3 **1 word:** 1-7 **2-5 words:** 0-2 **Nods or shakes:** 2-6 **Object of reference:** 0-2 **Sign or gesture:** 0-3	**Total responses:** 10-17 **Total vocal:** 7-15 **Clear vocal:** 6-11 **Unclear:** 0-5 **1 word:** 6-11 **Nods or looks down:** 0-5 **Object of reference:** 1-3	**Total responses:** 6-9 **Total vocal:** 0-1 **Clear vocal:** 0-0 **Unclear:** 0-1 **Nods or shakes:** 1-4 **Object of reference:** 2-4 **Sign or gesture:** 0-5	**Total responses:** 9-16 **Total vocal:** 5-14 **Clear vocal:** 4-14 **Unclear:** 0-3 **1 word:** 4-10 **2-5 words:** 0-4 **Nods or shakes:** 0-2 **Object of reference:** 0-3 **Sign or gesture:** 0-1

Due to restrictions on time, the counting of words in vocal responses took place during 1:1 interviews only. In Table 10 and Table 11, *'total vocal'* response notes both clear and unclear attempts at vocalisation, whereas *'word count'* refers to the transcription of clear vocal contributions. *'Object of Reference'* refers to Boardmaker symbols, photographs, examples of work and 3D items (such as the use of a skittle to represent bowling). *'Total Dyna Vox'* notes the number of occasions that the AAC system was used during all interviews (with zero referring to interviews where Ricky had left the device at home). All other references to Dyna Vox usage account only for interviews in which the system was used.

Table 11: Pupil responses to probe questions, rephrases and confirmations

Jason	Ricky	Ikra	Shamim	Sophie	Ayesha	Scott	David	Lucy
Total responses: 10-51	**Total responses:** 54-117	**Total responses:** 4-55	**Total responses:** 8-54	**Total responses:** 19-37	**Total responses:** 6-23	**Total responses:** 38-62	**Total responses:** 18-45	**Total responses:** 33-72
Total vocal: 9-48	**Total vocal:** 8-29	**Total vocal:** 4-48	**Total vocal:** 7-50	**Total vocal:** 8-24	**Total vocal:** 2-14	**Total vocal:** 25-47	**Total vocal:** 0-5	**Total vocal:** 29-62
Clear vocal: 9-46	**Clear vocal:** 6-28	**Clear vocal:** 4-45	**Clear vocal:** 7-45	**Clear vocal:** 8-22	**Clear vocal:** 2-12	**Clear vocal:** 23-43	**Clear vocal:** 2-5	**Clear vocal:** 25-57
Unclear: 0-2	**Unclear:** 0-7	**Unclear:** 0-3	**Unclear:** 0-5	**Unclear:** 0-4	**Unclear:** 0-2	**Unclear:** 1-5	**Unclear:** 0-0	**Unclear:** 1-7
1 word: 4-23	**1 word:** 6-25	**1 word:** 12	**1 word:** 9-32	**1 word:** 9	**1 word:** 2-10	**1 word:** 23-43	**1 word:** 2-5	**1 word:** 19-47
2-5 words: 4-17	**2-5 words:** 0-4	**2-5 words:** 10	**2-5 words:** 9-16	**2-5 words:** 2	**2-5 words:** 0-4			**2-5 words:** 3-16
6-10 words: 1-7		**6-10 words:** 7	**6-10 words:** 2-2					
10+ words: 0-16		**10+ words:** 1	**10+ words:** 0-1					
Nods or shakes: 0-10	**Nods or shakes:** 15-51	**Nods or shakes:** 0-3	**Nods or shakes:** 1-9	**Nods or shakes:** 6-21	**Nods or shakes:** 4-10	**Nods or looks down:** 4-13	**Nods or shakes:** 4-12	**Nods or shakes:** 0-9
Object of reference: 0-1	**Object of reference:** 0-3	**Object of reference:** 0-7	**Object of reference:** 0-1	**Object of reference:** 0-1	**Object of reference:** 0-5	**Object of reference:** 1-16	**Object of reference:** 5-15	**Object of reference:** 0-10
Sign or gesture: 0-2	**Sign or gesture:** 9-22	**Sign or gesture:** 0-2		**Sign or gesture:** 0-2	**Sign or gesture:** 0-4		**Sign or gesture:** 2-15	**Sign or gesture:** 0-1
	Total DynaVox: 0-21							
	New message: 2-17							
	Memory message: 0-5							
	Points to screen: 1-5							

The vocal responses of Jason, Ikra and Shamim were generally fluent and clear and ranged between one and ten (or more) words at interview, although Jason gave lengthy answers on a much more frequent basis. Ricky, Sophie, Ayesha and Lucy predominantly gave single word answers, although all gave two to five word responses on occasion. In contrast, Scott and David solely gave single word responses. Transcription difficulties were most evident in the interviews of Ricky, Scott and Lucy, as each made a significant number of unclear vocal responses.

All pupils used nods, shakes of the head or a *'look down'* response in the case of Scott, to communicate yes or no answers to some questions, with Ricky and Sophie using this response most often. Objects of reference, including photographs, Boardmaker symbols and 3D objects were presented on occasion to all interviewees, with Scott, David and Lucy being the most frequent users. Most pupils also used some signed or gestured responses, although Shamim and Scott were notable exceptions. As both were affected by Cerebral Palsy in their upper limbs, they found it difficult to make signs independently. Signed responses were most frequently used by David. Ricky also made a significant number of signed responses, especially when his Dyna Vox was not available or he was experiencing difficulties with it.

4.1.2 **Oak Street pupils**

Interviews varied in length from 14-37 minutes, as previously outlined in Section 3.10 (Table 2). For pupils in both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2, the introductory interviews tended to be longer in duration, as groups were larger and extra time was required to allow pupils to handle the props provided for discussion. Interviews of the shortest length took place in the final round, as the class teachers for both cohorts placed limitations on time, due to a year group assembly practice for Cohort 1 and a sport's day practice for Cohort 2.

In contrast to the wide variation in communication skills found in the Berry House sample, all the Oak Street pupils were able to articulate vocally. Many pupils were able to give fluent, often lengthy answers and like Jason and Ikra, many spoke quickly, especially when they were eager to relate their own views and stories. Several Oak Street pupils, like Jason, Ricky, Ikra and Shamim from Berry House, were confident interviewees from the outset. Many pupils asked questions of each other and myself, despite the fact that they were new to the interview situation and did not know me well. Like Sophie, Ayesha and Lucy, there were individuals at Oak Street who remained relatively quiet throughout all interviews, most notably Mire (Cohort 1) and Anisha (Cohort 2).

4.2 **How can the views of pupils be best elicited?**

This section outlines the various styles of interviews that took place at Berry House and Oak Street and highlights some of the difficulties that occurred in the transcription process. The listening and comprehension skills of pupils from both schools are then investigated and consideration is given to how behavioural issues affected the interview process. Following this, attention is given to the type of questions asked during interviews and the use of any additional materials.

4.2.1 **Interview style**

Both 1:1 and paired interviews took place at Berry House, with a comprehensive account detailed in Section 3.10 (Table 1). All interviews with Ricky, Scott, David and Lucy were conducted on a 1:1 basis, in order to provide better opportunities for them to remain focused and allow sufficient time for AAC systems to be deployed. All other pupils had a combination of both 1:1 and paired interviews. The majority of the paired interviews were initiated by the pupils themselves, with Ikra initiating six of her seven paired interviews and Shamim initiating five out of six. Although there was some concern that both Sophie and Ayesha may have been intimidated by being interviewed alongside more dominant peers, this proved not to be the case. In fact, Sophie was often more vocal when interviewed alongside Shamim and Ayesha was particularly at ease when interviewed alongside Ikra. Due to Jason's frequent school absences for hospital treatment and subsequent rescheduling of interviews, he was only able to take part in one paired interview, much to his disappointment.

All interviews at Oak Street took place in mixed sex friendship groups, drawn up with advice from their class teachers and presented in Section 3.10 (Table 2). In order to elicit the maximum amount of data about group members and activities, these groups were identical to those used during partnership sessions. As discussed in Section 3.10.1.2, four groups were interviewed in Cohort 1, but only three groups in Cohort 2. During Interviews 2 and 3, each of these groups were further split into two (with eight groups being interviewed in Cohort 1 and six in Cohort 2) to provide optimum conditions for the provision of drawing or writing materials and opportunities for individual discussions to take place. Although higher quality data was elicited when pupils were interviewed in these smaller groups, restrictions on time resulted in a return to larger groups during Interview 4.

4.2.2 **Transcription difficulties**

Difficulties with transcription occurred in interviews from both schools. The unclear speech of many of the Berry House pupils was overcome to some degree via the repetition and confirmation of replies, coupled with the fact that interviews were transcribed in a matter of days. At Oak Street, difficulties arose when several pupils spoke at once and was most noticeable in Interviews 1 and 4, when groups were larger. Problems also arose when private conversations took place or group members discussed unrelated topics. As with Sophie and Ayesha (and occasionally Jason), several children at Oak Street also had very quiet voices that were difficult to make out on tape. The speech of a number of Oak Street pupils with Urdu as their home language also caused problems, with strong Asian dialects and broken speech being very difficult to make out on tape. This was especially notable on the few occasions that, due to restrictions on time, transcription took place a week or more after interviews took place.

4.2.3 **Listening and comprehension skills**

Overall, the listening and comprehension skills of the majority of pupils interviewed from both schools were good. However, certain individuals in both schools struggled with comprehension. At Berry House, both David and Lucy failed to understand several questions that I perceived to be relatively straightforward. Most notably,

when discussing photographs of the two schools, both pupils had difficulties with terminology associated with size (big and small) and location (inside and outside) and as such, were unable to compare the two venues. On occasion, David seemed more interested in pressing the pre-recorded switches than making an informed selection, as seen in the interview extract provided in Figure 2. Such responses occurred, despite efforts to limit them by providing David with access to the switches prior to each interview commencing (as discussed in Section 3.5.3).

Figure 2: Extract from Berry House Interview 5 (David)

Interview	Question posed by interviewer	David's response	Comment
5 (1:1)	*Did you go in the classroom?* (showing photograph of classroom at Oak Street) *Did you go in here David?* (showing photograph again)	*Yes* (pressing switch) *No* (pressing switch in rapid succession) *Yes No* (pressing both switches) *Yes* (signed response)	On the first occasion the photograph was presented, David only gave it a fleeting glance, focusing his attention instead on the pre-recorded switches.

Lucy had particular difficulties relating to time and context and made several references to activities that she had taken part in with her own class at Berry House or with her family when answering questions about partnership sessions, with examples provided in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Extracts from Berry House Interviews 1, 2 and 3 (Lucy)

Interview	Question posed by interviewer	Lucy's response	Comment
1 (1:1)	*How do we get to Oak Street?* (showing photograph of mainstream school) *What do we go on?* (signing *'bus'* as a prompt)	*Swimming and the swings* *On the swings*	Lucy had participated in swimming at Berry House on the morning of the interview, although had not been on the school playground.
2 (1:1)	*What do you like doing at Oak Street?* (showing photograph of group taking part in an art activity)	*Having a drink*	Lucy had just had a drink in class prior to the interview.
3 (1:1)	*Where are we going on the trip?* *Is it McDonalds?* (showing photograph of this venue)	*Going to mummy and daddy's* *And grandad's*	Lucy's home-school diary indicated that she had visited her grandad at the weekend.

At Oak Street, both Sadia in Cohort 1 and Aisha in Cohort 2 appeared to experience similar difficulties with comprehension, with examples provided in Figures 4 and 5 respectively. However, unlike their special school peers who were routinely

interviewed individually or in pairs, Sadia and Aisha had fewer opportunities for questions to be repeated or rephrased and did not have photographs, symbols or examples of work to help formulate their responses.

Figure 4: Extracts from Oak Street Interview 3 with Cohort 1/ Group 2b (Sadia)

Interview	Question posed by interviewer	Sadia's response	Comment
3 (paired interview- as one pupil absent)	*Can you draw or write something about partnership sessions?* (directed at both girls) *Something you have liked doing with the children from Berry House* (directed at Sadia) *What do you like doing on Tuesday?* (directed at Sadia) *Did you play with a bunny?*	Drew a picture of her family, money and some toys and wrote *'I like going to the big shop'* underneath *I've got a toy bunny* *I've got a toy bunny*	Sadia clearly did not understand the purpose of the activity.

Figure 5: Extracts from Oak Street Interview 4 with Cohort 2/ Group 2 (Aisha)

Interview	Question posed by interviewer	Aisha's response	Comment
4 (group of 8 pupils)	*Did you make any friends, Aisha?* *Do you like Ayesha and Ikra?* (directed at Aisha)	*I enjoy your bowling* *Razeeda like it too*	Aisha appeared to want to talk about the joint trip and not discuss friendships with Berry House peers.

4.2.4 Behavioural issues

Behavioural issues affected the quality of the data elicited during a small number of interviews at both schools. Most noticeably at Berry House, Scott appeared to enjoy challenging me by repeatedly giving negative answers to questions where background knowledge and field note data would suggest otherwise. Likewise, both David and Ricky were often distracted by the interview surroundings and behaved in a silly fashion with props provided for discussion. At Oak Street, behavioural issues were most prevalent in Interviews 1 and 4, when larger groups were interviewed and the boisterous behaviour of a number of pupils came to light. There appeared to be a noticeable competitive spirit between group members, especially amongst the boys in Cohort 1.

On many occasions, individuals (and pairs of pupils) from both schools went off at tangents and needed to be guided back to the interview subject. At Berry House, Jason, Ricky, Ikra and Shamim all did this frequently. The subject of unrelated dialogue at both Berry House and Oak Street included school events, family

members and holidays. In both settings, tapping into an individual's sense of humour was often successful in curbing off-tangent discussions or distractions within interviews, although on occasion such tactics had reverse consequences with Scott.

4.2.5 **Question type**

In interviews at both Berry House and Oak Street, short, closed questions were used at the start of all interviews to focus the attention of the pupils and help to reduce any tension. As their confidence in the interview situation increased, several pupils from both schools made attempts to answer more challenging questions. Many pupils were able to answer open questions, although several Berry House pupils frequently needed these to be broken down into closed questions in order to elicit a response. Lengthy answers were often given by Jason, Ikra and Shamim at Berry House, by Amed, Erin and Sarah in Cohort 1 and Adil, Bini, Saha, Munib, Sophia and Emily in Cohort 2.

The majority of pupils at Berry House, plus Sadia and Aisha from Oak Street, frequently required the questions to be repeated or rephrased in order to elicit a response or clarify an ambiguous response. At Oak Street, repeated questioning and rephrasing was most prevalent when more challenging questions were asked, such as those relating to inclusion during later interviews. Similar data occurs when looking at the prevalence of prompting, for the majority of special school pupils, again with Sadia and Aisha from Oak Street, often required prompts from the interviewer and/ or other interviewees (where available). At Berry House, Ricky frequently required prompting when trying to locate communication pages on his Dyna Vox. The most notable use of prompting at Oak Street occurred during Interview 1, when items commonly used by Berry House peers were discussed.

4.2.6 **Additional material**

Pupils from both schools responded well when either 2D or 3D material was used in the interview situation. The photographs introduced at Berry House (of pupils, activities and setting) and the props provided at Oak Street (manual wheelchair, plus other physical aids) all acted as reference points for discussion and facilitated natural and spontaneous conversation. Both the photographs and the props prompted a sense of curiosity and often produced quite animated responses from interviewees. Although photographs were not used during the Oak Street interviews, due to time restrictions, several mainstream pupils did refer to photographic displays or albums relating to partnership work that they had seen in their school.

As outlined in Section 3.5.9, drawing and writing materials were provided in two of the four interviews with both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 at Oak Street, to help facilitate communication within groups and provide an additional source of data. However, due to the poor hand control of the majority of Berry House pupils involved in the study, this material was not extended to the special school. Although there was no pressure upon the interviewees to draw something linked to their partnership experience, the majority of pupils in both cohorts did complete a drawing or produce some writing. It is notable that a more balanced number of responses took place when drawing materials were provided, as each interviewee was given the option to discuss their work.

4.3 How is it possible to monitor changes in pupils' perspectives?

As pupils from Berry House were interviewed at regular intervals over the course of a full school year and each cohort from Oak Street for half a school year, it was possible to monitor changes in perspectives by comparing replies given in different interviews. As the next chapter will show, when looking at pupils' attitudes towards extending partnership work with known groups of peers, increasingly positive replies were evident from participants from both schools during later interviews, whether their starting points were confident or cautious. References to physical and emotional changes were often described in field notes, although much more detailed notes are available for pupils from Berry House.

4.4 How much can the pupils remember of different experiences?

Pupil attendance during partnership sessions was monitored by Berry House staff throughout the school year, by means of a register. This shows that participation in both schools was high, with a mean average of 93.6% for Berry House and 97.3% for Oak Street (with Cohort 1 scoring 98.0% and Cohort 2, 96.5%). The majority of pupils from both schools had a 100% attendance record. Noticeable absences were recorded for Jason and David, who missed five and eight sessions respectively. As both boys had prolonged periods of ill health/ hospitalisation during the Autumn term, their experience of working alongside Cohort 1 was somewhat limited.

The majority of pupils from both schools were able to recall information about group names, activities, trips and identify individuals that they had worked with, liked, had given help to or received help from. Jason, Ricky, Ikra and Shamim, as many of their mainstream peers, were able to provide a considerable amount of detail concerning session activities and events that took place some time ago. Jason, Ikra and Shamim, like several Oak Street peers, were also able to give detailed descriptions of the appearance and/ or personality of other group members. In addition, Ikra and Shamim both proved to have an excellent recall of group members who were present or absent during sessions.

4.5 Is evidence available to show their answers are focused and reliable?

Far more evidence from field notes and observations made during sessions is available for Berry House pupils than their counterparts at Oak Street, as the special school pupils were the main focus of the study. Despite this, sufficient data is available from field notes and observations to back up the responses that many pupils, from both schools, made during interview. Although individuals from both settings appeared to make exaggerated remarks at times, or confuse real and imagined events, the answers given by most pupils appear to be both focused and reliable, with the same replies often being given in repeated questions. Reversal of choices in repeated questions was frequently used during Berry House interviews and consistency was demonstrated on many occasions, as seen in the example given in Figure 6. Although the tactic was used less at Oak Street, due to pupils being interviewed in groups rather than on their own or in pairs, some consistency using reversal of choices was still evident, as indicated in Figure 7.

Figure 6: Extracts from Berry House Interview 7 (Lucy)

Inter -view	Question posed by interviewer	Lucy's response	Comment
7 (1:1)	*What activity did you do on Tuesday?* *Did you do some baking with Chloe on Tuesday?* *Were you doing some clay work?* (shows symbol), *some outside games?* (shows symbol) *or baking?* (shows symbol) You did games outside? *Did Chloe do outside games with you?* (shows symbol), *or baking?* (shows symbol) *or clay work?* (shows symbol)	*Like baking* (pause) *Chloe* (looks unsure) (points to outside games) *Yes* *Games* (points to outside games)	Field notes indicate that Lucy had taken part in a food technology lesson prior to interview (which may have caused confusion) and confirm that she had taken part in outside games with Chloe in the previous partnership session Confirmation of choice Reversal of choices provides additional confirmation

Figure 7: Extracts from Oak Street Interview 4 with Cohort 1/ Group 2

Inter -view	Question posed by interviewer	Nathan's response	Comment
4 7 pupils	*What do you think you have learnt from the partnership sessions with Berry House?* *Perhaps you have learnt something new. Maybe a new skill- like baking or clay work, or something about working with the children at Berry House or a new experience?* *So, what have you got out of partnership sessions?* *Maybe something to do with working with new children, or learning new skills or doing new things?*	(no reply from any group member) *I learn how to bake, how to do clay fish and about other children* (agreed with Tracy's comment that although you should not make fun of pupils with disabilities, you can still laugh at their jokes) *Yes, like learn what they like* (no reply) *I learn how to work wi'em, like doing signs and I learn how to bake and how to do clay and stuff (pause) And I went on a bus.*	As with other groups, question needed to be simplified/ examples given Nathan referred to activities and meeting new peers Again, I felt that group required re-phrased question to be simplified/ examples given Reversal of choices provides confirmation of earlier response, plus further details (experience of sign language/ going on bus)

At Oak Street, replies given by both Sadia and Aisha, coupled with their drawing and/ or writing, indicate that both girls were only partially aware or interested in the content of the interviews. Likewise at Berry House, both David and Lucy at times appeared to have trouble focusing on the interview topic, although both responded well to examples of work and photographs of their groups or activities that they had taken part in. Many of the answers given by Scott also raised concerns about respondent reliability. Although Scott appeared focused and alert during all interviews, many of his replies appear contradictory when matched with field notes. He frequently changed his view point on some issues (although not about his desire to remain in special education, as this remained constant) and at times appeared to enjoy giving controversial answers. In the example provided in Figure 8, he even refutes his own name.

Figure 8: Extracts from Berry House Interview 3 (Scott)

Inter -view	Question posed by interviewer	Scott's response	Comment
3 (1:1)	*Did you like working with Erin?* *Is that a 'yes' or 'no'?* *You tell me. Did you like working with Erin?* (shows 3 symbol switches-yes, no and maybe) *Is that a 'no'?* *No* (confirms choice) *What about all the photos I have of you having fun with Erin?* *Look at this one* (shows photograph) *Are you joking with me Scott?* *If I said to you today 'Is your name Scott?' would you say yes, no or maybe?* (shows 3 symbols in turn) *Is your name Scott?*	(Unclear-shouts) (laughs and looks toward symbol switches) (Eye points 'no' symbol) (nods head) *No* (presses switch for auditory response with assistance) (laughs, then 'looks down' for 'no' response) (looks at photo) *No!* (shouts) (laughs) (Eye points 'no' symbol, then laughs) (laughs) *No* (presses switch for auditory response with assistance)	Field notes show that Scott twice indicated that he wanted to be Erin's partner during sessions. His LSA confirmed that he had enjoyed working with Erin. Several photographs clearly show the pair enjoying joint activities. In addition, Scott twice confirmed their friendship in previous interviews The photograph showed Scott and Erin both laughing during a group art activity. Field notes indicate that they were both amused at their joint picture

4.6 Does the interview context affect pupils' responses?

This section investigates the attitude of pupils from both schools to taking part in the study. It highlights key distractions in both settings and considers the additional needs of two mainstream pupils that came to light during the interview process. Finally, it illustrates how the dynamics of paired and group interviews affected pupils' responses.

4.6.1 Attitude to the interview process

At the start of each interview, pupils from both schools were asked if they were happy about taking part and were given opportunities to return to their classrooms at any time, without incurring any negative repercussions. Field notes show that the majority of pupils from both schools were happy to participate in all interviews, although Michael in Cohort 1 was a notable exception. He often appeared uninterested about taking part and was twice observed both scowling and trailing behind other group members. However, when given the opportunity to return to his class, he repeatedly noted that he still wanted to take part.

Many pupils were clearly excited about being interviewed. Taking part in a lengthy cycle of interviews was a novel activity and involved changing rooms, often with a different layout and equipment and gave pupils a possibly unique chance both of expressing their views and being listened to attentively by an adult in school on a regular basis. Ricky and Scott, like a number of their Oak Street peers, had a strong desire to be interviewed 'first', although this may be as much to do with their eagerness to get out of the lesson or activity they were currently taking part in, as their interest in the interview process. Attendance at interview was high, with several pupils, from both schools, asking if interviews could be re-arranged in the event of absence from school. However, time restrictions meant that this was only possible in the special school setting. Jason in particular required a flexible interview schedule, in order to fit in with his frequent hospital visits and treatment programmes.

Field notes show that both Ayesha and a small number of Oak Street pupils appeared somewhat nervous during early interviews. Explanations may lie in the fact that Ayesha, like her mainstream peers, was not a member of my class, had not taken part in any previous pilot interviews and had no previous involvement in the partnership scheme. However, personality must also play a key part, for Lucy, like the majority of pupils interviewed from Oak Street, had little experience of the interviewer, the interview process or partnership work, yet she did not appear nervous at any point.

