

The Academic and Social Experiences
of Disabled Pupils:
A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This small scale, qualitative study explores the reality of the academic and social experiences of pupils with physical impairments. It focuses on one secondary school in the North West of England that has admitted disabled pupils for over twenty years. Whilst acknowledging that integration does take place, it analyses the extent to which this can be equated with inclusion.

Semi-structured interviews with both disabled pupils and learning support assistants reveal that the school has experienced some success, but the degree to which the establishment encourages full participation as well as celebrating difference is seen to be affected by a variety of factors. The role of the learning support assistant together with accessibility to the physical environment, prove key features in the inclusion process. In addition, lack of proximity, restricted sporting and extra-curricular opportunity, together with the absence of a facility to discuss disability issues, prove to be discriminatory factors.

An historical framework sets the institutional issues against a backdrop of successive governmental policies. Whilst the latter have published a commitment to integration – integration as opposed to inclusion - a series of qualifying clauses have led to inaction and indecision, resulting in restricted involvement for disabled pupils.

Conclusions reached stress the need for future development. The importance of this school and indeed all educational establishments, working towards inclusive practice, is seen as paramount.

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INTRODUCTION

I.B.: I wouldn't want to go there {special school} – it's the independent thing ... I think the people who go there haven't got much chance to be independent ... I just think they would be treated differently.¹

First and foremost I am a teacher, who has always passionately believed in education as a life-enhancing tool that should be available to all children. I have taken great satisfaction from seeing nervous, unsure 11 year olds, transformed by the time they leave school, into self-sufficient, independent and confident young adults, capable of achieving their academic and social potential.

I entered the profession with the aim of bringing the best out of each individual. I wanted to value talent, promote self-esteem and enable each young person I encountered to feel appreciated for what they had to offer. Cynics may suggest that these sentiments were unrealistic and could only be expressed by someone who had no experience of the classroom, but I can honestly say that after more than ten years of teaching, these objectives continue to govern my thinking.

I embarked on the educational doctorate programme, certain that it would be of no promotional benefit to me in the school situation, but conscious that it could provide me with a rare opportunity to reflect on my classroom practices and on my interaction with both staff and pupils. I hoped that this would lead to self-improvement.

In choosing to focus on the pupils with physical impairments as the subject of my thesis, I am acknowledging a group of students who have had a significant impact on my career to date; simply because, paradoxically, they have been instrumental in educating *me* since I joined Stapleton High School. I am ashamed to admit that on arrival at the school I worried about how I would cope with these young people in my lessons. How would they deal with the classroom situation? Having taught

¹ Initials used in conjunction with quotations represent comments made by pupils interviewed. A list of pseudonyms used can be found in Appendix 1.

pupils with a variety of impairments over the last ten years, I realise I should have been questioning how *I* would deal with the classroom situation. How would *I* get the best out of *them*? This realisation has led me to question the extent to which these pupils feel they have benefited from being in my class and on a wider scale, from being pupils at Stapleton High, a mainstream secondary school.

CONTEXTUALITY

Stapleton High School is a mixed community comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-18 in the North West of England. In 2000, at the start of my research study, there were 1175 pupils on roll, (just over twenty-five were pupils with physical impairments). This makes it bigger than similar schools with a sixth form (Ofsted, 2000, p.6). The school is oversubscribed and the number of pupils in the school has risen by about 6% since the time of the last inspection in 1995. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. There are very few ethnic minority pupils and very few pupils with English as an additional language. The standards of attainment of pupils coming into the school are wide-ranging, but above the national average overall. The school is the only designated secondary school in the Borough for pupils with physical impairments. As a consequence, the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, is at 3.4%. This is above the national average (Ofsted, 2000, p.6).

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I wanted to consider the academic and social experiences of the disabled pupils in this popular secondary school. I hoped my findings would prove useful to other institutions. I was interested to know whether or not the young people felt they were getting “a good deal”. I took the following questions as a basis for my study:

1. *How has educational provision for pupils with physical impairments evolved?*
2. *In terms of their academic and social development, to what extent do disabled pupils experience inclusion?*
3. *Do environmental factors lead to exclusion?*

Before commencing my research, it was essential to consider what I actually understood by the term, 'disability'. I used this as my starting point.