4.6.2 Distractions

The ability of individuals to focus on the partnership scheme during interviews fluctuated. Most Berry House pupils, like many of their mainstream peers, were distracted on occasion by their surroundings. For Ricky, the main cause of distraction during two interviews was technical difficulties experienced by his Dyna Vox. However, room layout, including the use of a tape recorder and props, background noise, the visibility of passing peers and adults and excess sunlight, caused difficulties for pupils in both settings. Interest in my physical appearance also caused

distractions for some, particularly with Cohort 1, as a number of girls made repeated references to both my clothing and hairstyle.

A desire to please, by agreeing with all suggestions and giving an immediate response to questions, was noted of individuals from both schools, although was most evident in the interviews of David and Lucy. The answers of both pupils were often inconsistent and their understanding of some basic questions was uncertain. In addition, many of Lucy's responses, like those of Sadia at Oak Street, also appeared somewhat ambiguous. Both girls frequently changed topics of conversation, making repeated references to apparently unrelated topics such as meal times and family outings. The most challenging responses however came from Scott, who at times appeared to deliberately frustrate me through making controversial answers and refusing to modify his opinion, even when photographic evidence suggested otherwise.

Despite all the distractions, the majority of pupils from both schools were able to remain focused on the interview questions, helped on occasion by questions being repeated or rephrased, the use of prompts and an ability to tap into their sense of humour. For both Ricky and Scott, field notes show that their level of concentration in interviews was generally higher than in the class room, although Scott's difficulties with posture and positioning remained constant in all settings. Both boys obviously benefited from receiving 1:1 attention in a quiet environment away from their peers. Ricky in particular was often reluctant for interviews to end, as illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Extracts from Berry House Interview 6 (Ricky)

Inter -view	**Question posed by interviewer**	**Ricky's response**	**Comment**
6 (1:1)	*Thank you for answering all my questions.*	*More!* (shouts)	Ricky particularly enjoyed having 1:1 attention in an interview situation.
	More questions?	(nods head)	
	I haven't got any (pause) *Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?*	(nods head/ long pause) *Elevator* (Dyna Vox response)	
	An elevator? (pause) *A lift?*	(nods head)	
	Will you need a lift if you go to a different school?	*Yes* (vocal response)	

4.6.3 **Learning difficulties at Oak Street**

Two Oak Street pupils, Sadia in Cohort 1 and Aisha in Cohort 2, stood out in the mainstream sample, as they did not initially appear to understand the purpose of the interviews. The first interviews that the girls took part in were both somewhat disrupted. Sadia did not initially want to take part and requested that she remain with her class teacher. However, she apparently changed her mind half way through the interview, as an LSA interrupted the proceedings and said that she would now like to

join in. Confusion likewise occurred during Aisha's first interview, as her class teacher made an unplanned request for an LSA to join her in the interview room.

Despite the fact that I had taken part in lengthy discussions with the class teachers of both cohorts prior to interviews commencing, I had very little information about either Sadia or Aisha, other than a brief mention of their physical difficulties. No information was provided about their attendant learning difficulties, nor any additional support that they required. With hindsight, both the pupils and the LSA allocated to Aisha's group during Interview 1, would probably have benefited from further explanation of the nature and purpose of the interviews, ideally on a 1:1 basis prior to taking part.

4.6.4 **Paired and group interviews**

The dynamics of paired and group interviews affected responses during interviews and dominant peers emerged in both schools. At Berry House, both Ikra and Shamim appeared to monopolise paired interviews with Sophie and Ayesha, giving an increased number of responses to joint questions and at times even answering questions specifically directed at their partner. However, field notes show that both Sophie and Ayesha appeared very much at ease during all paired interviews and on no occasion did either pupil seem intimidated by being interviewed alongside more dominant peers. In fact, Sophie made more vocal contributions during three of the four paired interviews that she had with Shamim than during all other interviews.

Both Ikra and Shamim played a dynamic role in paired interviews by asking questions of their interview partner, with Ikra asking a total of nine questions and Shamim twelve. Both pupils also made suggestions if their partner appeared to have difficulties formulating a response. On occasion comments or suggestions made by the second interviewee were refuted, with Ikra, Shamim and Sophie disagreeing with remarks on one or more occasions. Very rarely did input from the second interviewee appear to cause offence. One notable example is seen in Figure 10, when Ikra twice mimicked Shamim's reactions to circle time activities with Oak Street, causing her obvious anxiety. However, the majority of comments made by second interviewees were helpful, as illustrated in Figures 11 and 12. Jason, Ikra, Shamim, Sophie and Ayesha all agreed to several answers, comments or suggestions made by the second interviewee during paired interviews.

Classroom observations suggest that over the interview period, friendships between all participants from Berry House grew stronger, with those between Shamim and Sophie and Ayesha and Ikra being the most prominent. It is notable that both sets of friends frequently asked to be interviewed together during later interviews, as previously indicated in Section 3.10 (Table 1).

Figure 10: Extracts from Berry House Interview 2 (Ikra and Shamim)

Inter-view	Question posed by interviewer	Ikra's response	Shamim's response
2 (Paired)	*What does it feel like when you go into Oak Street, into the school?*	*Excited*	*It's like ok for me*
	Do you feel nervous or excited at all?	*I feel nervous sometimes*	(nods head in agreement)
	What about circle time?	*Shamim* (pause) *she doesn't do it. Close her mouth. Like* (demonstrates gasping)	*I do talk! You know where we say 'What have you done today?'*
	You joined in, didn't you? (directed at Shamim)	*She's been quiet sometimes. Scared. Like* (demonstrates gasping again)	*I do talk!* (Shamim seemed somewhat put out by Ikra's portrayal of her)

Figure 11: Extracts from Berry House Interview 7 (Shamim and Sophie)

Inter-view	Question posed by interviewer	Shamim's response	Sophie's response
7 (Paired)	*What did she tell you about her new school?* (Reference to former pupil who attended open day at Berry House)		*She said...(*speech unclear)
		Did she like it? (question directed at Sophie)	(nods head) *It's good* (whisper)
		Yes, that's right (confirmation of Sophie's reply)	
	What did she like?	*The dinner*	(nods head in agreement) *Eating* (whisper)

Figure 12: Extracts from Berry House Interview 8 (Ikra and Ayesha)

Inter-view	Question posed by interviewer	Ikra's response	Ayesha's response
8 (Paired)	*Did you talk to any children in your group?* (shows photographs of group members to both pupils) *Mohammed?* *Oh, you are having a look now Ayesha. Who did you talk to?* (question directed at Ayesha)	*Yes, Talib and him* (points to photograph of Mohammed and shows it to Ayesha) *Yes, him* *Look, was it her?* (directs Ayesha to photograph of Mavish) *Did she help you in bowling?* *What about Anisha?* (directs Ayesha to photograph of Anisha)	(looks at photo of Mohammed) (looks at photograph/ nods head in agreement) *Yes* (looks at photograph) *Yes*

A similar pattern was observed during group interviews at Oak Street. Dominant peers such as Erin, Lizzie and Michael (Cohort 1) and Emily, Jolene, Ben and Munib (Cohort 2), took a lead role in answering questions and were all keen to confirm and challenge the views of other group members, as illustrated in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Extracts from Oak Street Interview 2 with Cohort 1/ Group 4a

Inter-view	Question posed by interviewer	Erin's response	Michelle's response	Tony's response
2 (3 pupils)	*Do you think that you have made any new friends at Berry House?*	*I like Scott, he always wants to sit with me* *I think you were a bit frightened, Michelle* *He didn't pull your hair. You were nowhere near!* *She was, but I was next to Scott. He likes to work with me (pause) I asked him 'Will you always choose me?'*	*I didn't want him to pull my hair*	*I liked working with Scott too* *She was next to you. I think... (cut off by Erin)*

Quieter peers such as Mire, Wasim, Saba and Ray (Cohort 1) and Aisha, Razeeda, Idris and Anisha (Cohort 2) generally made increased contributions during Interviews 2 and 3, when groups were smaller, provision for drawn or written responses were available and group members had individual opportunities to discuss their work. However, on occasion this back fired, as some of the more dominant peers appeared to intimidate other group members by being critical of the style and/ or content of their drawn or written contributions, as highlighted in the Figure 14.

Figure 14: Extracts from Oak Street Interview 2 with Cohort 1/ Group 3b

Inter-view	Question posed by interviewer	Lizzie's response	Tosene's response	Nicola's response
2 (4 pupils)	*What have you drawn?*	*Look at you with your big nose!* (pointing to Nicola's drawing) *You've got a carrot nose!* (laughs) *One teeth is missing of yours. That one* (points again to Nicola's drawing). *You haven't got any teeth!* (shouts) *Nicola looks funny in this picture!* (pause) *Mine is better. I'm a good drawer!*	*Carrot nose!* (laughs)	*I have!* (seems put out)

4.7 Summary of communication issues

This chapter has highlighted the positive attitude held by pupils from both Berry House and Oak Street towards the interview process. It has shown how similar behaviours were observed in pupils from both settings, with some participants being confident and others being relatively quiet and shy. Some similarities of response have also been shown, as Jason, Ikra and Shamim, like the majority of their mainstream peers, were able to give vocal, often lengthy replies. In contrast, other pupils from the special school used a wide variation of AAC strategies in order to take part in the interview process.

An investigation of communication issues has illustrated how the majority of pupils in both schools displayed good listening and comprehension skills. However, attention has also been drawn to the fact that on occasion, individuals in both settings struggled to understand even basic questions. Whereas more open questions were asked during interviews at Oak Street, these frequently needed to be broken down into closed questions in the special school. The majority of participants from both

settings gave focused and reliable responses. However, there was a greater need for questions to be repeated or re-phrased at Berry House and for a higher degree of prompting to take place.

This chapter has highlighted the significance of re-interviewing pupils over time, for responses of both different quality and type were elicited in later interviews compared with responses given at the outset. This is no doubt linked to the increased confidence of pupils with the interview process and increased familiarity with myself as a researcher. It is also notable that my own developing skills as an interviewer may also have generated richer responses as the cycle of interviews progressed.

The significance of 1:1 interviews for pupils with additional communication difficulties has been outlined in this chapter, as more time is available for individuals to access different AAC systems and for the interviewer to focus on their responses. It has also shown the benefit of reducing the size of all interview groups, for both higher quality data and fewer transcription difficulties occurred when participants were interviewed in smaller groups at Oak Street. Attention has likewise been drawn to the advantages of using additional materials as added stimuli in interviews, with photographs and examples of work being used with special school participants and props and drawing materials with their mainstream peers.

Chapter Five: Findings concerning pupil perspectives of the partnership scheme

Introduction

This chapter details the findings that resulted from the analysis of data relating to pupils' perceptions of the partnership scheme highlighted in Chapter 3. It seeks to answer questions outlined in Section 3.1.2.2, namely to investigate pupil recall of partnership activities, to consider their initial attitudes, expectations and feelings towards the scheme and to examine whether these altered over time. Although separate consideration was given in 3.1.2.2 to questions relating to attitudes and expectations and those concerned with feelings, this section examines the three issues together, thus avoiding unnecessary repetition.

5.1 What can the pupils remember about different experiences of the partnership scheme?

Pupil recall was undoubtedly influenced by individual experiences of partnership activities. The majority of pupils from Berry House had taken part in partnership work in the previous year, knew what to expect and (with the exception of Scott) already held positive views about the scheme. By contrast, Ayesha, David and Lucy, like both cohorts at Oak Street, were new to the scheme. However, it is likely that Ayesha, David and Lucy gained some information about sessions from older peers at Berry House and may even have seen former Year 4 pupils from Oak Street during their visits to the special school.

By participating in sessions in the second half of the school year, Cohort 2 was also able to build up some prior knowledge of the scheme before taking part. During interview, many pupils in Cohort 2 discussed conversations with peers in Cohort 1, noted that they had seen Berry House pupils visiting their school and referred to photographs and displays of partnership activities. Ikra, like four of her mainstream peers, also gathered additional information about the scheme from family members who had taken part in partnership work in previous years.

In order to fully consider pupil recall of different partnership experiences, attention is given to nine key areas, namely specialist items, session routines, group members, conversations, friendships, assistance, activities, trips and venues. Each of these is now investigated in turn.

5.1.1 Recall of specialist items

A manual wheelchair was introduced as a stimulus for discussion during initial interviews at Oak Street, with each child having the opportunity to sit in and manoeuvre it. In addition, pupils were able to handle a selection of other specialist items required by individuals at Berry House. As all these items were previously presented in a year group assembly led by Berry House staff at the start of the school year, the recall of Cohort 1 was somewhat clearer than Cohort 2, as they were interviewed in the following week. However, individuals from both cohorts successfully recalled how *'Piedro'* boots can aid walking and how neck collars can

help posture. In addition, participants from both cohorts also made reference to the Dyna Vox, with Stacey (Cohort 1) describing it as *'the computer that talks to people'* and Emily (Cohort 2) noting *'it says what they wanna say'*. Only groups in Cohort 1 made reference to the signing puppet that had been introduced in the assembly, with Tracy describing sign language as being *'like patterns with your hands if you can't speak'*.

During Interview 2, both mainstream cohorts were asked if they had seen any Berry House peers using the specialist equipment discussed in their initial interview. All pupils agreed that they had seen both manual and electric wheelchairs, although several individuals in both cohorts referred to them as *'pushchairs'*, perhaps because they were more familiar with this term. Pupils from both cohorts recalled seeing peers from Berry House wearing special boots and the dual-placement pupils, Shab and Kelly, requiring the use of a neck collar and fixator (leg brace) respectively. Additional references were also made by Cohort 1 to Lucy's body brace, Kelly's hearing aid, Shab's gastrostomy feed[1] and Ricky's Dyna Vox, with Qasim noting of the latter *'It's just like a person is stuck in the computer ready to talk'*.

Several pupils in Cohort 2 reflected details of specialist items in their art work, with examples from three pupils, Jolene, Paul and Talib, highlighted in Appendix 12. Jolene's work includes depictions of five Berry House peers and in the discussion afterwards, she made reference to Sophie's electric wheelchair, Lucy's walking sticks and a special plaster on Scott's neck (used to limit excess saliva). Paul produced a detailed drawing of Scott's wheelchair, including his harness, tray, grab rail and footplates. Talib paid close attention to the adapted playground equipment that his group had used at Berry House, describing the wheelchair swing as being '*a bit like a flat boat...you put the wheelchair on, then you push the boat and it goes'*.

5.1.2 **Recall of session routines**

All the pupils involved in the scheme were able to identify the two venues and provide some additional details including means of travel, day and time, number of sessions and pupils present and absent. Ricky, along with several individuals from Oak Street, referred to the *'Partnership Timetable'* displayed in both schools (although the Berry House format was largely pictorial) which logged details about session venues, groups and activity rotations. Pupils from both schools were able to recall some details about their allocated partnership group. Whereas Berry House pupils frequently relied upon photographs to help identify their mainstream peers, the majority of Oak Street pupils were able to name their group members without prompts. However, it is important to note that as there were only two or three special school pupils to every seven or eight of their mainstream peers, the recall of names was far easier for pupils at Oak Street.

5.1.3 **Recall of group members**

When giving descriptions of group members, individuals from both Berry House and Oak Street paid attention to personal style, with similar remarks being made

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[1] This allowed Shab to be fed directly into his stomach by means of a feeding device inserted through a surgical opening, bypassing his mouth and throat.

concerning both clothing and hairstyle. Although pupils from both settings made references to size when describing peers from their partnership school, these were sometimes difficult to explain. Amed was twice described by Shamim as being small, despite being of average height in his peer group and Sophie was likewise perceived as being of small stature by several Oak Street pupils, although she was taller than many of her mainstream peers.

Whereas none of the special school pupils were described in terms of their disability, Ikra repeatedly described Sadia in terms of her hearing loss. It is likely that Ikra's own physical impairments made her both more familiar and more comfortable with terms associated with disability. A parallel can be made here with Idris, for although he did not describe Jason in terms of his disability, he did ask him directly about his impairments and like Ikra, it is possible that he felt more comfortable doing this as it emerged that he too had a physical disability (restricted growth).

5.1.4 **Recall of conversations**

Both Berry House and Oak Street pupils were able to recall peers that they had communicated with from their partnership school, although the majority of the former pupils identified peers from photographs rather than memory. Jason, Ikra and Shamim recalled several conversations with Oak Street pupils, which were also referred to by the named individuals during interviews at the mainstream school. Likewise, David's recall of teaching Makaton signs to his group was also confirmed by group members from Cohort 1. Shamim and Amed each discussed seeing each other outside school at a wedding, although both noted that it had been too busy and noisy at the ceremony for them to converse. On occasion, individuals at both schools indicated that they had been too preoccupied with activities during sessions to engage in conversations with other peers. Jason and Ricky, like Ray from Cohort 1, noted that they did not put much effort into communicating with group members, especially during early partnership sessions.

On some occasions conversations referred to by individuals from both Berry House and Oak Street were not fully supported by evidence from peers from their partnership school. When Mike (Cohort 1) recalled that had spoken to Ayesha both during sessions and outside school, this was not confirmed by the special school pupil. Likewise, when Jolene (Cohort 2) indicated that she had spoken to Shamim both during sessions and outside school at a local Mosque, Shamim only confirmed the former. Anomalies also occur in data from Berry House, for several mainstream pupils reflected that conversations noted by both Sophie and Lucy were actually one way, as neither girl spoke in return. Despite the fact that Sophie and Lucy may not have engaged in verbal discussions with their mainstream peers, it is important to note that they both probably felt that their non-verbal contributions still made them part of the conversation group.

5.1.5 **Recall of friendships**

Developing friendships proved to be a key part of partnership work and at the end of the interview period the vast majority of pupils from both schools agreed that they had made some new friends. Eight of the Berry House sample repeatedly identified the same Oak Street peers as their friends, with the mainstream pupils each

confirming the same friendships on at least one occasion. Although Berry House pupils overall selected an equal number of friends from Cohort 1 and Cohort 2, individual preferences arose. Whereas Jason, Ikra and Sophie noted more friends in Cohort 1 and Shamim, Scott and David identified more in Cohort 2, only Ricky and Ayesha named an equal number of friends in both cohorts.

When looking at the mainstream data, Cohort 2 confirmed far more Berry House pupils as friends than Cohort 1. During Interviews 1 and 2, Cohort 2 identified more than double the number of friends than Cohort 1 and over the course of the interview cycle, Cohort 1 named individual Berry House peers as friends on 58 occasions, with the figure rising to 81 for Cohort 2. Possible explanations for this may lie in the fact that Cohort 2 had more experience of their special school peers at the time of interview, for they had a longer build up to taking part and had received feedback about partnership work from Cohort 1. In addition, members of Cohort 2 also had more time to establish their own friendship groups in Year 3 (with interviews taking part in the latter part of the school year) and as such may have been in a more favourable position to meet new friends.

Only Scott and Lucy identified the same friend at Oak Street, namely Chloe. By contrast, pupils in the mainstream setting, probably as a consequence of their increased numbers, repeatedly named the same friends at Berry House. Table 12 offers some indications about the perceived popularity of individual pupils at Berry House. This table highlights a number of anomalies, for whereas Cohort 1 identified Sophie as the most popular Berry House peer and David (jointly with Lucy) least popular, Cohort 2 regarded David as the most popular peer, placed Jason in a much higher position and both Sophie and Ikra in a lower position. However, the majority of the special school participants were regarded in a similar fashion by both cohorts, with Ricky, Shamim, Ayesha, Scott and Lucy each holding parallel positions.

Table 12: The perceived popularity of Berry House pupils

Cohort 1		**Cohort 2**	
1	Sophie*	1	David
2	Ricky	2	Ricky
3	Shamim	3	Shamim
4	Ikra		Jason
	Ayesha	5	Ayesha
6	Jason	6	Sophie
	Scott	7	Scott
8	David	8	Ikra
	Lucy	9	Lucy

Note: * When Cohort 1 was asked to name any friends they had made from Berry House, Sophie was referred to most frequently (hence is positioned first), whilst both David and Lucy had the lowest number of mentions (and are therefore positioned last)

When considering speculative explanations for perceived changes in pupil popularity, David's significant absence from partnership sessions during the Autumn term is likely to be a key element, resulting in the fact that he was unable to build as strong a relationship with Cohort 1 as Cohort 2. Another significant factor may lie in the fact that Jason changed his attitude towards partnership work part way through the year, as he made much more effort to communicate with Cohort 2 and

increasingly regarded sessions as helping him develop skills that he would require in his forthcoming school transfer. However, both Ayesha and Shamim also developed much more confidence during the second half of the year and made increased efforts to communicate, yet their 'ranking' remained largely the same.

The majority of Berry House pupils named as friends by both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 received an equal number of references from both sexes. Ricky, Ikra and Sophie however were notable exceptions, for it was mostly boys in both Cohorts 1 and 2 who named Ricky as a friend, boys in Cohort 1 who identified Ikra as a friend and girls in Cohort 1 who regarded Sophie so highly. Whereas Ricky's joke telling received high acclaim from boys in both cohorts, Ikra's knowledge of football and Grand Prix racing, which was held in esteem by male members of Cohort 1 and the subject of much banter, received little support from Cohort 2. This lack of shared interests, coupled with the fact that a number of individuals regarded her as somewhat of a *'Tomboy'* may help explain her perceived fall in popularity in the latter part of the year. However, it may also be argued that Ikra, now into her second year of partnership work, became increasingly aware of the transitory nature of friendships made at Oak Street and as a consequence may not have put as much effort into developing friendships with Cohort 2.

Whereas the personalities of Ricky and Ikra often played a key part in their popularity, much of the attention that Sophie received, especially from the girls in Cohort 1, was linked to her appearance. Sophie's clothing, often adorned with velvet, lace or taffeta, sharply contrasted with the school uniforms worn by her mainstream peers and was the subject of several discussions. There appeared to be an element of competition amongst several groups of girls in Cohort 1 to both work with and befriend Sophie. Although some references to her clothing were made by girls in Cohort 2, it is possible that the novelty value of viewing her clothes had diminished by the latter half of the year.

The majority of Berry House pupils identified friends at Oak Street from the same partnership group, with only three Oak Street peers being selected from different groups. In contrast, Oak Street pupils identified Berry House peers as friends both from their own partnership group and, with the exception of Lucy, from different groups. The fact that the special school pupils did not identify friendships outside partnership groups with Cohort 2, may be linked to groups being larger, with a wider selection of potential friends and opportunities for whole group circle time being reduced (from twice to once per session).

Most references by Oak Street pupils to friendships with Berry House peers outside their group were linked to circle time activities, with three groups discussing Ricky's (humorous) circle time contributions and several individuals in Cohort 1 recalling Ikra sharing her interest in sport. The fact that Lucy was only described as a friend by pupils within her own group, may be linked to the fact she was not perceived to have made any significant contributions to circle time activities, as her speech was difficult to understand, her gestures often slight and possibly easily forgotten.

5.1.6 **Recall of giving and receiving help during sessions**

Although all pupils were asked if they had both given and received help during partnership sessions, no reference was made by any mainstream pupil to receiving help from Berry House peers. Eleven individuals in Cohort 1 and twelve in Cohort 2 referred to helping their special school peers. At Berry House, seven pupils noted that they had received some help from their Oak Street peers, although only Shamim discussed how she had offered them assistance, outlining how she had helped Emily in a baking session.

Confirmation of data between individual pupils was seen on three occasions, with Polly confirming that she helped Jason in art, Sarah discussing how she assisted Ayesha when walking and Adil noting how he had supported Ikra during outdoor games. The latter example was also supported in a drawing by Talib during Interview 3 (see Appendix 12). It is notable that Oak Street pupils did not regard their special school peers as being the only group members requiring assistance during partnership sessions, as pupils in Cohort 1 were clearly aware of Sadia's needs. Several interviewees in Group 2 discussed how they helped Sadia, although all agreed that Nathan offered her the most assistance, both in class and during partnership sessions.

5.1.7 **Recall of activities**

All pupils were able to recall taking part in partnership activities, with baking receiving the highest number of references from pupils in both schools, as highlighted in Table 13.

Table 13: Recall of activities by Berry House and Oak Street pupils

BERRY HOUSE		**OAK STREET**		
Activity	**Berry House References**	**Activity**	**Cohort 1 References**	**Cohort 2 References**
Baking	7*	Baking	6#	7
Collage	7	Collage	5	0
Painting	5	Painting	8	0
Drawing	3	Drawing	1	2
Papier Mache	1	Papier Mache	2	2
Clay work	2	Clay work	4	5
Outdoor games	4	Outdoor games	0	4
Tasting fruit	2	Tasting fruit	0	2
Circle time	1	Circle time	5	1
Poetry	2	Story time	1	0
		Washing up	1	1
* References cited above were made by individual pupils at Berry House either in response to a question or spontaneously (eg 7=7 individuals)		# References cited above were made by different groups of pupils at Oak Street either in response to a question or spontaneously (eg 6=6 groups)		

The popularity of baking was probably linked to the fact that Berry House had a separate food technology room and that pupils had the opportunity to take their baking home to share with family members. Taking part in baking and clay work was also somewhat of a novelty for individuals at Oak Street, with many pupils noting

that they had no previous experiences of taking part in either activity at school. It is difficult to directly compare references made by pupils in the two cohorts, as each experienced slightly different activities, due to changes in planning. Whereas the jungle theme explored by Cohort 1 contained more painting and collage activities, the food theme explored by Cohort 2 included fruit tasting sessions. In addition, the warmer weather during the Summer term permitted Cohort 2 to take part in outdoor games.

Examples of work and photographs of activities from partnership sessions were used as a stimulus for discussion during many interviews at Berry House, especially with less verbal pupils. Due to restrictions on time, these were omitted from interviews at Oak Street, although several pupils did refer to displays of art work and photographs of activities within their classrooms. Jason, Ricky, Ikra, Shamim and Scott, like many of their mainstream peers, were all able to recall events not only from the previous partnership session, but from two or more weeks previously.

Detailed descriptions of activities were given by many pupils at Oak Street and by a number of individuals at Berry House. Jason and Ikra gave lengthy accounts of both art and baking tasks, with the former pupil being particularly animated in his recall of making both a 3D portrait of Polly and a fruit sundae, with details of the former outlined in Figure 15. In addition, Ikra also gave a detailed summary of the outdoor races in which her group had participated. In a similar manner, Shamim also provided detailed accounts of several art activities and a poetry writing task. Sophie, Ayesha, Scott and Lucy were all able to relate some aspects of art and baking tasks, with the latter three additionally providing information about outdoor games. Although David offered the least amount of detail about partnership activities, he was twice able to identify his own work from a choice of three examples, as highlighted in Figure 16.

Figure 15: Extracts from Berry House Interview 2 (Jason)

Inter-view	**Question posed by interviewer**	**Jason's response**
6 (1:1)	*Do you remember some of the things you have been doing up there?*	*I know that last time we were making faces. I remember doing one of Polly*
	So you made a face of Polly?	*And Polly made one of me*
	And how did you do that?	*I did the face, brown face for the edges and I just did the eyes. I don't remember what colour they are. I don't know the colour of her eyes*
	You can't remember?	*And I, I put some paint on and some kind of yellow, put some yellow hair on and then put some red lips in and drew some lips, mouth and then put a line across, that line-you know she's got that bit that makes her lips move, that bit* (pointing to own lips) *Put a line across in t' middle, like that line* (demonstrates) *and then where t' line was I coloured in her lips red* (gesticulating throughout)

Figure 16: Extracts from Berry House Interviews 2 and 3 (David)

Inter-view	Question posed by interviewer	David's response	Comment
2 (1:1)	*Have I to show you some of the work from Tuesday?* *Look* (pause) *this is a poem, an animal poem- about dogs* (shows illustrated poem) *And this is a some collage work* (shows butterfly collage) *And this is a painting* (shows example) *Which one did you do?* *Can you tell me?* (pause) *Was it this one?* (pause) *Or this one?* (pause) *Or this one?* (points to each in turn) *Oh, you've got your hands up there. Does that mean yes?* *The collage?*	(nods head-eager to touch items) (looks at all three in turn) (Hands up-excited) (picks up butterfly collage, raises arms again) *Yes!* (shouts) (nods head)	David was given time to look at/ handle all photographs, symbols, switches and examples of work before each interview commenced. The intention behind this was to increase his attention to task during the interviews and ensure that he was familiar with all items to be presented. David often raises his arms to show excitement Confirmation of response
3 (1:1)	*Can you remember what you made on Tuesday David when the children from Oak Street came?* (signs 'Tuesday') *Look at these, David* (signs 'look'/ pause) *This one* (shows fish picture/ signs 'fish') *And this* (butterfly picture/ signs 'butterfly') *And this one* (shape picture/ signs 'shapes') *Can you remember what you made?* *The fish?* (pause) *Is that your picture?* *You made a picture of some fish didn't you? (signs fish)*	(no response) (nods head-points to picture of fish) (points to fish picture/ signs *'fish'* in imitation) (Hands up-excited) (nods head)	David did not appear interested in the question initially-although was very keen to engage with interviewer when art work examples shown The fish picture was the actual piece of art work that David completed in previous partnership session Confirmation of response

5.1.8 **Recall of joint trips**

Pupils from both schools were able to recall details about the two joint trips that took place during the interview period. Berry House pupils joined Cohort 1 to look at exotic exhibits at Tropical World and for lunch at McDonalds and Cohort 2 for a walk around Kirkstall Abbey, a game of Ten Pin Bowling and for lunch at Pizza Hut. Jason, Ricky, Ikra, Shamim and Sophie were able to independently name each venue, with other Berry House pupils being able to identify the different locations from photographs. It is notable that both Scott and Lucy made increased attempts at vocalising responses when viewing photographs of the trips, with Scott referring to the *'parcel'* (pass the parcel) and Lucy giving details of the food she ate and the group members she sat with, with evidence of the latter provided in Figure 17. David was also particularly keen to look at the photographs, was able to identify himself in all examples shown and twice signed *'eat'* when viewing photographs of his group eating lunch.

Figure 17: Extracts from Berry House Interview 4 (Lucy)

Inter -view	**Question posed by interviewer**	**Lucy's response**	**Comment**
4 (1:1)	*Where are you?* (pause) *Can you see you in the photo?*	*Ayesha there* (reaches for photos -points to Ayesha)	Lucy was keen to look at all photos, but was not interested in locating herself -just her group members.
	Yes, that's Ayesha, but where are you?	*That Scott* (unclear vocal/ points to Scott)	
	Yes. There's Scott.	*Yes* (pause) *There's Scott*	Repeats my response
	Look at this photo here (pause) *Do you know that boy's name who you were sat next to?* (Points to Michael)	(unclear vocal)	Ignores my initial request to look at Michael. Was initially more interested in peers from own school
	Do you remember his name?	*That Ikra* (points to Ikra in photo)	
	Yes (pause) *That's Ikra* (pause) *All your group, all sat round the table...*	*Yes* (pause) *That one there* (points to Stacey)	Lucy was so keen to identify Stacey that she interrupted my question
	It's Stacey (points to Stacey)	*Yes*	
	Stacey (pause) *And do you know what this boy's called here?* (points to Michael)	(unclear vocal)	
	He's called Michael (pause)	*Michael, I know* (fleetingly looks at photo of Michael)	

	And that's Sania (points to photo) *You've found everybody!*	*Oh yeah* (pause/ unclear vocal) *That Sania* (points to Sania) (long pause) *That David* (points to David)	Lucy seemed very pleased that she had identified all individuals in the photographs

5.1.9 Recall of venues: identifying key features and making direct comparisons

The majority of pupils from both schools were able to make direct comparisons between the two settings. David and Lucy however, both seemed confused by basic terms of comparison and as such their replies were omitted from Table 14. Despite this, both pupils were able to identify key features of both schools from photographs, including car parks, entrances, classrooms and halls.

Table 14: Areas of difference highlighted by pupils from Berry House and Oak Street

BERRY HOUSE		**OAK STREET**		
Area	**Individual References**	**Area**	**Cohort 1 References**	**Cohort 2 References**
Building size	6*	Building size	2#	2
Pupil numbers	5	Pupil numbers	0	0
Facilities	5	Facilities	4	2
Mobility Issues	3	Mobility Issues	4	2
Classroom Furnishings	2	Classroom Furnishings	3	0
Display	1	Display	2	0
Noise Level	3	IT equipment	3	2
Age of School	1	Temperature	0	1
Smell	1	Curriculum	0	1
• References cited above were made by individual pupils at Berry House either in response to a question or spontaneously (eg 6*=6 individuals) • References refer to responses of 7 pupils at Berry House-both David and Lucy were unable to make direct comparisons • Of the 6 pupils discussing building size, 4 were of the opinion that Berry House was larger and 2 that Oak Street was larger		• References cited above were made by different groups at Oak Street either in response to a question or spontaneously (eg 2#=2 groups) • Of the 2 groups discussing building size in both Cohorts 1 and 2, 1 was of the opinion that Berry House was larger and 1 that Oak Street was larger • One group in Cohort 1 discussed pupil numbers *prior* to visiting Berry House and speculated that Oak Street had more pupils (discussion not linked to direct questioning about the two schools)		

Very few similarities were noted by pupils from either school and far more examples of difference were identified. At Berry House, only Sophie noted any similarities between the two venues, as she thought the work was the same in each. One pupil from Cohort 1 and three from Cohort 2 noted similarities between the schools, with references being made to comparable door design, alarm systems and work load. Like Sophie, Saha in Cohort 2 thought that the curriculum was the same in both settings, arguing that Berry House pupils *'do the same stuff as us'*. When looking at the areas of difference noted by pupils from both schools, Berry House pupils referred to nine areas and Oak Street groups to eight, as outlined in Table 14. Five areas of difference were noted by both schools, namely building size, facilities, mobility issues, classroom furnishings and display, each of which are discussed below.

Pupils from both settings who thought that Berry House was the larger school all mentioned its long corridors. In Cohort 2, Mavish described it as *'a long path'*, Rabeena *'an alley way'* and Ben noted that the special school was *'a bit like being in a hotel...because there are doors on the side and on the other side'*. Opinion was split however when giving reasons for Oak Street being the larger school, with pupils from Berry House referring to the mainstream school having more pupils, whereas Oak Street pupils focused on it having more classrooms and halls. Several pupils in Cohort 2 referred to the schools being on different levels, with Talib noting that Oak Street has an *'upstairs'* whereas Sophia described Berry House as being *'like a bungalow'*.

When discussing different facilities, Ricky, Ikra and Ayesha, like groups from both mainstream cohorts, described the swimming pool at Berry House. Ikra and Ayesha, along with all groups in Cohort 1, also noted that Berry House has a multi-sensory room (referred to as a *'white room'*). In addition, Ikra also identified the *'soft play'* room at Berry House and Shamim mentioned that Oak Street has a *'training room'* (for ICT purposes). Both mainstream cohorts discussed how Berry House has a food technology room and Cohort 1 made additional references to the special school's separate art room and the fact that it only has one hall, compared to the two halls at Oak Street.

The large number of wheelchair users at Berry House was referred to by groups in both mainstream cohorts and also by Ricky, Shamim and Ikra, with the latter pupil explaining *'They walk and not us...because they have not got disabilities'*. Two groups in Cohort 2 additionally noted that special buses were required to take their Berry House peers home. Mobility issues were also reflected in discussions about classroom furnishings, with both Jason and Ikra commenting on the low tables at Oak Street and individuals in Cohort 1 discussing how larger tables, fewer chairs and the provision of bean bags all helped pupils with physical difficulties. Display was also seen as an area of difference by individuals in both schools. Ikra commented on the differences in wall colour and several members of Cohort 1 noted how Oak Street had lots of star charts on classroom walls, whereas one classroom at Berry House had a *'pop corner'*, displaying posters of different artists.

Not all areas of difference were commented on by pupils from both settings, for only pupils from Berry House made reference to pupil numbers and noise. One explanation for this may be that the move of Berry House pupils from a relatively

quiet environment with low pupil numbers into a noisy and crowded mainstream setting was possibly more of a shock for them than for Oak Street peers experiencing the reverse. Ricky was the only pupil to directly discuss the different ages of the two schools, noting that Berry House was *'very old'*, although some pupils at Oak Street compared the (traditional) wooden floors and curtains at Berry House with the (modern) carpets and blinds at Oak Street. Jason was the only pupil to refer to the different smells of the two schools. He described Oak Street as having *'a funny smell'*, although was unable to pin point its source.

The provision of IT equipment was regarded by many Oak Street pupils as a key area of difference between the schools, with pupils in both cohorts referring to the interactive white boards at their school. Cohort 1 additionally noted that pupils at Oak Street have lap top lessons, smaller computer mice and keyboards displaying both upper and lower case font, while a number of pupils in Cohort 2 referred to the *'talking computers'* available at Berry House. Curriculum differences were also discussed by Cohort 2, with both Emily and Yugi believing that all lessons at Berry House were similar to partnership activities, with the former pupil noting *'We don't make stuff'* (at Oak Street) and the latter declaring *'You don't have to do any work'* (at Berry House). Jamie in Cohort 2 was the only pupil interviewed who made any reference to temperature differences, noting that Berry House *'is a bit cold'*.

5.2 What were the initial attitudes, expectations and feelings of pupils towards the partnership scheme?

This section looks at the initial attitudes, expectations and feelings of pupils from both schools towards the partnership scheme. In the first instance, the mainstream pupils' experience and explanations of disability prior to taking part in the partnership scheme is considered. Following this, the overall attitude of all participants prior to taking part is summarised. Attention is then directed to pupils' views about working in two venues, meeting, communicating and showing empathy to other peers and developing friendships. Next, consideration is paid to favourite aspects of partnership work, feelings about session length and any dislikes or concerns about the scheme. Finally, the feelings of the Berry House pupils concerning their future schooling are examined.

5.2.1 Oak Street pupils' experience and explanations of disability prior to taking part

A number of pupils in both cohorts had family members who required the use of mobility aids. Tracy in Cohort 1 discussed how her father required a wheelchair as *'he can't walk and speak properly'* and Razeeda in Cohort 2 noted that her mother also used one as *'she can't walk properly'*. A number of pupils in both cohorts also said that their grandparents, aunts and uncles and neighbours were wheelchair users. Jolene (Cohort 2) gave a detailed account of how her cousin lost a leg in a road traffic accident outside the mainstream school and required the use of a wheelchair. Several pupils in both cohorts also named Shab as a wheelchair user, with Mohammed (Cohort 2) noting that he required an electric version as he *'don't have many strength'*.

When asked about other types of disability, several pupils in Cohort 1 referred to their classmate Sadia, with Lizzie explaining that she wears *'kind of sunglasses'*. Although both Aisha and Idris in Cohort 2 also had disabilities, no reference was made about the impairments of either pupil during initial interviews. Tosene in Cohort 1 discussed how her four year old sister could not walk or talk, but did not require the use of a wheelchair. Both Fazan and Saba in Cohort 1 also had close family members with a disability, yet only disclosed this in later interviews, perhaps when they felt more comfortable with the interview situation. Individuals in both cohorts referred to family members and neighbours who used walking sticks and both Stacey and Sabrina in Cohort 1 discussed friends who had difficulty in using their arms.

Although pupils were not asked about their understanding of different disabilities directly, a number of individuals in both cohorts raised issues during initial interviews. Several pupils in both cohorts were of the opinion that wheelchair users are unable to walk because they have *'broken bones'* or may have been *'hurt'* in some way, with a number of participants referring to the road traffic accident involving Jolene's cousin. Michael in Cohort 1 likewise regarded his neighbour's disability as an accident, explaining *'When he was a baby, his mum was carrying him wrong and she dropped him'*. Both Saba in Cohort 1 and Manira in Cohort 2 felt that disabilities arose in infancy, with the latter explaining *'sometimes people are born like that'*.

With the exception of Saba in Cohort 1 and Anisha and Razeeda in Cohort 2, the majority of pupils were happy to sit in the wheelchair provided as a prop in Interview 1. During Interview 3, Saba felt able to discuss her reluctance to take part, explaining *'I didn't want to go in it 'cos I thought that I was gunna fall off.'* Boys in particular seemed keen to have multiple turns and propel the wheelchair at speed. However, many pupils struggled to manoeuvre it successfully, with Talib (Cohort 2) explaining '*It's hard to turn around, to do corners. It would be easy in an electric one'*. Sophia (Cohort 2) likened the experience to '*driving a car'* and Ben (Cohort 2) to '*a bicycle'*.

5.2.2 **Overall attitude prior to taking part**

Of the six Berry House pupils who had taken part in partnership work in the previous year, all except Scott had a positive attitude towards future sessions. Scott had mixed feelings about taking part and repeatedly indicated that he wanted all sessions to take place at Berry House, as he did not like visiting Oak Street. From discussions of photographs of partnership activities taken in the previous year, the three pupils new to the scheme, Ayesha, David and Lucy, all agreed that they were looking forward to meeting their mainstream peers and visiting Oak Street.

Pupils in both mainstream cohorts also noted that they were looking forward to the visits, with many questions being raised about wheelchair access, pupil numbers, the curriculum and communication. Several pupils discussed receiving positive accounts of partnership activities from siblings or cousins who had taken part in the scheme in previous years. The initial confidence of Cohort 2 towards taking part in partnership work appeared higher than that of Cohort 1, possibly because pupils were more established in their year group during the latter half of the year. In addition, Cohort 2

had increased knowledge about the special school, as they had seen Berry House pupils around Oak Street during partnership sessions, had more time to get to know the two pupils on dual placement and had received feedback about sessions from their peers in Cohort 1.

Prior to taking part in partnership sessions, the majority of pupils in both cohorts said that they felt either happy or excited (or both) about meeting pupils from Berry House. Seven pupils in each cohort however, admitted feeling nervous about the first visit from the special school pupils and a further four pupils in Cohort 1 said that they had mixed feelings, being both excited and nervous. In Cohort 1, Mire admitted that she was nervous *'Cos I don't know what the children will be like'*, Sarah noted that she was worried in case *'people crash into people'* and Wasim was concerned that he might have to miss going to Mosque after school if the sessions with Berry House overran. Michael reflected that his sister (who had taken part in project in previous year) had been nervous about sitting with Berry House peers and this led him to ask *'Do you have to be a partner with them?'*. In Cohort 2, Jolene noted that she was shy *'about new people'* and Mohammed admitted that he was nervous as *'I haven't met them before.'* Samira, Shenaz and Talib all said that they were concerned about the disabilities of their Berry House peers, with Talib admitting *'I feel worried about helping children in wheelchairs because they might fall out and hurt themselves'*.

After the first partnership session, both cohorts showed a slight increase in pupils expressing mixed feelings or nervousness. The views of Qasim in Cohort 1 were echoed by a number of participants, for he reflected that although he *'just couldn't wait'* to meet the pupils from Berry House, upon his arrival he *'thought it was scary'*. Sabrina (Cohort 1) explained that she was initially nervous *'because everyone...kept staring at us'*, although a group member, Stacey, was quick to add *'They're not staring at you. They wanna talk to you and get to know you a bit'*. Interestingly, Sabrina's recollections of being closely watched by peers from her partnership school echo feelings noted by Scott during later interviews.

During initial interviews, a greater proportion of Berry House pupils confirmed their shyness compared with their mainstream peers, possibly because they felt more at ease with the interviewer. Jason, Shamim, Sophie and Ayesha all noted that they had been shy on two or more occasions during initial partnership sessions. However, both Sophie and Ayesha each refuted this on occasion. Jason and Shamim noted that they were initially shy around all new people, referring to both peers and staff at Oak Street. Shamim was able to describe how shyness affected her, adding *'I get a thump, like here'* (touching her chest). As with the individuals at Oak Street who discussed feeling initially shy, all four special school pupils noting similar feelings said that their confidence had increased after taking part in three to four sessions, with Jason explaining *'Once I'm used to them...I'm fine'*. Ikra, David and Lucy all confirmed that they had never felt shy when meeting Oak Street peers and neither Ricky nor Scott made any reference to feeling shy during initial interviews.

5.2.3 **Feelings about working in two venues**

Pupils from both cohorts initially said that they were happy about visiting Berry House when the question was raised in Interview 2. Eight pupils in Cohort 1 and six

in Cohort 2 volunteered that they felt *'excited'*. In Cohort 1, Michelle noted *'I can't wait to go there'* and Erin thought it would be *'fantastic'*. In Cohort 2, Arslan said '*I just can't wait!'* and Shazad lamented that waiting until after the Easter holiday was '*too long!'*. David (Cohort 1) said that he was *'sad'* that he would miss out on the visits, as he was transferring schools after the holiday. Five pupils in Cohort 1 admitted to feeling slightly nervous later in Interview 2, whereas Yugi was the only member of Cohort 2 to express similar views, adding *'I'll get used to it'*.

5.2.4 **Meeting, communicating and showing empathy to other peers**

The feedback about meeting Oak Street peers was wholly positive from eight of the special school pupils and even Scott was generally positive, agreeing he was happy to meet them on three of the four occasions that he was asked. The majority of pupils in both mainstream cohorts likewise had a positive attitude towards meeting peers from Berry House. Six of the special school pupils indicated that they had initially found it difficult to communicate with their peers at Oak Street, although Ikra, David and Lucy all agreed that they were confident about this from the outset. Many mainstream pupils also revealed that they were confident about communicating with Berry House peers. However, during initial interviews, a number of pupils from both cohorts confessed that they had not yet spoken to Berry House pupils in their group. As individuals from both schools found it problematic at first to communicate with peers from their partnership school, it can be seen that confidence at communicating was not simply linked to pupils possessing verbal skills.

Individuals from both settings showed empathy and concern towards unfamiliar disabilities during initial interviews. Ikra showed empathy towards Sadia's hearing impairment on two occasions and whilst manoeuvring a manual wheelchair in Interview 1, individuals in both mainstream cohorts expressed empathy towards those who have to use wheelchairs on a permanent basis. Stacey in Cohort 1 asked how children might feel if they *'always'* had to propel a wheelchair and suggested they might be *'aching'*. Sophia in Cohort 2 remarked '*You can never make fun of people in wheelchairs 'cos it's not their fault...you're not allowed to laugh, as they might cry'*. Ikra, Sophie and Scott all empathised with Oak Street pupils visiting their school for the first time, with the latter two pupils agreeing that they would help to show them around. In addition, Jason showed empathy towards Ricky's anxieties about the trip with Cohort 1.

5.2.5 **Developing friendships**

All Berry House pupils indicated that they would like to make new friends during initial interviews. Ikra discussed how meeting new friends made her feel *'excited inside'* and Shamim reflected *'It's good at Oak Street... 'Cos I've got all my friends'*. The majority of mainstream pupils also expressed an interest in making new friends during initial interviews.

Communication was regarded by the majority of pupils as the key to developing friendships, with Stacey (Cohort 1) suggesting *'Try and talk to 'em, get to know 'em. Then they'll start remembering you'*. Jason and Ikra reflected that participating in joint activities and being kind and helpful would also promote friendships. Both Jason and Ricky noted the importance of conversation in developing friendships,

with Jason also suggesting that friends could be made through *'helping'* and *'making cards'*. Similar responses were made by individuals from both mainstream cohorts, with Nathan (Cohort 1) noting that friends could be made *'by being nice to them and helping them'* and Mavish (Cohort 2) explaining that *'doing things together'* would additionally support friendships.

During initial interviews, friendships developed between pupils in the same partnership groups and also between individuals in different groups, as outlined in Table 15. It is important to note that Cohort 2 actually had fewer opportunities to meet Berry House peers outside their own group, as whole group circle time sessions were reduced from two to one per session in the second half of the year, due to increased group numbers. During initial interviews, Jason was the only pupil from either Berry House or Oak Street who made any comparison between friendships in the two schools, twice describing pupils from both venues as being his *'best'* friends.

Table 15: References to friendships made in initial interviews

BERRY HOUSE		**OAK STREET**	
References to peers in same partnership group	References to peers in different partnership group	References to peers in same partnership group	References to peers in different partnership group
23*	**3**	**Cohort 1: 5#** **Cohort 2: 14**	**Cohort 1: 5** **Cohort 2: 7**
*23 references were made by individual Berry House pupils about mainstream peers in their group being friends		# Individuals in Cohort 1 made 5 references to Berry House peers in their group being friends	

5.2.6 **Favourite aspects of partnership work**

At Berry House, with the exception of Scott, all pupils confirmed that they had enjoyed taking part in all activities. Continuing to dislike sessions held at Oak Street, Scott noted that he had only enjoyed partnership activities within his own school. When discussing particular activities, eight Berry House pupils indicated that they had enjoyed art, five discussed baking and four selected circle time sessions. At Oak Street, group members from both cohorts confirmed that they had enjoyed taking part in all activities. As at Berry House, art and baking featured highly in responses from the mainstream school, with all groups in Cohort 1 outlining how they thought both painting and collage was fun and one group in Cohort 2 discussing their enjoyment of making fruit sundaes.