WHAT IS 'DISABILITY'?

The conceptualisation of disability involves a discussion around definitions. Fulcher (1999, p.25) suggests that there are four main discourses around the term disability: medical, lay, charity and rights. Looking at disability from a medical perspective pathologises and individualises the problem. Disability is seen as a feared status and a personal tragedy, rather than a public issue. A medical discourse links impairment to disability. A charity discourse defines people called 'disabled' as in need of help. The implications are, therefore, that any help given by 'the experts who know best', should result in appreciation from its grateful recipients. The lay perspective is informed by the medical model and the charity ethic. Fear, prejudice and pity combine to inform social practices which lead to discrimination (Fulcher, 1999, pp.24-29). Disabled people are discriminated against because whilst society upholds these three definitions of the term, the problem is seen as individual not societal. Society can control and influence the lives of disabled people and the extent to which it takes responsibility for improving their role and status within society is questionable. As a consequence, disability is often used to exclude rather than include and to oppress rather than enable (Fulcher, 1999, p.24).

The rights' discourse on disability shifts the responsibility. It promotes the view that disability is society's problem rather than the individual's. The rights' discourse opposes the medical, charity and lay discourses. It promotes themes of equality, citizenship, self-reliance and independence (Fulcher, 1999, pp.29-30). The most progressive of the four discourses it advances the view that society has a duty to work for the inclusion of its citizens, including those who have physical impairments.

It was important for me to take on board the rights' discourse on disability. I concluded that an individual may lack part or all of a limb, or they may have a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body – that is their impairment, but it is not their disability. Disability is disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a society that takes little or no account of people who have a physical impairment. Consequently, it excludes them from participation in mainstream activities (Oliver, 1996b, p.22).

In all social institutions, including schools, it is essential that we start from the premise that disability is imposed on individuals, preventing them from accessing fundamental rights such as self-reliance, citizenship and independence. The latter is an entitlement considered essential by Ian in the chapter's opening quotation. Disability is a form of social oppression and we must recognise it as such and so work towards its elimination.

With a belief in a social model of disability, I wanted to discover the extent to which Stapleton High was providing an inclusive environment for its pupils. As I set out the results of my finding in this thesis, I emphasise that the terminology used reflects my commitment to the social model of disability. Students are referred to as 'disabled' young people, or as young people with 'physical impairments'.

BRINGING THE STUDY DOWN TO SIZE!

Barton (1996, p.152) argues that the researcher must have the humility to identify the limitations of the research. I recognised the constraints of the project I was to undertake. It was case study research based on one institution, at a given time, involving one set of pupils and learning support assistants, each with their own individual experiences. I did not set out to conduct a study that could be replicated in other settings, but I hoped that my findings could prove informative to other institutions and may help establish common threads. I had initially intended to include the two primary schools designated for pupils with physical impairments, in the Borough, together with the special school. I had thought I could make comparisons, focus on differences and analyse the transition from primary to secondary school. However, I considered that to compare and contrast I would have had to have included non-designated primary schools as well. I could not have given all this subject matter adequate thought and attention in the confines of this thesis and so I opted to concentrate solely on Stapleton High School. I did, however, rely on the pupils I interviewed to discuss their disparate experiences of primary school and special schools and after all, it was their voices that I wanted to hear.

Having decided on Stapleton High School as the research setting, I aimed to discover the extent to which it was an inclusive institution. It clearly did integrate disabled pupils, i.e. they were present in the school, but did it include them? Integration has proved a long-term aim of successive policy-makers. They have been keen to see disabled pupils educated alongside their non-disabled peers. However, a number of factors have resulted in only limited success in this area and have led to questions surrounding the validity of integration as an ideal. Integration implies that although disabled pupils should find themselves in mainstream settings, it is their responsibility to adapt to their surroundings and learn to fit in. There is no obligation on the part of the institution to make modifications and changes, to facilitate this process taking place. Therefore, rather than the disabled pupils fitting in and becoming involved in the school community, the antithesis can be true, as the young people find themselves present but excluded, integrated but not included.

Inclusion on the other hand supports a social model of disability. Disability is no longer viewed as an individual deficit, but rather society's problem.