During initial interviews, four of the Berry House pupils discussed their favourite activities, with Ayesha, David and Lucy all selecting baking as their preferred activity and Scott selecting both circle time and art. All other pupils noted that they particularly enjoyed meeting Oak Street peers and developing friendships, although Ikra added that she had liked *'everything'* about the scheme. The majority of groups in Cohort 1 discussed their favourite activities, with art being particularly popular. However, the majority of pupils in Cohort 2 and one group in Cohort 1, made an equal number of references to both activities and developing relationships with Berry House peers. A few individuals in Cohort 2 felt that developing friendships was key to partnership work, with Bini noting *'I think that meeting new friends is more better*

than doing activities'. The fact that more references were made by Cohort 2 than Cohort 1 to the enjoyment of making new friends may again be linked to Cohort 2 being older and more established in their year group at the time of interview, with increased knowledge of partnership work.

5.2.7 **Feelings about session length**

During initial interviews, Jason, Ricky and Shamim were all happy about extending session length and Ikra, Shamim and Sophie all agreed that they would also like the opportunity to take part in other lessons with peers at Oak Street. Although the opinions of David and Lucy were not sought on the issue of session length, other pupils at Berry House did not express such positive views. Ikra, Sophie and Scott all had mixed feelings about increasing session length and Ayesha wanted sessions to remain the same.

Pupils at Oak Street appeared to have more positive feelings about session length than their special school peers. Although questions relating to session length were not asked to Cohort 1, all groups in Cohort 2 agreed that they wanted sessions to be longer. The optimum time for sessions ranged from *'3 hours'* (Sophie) to *'6 hours, 5 days a week'* (Paul). Talib agreed that sessions should be longer, but should remain in the afternoon, explaining *'If we did it in a morning we'd have done all the fun stuff...but in the afternoon you've done everything and you go to Berry House and you can just relax and talk to your friends'*.

5.2.8 **Any dislikes or concerns**

Five Berry House pupils identified aspects of the scheme that they disliked or were apprehensive about. Both Ricky and Jason had concerns about the Tropical World trip, with Ricky's fear of bats and the dark causing him anxiety prior to the visit and Jason noting that the visibility of some exhibits was poor for wheelchair users. Jason was anxious about missing both partnership sessions and interviews due to ill health or medical appointments and was keen to rearrange the latter so that he did not miss out. Ricky also required repeated reassurance about the recent building work at Oak Street, especially the partition wall which had been erected in the hall, which he thought may make the area *'dark'* and *'scary'*.

Ikra referred to the behaviour of Michael in Cohort 1 when discussing her dislikes, noting how he repeatedly put his feet on the table during sessions and often ignored instructions to remove them. Ikra, Shamim, Sophie and Scott required reassurance that I was not proposing imminent mainstream transfer, with Scott being particularly concerned about this issue. Scott had a number of other concerns, including his dislike of wearing 'bibs' at Oak Street and being watched, 'baby-ed' and crowded by his mainstream peers, all of which may be linked to his desire to be viewed in an age-appropriate manner. Field notes taken during partnership sessions testify that in addition to Scott, both Sophie and Lucy were also treated on occasion as if they were far younger in age by their mainstream peers. However, unlike Scott, neither Sophie nor Lucy appeared to be concerned about this.

When Oak Street pupils were asked to voice any concerns that they had about the scheme, both cohorts made reference to Scott's behaviour. His group members in

Cohort 1 discussed their apprehensions about his kicking, hitting, *'spitting'*, removing his glasses and not listening to a LSA, with group members in Cohort 2 making an additional reference to his hair pulling. The majority of group members felt that Scott's actions were accidental, with those who discussed the spitting incidents being relieved to find out that he was actually dribbling. It is interesting to compare reactions to the behaviours of both Scott and Michael, for although pupils at Oak Street largely regarded Scott's behaviour as being accidental, Ikra felt that Michael enjoyed the attention he received from not conforming to school rules. It is also notable that classroom observations and field notes often ran contrary to the majority view at Oak Street, suggesting that Scott's reactions were regularly calculated and that he too enjoyed behaving badly.

Individuals in both cohorts noted concerns about unfamiliar pupils during visits to Berry House. In Cohort 1, Sarah referred to the special school as being *'weird...because they have bells to ring'*, describing how she had seen a group of unknown pupils ringing bells as they moved around Berry House and was relieved to know that this was actually linked to the delivery of the school Christmas post and not a daily occurrence. In Cohort 2, Emily expressed concern about the medical needs of some of the pupils that she had seen, noting *'Some of the children, we don't know them...some of them be poorly and stuff. You see them poorly and I don't like that'*. Although only Sarah and Emily voiced apprehensions at interview about meeting unfamiliar pupils during visits to Berry House, field notes show that other mainstream pupils also appeared uneasy when meeting pupils with more significant physical difficulties and/ or behaviours.

5.2.9 **Thoughts about future school choices**

During initial interviews, five Berry House pupils were asked how they felt about future school choices. Although Jason and Ricky were both due to transfer to local mainstream schools in the following school year, they had different feelings about this. During initial interviews, Jason was in two minds, stating '*I wish I could stay here'*, although he later added that going to a school like Oak Street would be '*really good'*. Ricky however appeared very happy about transferring schools and showed no concern about being the only wheelchair user at his new school. He also noted that he was particularly excited about going to the 'breakfast club' and making new friends.

Shamim, Sophie and Scott were each asked if they would like to transfer to a school like Oak Street in the future. Both Shamim and Sophie noted that they would like to remain in a special school, with Shamim adding *'I want to stay here because disability is'*. Although he did express some interest in dual placement during Interview 4, Scott was noticeably worried at the prospect of transfer and required repeated reassurances that this would not be considered until he was older and more confident.

5.3 What were the pupils' attitudes, expectations and feelings towards the partnership scheme in later interviews?

This section examines the attitudes, expectations and feelings of pupils from both schools towards the partnership scheme in later interviews. Attention is again given to the nine key areas discussed in Section 5.2. Firstly, the mainstream pupils' developing experience and explanations of disability are investigated. Following this, the overall attitude of all participants is discussed, before summarising views concerning the location of sessions, meeting, communicating and showing empathy to other peers and developing friendships. Pupils' favourite aspects of partnership work are subsequently outlined, followed by a summary of feelings about session length and any dislikes or concerns that arose. In the final sub-section, the feelings of the Berry House pupils about their future schooling are reconsidered. In addition to the areas covered in Section 5.2, the views of the mainstream pupils towards their changing school population are also summarised.

5.3.1 Oak Street pupils' experience and explanations of disability

During later interviews, pupils in both cohorts raised questions about why some children have disabilities and individuals discussed disabled family members for the first time. In Cohort 1, Fazan noted that his sister *'has a doll kind of arm'*, but when other group members questioned whether it was *'broken'*, he explained that she had had it since birth and that *'God made it'*. Divine explanations were also put forward by both Nicola and Erin when discussing David's deformities and lack of speech, with the latter pupil concluding *'That's how you be born and that's how you grow up'*. Like Fazan, both Saba and Michelle also felt at ease in later interviews to note how disability and tragedy had affected their families, with Saba disclosing how his cousin *'doesn't talk and uses those sign things'* and Michelle discussing the still-birth of her brother.

Cohort 2 appeared more hesitant when raising questions about disability issues, possibly linked to the fact that several participants disclosed that they had been told by their class teacher not to ask pupils *'Why are you like this for?'*. When Bini and Munib noted that they felt sorry for pupils with disabilities, they were rebuked by Manira, who reminded them that they had been told *'not to feel sorry for the children at Berry House because they are happy as they are'*. Although he was cautious in doing so, Jamie did ask how the pupils at Berry House had '*become poorly'* and Yugi replied *'They might be born like that'*, with other group members agreeing.

5.3.2 Overall attitude to taking part

The majority of pupils from both schools continued to hold positive views about the partnership scheme, with eight of the Berry House pupils and both cohorts at Oak Street agreeing that they enjoyed all aspects. Only Scott continued to have mixed feelings about taking part.

5.3.3 Feelings about working in two venues

With the exception of Scott, all pupils at Berry House consistently agreed that they enjoyed working in both venues and that partnership sessions were fun. When asked

to give their preference in earlier interviews, pupils were almost equally divided between the two venues, with Ricky, Sophie, Ayesha and Scott preferring Berry House, Jason, David and Lucy increasingly favouring Oak Street and Ikra and Shamim liking them both the same. There was a slight shift of emphasis towards Oak Street in later interviews, although only six pupils indicated their preference (with Ricky, Ikra and Shamim preferring Oak Street, Scott and Lucy favouring Berry House and Ayesha liking them both the same). Only Scott gave reasons for his preferred venue, agreeing that he felt more comfortable amongst other wheelchair users at Berry House.

Unlike their special school peers, pupils at Oak Street were not asked about their preferred venue during initial interviews. However, in later interviews the majority of pupils in both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 named Berry House as their favourite location for partnership work, although a significant number of individuals in Cohort 2 said that they had equally enjoyed both venues. Once fully immersed in partnership work in later interviews, the majority of pupils from both schools increasingly favoured sessions at their partnership school. The novelty value of a different venue appealed to the majority of pupils in both settings, with individuals in Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 noting that a change of venue provided both fun and variety, with Emily (Cohort 2) explaining *'It's boring sat in your own school'* and Michael (Cohort 1) adding *'You get to go on a bus'*.

5.3.4 **Meeting, communicating and showing empathy to other peers**

As in earlier interviews, eight of the special school pupils and all groups at Oak Street continued to enjoy meeting peers from their partnership school, with Scott remaining largely positive about taking part. Ikra, David and Lucy remained confident about communicating with their mainstream peers, with all other Berry House pupils agreeing that they were making increased efforts to do so. During the final interviews at Oak Street, both cohorts agreed that they had got to know their Berry House peers better and felt more confident chatting to them. Despite the fact that David missed several sessions at the start of the school year and subsequently did not develop many new friendships with Cohort 1, his confidence did not appear to be impaired.

During later interviews, the majority of interviewees from both schools felt that their confidence had increased during partnership sessions and far fewer pupils testified to any feelings of shyness. Although Ricky, Sophie and Scott each discussed their initial shyness with Oak Street peers, all agreed that this had now past. Each of the Berry House pupils agreed that their confidence had increased when working alongside their mainstream peers and with the exception of Sophie, all noted that they now found it easier to communicate with them. Although Sophie expressed her confidence at participating in joint activities, she twice agreed that she continued to struggle to communicate verbally with Oak Street peers. In contrast, Jason felt that he had made significant progress in communicating with his mainstream peers, discussing how he now held his *'head up'* and spoke to all members of his group, adding *'I did quite well!'*.

The majority of Oak Street pupils agreed that their confidence had increased working alongside Berry House peers, although five pupils in Cohort 1 and two pupils in

Cohort 2 admitted that they still felt slightly nervous or shy at the start of sessions. In Cohort 1, Qasim noted that his nerves disappeared '*straight away'* and Tony and Michelle said that theirs had '*nearly gone away'*. An additional pupil in Cohort 1 and eight more in Cohort 2 also said that they had felt initially nervous when visiting Berry House. However, with the exception of Sophia and Razeeda in Cohort 2, all noted that this had passed by Interview 3.

A small number of pupils in both cohorts discussed difficulties they had experienced when communicating with Berry House peers, with individuals noting that they could not understand what some pupils were trying to say. Tracy (Cohort 1) noted '*Their accents are a bit different from others. I feel a bit worried 'cos it's not the same as us and they are smaller than us or bigger than us!'* and Razeeda (Cohort 2) declared *'I haven't talked to nobody 'cos I don't understand their talking'*. It is interesting to note that no concerns were actually made by any Oak Street peers about communicating with Sophie. This may be linked to the fact that like many selective mutes, Sophie was skilled in the art of giving non-verbal responses.

Ricky, Ikra, Shamim and Scott empathised with Oak Street pupils making initial visits to Berry House, with Shamim noting *'they haven't been to our school, have they?'* and Ricky being concerned that they might be scared of the *'school bus'*. Pupils from both schools showed empathy to Sadia's impairments in later interviews. Both Ikra and a number of individuals in Cohort 1 were concerned that she was unable to view exhibits during the trip to Tropical World, with Nathan noting *'She couldn't see in the dark'*. Other pupils in Cohort 1 were equally concerned about Jason and Ricky during the trip, noting that they may have been scared of the dark.

Members of both cohorts discussed how getting to know Berry House peers had helped them to gain an insight into what it was like to have a disability. In Cohort 1, Stacey explained that *'If you have a disabled friend and you...really get to know 'em, you can help 'em a lot and see how they feel and stuff when they're in wheelchairs'*. Similar views were expressed by Bini in Cohort 2, who noted '*We can find out about other children, like if we were like that, how would we feel and things'*.

5.3.5 **Developing friendships**

The majority of pupils from both schools continued to feel happy about developing friendships in their partnership school. During the final interview at Oak Street, only one pupil, Wasim in Cohort 1, declared that he had not yet made any friends amongst his Berry House peers. Like Scott, Wasim stood out in the sample of pupils interviewed, as he was not concerned about expressing his own feelings, even when they ran contrary to the majority opinion.

As outlined in Section 5.1.5, pupils from both schools consistently identified friendships. All references to friendships made by Berry House pupils were made to peers in the same partnership group, as seen in Table 16. It is arguable that the special school pupils did not look for friendships outside their group when working alongside Cohort 2, as groups were larger and therefore offered more potential friends. In addition, these large groups may have made it more difficult for individual members to get to know each other and may be a reason why more Oak Street pupils looked to make friendships in other groups.

Seven of the Berry House pupils were asked their feelings about friends that they had made in both schools (with the views of both Sophie and David being unfortunately omitted). Ricky, Ikra, Ayesha, Scott and Lucy all noted that they were closer to their friends at Berry House than to those made at Oak Street. Only Shamim confirmed that she liked both sets of friends equally, explaining that *'Sophie is my friend and...Sophia is my friend as well'*. When giving explanations, both Ricky and Lucy agreed that they were closer to their special school peers as they knew them better, with the former pupil stating that Jason was his *'One good...friend'*. Scott agreed that he did not see his Oak Street friends as often as those at Berry House and Ikra said that friendships in the two settings were different *'because they're not disabled'*.

Table 16: References to friendships made in later interviews

BERRY HOUSE		**OAK STREET**	
References to peers in same partnership group	References to peers in different partnership group	References to peers in same partnership group	References to peers in different partnership group
22*	**0**	**Cohort 1: 8#** **Cohort 2: 24**	**Cohort 1: 0** **Cohort 2: 16**
*22 references were made by individual Berry House pupils about mainstream peers in their group being friends		#Individuals in Cohort 1 made 8 references to Berry House peers in their group being friends	

The majority of pupils from Cohort 2 who were asked to compare friendships during Interview 4 also regarded their new and established friends differently, with only three pupils noting that they were the same. When giving explanations for friendships being different, two pupils referred to play, with Manira arguing that Berry House peers *'don't know how to play'* and Talib explaining that they *'can't really play with us properly'*. Two pupils argued that it was difficult to communicate with Berry House peers, with Yugi noting that *'everybody speaks and talks'* (at Oak Street) and Alarna explaining *'When we talk...they can't talk back to us'*. An additional three pupils made reference to Berry House peers being wheelchair users, with Jolene noting that friendships were different *'Because they don't look the same...us lot don't sit in wheelchairs'*.

5.3.6 **Favourite aspects of partnership work**

This section first investigates pupils' enjoyment of specific activities, then considers views about joint trips (both before and after the event), before summarising data concerning favourite aspects of the scheme.

5.3.6.1 *Activities*

As in earlier interviews, eight of the special school pupils confirmed that they had enjoyed taking part in all activities, with Scott continuing to note that he only liked activities that took place at the special school. Seven Berry House pupils discussed their enjoyment of baking, six of taking part in outdoor races, three of participating in art and three noted that they liked clay work. Groups in both mainstream cohorts also confirmed that they had enjoyed taking part in all activities. Baking continued to be a favourite activity of pupils from both cohorts, although art also featured highly with Cohort 1 and clay work and outdoor races with Cohort 2.

5.3.6.2 ***Taking part in forthcoming joint trips***
In initial interviews, seven pupils from Berry House confirmed their excitement at going on a joint trip with Cohort 1, although Scott repeatedly noted that he did not want to go and Ricky was initially hesitant about the Tropical World venue due to his fear of bats and the dark. In later interviews, eight pupils confirmed their excitement at going on a joint trip with Cohort 2, although Scott again repeatedly noted that he would prefer to remain at Berry House (despite acknowledging that the trip with Cohort 1 had been fun).

There was a positive response to the prospect of joint trips from both mainstream cohorts. The majority of pupils in Cohort 1 said that they were looking forward to going on a joint trip, with Sabrina, Tracy and Polly all noting that they were *'excited'*. Although Saba and Michelle both admitted to feeling nervous, no such feelings were expressed by pupils in Cohort 2. The positive feedback that Cohort 2 received from Cohort 1 may have helped to generate excitement about the trip. Several pupils noted how they were so excited they *'couldn't wait'* and many were keen to know exact details of the day, with Group 1 asking questions about funding, pupil numbers and uniform.

5.3.6.3 ***Afterthoughts on the joint trips***
Although pupils from both settings were asked to provide feedback about the joint trips, time restrictions at Oak Street meant that it was not possible to ask the mainstream pupils detailed questions about interactions with their Berry House peers. As a consequence, both cohorts gave feedback about the trips in large groups.

In an earlier interview (4), all Berry House pupils confirmed that they had enjoyed the joint trip with Cohort 1, with six pupils noting that McDonalds was their favourite trip venue and three selecting Tropical World. Although Ricky noted that he preferred the former activity, he reflected that he had overcome his fears about Tropical World and had actually enjoyed viewing the exhibits. All pupils in Cohort 1 likewise said that they had enjoyed the trip, although Gareth noted that he had disliked the smell of the parrots at Tropical World. Overall, McDonalds received slightly more votes than Tropical World as the favourite trip venue for Cohort 1.

In a later interview (8), all the special school pupils confirmed that they had enjoyed the trip with Cohort 2, with five pupils selecting bowling as their favourite venue, one Pizza Hut, one Kirkstall Abbey and two selecting both bowling and Pizza Hut. Pupils in Cohort 2 also said that they had enjoyed the trip, although Adil and Razeeda noted that they disliked eating pizza. When looking at the popularity of the venues for the mainstream pupils, an equal number of pupils gave both bowling and Pizza Hut as their favourite venues.

5.3.6.4 ***Favourite aspects***
With the exception of Scott, all pupils from both schools confirmed that they had enjoyed both taking part in activities and meeting new peers. Of the seven special school pupils asked about their favourite aspects, Jason and Ricky referred to making friends, Ikra, Ayesha and Scott to meeting Oak Street peers and David and Lucy to taking part in activities. Due to time restrictions given by Oak Street staff for the final interviews, pupils in Cohort 2 were asked to write down their three favourite aspects of partnership work. Fifteen references were made to baking, thirteen to

going on trips and a further thirteen to making or helping friends. Although some pupils in Cohort 1 shared their individual preferences, with hindsight, it would have been useful to have comparison written data for this sample.

5.3.7 **Feelings about session length**

During later interviews, the majority of pupils from both schools favoured an increase in session length, with only Scott continuing to have mixed feelings. A number of pupils explained that more time was required to complete activities, with Amed (Cohort 1) noting that extra time was needed *'So we can do more stuff'* and Talib (Cohort 2) explaining that sessions would not feel as *'rushed'*. Individuals also argued that an increase in session length would help develop relationships between pupils, with Stacey (Cohort 1) explaining that more time was needed *'to get to know 'em and trust 'em'* and Emily (Cohort 2) that extra time was required *'to make some new friends'*.

When discussing desired increases in session length, considerable differences were noted in the responses made by Ricky and individuals in both mainstream cohorts, leading me to question some pupils' understanding of time. On the three occasions he was asked, Ricky's suggestions ranged from five minutes to one hour every day. In Cohort 1, Nathan noted *'I want it to be 10 hours'*, Amed felt that sessions should last *'all week'* and Sarah extended this to '*a month.'* In Cohort 2, Razeeda and Paul argued that sessions should last *'all day'*, Munib suggested *'250'* (hours) and Bini extended this to '*600 hours'*.

The majority of pupils from both schools were happy about suggestions to extend partnership activities. At Berry House, Ikra, Sophie and Scott were each asked their opinions about taking part in other lessons at the mainstream school. Ikra and Sophie continued to feel happy about this, with Ikra adding that she would like to go to Oak Street in her new electric chair. Somewhat surprisingly, Scott also gave positive responses, twice noting that he would like to take part in other lessons at Oak Street during Interview 6.

Pupils in both mainstream cohorts also agreed that they would like to take part in more lessons at Berry House, with several pupils in both cohorts suggesting swimming and individuals in Cohort 2 additionally requesting food technology, ICT, art and outdoor play. Michael (Cohort 1) was also keen to get to know pupils from other classes in the special school, asking *'Why can't we work with any more people from Berry House?'*.

5.3.8 **Any dislikes or concerns**

As in initial interviews, five of the Berry House pupils identified dislikes or concerns about the scheme: Ikra, Shamim and Scott continued to require reassurance that I was not proposing imminent mainstream transfer; Ricky expressed some concern about missing his friends when he transferred schools; Scott continued to note his dislike of wearing bibs whilst at Oak Street and Jason again expressed his concern about missing sessions due to ill health/ medical appointments. A parallel can be drawn between Jason and Idris in Cohort 2, for he too was concerned that he had missed his opportunity to take part in baking due to absence from school.

All other concerns raised by Oak Street pupils during later interviews were made by a single group in Cohort 1. During their final interview, Group 4 was open about anxieties that they had previously held about individual Berry House peers, although stressed that they had now overcome their initial concerns. Several references were made to David's unusual head shape, his spots and his lack of thumbs, with Tony admitting *'I thought that David had a mask to scare people'*. Amed likewise discussed how he had been initially uneasy about Shamim's appearance, noting that she has *'a little bit of hair on there* (touching upper lip), *like a boy'*. Ray noted how he was initially scared of Ricky *'because of how he speaks'* and Erin commented on the behaviour of Scott, admitting *'When I first started I got scared 'cos I thought Scott was gunna scratch me'*.

5.3.9 **Thoughts about future school choices**

This section explores the feelings of the special school pupils towards future partnership sessions. It considers opinions about extending partnership work for existing groups of Berry House pupils and highlights both Jason and Ricky's feelings towards their prospective new schools. The section then assesses opinion on expanding partnership work to include peers with different needs and highlights the views of Cohort 2 concerning the forthcoming transfer of pupils with visual impairments to their school.

5.3.9.1 ***Feelings about future partnership sessions***

Five pupils from Berry House were asked how they felt about future partnership sessions. Due to their forthcoming mainstream transfer, Jason and Ricky were not included in this line of questioning and David and Lucy were also omitted, as neither pupil appeared to have much awareness of long term change. Both Ikra and Ayesha agreed that they were looking forward to working with another class from Oak Street in the following school year. Scott however remained apprehensive about this, again noting his dislike of sessions at the mainstream school. Both Shamim and Sophie said that they would miss partnership sessions when they moved to another class at Berry House in the following school year.

A number of pupils in both cohorts asked questions about partnership activities in the following year, with several being genuinely surprised that no plans were in place for their year group to be involved in further sessions. Despite my attempts to relate that suggestions for future partnership sessions were purely speculative, there seemed to be some confusion between desired and actual plans, with individuals from both schools being hopeful that their ideas for extending sessions would come to fruition.

5.3.9.2 ***Views on extending partnership work for existing groups of Berry House pupils***

When the question about extending partnership work for existing groups of Berry House peers was initially raised during Interview 4, all pupils except Scott were positive about this. Whilst the responses of eight pupils became increasingly positive in later interviews, Scott's attitude continued to fluctuate. However, three pupils expressed concerns that mainstream education would not be suitable for all Berry House pupils involved in the partnership scheme. Jason felt that peers with limited speech and more severe physical difficulties would struggle, Ricky felt that Lucy was

too *'small'* and Ikra and David too *'noisy'* and Ayesha likewise noted that David should not attend.

The majority of pupils in both mainstream cohorts initially said that they would be happy about known Berry House peers attending more lessons at their school. Several pupils named peers that they would like to join their class, with Ikra and Ricky being popular choices with Cohort 1 and Jason and Shamim with Cohort 2. Individuals in both cohorts also discussed changes that would need to be made in their classroom to facilitate wheelchair users, with Nathan (Cohort 1) noting that *'bigger tables'* would be required and Arslan (Cohort 2) suggesting that Oak Street might put in a lift.

Despite the initial excitement, several Oak Street pupils, like Jason, Ricky and Ayesha, were concerned that some Berry House peers would not be able to complete the work load required in mainstream schools. Individuals were concerned that some pupils may not be able to complete written tasks, with Scott and David being regarded as having most difficulties in this area. However, a number of pupils in Cohort 1 were eager to find a solution for all problems raised, with suggestions of extra help and alternative lessons (such as art) being put forward.

5.3.9.3 ***Views on the transfer of Jason and Ricky to mainstream***

When the question about mainstream transfer was initially raised during Interview 4, both Jason and Ricky gave positive responses. Yugi (Cohort 1) was the only Oak Street pupil to pass comment on school transfer. He was of the opinion that pupils needed to be mobile in order to attend mainstream school and asked of Jason, *'Can he now walk without a wheelchair?'*. A parallel can be made here with comments from Shamim during Interview 7, as she also initially thought that pupils needed to be ambulant in order to attend mainstream, noting *'When they go they can walk and if you cannot walk they can't go'*.

5.3.9.4 ***Views on expanding partnership work to include peers with different needs***

When Jason, Ricky, Shamim and Ayesha were asked their opinions about extending partnership work, each noted that they did not think mainstream education was suitable for all pupils who attended Berry House. It is unfortunate that Ikra did not give her opinions about this issue, for although the question was raised with her, subsequent conversations went somewhat off tangent and the question was not repeated. Both Jason and Shamim felt that pupils with fewer physical difficulties and better speech would encounter fewer problems in mainstream schools. Jason however, felt that individuals had the potential to improve their physical and communication skills as they got older, noting *'When they grow and they get bigger, they'll be able to move their hands and they might be able to talk better'*. Ricky and Shamim both related that only well behaved pupils were suitable candidates for mainstream transfer, each naming and discounting a number of Berry House pupils whom they perceived as being too noisy or too badly behaved.

The issue of more children with disabilities attending Oak Street was raised with a number of mainstream groups during later interviews. The majority of pupils asked said they would be happy to have a wheelchair user as a classmate, with Ben (Cohort 2) describing such an opportunity as '*wicked!*' and Saha (Cohort 2) *'fantastic!'*. Individuals in both cohorts did express concerns however, with Sarah (Cohort 1)

explaining *' if they're new and you don't know 'em, you feel nervous'* and Talib (Cohort 2) noting concerns that as wheelchair users need *'loads of space to move around ...arms and legs might get scraped'* (although it is not certain whose limbs he was referring to).

5.3.9.5 *The views of Cohort 2 concerning the transfer of pupils with visual impairments*

During the final interview at Oak Street, pupils in Cohort 2 were asked how they felt about the forthcoming transfer of pupils from a local school for the visually impaired in the following September. The majority of pupils questioned were apprehensive about this, with only four pupils expressing positive responses. Many interviewees noted that they felt nervous during the recent visit by a number of visually impaired pupils, with several pupils discussing concerns about their physical appearance. Talib explained that he was *'worried'* because unlike Berry House peers, some pupils with visual impairments *'are really different to us from their faces'*. Likewise, Adil recalled feeling *'scared'* when he saw a girl with '*no eyes...she couldn't even open them'*.

A fear of change and the unknown was common to many pupils, for parallels can be drawn between the reactions of Talib and Adil and of individuals in Cohort 1 who were initially concerned about the appearance of both David and Shamim. Likewise, parallels can be drawn across schools, for similar reactions were also noted by Berry House pupils who required repeated reassurances that mainstream transfer was not imminent.

5.4 Summary of pupils' perceptions of the partnership scheme

This chapter has provided a comprehensive account of the perspectives of pupils from Berry House and Oak Street towards the partnership scheme. It has highlighted the ability of all interviewees to recall information about activities, individuals and events. Although the three most vocal pupils at Berry House, like the majority of their mainstream peers, were able to convey their opinions in detail, this chapter has highlighted the equally valid accounts of participants with communication impairments and/ or significant learning difficulties. It has clearly shown that with the aid of AAC systems, including photographs and examples of work, pupils with significant levels of need can successfully relate their views in an interview situation.

By presenting information conveyed during both initial and later interviews, this chapter has provided a thorough review of the attitudes, expectations and feelings of all the pupils involved in the partnership scheme. It has been possible to track pupils' views over the duration of the interview period and record both changes of opinion and similarities of outlook. Parallel views have been noted in pupils from both settings, with many interviewees holding similar opinions about favourite activities, joint trips, session length and preferred venue. This chapter has highlighted the increasingly positive attitudes of the majority of pupils from both Berry House and Oak Street towards participation in partnership activities. In addition, it has reflected the heightened confidence experienced by the majority of participants in later interviews towards both meeting and communicating with peers from their partnership school. Further discussion of these research findings is offered in the following chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion

At the outset, this chapter aims to relate the study to current themes and issues and outline its relationship to previous research. It then provides a discussion of findings relating to the elicitation of pupils' perspectives and their perceptions of the partnership scheme. Next, reflections on both the partnership scheme and the methodology used in the study are given. Following this, the overall strengths and limitations of the research are discussed. Finally, the study's contribution to existing knowledge is assessed and considerations for future research offered.

6.1 The study context

The study was conducted against a background in which taking children's views into account was, as it remains, high on both the social and educational agenda. Research into children's perspectives increased throughout the 1990s encouraged by national and international acknowledgement of an individual's right to freedom of expression (UN, 1989/ UNESCO, 1994). The ethos behind involving children as active participants in education is made clear in the Children Act (DoH, 1989) and the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a). However, although there is a growing trend in education towards accessing children's perspectives, there is no guarantee that these will be acted upon.

Whilst in my current teaching role at Berry House, it was of increasing concern to me that pupils were not given any real opportunities to discuss their feelings about involvement in the partnership scheme with Oak Street and that decisions were being made on their behalf. Although regular observations of the special school participants took place, monitoring their involvement in activities in both venues, no systematic attempt was made to gather their personal views. Despite verbal pupils, in both settings, having the ability to express opinions about the scheme on an ongoing basis, the feelings of participants with little or no speech were, as is commonly the case, largely unknown.

6.2 Relationship to previous research

In recent years, many studies have focused on eliciting pupils' views on different aspects of their education, such as those conducted by Rudduck and Flutter (2000) and Norwich and Kelly (2004). The driving force behind many studies is a belief that all pupils should be listened to, so that individual needs can be both identified and accommodated. Ainscow (2000), Farrell (2000) and Booth et al (2002) all stress the importance of schools evaluating the process of inclusion. However, despite small scale studies, such as those by Beveridge (1996) and Whitehurst (2006), little has been done to ascertain the specific views of special school pupils towards partnership activities with their mainstream peers. Considering partnership schemes are important to future inclusion opportunities, it is essential that more is done to assess what all pupils think of them.

There has also been a tendency for research concerning pupils with SEN to focus on individuals with physical impairments and/ or mild to moderate learning difficulties, as seen in studies by Connors and Stalker (2003) and Curtin and Clarke (2005).

Despite attempts to redress this imbalance, such as those by Alderson and Goodey (1996), Morris (1998) and Moore and Sixsmith (2000), much more needs to be done to investigate the perspectives of individuals with communication impairments and more significant learning difficulties.

6.3 **Eliciting pupils' perspectives**

In this section, the research questions outlined in Section 3.1.2.1 provide a framework for a discussion of the findings relating to methodology and communication issues.

6.3.1. How do pupils communicate information during the interviews?

All the pupils involved in the study enjoyed communicating information during the cycle of interviews. As demonstrated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1), much data was conveyed by participants from both Berry House and Oak Street, with variations in response rate observed both between and within the two schools. Like Marchant and Page (1993), I often underestimated how long children wanted to 'talk' about things that they considered important. Although the most articulate pupils were found in the mainstream sector, both Jason and Ikra also gave lengthy verbal replies and Ricky in particular had many supplementary issues that he wished to discuss at interview. Despite the high percentage of pupils in both schools having an additional home language, this did not appear to affect any pupil's understanding of interview questions. However, the strong Asian accents and broken speech of many of the Oak Street pupils did present a number of challenges, especially during the transcription stage. On many occasions, I actually found the speech of the mainstream pupils more difficult to determine than the unclear speech of any of the Berry House participants.

Prior to the start of the research, discussions took place as to whether David and Lucy should be involved in the interviews at all, as both myself and other colleagues at Berry House were uncertain whether they would be able to understand the level of questioning planned. As neither pupil had been involved in previous pilot interviews, it was difficult to determine how successful their participation would be. Due to my determination to elicit the views of all pupils involved in the partnership scheme, I made the decision to involve David and Lucy in the full cycle of interviews. From the outset, I paid close attention to how interview questions could be simplified and AAC systems employed to assist both pupils in formulating considered responses. On reflection, it can be seen that both David and Lucy were able to answer many questions effectively. In particular, once I was 'tuned' into Lucy's speech, I found that she made more vocal contributions than I had previously envisaged. As interviews progressed, I had more confidence in her ability to answer more challenging questions, such as those relating to differences in friendships.

The successful participation of both David and Lucy in the study raises questions about how pupils with communication difficulties are assessed and how far standard assessment procedures capture the capabilities of individuals. The fine grained class-based assessment of both pupils did not reflect the potential they demonstrated during the cycle of interviews. Their ability to answer a wide range of questions serves as a reminder that researchers should not make assumptions about the capability of pupils with communication impairments and SLDs to take part in

research. The study clearly demonstrates that fluent speech is not a prerequisite for successful communication of information during interviews.

6.3.2 How can their views be best elicited?

Extensive piloting took place prior to the commencement of the study to determine the most productive methods of eliciting the views of pupils in both schools. As a consequence, group interviews were planned for the mainstream participants, with individual and paired interviews taking place at Berry House.

Group interviews proved to be extremely useful in the mainstream setting, as pupils interacted with one another and both supported and questioned each other's views. However, I found that larger groups were difficult to manage and particularly challenging to record. Higher quality data was gathered during Interviews 2 and 3, when pupils were interviewed in smaller groups and transcription also proved to be easier. In all interviews, mixed sex groupings worked well and I did not encounter any of the difficulties experienced by Mahon et al (1996), who reported less success when interviewing boys. Although Watts and Ebbutt (1987) note that group interviews do not allow specific questions to be asked to individuals, I found that involving groups in a repeated cycle of interviews, did present opportunities for individuals to be asked specific questions, especially when group sizes were small.

One-to-one interviews took place with four of the pupils from the special school accessing AAC systems as their main form of communication. Although 1:1 interviews were often more intense and initially time-consuming, the benefits outweighed this, as highlighted in Sections 3.5.1.2 and 4.2.1. Most particularly, 1:1 interviews proved to be extremely useful when interviewing children with little or no speech, as they allowed time to access switch devices and other additional material, such as fixed alternatives (yes, no and maybe), emotion symbols (like, dislike and unsure), photographs and examples of work.

As the cycle of interviews progressed, it was evident that many of the Oak Street pupils also appeared to have literacy difficulties and struggle with reading, writing and comprehension. It became apparent that the cognitive abilities of a number of the Berry House pupils were actually higher than some of their mainstream peers. With hindsight, it would have been useful to have some AAC strategies in place for both Sadia and Aisha at Oak Street, as both pupils struggled to understand many of the questions asked to their group. If I had been alerted to their comprehension difficulties earlier, it may have been possible for me to offer them more assistance. I feel that both girls would have benefited from paired interviews, coupled with the use of photographs and examples of work. However, it may have been difficult to offer such support without disrupting the unity of the existing interview groups. Although it proved difficult to offer individual mainstream participants extra support during interviews, observations made during partnership sessions indicate how a sharing of expertise across school boundaries was of benefit to individual pupils. As shown in Section 5.1.7, Oak Street pupils certainly gained from having access to new curriculum areas and increased adult support.

Although I had intended to determine the participants involved in paired interviews at Berry House, in many instances the pupils themselves selected peers that they

would like to be interviewed alongside. Any initial concerns that I had concerning dominant peers overshadowing less confident pupils were quickly allayed. In fact, when pupils chose their own interview partner, this frequently led to an increased number of responses and a more relaxed atmosphere, as shown in Section 4.2.1. Similarities can be seen in a number of interviews within the mainstream sector, for pupils interviewed alongside both Sadia and Aisha frequently offered them support and prompts. Echoing findings by Lewis (1992), some groups gelled extremely well, with Group 4 in Cohort 1 being particularly supportive of one another.

The strategic use of questioning proved to have a noticeable effect on quality of the data gathered. I found 'warm up' questions to be particularly useful in setting the mood of the interview and instilling confidence in the participants that they could successfully contribute. The study demonstrates how much can be gained from investing time in building up friendly, informal relationships with interviewees. As Simons (1981) suggests, establishing rapport with pupils is extremely important and can have a noticeable effect on both the quality and quantity of the data collated. In all interviews, I looked closely at how questions were phrased, to elicit the most reliable response from participants. Whereas Oak Street pupils were often able to answer open questions without the need for further prompts, AAC users at Berry House frequently required specific and concrete questions.

Both photographs and props proved to be very useful in the study and appeared to elicit a wider range of responses. As noted by Walker and Wiedel (1985) and Collier and Collier (1986), I also found that such media acted as reference points, promoted curiosity and increased conversation. It is notable that not as many props were used with Cohort 2 as Cohort 1, as I felt that initial interviews with Cohort 1 were somewhat rushed. The study also supports the provision of drawing materials in interviews, as suggested by Lewis (1995), Beresford (1997) and Cameron (2005). Drawings helped provide a more balanced number of contributions from group members, as each of the mainstream pupils was given the opportunity to discuss their (optional) work. They also proved to be a non-threatening form of expression, as it was noticeable that quieter peers made increased contributions during interviews in which opportunities for drawing and/or writing occurred.

Although it was not possible to extend the provision of drawing materials to Berry House pupils, due to the poor fine motor skills of the majority of the special school participants, examples of work and other stimuli proved useful in engaging pupils' interests and fostering thought and reflection. Many interviews at Berry House were based around photographs taken during previous sessions. In the majority of instances, I found that the provision of photographs increased responsiveness and helped reduce demands made on verbal abilities. Photographs helped Berry House pupils in identifying peers, whereas recall of activities was largely aided through the provision of Boardmaker symbols and examples of work.

6.3.3 How can changes in pupils' perspectives be monitored?

Changes in pupils' perspectives were tracked by asking respondents repeated questions during the cycle of interviews. The majority of pupils from both schools made increasingly optimistic replies about their involvement in the scheme and their attitude towards peers in their partnership school during later interviews. Section 5.3

clearly shows an increase in positive references towards participation in joint activities and an increase in the number of peers from their partnership school named as friends. Physical and emotional changes in pupils' behaviour were also recorded in field notes, including observations and discussions with colleagues in both settings.

Although it would have been possible to monitor changes in perspective by interviewing participants twice, at the outset and closing stages of their involvement in partnership activities, this would not have provided the richness of data offered by the study. Involving pupils in a repeated cycle of interviews over a significant period of time allowed gradual changes in perspective to be monitored. As pupils became increasingly familiar with the interview process and myself as an interviewer, this enhanced their readiness to discuss pertinent issues. Continued investment over time also supported pupils in both answering and raising more sensitive questions in later interviews, as shown in Section 5.3.9. Repeated questioning also served to increase evidence for the reliability of individual responses, as demonstrated in the consistency of answers given in Section 4.5.

6.3.4 How much can the pupils remember of different experiences?

Pupils from both schools achieved extremely high participation rates for partnership sessions, although the prolonged ill health and hospitalisation of both Jason and David did affect their involvement in activities with Cohort 1. Pupil recall of partnership experiences was extremely high in both schools, with detailed responses being made by many of the mainstream participants. In addition, Jason, Ricky, Ikra and Shamim were all able to discuss events that had occurred some time ago. It is notable that all other interviewees were able to recall information about individuals from their partnership school, group names, activities and joint trips.

6.3.5 Is evidence available to show their answers are focused and reliable?

Participants from Berry House and Oak Street gave equally reliable and accurate responses to the majority of questions concerning fact and opinion. However, on occasion, exaggerated comments and confusion over real and imagined events were made by pupils from both schools. Like Goodman and Schwartz-Kenney (1992), I additionally found that the concept of time presented particular challenges for the special school and mainstream pupils alike. It can therefore be seen that embellished replies, ambiguities concerning fact and fiction and difficulties with estimating time are not simply linked to pupils having a communication and/ or learning difficulty, but are common to many children. Following the advice of Keats (2000), I took care not to interpret such responses as memory failure or error, as they typify the vibrancy of children's imaginations.

Supportive evidence to back up individual responses is provided in detailed field notes and observations, although significantly more material is available for pupils at Berry House than Oak Street, since the former pupils are the main focus of the study. Further evidence of reliability and accuracy can be seen in answers to repeated questions in which pupils offered the same replies. Reversal of choices in questions also demonstrated consistency of responses and was used most often with Scott, David and Lucy.

Even pupils with significant learning and communication difficulties proved capable of recalling much relevant data. Both David and Lucy responded especially well to photographs and examples of work from partnership sessions. Although a number of contributions offered by Sadia and Aisha at Oak Street were linked to partnership activities, it proved extremely difficult to keep them focused within the confines of a group. At Berry House, responses given by Scott presented the most challenges, as he frequently changed his viewpoint. However, it is notable that his opinions about remaining in a special school remained constant throughout the cycle of interviews.

6.3.6 Does the interview context affect pupils' responses?

The majority of participants in the study had a positive attitude to the interview process, despite the fact that a number of pupils from both Berry House and Oak Street were initially nervous about taking part. Many pupils, from both settings, were clearly excited about taking part in the cycle of interviews and enjoyed the novelty of changing rooms and being asked their opinions about partnership activities. Ricky and Scott in particular appeared to benefit from individual attention within a quiet environment, as field notes demonstrate that both pupils had a higher level of concentration within interviews than they generally showed within the classroom.

Although distractions caused by background noise and the location of the tape recorder were noted in both schools, like Powney and Watts (1987), I found that pupils quickly became accustomed to the presence of recording devices. An increased number of technical difficulties occurred within the special school, largely due to problems with Ricky's Dyna Vox. Field notes support the findings of Crossley (1994) that equipment failure is unfortunately a regular occurrence for high-tech communication aid users.

6.3.7 Summary of findings relating to the elicitation of pupils' perspectives

This section has considered the assessment of pupils with communication impairments and/ or learning difficulties and has raised questions about whether they are fine-tuned enough to capture the true potential of individuals. It highlights how researchers must not underestimate the ability of pupils with communication and/ or learning difficulties to take part in interviews and demonstrates how participants do not have to be articulate in order to communicate information successfully.

This section has stressed the importance of carrying out thorough piloting to ascertain the most effective ways of eliciting the views of all children and outlines the significance of 1:1 interviews when interviewing pupils with little or no speech, for individuals have more time to access additional materials and have fewer distractions. The significance of longitudinal studies with repeated cycles of interviews is also verified in this section, as they can increase the quantity and quality of data elicited, support the discussion of sensitive issues and permit gradual changes in perspectives to be monitored.

This section has also revealed the similarity of responses of participants from the special and mainstream schools. Whereas all pupils were able to give accurate and reliable answers to questions relating to fact and opinion, many individuals from both schools were prone to exaggeration, confused fact and fiction and had difficulties

with questions relating to time. Many pupils, from both schools, also had difficulties with key areas of literacy, highlighting the fact that more could be done to share expertise between the two settings, such as the extension of AAC strategies to Oak Street.

6.4 Pupils' perceptions of the partnership scheme

This section addresses the main research questions outlined in Section 3.1.2.2 and focuses on pupils' perceptions of the partnership scheme.

6.4.1 What can pupils remember about different experiences of the partnership scheme?

As shown in the previous chapter (Section 5.1), participants from both schools were able to recall information in nine key areas. A common theme during initial interviews was that both the special school and mainstream pupils enjoyed the same things. As shown in Section 5.3.6, evidence is available to show that the majority of pupils from both Berry House and Oak Street had fun meeting peers from their partnership school and interacting with them. A comparison of pupils' responses likewise indicates that pupils achieved pleasure from taking part in the same activities, with art and food technology being well-liked in both schools. An enjoyment of joint trips was also common to the majority of pupils involved in the study, with McDonalds being a popular choice amongst all participants.

Although research conducted by Mitchell (1999) notes that pupils with disabilities are often denied the same experiences as their able bodied peers, in the current study the reverse was often true. In many instances, it was the mainstream pupils who lacked experience of participating in a wide range of curricular activities, such as food technology and clay work and who had little experience of travelling out of their locality and going on out of school visits. This may explain the heightened excitement of Oak Street pupils toward both travelling on the mini bus to Berry House and participating in the joint trips.

6.4.2 What are the initial attitudes, expectations and feelings of pupils towards the partnership scheme?

When monitoring changes in pupil perspectives, I found it useful to reflect on the findings of Steele (1998), who observed that the inclusion process is characterised by four stages: an anxiety stage (noting the fears experienced by many people to a novel situation); a charity stage (sometimes producing over sympathetic attitudes to individuals with SEN); an acceptance stage (characterised by a reduction in the amount of attention focused on the individual with SEN) and a true inclusion stage (where the pupil with SEN is expected to act in appropriate ways and may be liked or disliked for their personality rather than their intellectual ability).

During the cycle of interviews that took place as part of the research, many pupils from both settings experienced the anxiety stage described by Steele, especially during initial visits to their partnership school. Many of the mainstream pupils also displayed evidence of the charity stage, although it is interesting to note that Ikra likewise showed an overly sympathetic attitude to Sadia's impairments. During later

interviews, signs of the acceptance stage became more evident, as the mainstream pupils became increasingly familiar with their peers from Berry House (and vice-versa) and friendships started to develop. Although no evidence of Steele's final stage was recorded during the study, it is notable that Shab and Kelly, the two dual placement pupils who had taken part in partnership activities during previous years, both reached this stage of acceptance.

During initial interviews, the majority of pupils from both Berry House and Oak Street indicated that they were happy to participate in the partnership scheme. However, some pupils, from each school, disclosed that they were nervous about taking part and experienced fears noted by Steele (1998) as being characteristic of the anxiety stage of the inclusion process. As both schools were used for partnership activities, all pupils had the shared experience of visiting an unfamiliar venue and the opportunity to feel both conspicuous and shy. This is highlighted in the similarity of comments that pupils made about being stared at. It is interesting that some pupils, in both settings, noted that they felt more nervous after the first visit to their partnership school, possibly because they knew what to expect.

Fear of the unknown was common to pupils from Berry House and Oak Street. During initial interviews, four of the special school pupils required reassurance that I was not proposing imminent mainstream transfer. Individuals from the mainstream setting also expressed anxiety about meeting unfamiliar peers, such as pupils with more significant difficulties that they had seen during initial visits to Berry House. It is notable that individuals from both schools expressed concerns about communicating with peers from their partnership school. The study highlights how pupils' confidence at communicating is not simply linked to an ability to talk. It supports observations made by Peck et al (1990), who likewise found that articulate pupils often struggled to communicate with unfamiliar peers.

6.4.3 What are the attitudes, expectations and feelings of pupils towards the partnership scheme in later interviews?

The positive attitude of pupils from both the special and mainstream schools towards involvement in the scheme increased as the study progressed. This mirrors their developing confidence at participating in the interview process, outlined in Section 4.6. Pupils in both schools appear to have benefited from regular contact over the course of the academic year, allowing time to develop confidence at both working alongside and communicating with peers from their partnership school. Later interviews highlight that the majority of pupils from Berry House and Oak Street took much delight in developing friendships with peers from their partnership school. Pupils consistently identified friendships over the course of interviews, demonstrating the reliability of their responses and providing evidence that they were not simply feigning enjoyment to please me as a teacher-researcher.

The majority of pupils from Berry House and Oak Street clearly enjoyed taking part in the weekly partnership sessions. With the exception of Scott, all pupils took pleasure in working in both venues and taking part in joint activities. Baking emerged as the most popular activity choice amongst pupils from both schools, although art and clay work also featured highly with the mainstream participants. The novelty value of working in dedicated art and food technology rooms was of

obvious appeal to pupils from Oak Street, many of whom testified that they had no previous experience of either clay work or baking.

Although the majority of Berry House pupils were excited about taking part in joint trips, their views did not appear to be as heightened as those of their mainstream peers. This may be linked to the special school pupils having far more experience of going on trips, with community inclusion being regarded as a school priority and small pupil numbers making visits easier to organise. At Oak Street, the National Curriculum is followed more stringently than at Berry House and subsequently fewer out of school opportunities are available. In addition, the fact that most pupils at Oak Street also live in a social priority area, may arguably mean that they have fewer opportunities at home to make visits outside their neighbourhood.

It is noticeable that some mainstream pupils discussed friends and relatives with disabilities for the first time during later interviews. Likewise, more sensitive issues were often raised for the first time in later interviews, such as perceptions about what constitutes 'disability'. Diamond and Hestenes (1996) highlight how young children often find it more difficult to comprehend learning and or communication difficulties than physical impairments. Findings from the study likewise indicate that the mainstream participants were more aware of the physical impairments of their peers from Berry House than any other difficulties, as noted in their spontaneous comments and drawings. The ways in which the pupils from Oak Street organised their ideas about disability appeared to reflect their attempts to assimilate the phenomenon of disability into already existing cognitive structures. Mirroring findings by Diamond and Hestenes (1996), pupils in the study also tended to give explanations for why an individual has a disability based upon injury, health or accident. However, some additional comments based upon divine intervention were also made in the course of the research.

Although later interviews highlight how the majority of pupils from both schools continued to enjoy all aspects of the partnership scheme, it is significant that some pupils only discussed their initial shyness and concern about participating in the scheme in the final round of interviews. The openness of Group 4 (Cohort 1) in their final interview is notable, for they were able to discuss at length anxieties that they had previously held about certain peers from Berry House, as outlined in Section 5.3.8. It is also interesting that even though the majority of participants from Oak Street expressed their confidence in working alongside known peers with disabilities, characteristic of the acceptance stage noted by Steele (1998), several pupils noted that they might still feel nervous about working with unfamiliar pupils from Berry House if partnership work was extended.

6.4.4 Do their perspectives (including attitudes, expectations and feelings) alter over time?

The study demonstrates that special school pupils have the same range of preferences and concerns as their mainstream peers. It challenges prevailing assumptions that it is only pupils from the latter setting who require additional preparation and support prior to the commencement of partnership schemes. In fact, it can be seen that apprehensions about meeting new individuals are common to all groups of people coming together for the first time and are not simply limited to children. A later

section of this chapter (6.5.2) further considers the importance of preparing all pupils for interactions with unfamiliar peers and the need to provide ongoing support for partnership experiences.

During the initial phase of partnership work, common concerns included hesitancy about visiting an unfamiliar venue and meeting and communicating with unknown peers, typical of the anxiety stage of the inclusion process (Steele, 1998). In later interviews, it became apparent that pupils from both settings had moved into more of an acceptance stage, as many participants noted that they found it easier to both work alongside and communicate with peers from their partnership school. It does appear that individuals in both schools had their own agenda, as Jason, Ricky and Ray (Cohort 1) each outlined how they preferred taking part in activities rather than 'mixing' with peers during early interviews. However, in later interviews, all three pupils noted that they had a different attitude and saw the merit of establishing relationships with peers from their partnership school.

6.4.5 **Summary of pupils' perceptions of the partnership scheme**

This section has highlighted how pupils from both the special and mainstream schools had good recall of partnership sessions and were able to share information about both joint activities and group members. The overriding message from all participants was that involvement in partnership sessions was fun. It can also be seen that the majority of pupils from both schools enjoyed the same things, most notably meeting new peers, taking part in activities and going on joint trips. It is notable that many experiences provided by the partnership scheme were novel events for many Oak Street participants, with several pupils noting how they had little or no experience of going on a mini-bus, taking part in clay work or involvement in cookery. Such reflections challenge prevailing assumptions that partnership schemes offer a wider range of experiences to special school pupils than their mainstream peers.

This section has also demonstrated that pupils from both schools went through the same range of experiences, both prior to and during partnership sessions, supporting findings by Steele (1998). The confidence of all pupils taking part in the partnership scheme increased over time, highlighting how partnerships need time to develop. Although the majority of pupils displayed an overwhelming sense of enjoyment about participating in the scheme, individuals from both schools noted that they experienced some anxiety, especially during initial visits. It is significant that individuals from both Berry House and Oak Street noted that they had difficulties communicating with peers from their partnership school, especially during initial interviews. It is evident that the ability of pupils to communicate with others is not simply linked to their articulation skills, as confidence plays a key part.

6.5 **Broader reflections on the partnership scheme**

This section offers reflections on key aspects of the partnership scheme, notably the impact on participants, peer preparation and the development of friendships. It also highlights some of the difficulties encountered by schools running such schemes.

6.5.1 **The impact on participants**

Overall, participation in the scheme proved to be enjoyable, with pupils gaining additional skills, meeting new peers and having opportunities for reflection. Pupils from both settings appear to have benefited from regular contact over a significant time period, allowing them opportunities to develop confidence at both working alongside and communicating with peers from their partnership school. Later interviews with pupils from both schools note that many individuals gained a sense of achievement about their ability to mix with other pupils and take part in joint tasks.

The research supports the views of Steele and Mitchell (1992) and Marom et al (2007) that positive benefits accrue when children take part in partnership schemes early in their schooling. It shows how joint ventures can offer pupils opportunities to recognise personal qualities and inherent abilities in others. As Marom et al (2007) suggest, early interaction between pupils may reduce incidents of stereotyping and prejudice and the need for more intensive efforts in later schooling. In the study, members of both cohorts discussed how they had gained insights into what it may be like to have a disability. However, it is interesting to note that the display of empathy was not just one way, for individuals at Berry House also showed understanding of those with unfamiliar disabilities, such as the visual difficulties and hearing impairment of Sadia. It is also of interest that both Jason and Shamim modified some of their own opinions about disability issues during the course of the interview process.

When considering the advantages of the scheme for the mainstream participants, field notes indicate how pupils benefited from the higher adult ratio at Berry House, allowing them both increased opportunities to enter discussions with adults and extra support during activities. This study upholds the views of both Farrell (1997) and Gibb et al (2007) that mainstream pupils can benefit from the small group sizes and specialist curriculum of the special school. Although Jowett et al (1988) and Noonan Walsh et al (1996) note how special school pupils can make gains from the wider curriculum opportunities and higher numbers of specialist teachers within the mainstream sector, in the current study the reverse was often true. Oak Street pupils undoubtedly benefited from working with the specialist food technology teacher at Berry House, plus the specialist art and outdoor facilities in this setting.

When reflecting on the advantages of taking part in joint ventures from the perspective of the special school, I support the findings of Beveridge (1996), who illustrates how special school pupils can benefit from the positive role models and peer interactions available from working alongside mainstream peers. Field notes show how Berry House pupils frequently made increased efforts to communicate with more articulate peers. As Dockrell (2004) highlights, such interactions facilitate the practising of communication skills in different contexts. Another significant advantage for special school pupils is that being part of this process may lead to a full-time place within mainstream, as outlined by Jowett et al (1988). It is notable that the dual placement of Shab and Kelly was a direct consequence of their involvement in the partnership scheme during previous years and that there is a possibility that such placements could be extended to other Berry House pupils in the future.

6.5.2 **Peer preparation**

The positive reactions expressed by the majority of participants towards involvement in the partnership scheme was, in part, a direct consequence of the efforts staff from both schools made to prepare pupils for involvement in partnership activities. As Shevlin (2003), McConkey and Smyth (2003) and Frederickson et al (2007) note, much can be done to help pupils discover similarities between themselves and peers in their partnership school prior to projects taking place. Although opportunities were not available at the start of the research to make videos of pupils who were to take part in the partnership scheme, as suggested by Shevlin (2003), 'passport' exchanges took place, whereby photographs and information about pupil' interests were shared between the two settings and appeared to help a number of participants (from both Oak Street and Berry House) overcome initial anxieties. Staff from Berry House also delivered assemblies within the mainstream school to encourage pupils to respond positively to participation in the partnership scheme. As suggested by Germain (2004), this also included explanations of different communication systems.

There appears to be a significant contrast between the preparation given to the partnership work between Oak Street and Berry House and that given to the forthcoming transfer of visually impaired pupils to the mainstream school. Whereas the Oak Street pupils had developed a relationship with their peers at Berry House during weekly sessions over a six month period, pupils in Cohort 2 noted that they had witnessed only one visit from the visually impaired pupils during the Summer term, with the transfer due to take place in the following September. Field notes also indicate that this transfer of pupils appears to have caused an equal amount of anxiety amongst staff in the mainstream sector. As Tutt (2007) highlights, schools can encounter numerous challenges by being asked to take on pupils outside their experience.

The level of assistance offered during partnership activities also needs to be carefully monitored, with staff being aware of when to both provide and withdraw support. Observations completed within the research highlight that interactions between Oak Street pupils and their special school peers often needed to be systematically guided and encouraged by staff, supporting views expressed by Beveridge (1996). However, like Lincoln et al (1992), I also found that excess support could also be a hindrance. Field notes made during partnership sessions indicate that when support staff sat next to Berry House pupils for the entire duration of activities, fewer interactions took place between those pupils and their mainstream peers.

6.5.3 **The development of friendships**

The majority of pupils from both settings asked about friendships during the study noted that they were closer to peers within their own school. Ikra's reflections concerning her closeness to peers with similar disabilities echo those of a number of pupils interviewed by Curtin and Clarke (2005). Like Ikra, individuals in the latter study noted that pupils with similar difficulties both accepted and understood them. An additional similarity with Curtin and Clarke, is that the research also found that some pupils were able to make friends with peers from a different setting easily, whilst others experienced great difficulty.

The main difference between the findings of the current study and those of Curtin and Clarke is that none of the Oak Street pupils professed to developing 'close' friendships with peers from the special school. However, it must be noted that their research focused on former special school pupils who had transferred to mainstream provision during the previous school year. As a consequence, the able-bodied pupils had increased opportunities to develop relationships with the former special school pupils. The majority of Oak Street pupils who noted differences in friendships in the study, referred to difficulties they had both communicating and playing with their peers at Berry House. Such views echo findings by Gibb et al (2007), with mainstream pupils commenting that their special school peers *'didn't know how to (play) appropriately'* and that they did not perceive them to be *'close friends'* (p.117).

The transitory nature of friendships made as part of the partnership scheme needs further investigation. It is possible that pupils who had been involved in partnership work in previous years, developed an awareness of the limited nature of friendships and that this may have affected their attitude towards subsequent cohorts at Oak Street. If sessions between the two schools were ongoing, it is possible that relationships made during the study period might evolve into personal friendships, as indicated by Curtin and Clarke (2005). Discussions with Shab and Kelly likewise indicate that such relationships are possible, for both pupils were able to build upon friendships that they made during previous partnership activities as a result of their subsequent dual placement.

6.5.4 **Restrictions on partnership activities**

Although regular meetings took place between staff at Berry House and Oak Street during the course of the research to overcome some of the practical difficulties noted by Jowett et al (1988) in running a partnership scheme, teachers from the former setting became increasingly responsible for the bulk of all planning, delivery and assessment. This situation has led to a considerable amount of unease within the special school over the past school year, resulting in a number of my colleagues questioning whether the scheme should actually be called a 'partnership' at all.

Both Wiltshire (1998) and Ainscow (2007) express concerns that the culture of competition in education and the government's standards agenda may be leaving mainstream schools less space, time and resources to take part in such arrangements. Despite the ongoing commitment of the staff at Oak Street toward the partnership scheme, it does appear that increased demands to achieve targets in literacy and numeracy in recent years, has led to the marked reduction in the time available for teaching staff to be involved. As Male and Rayner (2007) outline, a stretching of funds has also resulted in interventions being led by LSAs. This situation poses real difficulties for partnership activities, for as Fletcher-Campbell (1994), Noonan Walsh et al (1996) and Rose and Coles (2002) indicate, the success of schemes is often linked to the extent to which both schools are seen as equal partners.

6.6 **Reflections on study methodology**

Being a teacher-researcher within the special school was certainly an advantage during the research, for my training and experience in using a wide range of AAC

systems meant that I did not require the assistance of a facilitator to communicate effectively with participants. As Simons (1981) highlights, it was also useful for me to have background knowledge of individuals and information from alternative sources, such as key adults in the pupils' lives. Although I did not have comparable knowledge of the Oak Street participants, my role as a teacher-researcher allowed me to develop a relationship with each of the cohorts during both partnership sessions and the cycle of interviews.

At times, moving into a teaching role occurred instinctively during interviews in both settings, despite my attempts to differentiate between my roles as a teacher and a researcher. This was undoubtedly linked to the fact that I have been a teacher for a long time (far longer than I have been a researcher) and that I genuinely wanted to 'help' pupils express their thoughts on partnership issues. At times, I found it difficult to put aside personal expectations and goals that I had for pupils within my class. Some prompting did occur, especially within the special school, yet this was based on my awareness of individual needs. As I was aware of the power divide between the research participants and myself as a teacher, I followed the advice of Lewis and Porter (2004) and took steps to redress this by summarising the main findings from the study in a letter addressed to each class. This had a positive result, with subsequent discussions with colleagues in both schools revealing that pupils found such feedback to be both useful and rewarding.

The involvement of a second teacher-researcher in the study was a great asset, as she offered much support throughout the interview process. Although it was impossible for my colleague to take on the role of a second interviewer, due to the time required in helping her utilize interview techniques that had taken me an entire year of pilots to develop, she provided assistance in many other ways. Most specifically, she was able to moderate a number of interviews with AAC users in both the pilot and the main study and check subsequent transcripts for any anomalies.

Although establishing a cycle of semi-structured interviews in two settings was very time-consuming, this method provided a balance between structure and openness. Like Robson (1993), I observed that this form of interview facilitated the modification of questions according to pupil need and allowed adjustments to be made concerning both pace and interview length. As a consequence, 1:1 interviews with Ricky and Scott were noticeably lengthy, for each required a larger number of probe, repeated and rephrased questions, plus time to access appropriate communication devices. On reflection, I would certainly use semi-structured interviews again, due to their flexibility.

When reflecting on the use of interview schedules, both advantages and disadvantages can be seen. As I was hindered by having a copy of the interview schedule on show during a number of pilot interviews, I consequently strove to familiarise myself with questions in the main study. However, one drawback was that I omitted to ask specific questions both to individuals at Berry House and to entire groups within the mainstream setting. Most notably, I failed to ask Ikra questions about future school choices and did not consistently ask the same questions regarding friendships to all groups at Oak Street.

Time restrictions imposed on a number of interviews also led to some questions being omitted. This was most notable in the final interviews with both mainstream cohorts, as questions relating to the joint trips were limited, due to the participants being required to take part in other school-based activities. In order to increase data in the final interview, I asked pupils in Cohort 2 to write down their three favourite aspects of the scheme. However, with hindsight, it would have been useful to have equivalent data for Cohort 1.

The extensive piloting that took place prior to the commencement of the study proved invaluable. Pilot interviews allowed me to practice and develop my skills as an interviewer in both settings and determine which strategies best suited the study. In addition, pilots at Berry House allowed me to trial innovative techniques with AAC users, such as those outlined by Bloomberg and Johnson (1991), Cohen and Manion (1994) and Cameron and Murphy (2007). On reflection, I found both emotion symbols and the fixed-alternatives *'yes'*, *'no'* and *'maybe'* to be particularly useful in helping AAC users indicate their feelings about individuals and events in the main research. However, with hindsight, I wish that I had taken photographs of some of the images sorted during interviews, as this would have provided a permanent record of choices made by individual pupils.

6.7 **Strengths and limitations of the study**

A major strength of the study is that it took part over a considerable period of time and involved repeated cycles of interviews. This facilitated the development of a level of rapport between myself and the research participants in both schools. It also allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of individual experiences of the partnership scheme and obtain a detailed account of views and opinions. The study demonstrates how pupils have insights and perspectives which can differ from those of teachers and that in order to develop a clear picture, eliciting pupil perspectives is vital. As Clark and Moss (2001) and Smart (2002) note, children report on what they see as important and this is not always congruent with adult interpretations.

An additional strength of the research is the impact that it had on the pupils taking part. Participation in the cycle of interviews proved to be an enjoyable and potentially empowering learning experience for all participants. Field notes highlight how staff in both schools observed increases in pupil's self esteem and autonomy throughout the cycle of interviews. The interviews also provided an opportunity for pupils to discuss their involvement in the partnership scheme and improve their understanding of peers in another sector.

When considering the limitations of the study, it may be regarded as unfortunate that a number of questions were omitted from interviews that took place in both schools. However, as discussed in Section 6.6, I feel that had the interview schedule been visible, then it would have affected the flow of conversation and caused distractions to the research participants. Another limitation of the research is the lack of opportunity to see how the partnership scheme between Berry House and Oak Street developed. Although pupils from both settings made lots of suggestions about how they would like to improve the partnership scheme, the study does not consider how far their suggestions were acted upon and how far they were genuinely involved in making changes.

The decision to limit the research to the perspectives of the nine pupils involved in the partnership scheme, together with their mainstream peers, resulted in the views of the two dual-placement pupils being omitted. Although Shab and Kelly took part in a series of eight paired interviews at the same time as the main research, I considered their reflections on previous partnership activities and their subsequent inclusion in other lessons at Oak Street to be beyond the scope of the thesis. Consequently, it is a matter of speculation what light their views might have added to the interpretation of data in the study.

6.8 The study's contribution to existing knowledge

The study contributes to the field by addressing some of the perceived gaps in the research literature. Whereas much evaluation of partnership schemes has previously focused on ascertaining the views of staff and verbal (mostly mainstream) pupils, the current study has sought to address issues from the standpoint of all the pupils taking part. As a consequence, it offers distinctive information about children's perceptions of a partnership scheme.

Although pupils with SEN have previously been included in studies of inclusive practices, they have rarely been the focus. The current research demonstrates how pupils with communication and/ or learning difficulties are able to take part in an extended cycle of interviews. The study confirms the findings of Curtin and Clarke (2005) that pupils with similar disabilities do not form a homogenous group, but are individuals with diverse views and opinions. It also supports arguments put forward by Beresford (1997) and Leicester (1999) that individuals with significant learning and/or communication difficulties have reliable memories and are able to express their preferences and share their perceptions about different experiences. The study demonstrates the ability of all the Berry House participants to reflect on their involvement in the partnership scheme and highlights the richness and complexity of their responses.

The thesis has explored alternative methodologies in order to involve pupils with learning and / or communication difficulties in the research process and has demonstrated successful ways of helping children develop a voice. It has assessed the use of particular methods of eliciting views of pupils, for as Jones (2005, p62) notes: *'Interviews move away from a researcher and interviewee talking at length about abstract concepts to a shared dialogue that has additional material (pictures, artefacts, videos, cue cards) to support a child's increased understanding and access to interviews'.*

6.9 Considerations for future research

The study has demonstrated how participants from both mainstream and special schools can successfully evaluate their involvement in a partnership scheme. Like Ainscow (2000), Farrell (2000) and Booth et al (2002), I believe that gaining the perspectives of pupils in all aspects of their education will assist further improvements in the field. However, much more needs to be done to help pupils from both settings communicate their experiences within school. As Ruddock and Flutter (2000) outline, there is a genuine need to assist pupils in developing a language to take part in discussions about learning and themselves as learners.

The research has elicited the views of pupils in two schools about participation in a joint venture. In this respect the study is limited, but further research in other settings could both confirm and extend its findings. Although the special school participants involved in the study have a wide range of physical impairments and/ or moderate to severe learning and communication difficulties, they do not form a representative sample of all pupils at Berry House. The research did not seek to include the views of any pupils with PMLDs, since at present these children are not involved in partnership activities with Oak Street School. As Ouvry (1987) and Simmons and Bayliss (2007) discuss, more needs to be done to increase inclusion opportunities for pupils with PMLDs, since they are often excluded from partnership schemes. Although Section 5.2.8 highlights how a number of Oak Street pupils were uneasy about seeing unknown pupils with more severe difficulties during visits to the special school, one pupil, Michael in Cohort 1, did express an interest in meeting a wider range of pupils from Berry House (Section 5.3.7).

Although the thesis has largely focused on the social outcomes of partnership schemes, a number of academic outcomes have also been observed. Positive results can be seen in special school pupils transferring skills between settings, such as using communication devices at Oak Street. Likewise, the partnership scheme offered new curriculum opportunities to Oak Street pupils, including taking part in Food Technology and clay work activities in specialist rooms. This is clearly an under-researched area and further studies are required in order to measure academic outcomes of partnership activities.

The study could also be extended if the views of pupils towards the partnership scheme were compared with those of school staff and parents. Although Head and Pirrie (2007) have undertaken a limited amount of research in this area, much more could be learned by comparing different viewpoints. Tentative suggestions from field notes in the study indicate that many staff from both Berry House and Oak Street feel that their thinking has been influenced by taking part in the partnership scheme and that they have developed new skills and approaches as a result. However, field notes also suggest that some members of staff are clearly more positive in principle than reality and that concerns regarding both funding and staffing levels need to be addressed before further progress can be made. Field notes also record the positive responses to partnership activities made by a number of parents of pupils in both schools. However, as this sample was very small, it is uncertain whether their views echo those of the majority of parents.

A major research challenge is to determine the extent to which schools can and do reflect on studies that have sought to elicit the views of pupils. Although Rose et al (1999) and Lewis (2002a) suggest that involving children in decision making can both develop their self confidence and increase staff awareness of the needs of individual pupils, further studies are required in order to explore the extent to which consultation with children in schools has led to educational improvements.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This concluding chapter presents further reflections on partnership activities between special and mainstream schools and summarises significant aspects of the study.

7.1 Further reflections on partnership schemes

Partnership schemes are widely seen as being instrumental to educational change, providing opportunities for pupils from special and mainstream schools to engage in joint social and curricular activities. The overriding message from the Berry House and Oak Street pupils involved in the study was that taking part in the weekly partnership sessions was enjoyable and brought them a great deal of personal satisfaction. Clear advantages to involvement in the scheme can be seen, with pupils from both settings reflecting on their attainment of skills and the opportunity to develop relationships with new groups of peers. Over the course of the interview period, the majority of participants developed increasingly positive attitudes towards the scheme and gained heightened confidence at both meeting and communicating with other peers. Field notes also indicate that staff in both schools likewise benefited from involvement, including the acquisition of new skills and the sharing of expertise.

Although the majority of pupils from both Berry House and Oak Street noted that they had developed friendships with peers from their partnership school, it is unlikely that these relationships can be anything other than short term encounters. Consequently, when planning partnership schemes, schools need to be aware that if activities are limited to specific year groups, pupils will not be able to sustain friendships. During the interview period, there are indications that Ikra became aware of the transitory nature of friendships with Oak Street pupils and subsequently may have put less effort into developing relationships with new groups of peers in Cohort 2. However, it is significant that as both Shab and Kelly had increased opportunities to attend Oak Street, as a result of their dual-placement, they were able to develop friendships that they had made during the partnership scheme that took place in the previous year.

The research highlights other challenges for the two schools involved in the partnership scheme. During the course of the study, restrictions on available space at Oak Street has resulted in partnership activities being squeezed into one (reduced sized) hall. Likewise, demands on teaching time within the mainstream school has led to LSAs leading sessions in this venue and a reduction in funding (from both schools) has limited monies to one further academic year. It is lamentable that the mainstream school appears to have moved from the position of 'equal partner' to that of 'token supporter', as planning, delivery and assessment have increasingly fallen on teachers from Berry House. As Ravet (2007) highlights, projects are often short lived when they rely on individuals to maintain their momentum. Not surprisingly, morale is currently at a low level in both settings and radical action is required to put the scheme on a surer footing.

Further research is required into the effectiveness of a wide range of partnership schemes to determine how all schools taking part in such ventures can both maintain and develop their momentum. In order to make further improvements clear direction

is required from the management of the schools involved, for arrangements need to be both reciprocal and genuine. As Fletcher-Campbell and Kington (2001) argue, links need to be embedded into the plans of both schools and not merely be regarded as 'optional extras'. Further studies should also take place to elicit the opinions of the pupils who take part in joint school activities for, as Hunter and O'Connor, (2006) outline, inherent in the process of inclusion is a prerequisite that we need to listen to those who are directly involved and who experience the services provided. I firmly believe that in order to strengthen partnership schemes, systemic change is required. Schools, together with local and government support, need to work closely together to ensure that partnerships are of maximum benefit to pupils, parents, staff and the wider community.

Schools taking part in partnership activities also need to ensure that schemes are as inclusive as possible. The SEN of the pupils in the two classes at Berry House involved in partnership activities with Oak Street ranged from moderate to severe. However, no plans are in currently in place to extend the scheme to classes of pupils with more complex needs. As Farrell (1997) outlines, many schemes focus on pupils with learning difficulties, who do not present challenging behaviours, as it is widely believed that such pupils will have less difficulty participating in joint activities and communicating with their mainstream peers. However, as Ouvry (1987) and Simmons and Bayliss (2007) argue, this can be seen as discriminatory, with pupils having PMLDs being marginalised twice, firstly through their placement in a special school and secondly, through having reduced opportunities to take part in joint activities with able-bodied peers. I believe that more research is required in order to determine how schools can redress this imbalance. However, we need to ensure that pupils with PMLDs can participate with their mainstream peers in meaningful ways and not simply take part in superficial or tokenistic encounters.

7.2 **Final reflections on the study**

A review of literature concerning accounts of inclusion highlights the fact that despite the endeavours of Beresford (1997) and Lewis (2002b) and a profusion of requests from government and charitable circles, the 'voices' of pupils with significant communication and/ or learning difficulties have remained relatively silent. Following studies by Beveridge (1996) and Whitehurst (2006), the current research has helped to redress the imbalance, by seeking the opinions of all pupils taking part in a partnership scheme.

Through a comprehensive series of pilots in both schools, I have been able to determine the most productive ways of eliciting the opinions of all participants. As a consequence, pupils from both settings have been able to recall information about joint activities, peers from their partnership school and other significant events. Individuals with little or no speech have had considerable success in relating their perspectives via the strategic use of questioning and the deployment of both low-tech and high-tech systems to augment communication. A key finding of the study is that pupils do not have to be articulate in order to express their perspectives within interview situations.

The study has shown that the provision of additional stimuli during interviews with children can generate interest, motivation and enhance the quality of pupils'

responses. The deployment of props during initial interviews at Oak Street promoted curiosity and increased conversation between group members. Likewise, the provision of drawing materials within the mainstream setting also gave a concrete focus for pupil attention and helped provide a balanced number of contributions from group members. At Berry House, examples of work and photographs similarly engaged the interest of the special school pupils. In addition, such stimuli aided recall and helped pupils with communication impairments formulate responses.

It is notable that at the outset of the study, myself and other colleagues at Berry House debated whether both David and Lucy would be able to meaningfully participate in the cycle of interviews. As I was determined to elicit the opinions of all the pupils involved in the partnership scheme, I embraced the challenge and made real efforts to elicit their opinions. I was genuinely surprised by both their enthusiasm to take part in the cycle of interviews and the extent of their contributions. Although their responses were often less elaborate than other participants from Berry House, both emerged as confident interviewees. Through the use of targeted questioning and additional stimuli, they were able to express their opinions about partnership activities, individuals and events.

As the study was longitudinal, I was able to listen to and observe pupils over a substantial period of time. Pupils from both schools were empowered through involvement in a repeated cycle of interviews and clearly enjoyed having their views taken into account. However, when the research came to a close, it is lamentable that pupils from both schools had significantly less scope to formally express their views about matters relating to their education. This echoes findings by Ravet (2007), who highlights how the rights and freedoms to speak enjoyed by pupils in her study were withdrawn when the research ended. Schools clearly need to do more to genuinely involve pupils as active partners and fulfil government requirements to collaborate with them in matters pertaining to their education (DfES, 2004).

The study highlights how pupils with a wide range of communication and learning difficulties can be included in an extended cycle of interviews and, with appropriate support, successfully express their wishes and feelings about different aspects of their education. Although the research has been time consuming, it has proved to be extremely rewarding. The study challenges negative assumptions that individuals with little or no speech and/ or attendant learning difficulties cannot actively participate in research and highlights how researchers need sensitivity to different ways of communicating. It demonstrates that if researchers adopt flexible and creative approaches and are willing to try new techniques, all pupils can successfully relate their perspectives. Although, like Lewis (2002b), I believe that accessing children's views can never be achieved 'perfectly', the study has shown that researchers can strive to reflect pupils' views as authentically as possible, whilst acknowledging limitations.

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Appendix 1: Questions focusing on the perceptions of Berry House pupils towards the partnership scheme

Question 1:
What do the pupils remember about different experiences from partnership sessions?

- Attendance
- Experience of partnership scheme
- Recall of session structure
- Recall of group
- Recall of OS peers
- Recall of conversations with OS peers
- Recall of any friendships with OS peers
- Recall of giving and receiving help during sessions
- Recall of activities
- Recall of past events (2 weeks previously/or more)
- Recall of joint trips
- Recall of venues-identifying key features and making direct comparisons

Question 2:
What are their initial attitudes and expectations towards the partnership scheme?
(Interviews 1-4)

- Overall attitude prior to taking part
- Preferred venue
- Meeting/ communicating with OS peers
- Developing friendships with OS peers
- Taking part in joint activities
- Taking part in the forthcoming joint trip to McDonalds and Tropical World
- Afterthoughts on the joint trip
- Favourite aspects of partnership work
- Any dislikes
- Any concerns
- Views on extending partnership work for existing groups of BH peers
- Views on school transfer (Jason and Ricky)
- Views on extending partnership work to include other groups of BH peers

Question 3:
What are their attitudes and expectations towards the partnership scheme in later interviews?
(Interviews 5-8)

- Overall attitude to taking part
- Preferred venue
- Meeting/ communicating with OS peers
- Developing friendships with OS peers
- Taking part in joint activities
- Taking part in the forthcoming joint trip to Pizza Hut, Kirkstall Abbey and Pizza Hut
- Afterthoughts on the joint trip
- Favourite aspects of partnership work
- Any dislikes
- Any concerns
- Views on extending partnership work for existing groups of BH peers
- Views on school transfer (Jason and Ricky)
- Views on extending partnership work to include other groups of BH peers

Gradual changes to attitudes and expectations over time:

- Views on preferred venue
- Views on how to develop relationships with OS peers
- Views on the extent of friendships with OS peers
- Any dislikes or concerns
- Views on extending partnership work for some/ all BH peers
- Views on future schooling

Changes to attitudes and expectations triggered by distinct events:

- Ricky and Scott's experience of joint trips

Question 4:
What are the pupils' initial feelings about their experiences of the partnership scheme?
(Interviews 1-4)

- Feelings about OS peers
- Feelings about making new friends
- Feelings about friendships with Cohort 1
- Feelings about friendships in both venues
- Feelings of empathy to other peers
- Feelings about session length
- Feelings about extending sessions
- Feelings about future schooling

Question 5:
What are the pupils' feelings about their experiences of the partnership scheme in later interviews?
(Interviews 5-8)

- Feelings about OS peers
- Feelings about friendships with Cohort 2
- Feelings about friendships in both venues
- Feelings of empathy to other peers
- Feelings about session length
- Feelings about extending sessions
- Feelings about future sessions (new school year)
- Feelings about future schooling

Question 6:
Do their perspectives alter over time?
Gradual changes in feelings:

- Overcoming shyness
- Gaining confidence
- Feelings about extending sessions
- Feelings about future partnership work
- Feelings about future schooling

Changes in feelings triggered by distinct events:

- Ikra, Shamim and Sophie's meeting with former BH peers now in mainstream (Open Day at BH)

Identifying gradual changes in perspectives:

- Benefit of taking part in partnership sessions

Identifying changes in perspectives triggered by distinct events:

- Views on future transfer after Open Day at BH (Ikra, Shamim and Sophie)

Key: OS-Oak Street/ BH-Berry House

Appendix 2: Questions focusing on the perceptions of Oak Street pupils towards the partnership scheme

Question 1:
What do the pupils remember about different experiences from partnership sessions?

- Recall of specialist items shown in introductory assembly/ Interview 1
- Recall of BH peers using specialist items
- Recall of session structure
- Recall of group
- Recall of BH peers
- Recall of conversations with BH peers
- Recall of any friendships with BH peers
- Recall of giving and receiving help during sessions
- Recall of activities
- Recall of an incidents
- Recall of joint trips
- Recall of venues-identifying key features and making direct comparisons

Question 2:
What are their initial attitudes and expectations towards the partnership scheme?
(Interviews 1 and 2)

- Knowledge of wheelchair users prior to taking part
- Experience of other types of disability prior to taking part
- Explanation for wheelchair use
- Explanation for other types of disability
- Overall attitude prior to taking part
- Thoughts on BH, prior to the first visit
- Meeting and communicating with BH peers
- Developing friendships with BH peers
- Taking part in joint activities
- Taking part in the forthcoming joint trip
- Favourite aspects of partnership work
- Any dislikes or concerns

Question 3:
What are their attitudes and expectations towards the partnership scheme in later interviews?
(Interviews 3 and 4)

- Attitude to disability
- Explanations for disability
- Overall attitude to taking part
- Working in 2 venues/ Preferred venue
- Meeting and communicating with BH peers
- Developing friendships with BH peers
- Taking part in joint activities
- Taking part in the forthcoming joint trip
- Afterthoughts on the joint trip
- Favourite aspects of partnership work
- Any dislikes or concerns
- Views on the further inclusion of pupils with disabilities within OS

Gradual changes to attitudes and expectations over time:

- Views on developing relationships with BH peers
- Views on developing friendships with BH peers
- Any dislikes or concerns
- Views on extending partnership work

Question 4:
What are the pupils' initial feelings about their experiences of the partnership scheme?
(Interviews 1 and 2)

- Feelings about sitting in/ manoeuvring a wheelchair
- Feelings about meeting BH peers for the first time
- Feelings about BH peers after the first partnership session
- Feelings about making new friends
- Feelings about friendships with Cohort 1
- Feelings about visiting BH for the first time
- Feelings of empathy to other peers
- Feelings about session length

Question 5:
What are the pupils' feelings about their experiences of the partnership scheme in later interviews?
(Interviews 3 and 4)

- Feelings about BH peers
- Feelings about making friends
- Feelings about friendships in both venues
- Feelings about visiting BH
- Feelings of empathy to other peers
- Feelings about session length
- Feelings about extending sessions
- Feelings about inclusion for all

Question 6:
Do their perspectives (including attitudes, expectations and feelings) alter over time?
Gradual changes in feelings:

- Overcoming shyness
- Gaining confidence
- Feelings about extending sessions
- Feelings about future partnership work
- Feelings about inclusion for all

Identifying gradual changes in perspectives:

- Benefit of taking part in partnership sessions

Key: OS-Oak Street/ BH-Berry House

Appendix 3: A summary of pilot studies undertaken at Oak Street

Pilot	Numbers	Type of Grouping/ Location	Interview topic	Focus
1	18 (9G + 9B)	Group 1: 6B Group 2: 6G Group 3: 3B + 3G All: Random selection groups **Location**: L	Favourite play activities and sports	Is six an optimum group size? Does the sex of groupings affect responses?
2	18 (9B + 9G)	Group 1: 2G Group 2: 2B Group 3: 1G + 1B Group 4: 4B Group 5: 4G Group 6: 2G + 2B All: Random selection groups **Location**: L	Favourite food	Does the size of the group affect responses? Does the sex of groupings affect responses?
3	9 (6G + 3B)	Group 1: 3G Group 2: 3G Group 2: 3B All: Friendship groups **Location:** TR	Group 1: Props (drinks) Group2: Photographs (Celebrities) Group 3: Props (hats)	Do friendship groupings affect responses? Do photographs or props affect responses?
4	20 (14G + 6B)	Group 1: 4G Group 2: 3G + 2B Group 3: 1B + 1G Group 4: 3B Group 5: 3G Group 6: 3G All: Groups selected by researcher based knowledge from previous pilots **Location:** TR	Props (linked to disability) Thoughts about partnership project -prior to involvement	What are the pupils' existing experiences and views of disability? What are the pupils' views about the forthcoming visit by Berry House peers? Do props affect responses?
5	18 (12G + 6B)	Group 1: 3G Group 2: 3G + 1B Group 3: 2B + 1G Group 4: 2B Group 5: 3G Group 6: 3G All: Groups were similar to Pilot 4 **Location:** TR	Thoughts about the initial visit of peers from Berry House Discussion around individual drawings	Do the pupils hold similar views to those expressed in Pilot 4 or have they changed due to involvement in the project? What are the pupils' views about their forthcoming visit to Berry House? Do drawing materials affect responses?
6	18 (11G + 7B)	Group 1: 2G Group 2: 2G + 1B Group 3: 2B + 1G Group 4: 4B Group 5: 3G Group 6: 3G All: Groups were similar to Pilot 4 and 5 **Location:** L	Thoughts about their initial visit to Berry House Discussion around individual / group drawings	Do the pupils hold similar views to those expressed in Pilot 4 and 5 or have they changed due to increased involvement in the project? What are the pupils' views about the forthcoming joint Sports Day? Do drawing materials affect responses? How do pupils' views compare to observations made in the research diary?
7	18 (12G + 6B)	Group 1: 2G Group 2: 3G Group 3: 2B + 1G Group 4: 4B Group 5: 3G Group 6: 3G All: Groups were similar to Pilots 4, 5 and 6 **Location:** L	A summary of their involvement in the project over 1 term	Do the pupils hold similar views to those expressed in previous pilots? Have the pupils developed/ sustained any friendships with Berry House peers? What are pupils' views about involvement in the joint Sports Day at Berry House? How do pupils' views compare to observations made in the research diary?

Key: G-number of girls/ B-number of boys/ L-library/ TR-training room

Appendix 4: A summary of pilot studies undertaken at Berry House

Pilot	Numbers	Type of grouping	Interview topic	Focus
1	12 (6G+ 6B)	1:1 interviews **Location: C**	Play activities and sports Discussion of symbols	What are the most productive means of interviewing a sample of children with physical/ communication/ learning difficulties? Assessment of use of happy, sad and unsure symbols Assessment of video recording
2	13 (5G + 8B)	1:1 interviews **Location: C**	Favourite food Discussion of symbols	To involve an additional teacher researcher in observing 2 interviews and independently interviewing 3 pupils using the same interview schedule Assessment of use of like, dislike and unsure symbols Assessment of Dyna Vox use during interview (Ricky) Assessment of audio recording
3	6 (2G + 4B)	Group 1: 1G + 3B Group 2: 1 G + 1B **Location: A**	Group 1: Discussion of personal photographs Group 2: Discussion about a selection of hats	Is it productive to interview some pupils in pairs or small groups? Which interview venue do pupils prefer? Does the use of photographs or props affect responses/ recall of events? Assessment of use of yes, no, unsure symbols Further assessment of symbols used in Pilots 1 and 2
4	10 (5G + 5B)	1:1 interviews with 3G + 3B Group 1: 1G + 1B Group 2: 1G + 1B **Location: A**	The partnership project during the previous academic year Discussion of photographs	Which activities have the pupils most enjoyed? What is their preferred venue? Have the pupils developed/ sustained any friendships with Oak Street peers? What are the pupils' views about involvement in the forthcoming joint Sports Day? How do pupils' views compare to observations made in the research diary? Further assessment of symbols used in Pilots 1, 2 and 3 Further assessment of Dyna Vox use during interview (Ricky)

Key: G-number of girls/ B-number of boys/ C-classroom/ A-art room

Appendix 5: A summary of interviews planned with Oak Street pupils

*	Interview focus	Specific questions
1	To determine pupil knowledge/ experience/ views of disability prior to involvement in partnership project	Do you know anyone who is a wheelchair user or has any aids like these? (Discussion/ handling of manual wheelchair and other items used by some pupils at Berry House)
	To survey pupil feelings about the partnership project, prior to involvement	What do you know about the partnership project with Berry House?
2	To ascertain views about the two visits of peers from Berry House to Oak Street	Have your feelings changed now that you have met pupils from Berry House?
	To discuss individual drawings/ writing about aspects of partnership work	
	To assess views about the forthcoming visit to Berry House	How do you feel about visiting Berry House?
3	To determine thoughts about the initial visit to Berry House	Have your feelings changed now that you have visited Berry House and know the pupils better?
	To discuss individual drawings/ writing about aspects of partnership work	
	To compare and contrast the two school settings	Do you think that Berry House is similar to Oak Street?
		Which partnership venue do you prefer?
	To discuss relationships with Berry House peers	Have you developed any friendships with peers at Berry House?
	To assess views about the forthcoming joint trip with Berry House	How do you feel about going on a trip with Berry House?
4	To determine views about joint trip with Berry House	Did you enjoy the joint trip?
	To evaluate involvement in partnership work over 6 month period	What aspects have you liked best/ least?
		Would you like to make any changes?
	To discuss relationships with Berry House peers	Have you developed friendships with any Berry House peers?

Key: * Cycle of interviews

Appendix 6: A summary of interviews planned with Berry House pupils

*	Interview focus	Specific questions
1	To ascertain the most productive means of interviewing the new children involved in the project	
	To discuss initial visits to Oak Street in new academic year	How do you feel about visiting Oak Street?
	To survey pupil feelings about involvement in the partnership project with either a new group of pupils/ or for the first time	What do you think about pupils in your partnership group?
2	To summarise involvement in partnership work after 6 visits to Oak Street (last group work session at Oak Street with Cohort 1)	Which activities have you most enjoyed? What do you think about your peers at Oak Street?
	To assess views about the forthcoming visit of Cohort 1 to Berry House	What do you think about Oak Street peers visiting Berry House?
3	To discuss first half of Cohort 1's two visits to Berry House	What did Oak Street pupils think about Berry House?
	To compare and contrast the two school settings	Do you think that Berry House is similar to Oak Street? Which partnership venue do you prefer?
	To discuss relationships with Oak Street peers	Have you developed any friendships with peers at Oak Street?
	To assess views about the forthcoming joint trip with Cohort 1	How do you feel about going on a trip with Cohort 1?
4	To determine views about joint trip with Cohort 1	Did you enjoy the joint trip?
	To evaluate involvement in partnership work over 6 month period	What aspects have you liked best/ least? Would you like to make any changes?
	To discuss relationships with peers in Cohort 1	Have you developed friendships with any peers in Cohort 1?
	To survey pupil feelings about working with a new group of pupils from Oak Street (Cohort 2)	How do you feel about working with a new group of pupils? Do you think that you will miss working with Cohort 1?
5	To discuss two visits to Oak Street, working alongside Cohort 2	How do you feel about visiting Oak Street?
	To survey pupil feelings about involvement in the partnership project with a new group of pupils	What do you think about pupils in your partnership group?
	To assess views about the forthcoming visit of Cohort 2 to Berry House	What do you think about peers in Cohort 2 visiting Berry House?
6	To discuss first half of Cohort 2's initial visit to Berry House	What did Oak Street pupils think about Berry House?
	To compare and contrast the two school settings	Do you think that Berry House is similar to Oak Street? Which partnership venue do you prefer?
	To discuss relationships with Oak Street peers	Have you developed any friendships with peers in Cohort 2?
	To assess views about the forthcoming joint trip with Cohort 2	How do you feel about going on a trip with Cohort 2?
7	To determine views about joint trip with Cohort 2	Did you enjoy the joint trip?
	To discuss relationships with peers in Cohort 1	Have you developed friendships with any peers in Cohort 1?
8	To evaluate involvement in partnership work over 12 month period	What aspects have you liked best/ least? Would you like to make any changes?
	To determine aspirations for the future	Would you like to attend more lessons at Oak Street? Would you like to attend a school like Oak Street in the future?

Key: * Cycle of interviews

Appendix 7: An overview of the Berry House pupils involved in the study

Jason	Ricky	Ikra	Shamim	Sophie	Ayesha	Scott	David	Lucy
Sex: Male	**Sex:** Male	**Sex:** Female	**Sex:** Female	**Sex:** Female	**Sex:** Female	**Sex:** Male	**Sex:** Male	**Sex:** Female
Age: 7	**Age:** 7	**Age:** 8	**Age:** 9	**Age:** 10	**Age:** 7	**Age:** 9	**Age:** 10	**Age:** 7
Ethnic Origin: Caucasian	**Ethnic Origin:** Caucasian	**Ethnic Origin:** Asian	**Ethnic Origin:** Asian	**Ethnic Origin:** Mixed race	**Ethnic Origin:** Asian	**Ethnic Origin:** Caucasian	**Ethnic Origin:** Caucasian	**Ethnic Origin:** Caucasian
Disability: Spinal Muscular Atrophy Leukemia	**Disability:** Cerebral Palsy (Spastic Quadrip-legia)	**Disability:** Cerebral Palsy (Spastic Quadrip-legia)	**Disability:** Cerebral Palsy (Spastic Quadrip-legia)	**Disability:** Mychon-drial Myapathy Selective Mutism	**Disability:** Severe Muscle weakness (no named condition)	**Disability:** Cerebral Palsy (Spastic Quadrip-legia)	**Disability:** Cerebral Palsy (Quadrip-legia) Some facial disfigure-ment/ No thumbs Develop-mental delay	**Disability:** Mytonic Dystrophy Hydro-cephalus Develop-mental delay
Mobility: Electric wheelchair	**Mobility:** Manual wheelchair (self propelled) Walking frame	**Mobility:** Manual wheelchair (adult propelled) Electric wheelchair (at end of research period)	**Mobility:** Manual wheelchair (adult propelled) Electric wheelchair (at end of research period)	**Mobility:** Electric wheelchair	**Mobility:** Manual wheelchair for distance (adult propelled) Able to walk short distances with arm support from adult	**Mobility:** Manual wheelchair (adult propelled)	**Mobility:** Manual wheelchair (self propelled over short distance)	**Mobility:** Manual wheelchair (self propelled-short distance) walking sticks (and body brace)
Speech: Able to give fluent answers	**Speech:** Very limited vocal responses	**Speech:** Able to give fluent answers	**Speech:** Able to give fluent answers	**Speech:** Limited vocal responses	**Speech:** Limited vocal responses	**Speech:** Very limited vocal responses	**Speech:** Very limited vocal responses	**Speech:** Limited vocal responses
Pivats **Attention:** 1b **Speaking:** 1a **Listening:** 1b	**Pivats** **Attention:** 1b **Speaking:** P7 **Listening:** 1b	**Pivats** **Attention:** 1c **Speaking:** P8 **Listening:** 1b	**Pivats** **Attention:** P8 **Speaking:** P7 **Listening:** P7	**Pivats** **Attention:** P8 **Speaking:** P6 **Listening:** P7	**Pivats** **Attention:** P8 **Speaking:** P5 **Listening:** P6	**Pivats** **Attention:** P8 **Speaking:** P4 **Listening:** P7	**Pivats** **Attention:** P4 **Speaking:** P4 **Listening:** P5	**Pivats** **Attention:** P4 **Speaking:** P5 **Listening:** P4

Notes:

- P Scales are a school based assessment instrument based on performance criteria published by the DfES and QCA
- PIVATS (Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting) range from P Scales to Level 4 of the National Curriculum

Appendix 8: A summary of the communication skills of Berry House pupils

Jason	Ricky	Ikra	Shamim	Sophie	Ayesha	Scott	David	Lucy
Has English as a home language	Has English as a home language	Has Urdu as a home language	Has Urdu as a home language	Has Urdu as a home language	Has Urdu as a home language	Has English as a home language	Has English as a home language	Has English as a home language
Able to give fluent answers	Very limited vocal responses	Able to give fluent answers	Able to give fluent answers	Limited vocal responses	Limited vocal responses	Very limited vocal responses	Very limited vocal responses	Limited vocal responses
Speaks quickly at times- especially if keen to relate own views	Has consistent yes/ no response and attempts many other words	Speaks quickly at times- especially if keen to relate own views	Generally keen to relate own views and stories, yet easily flustered with unfamiliar people	Selective Mute: Only speaks to a limited number of people (mostly adults) at home and school	Able to give 4-5 word vocal responses, but tends to give single word replies	Has consistent yes/ no response and attempts some other words	Has consistent yes response and attempts some other words	Able to give 4 word vocal responses, but often gives single word replies
Generally speaks in a quiet voice	Speech is often unclear	Chatty and confident in all interviews	Chatty and confident in all interviews	Speaks in a quiet, almost whispered voice	Speaks in a very quiet voice	Speech is generally unclear	Speech is generally unclear	Speech is often unclear, of one tone and mumbled
Asked questions of interviewer	Asked questions of interviewer	Asked questions of interviewer and second interviewee	Asked questions of interviewer and second interviewee					
Understands a wide range of Boardmaker symbols	Frequently uses a wide range of Makaton signs and Boardmaker symbols	Understands a wide range of Boardmaker symbols	Understands a wide range of Boardmaker symbols	Sometimes uses a limited range of Makaton signs/ Understands a wide range of Boardmaker symbols	Sometimes uses a limited range of Makaton signs/ Understands a wide range of Boardmaker symbols	Understands a wide range of Boardmaker symbols	Frequently copies/ uses a limited range of Makaton signs/ Understands a limited range of Boardmaker symbols	Sometimes copies a limited range of Makaton signs/ Understands a limited range of Boardmaker symbols
Often uses facial gesture and body language	Frequently uses facial gesture and body language	Often uses facial gesture and body language	Frequently uses facial gesture and body language	Frequently uses facial gesture and body language	Frequently uses facial gesture and body language	Frequently uses facial gesture and body language	Frequently uses facial gesture and body language	Frequently uses body language, (unable to make facial gestures due to palsy)
	Frequently uses Dyna Vox to both ask and answer questions/ Sometimes uses 2-3 pre-recorded symbol switches					Often uses 2-3 pre-recorded symbol switches to answer questions (requires some help with targeting)	Sometimes uses 2-3 pre-recorded symbol switches to answer questions	
Sometimes uses finger pointing when selecting photos (when presented with multiple options)	Frequently uses finger pointing when selecting symbols and photos (when presented with multiple options)	Sometimes uses finger pointing when selecting symbols and photos (when presented with 3-6 options)	Often uses finger pointing when selecting symbols and photos (when presented with 3-6 options)	Often uses finger pointing when selecting symbols and photos (when presented with 3-6 options)	Often uses finger pointing when selecting symbols, examples of work and photos (when presented with 3-6 options)	Frequently uses eye or fist pointing when selecting symbols, examples of work and photos (when presented with 3-4 options)	Often uses finger pointing when selecting symbols, examples of work and photos (when presented with 2-3 options)	Often uses finger pointing when selecting symbols, examples of work and photos (when presented with 2-3 options)

Appendix 9: Interview data concerning pupils from Berry House

Jason	Ricky	Ikra	Shamim	Sophie	Ayesha	Scott	David	Lucy
Researcher knowledge Currently attends some lessons taught by researcher Taught by researcher for 1 year	**Researcher knowledge** Currently attends some lessons taught by researcher Taught by researcher for 1 year	**Researcher knowledge** Currently attends some lessons taught by researcher Taught by researcher for 2 years	**Researcher knowledge** Member of researcher's class Taught by researcher for 4 years	**Researcher knowledge** Member of researcher's class Taught by researcher for 4 years	**Researcher knowledge** Currently attends some lessons taught by researcher Not previously taught by researcher	**Researcher knowledge** Member of researcher's class Taught by researcher for 4 years	**Researcher knowledge** Member of researcher' s class Taught by researcher for 2 years	**Researcher knowledge** Currently attends some lessons taught by researcher Not previously taught by researcher
Partnership experience Involved in scheme in previous year	**Partnership experience** Involved in scheme in previous year	**Partnership experience** Involved in scheme in previous year	**Partnership experience** Involved in scheme in previous year	**Partnership experience** Involved in scheme in previous year	**Partnership experience** New to scheme	**Partnership experience** Involved in scheme in previous year	**Partnership experience** New to scheme	**Partnership experience** New to scheme
Research experience Involved in pilot interviews	**Research experience** Involved in pilot interviews	**Research experience** Involved in pilot interviews	**Research experience** Involved in pilot interviews	**Research experience** Involved in pilot interviews	**Research experience** Not involved in pilot interviews	**Research experience** Involved in pilot interviews	**Research experience** Not involved in pilot interviews	**Research experience** Not involved in pilot interviews
Total number of interviews as part of current research 7	**Total number of interviews as part of current research** 8	**Total number of interviews as part of current research** 8	**Total number of interviews as part of current research** 8	**Total number of interviews as part of current research** 8	**Total number of interviews as part of current research** 8	**Total number of interviews as part of current research** 8	**Total number of interviews as part of current research** 5	**Total number of interviews as part of current research** 7
Number of 1:1 interviews 6	**Number of 1:1 interviews** 8	**Number of 1:1 interviews** 1	**Number of 1:1 interviews** 2	**Number of 1:1 interviews** 1	**Number of 1:1 interviews** 3	**Number of 1:1 interviews** 8	**Number of 1:1 interviews** 5	**Number of 1:1 interviews** 7
Number of paired interviews 1	**Number of paired interviews** 0	**Number of paired interviews** 7	**Number of paired interviews** 6	**Number of paired interviews** 7	**Number of paired interviews** 5	**Number of paired interviews** 0	**Number of paired interviews** 0	**Number of paired interviews** 0

Appendix 10: Thematic analysis of one key theme (disability issues)

	Specific Issues	Comment
Issues relating to disability	**Physical difficulties:** During initial interviews, a number of OS pupils from both cohorts discussed having family members with physical difficulties	2 pupils in Cohort 1did not refer to the disability of close family members until later interviews, perhaps when they felt more comfortable in the interview situation/ had increased knowledge of the interviewer
	During initial interviews, a number of individuals in Cohort 1 discussed the visual and auditory difficulties of their classmate Sadia	No reference was made by OS pupils to the disabilities of their classmates Aisha (heart condition) and Idris (restricted growth) until later interviews, perhaps because both disabilities were less obvious/ needed no physical aids
	Pupils in both OS cohorts raised questions during later interviews about why some children have disabilities: • Several children from both cohorts discussed how BH pupils must have been born with physical difficulties • Several members of Cohort 1 referred to their belief that *'God made them like that'* • Individuals in both cohorts noted that some pupils might have *'broken'* their bones, perhaps as a consequence of a fall or accident • Individuals from both cohorts also noted that some BH pupils may have caught an illness • Jason noted of some less able peers *'When they grow and they get bigger, they'll be able to move their hands and might be able to talk better'* • Some OS pupils noted how BH peers *'might be born like that'* (Yugi), whilst others thought that disability would continue throughout a child's life (with Erin noting *'That's how you be born and that's how you grow up')*	Individuals from OS referred to unknown pupils (with PMLDs) whom they had seen during visits to BH as being *'poorly'* –perhaps because these pupils appeared to be less responsive than the known BH peers involved in partnership work Several references were made to Jolene's cousin being hurt in a road traffic accident *'You see them poorly and I don't like that'* (Emily) and '*How did they become poorly*? (Jamie) Conversations surrounding disability, led to Michelle (Cohort 1) discussing her family's loss when her brother was still born

	A number of individuals from both schools were of the opinion that given time and/ or (medical or spiritual) intervention, the physical impairments of BH pupils may diminish/ disappear	2 BH pupils made references to this during interviews: • Jason's personal experiences of fighting Leukaemia had given him much faith in the medical profession and he was of the opinion that an operation may help him become ambulant • Shamim and her family (like several Moslem pupils at OS) held strong religious convictions that prayers and pilgrimage may heal her physical difficulties
	BH pupils appeared more comfortable discussing the disabilities of OS peers than the reverse	A number of BH pupils openly discussed Sadia's HI/ VI and field notes show how Ikra directly asked her about her hearing aids during a partnership session (although Sadia was unable/ unwilling to respond)
	Few OS pupils questioned BH peers directly about their disabilities, although field notes show that several pupils raised questions with BH staff during partnership sessions and also asked questions of the interviewer before, during and after interviews Idris however did ask Jason about his disability, noting *'He told me he was born like that'*	The lack of direct questioning may be linked to the fact that OS pupils had been repeatedly told by their class teachers not to ask BH peers why they had a disability, as it might cause offence The fact that Idris asked Jason about his disability, may be linked to the fact that as he also had a disability (restricted growth), he felt comfortable raising such questions
	Even in early interviews, many OS pupils were able to give detailed descriptions of wheelchairs and other specialist equipment	Details such as footplates and harnesses were also noted in pupil drawings
	Many questions were raised as a consequence of OS pupils handling specialist equipment during Interview 1 A few individuals at OS were concerned about the safety of wheelchairs, with Talib noting that BH peers *'might fall out and hurt themselves'*	Pupils were keen to know how to manoeuvre a wheelchair/ whether a licence was needed/ how users accessed playground equipment Many questions were also raised about gastrostomy feeds, such as can pupil's taste the liquid feed etc
	No OS pupils described BH peers in terms of their disability, whereas Ikra repeatedly described Sadia in terms of her hearing impairment	The fact that Ikra felt at ease describing Sadia's condition is possibly linked to the fact that she herself had physical difficulties and as such was familiar with vocabulary associated with impairments

	OS pupils did not appear to regard known BH peers with more severe physical and/ or communication difficulties less favourably than those with fewer difficulties	Although concerns were voiced by some individuals about David's facial deformities/ digit loss (in later interviews) he was actually ranked the most popular peer by Cohort 2 (with references being made to his outgoing personality/ sense of humour)
	Individuals from both schools felt that pupils needed to be ambulant in order to attend mainstream	It is perhaps understandable that pupils from OS held such views, as they may not have seen Shab (dual placement wheelchair user) around their school, especially in the first half of the year (when he and Kelly were part-time) However, it is somewhat surprising that Shamim expressed similar views, as she had several friends who had transferred/ were in the process of transferring to mainstream, all of whom were wheelchair users
	References were also made to the belief that mainstream pupils needed to have good hand function	Both Emily and Paul questioned how pupils could write *'if their hands are broken'*
	Communication difficulties: Individuals from both schools were of the opinion that given time, pupils with communication difficulties would somehow learn to speak	As with references to physical difficulties, individuals from both schools made reference to their belief that AAC users may become speech users given time and/ or (medical/ spiritual) intervention Tosene discussed her own sister's speech difficulties
	There was much interest about AAC use from both OS cohorts, with pupils being keen to 'read' Boardmaker symbols on Ricky's Dyna Vox screen and learn Makaton signs to use with David	Several pupils discussed Ricky's Dyna Vox, with Qasim noting *'It's just like a person is stuck in the computer ready to speak'*
	Several pupils from BH felt that peers with more severe communication difficulties would be unable to take part in any mainstream lessons	It is somewhat surprising that Jason noted that those with limited speech would have difficulties accessing the mainstream curriculum, as his closest friend Ricky was an AAC user, due to transfer schools

Note: Issues relating to 4 other themes (individual differences, relationships, inclusion and the development of the partnership scheme) were considered in a similar manner

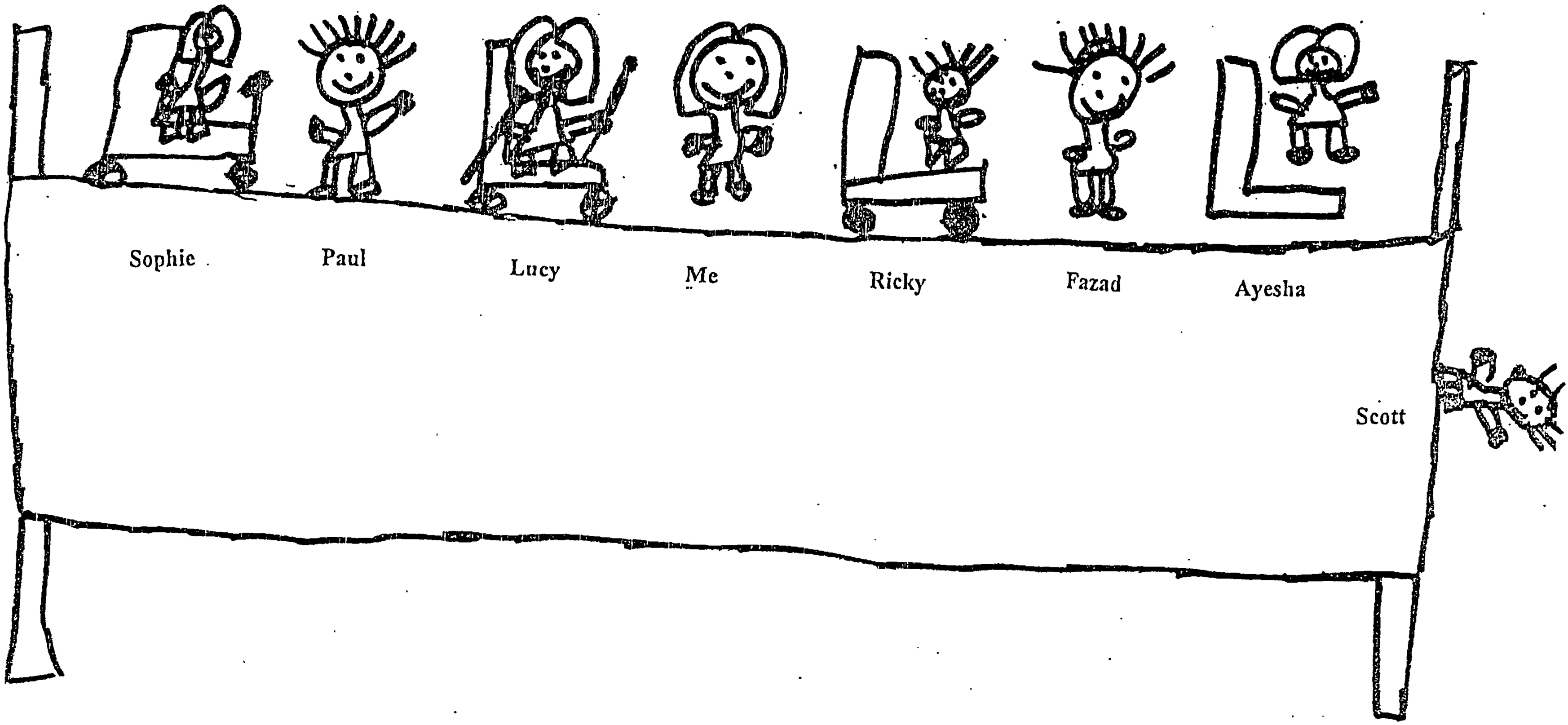
Appendix 11: Comparative analysis of one key question

	Berry House	Oak Street	Comment
What were the pupils' initial attitudes / expectations towards the scheme?			
(Overall attitude prior to taking part)	Of the 6 pupils who had taken part in the scheme in the previous year, all except Scott had a positive attitude towards future sessions From photo discussions, all 3 pupils new to the scheme, agreed that they were looking forward to meeting OS peers and visiting their school	All pupils agreed that they were looking forward to meeting BH peers and visiting their school Pupils from both cohorts asked questions about BH, with individuals asking about wheelchair access, pupil numbers, curriculum and communication Several pupils (in both cohorts) had siblings who had taken part in the scheme in previous years Pupils in Cohort 2 reported that they had received positive feedback about the scheme from peers in Cohort 1	The initial confidence of Cohort 2 towards taking part in the project appeared to be higher than that of Cohort 1 and may be explained by the following: • They were now established Year 4s (with interviews taking place in the latter part of the school year) • They had increased knowledge about BH, as they had seen BH pupils around OS during partnership sessions, had more time to get to know the 2 pupils on dual placement and had received feedback about partnership work from Cohort 1
(Meeting/ communicating with OS peers)	The feedback about meeting OS peers was wholly positive from 8 pupils and even Scott was generally positive (agreeing on 3 of 4 occasions that he was happy to meet them) 6 pupils indicated that they had initially found it difficult to communicate with OS peers, although 3 were confident about this from he outset	The majority of pupils in both cohorts had a positive attitude towards meeting BH peers and many indicated that they were confident about communicating with them from the outset During early interviews, some pupils from both cohorts confessed that they had not yet spoken to BH pupils in their group	Pupils from both schools had a positive attitude to meeting new peers It is interesting to note that individuals from both BH and OS found it problematic at first to communicate with peers from their partnership school-confidence at communicating was not solely linked to an ability to articulate
(Developing friendships)	All pupils were positive from the outset about developing friendships with OS peers All pupils agreed that trying to communicate with OS peers was key to developing friendships, with 2 also suggesting that participating in joint activities and being kind and helpful would also promote friendships	The majority of pupils in both cohorts were positive from the outset about developing friendships with BH peers Individuals from both cohorts suggested that friendships could develop through communication, participating in joint activities and being kind and helpful	Pupils from both schools had a positive attitude to making new friends Pupils from both schools had similar views on how best to make new friends
(Taking part in activities)	8 pupils confirmed that they had enjoyed taking part in all activities, although Scott noted that he only enjoyed activities that took place at BH	Group members from both cohorts confirmed that they had enjoyed taking part in all activities	The majority of pupils from both schools had a positive attitude towards participating in new activities

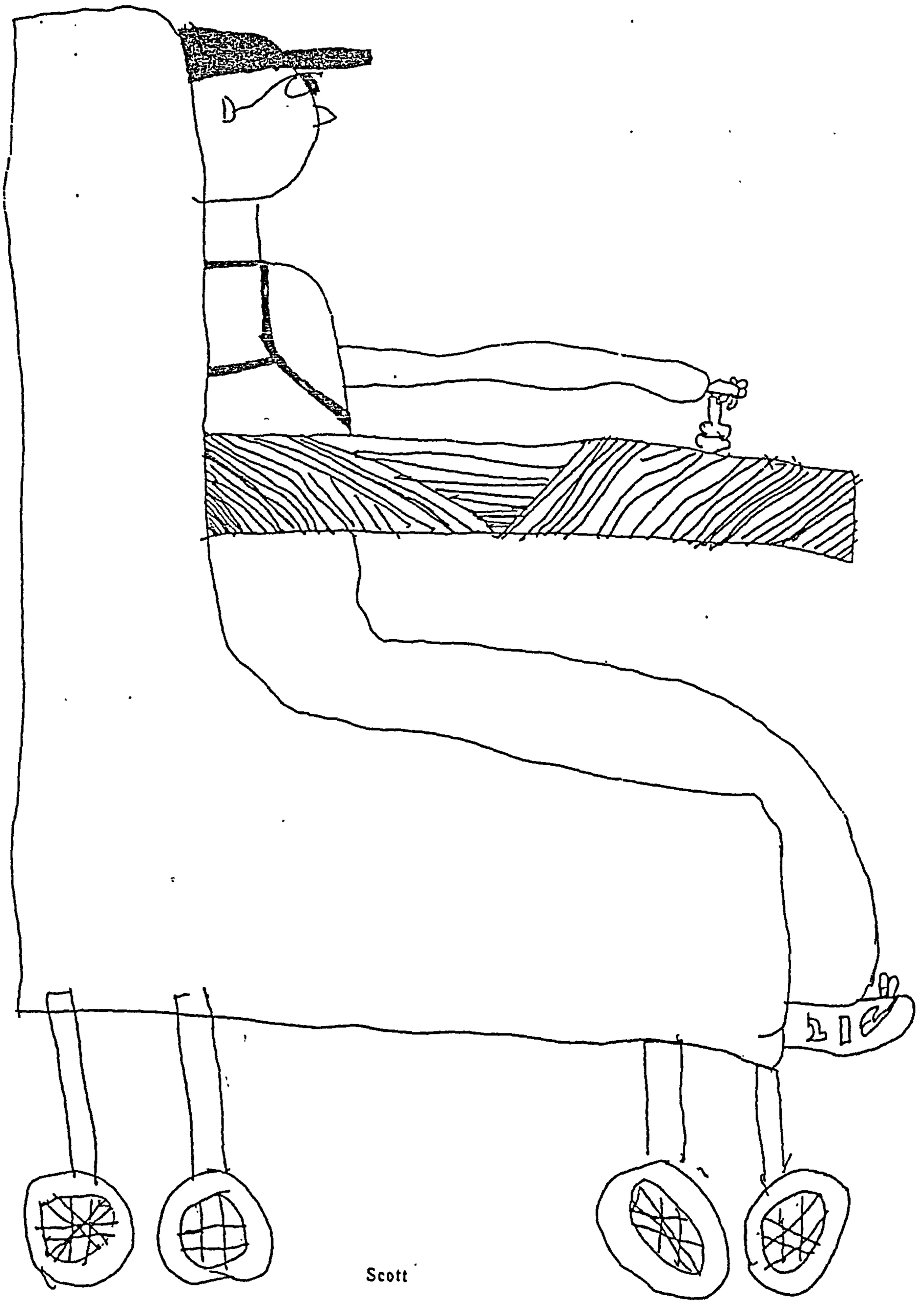
(Favourite aspects of partnership work)	During initial interviews, 8 pupils discussed their enjoyment of art, 5 discussed baking and 4 participating in circle time 4 pupils discussed their favourite activities, with 3 references being made to baking, 1 to circle time and 1 to art 3 pupils also referred to making friends and 2 to meeting OS peers when this question was asked during initial interviews	All groups in Cohort 1 discussed their enjoyment of art and 1 group in Cohort 2 discussed their enjoyment of baking The majority of groups in Cohort 1 discussed their favourite activities (especially art), although one group made an equal number of references to talking with BH peers The majority of pupils asked this question in Cohort 2 regarded meeting new friends and taking part in activities as being equally enjoyable	Art and baking activities featured highly during discussions at both schools More references were made by Cohort 2 than Cohort 1 to the enjoyment of making new friends-again, this may be linked to Cohort 2 being older and more established Year 4 pupils (at the time of interview), with more knowledge of partnership work
(Any dislikes or concerns)	5 pupils identified dislikes or concerns about the scheme: • Jason and Ricky discussed aspects of the Tropical World trip (namely visibility of exhibits and a fear of bats) • Jason expressed concern about missing sessions due to ill health/ medical appointments • Ricky required reassurance about the recent building work at OS • Ikra referred to Michael's behaviour (how he repeatedly put his feet on the table) • Ikra, Shamim, Sophie and Scott required reassurance that I was not proposing imminent mainstream transfer • Scott discussed how he disliked wearing bibs at OS and being watched, 'baby-ed' and crowded by OS peers	Scott's group members in Cohort 1 discussed their concerns about his kicking, hitting, 'spitting', removing his glasses and not listening to his support assistant and group members in Cohort 2 discussed his hair pulling Individuals in both cohorts noted concerns about unfamiliar BH pupils during visits to BH: • Sarah (Cohort 1) discussed her unease at viewing BH pupils ringing bells as they moved around school (This was actually linked to the delivery of the school Christmas post/ not a daily occurrence as she thought) • Emily (Cohort 2) noted concerns about seeing *'poorly'* children	Incidents regarding behaviour were noted by pupils from both schools Interesting to note that the majority of pupils who worked in Scott's group from both cohorts, felt that his actions were accidental, with those who discussed the spitting incidents being relieved to find out that he was actually dribbling Whereas group members from OS largely regarded Scott's behaviour as being accidental, Ikra thought that Michael enjoyed behaving badly- (Note-Classroom observations/ Field notes do suggest that Scott's reactions were often calculated and that he too enjoyed behaving badly) Scott's dislike of wearing bibs at OS was probably linked to his desire to be viewed in an age appropriate manner Although only Sarah and Emily voiced concerns at interview about meeting unfamiliar pupils during visits to BH, field notes show that other OS pupils also felt uneasy about seeing pupils with more significant physical difficulties and/ or behaviours

Appendix 12: Examples of drawings from interviewees at Oak Street

Lizzie (Cohort 2) Interview 3



Paul (Cohort 2) Interview 3



Scott

Talib (Cohort 2) Interview 3