Consequently, institutions such as schools become responsible for ensuring that all pupils, disabled pupils included, gain positive and meaningful experiences in the mainstream setting. Inclusion implies that disabled pupils and their non-disabled peers, should be viewed as individuals. Inclusion celebrates individual difference and promotes diversity to enhance the experience of all pupils. To help schools become inclusive establishments, the Index for Inclusion (a document devoted to supporting schools in the process of inclusive school development) offers a tripartite approach. It suggests the need for schools to produce inclusive policies, evolve inclusive practices and create inclusive cultures.

A school working towards inclusivity should not only house its disabled pupils, but it should also provide an environment conducive to them making it their home! Once the social model of disability is accepted, then for inclusivity to take place, the disabled young people need to feel celebrated for the contribution they have to make and valued for their differences. To do this they need to be able to function in barrier-free environments (CSIE in Thomas, Walker and Webb, 1998, pp.15-16).

Chapter 1 highlights the fact that the quest for a barrier-free environment for this group of young people is long overdue. Negative attitudes associated with impairment have developed over time. As a result, disabled people have been viewed as dependents, in need of charity, sidelined from the mainstream of society. There have been repeated attempts by politicians, in the field of education, for example, to introduce legislation to improve the situation, but although the intentions may have been honourable, the rhetoric has frequently resulted in little reform actually taking place.

I considered that maybe at a school level, there had been advances. Chapter 2 details the methods I employed to help discover, whether indeed this was the case. In order to provide 'answers' to my research questions I opted to conduct semi-structured interviews with the disabled pupils in years 8-13, together with eight learning support assistants. I had initially intended to follow up my interviews

with the pupils by speaking to the teaching staff. However, as will be detailed later, following analysis of the pupils' transcripts, I discovered that the learning support staff appeared to play a far more significant role in their lives than the teachers did.

Conducting the interviews proved a learning experience for me. When considering my position as a non-disabled adult and teacher, I had worried that the pupils in particular, may have felt more reticent about expressing their true feelings and opinions, particularly if they were to the detriment of the school. However, I was impressed with the eloquence of all my interviewees. They clearly articulated their views and beliefs, speaking knowledgeably and openly on a variety of subject areas. I was struck by the fact that this was the first opportunity afforded all those involved, to voice their valuable thoughts and opinions.

Following analysis of the interview transcripts, I was able to divide my findings into three chapters, all with a common theme - the identification of barriers to inclusion. In Chapter 3, I set out to explore both the academic and social restrictions placed upon the pupils interviewed, at Stapleton High School. Although the former proves worthy of discussion, the emphasis on the social obstacles encountered by the young people predominates both their interviews and consequently, the chapter. Significant factors appear to conspire against the disabled students, leading to fewer opportunities for them to make and develop friendships, than their non-disabled peers.

Learning support assistants prove to be major factors in friendship formation. For this reason and given the frequency with which they appeared in the interviews, I decided to devote Chapter 4 to the growth, development and use of assistants in mainstream secondary schools. Confusion regarding their role together with their low pay and status provide significant discussion and a useful by-product of the research process has been an indication as to their possible future role in the school situation.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus predominantly, on the human barriers to inclusion, whilst Chapter 5 highlights environmental factors. Given that Stapleton High is the designated school for pupils with physical impairments in the Borough, it could be assumed that the buildings, equipment and material are adapted to the needs of these pupils. However, it is clear that accessibility is an issue. The construction of a new block designed to improve facilities for this group of students does seem to be a positive way forward, but there remain concerns relating to its suitability.

I conclude this introduction as it started, with the quotation from Ian Brown, one of the students interviewed:

I.B.: I wouldn't want to go there {special school} – it's the independent thing ... I think the people who go there haven't got much chance to be independent ... I just think they would be treated differently.

His objections to special school education rest on fear of restricted independence. He clearly believes that a mainstream secondary school offers greater opportunity and possibility. I wanted to discover the extent to which this was true at Stapleton High School. Would the disabled pupils leave as self-reliant, self-assured individuals, capable of functioning in society or would their experiences of mainstream secondary education prove negative and counter-productive? Ian believes that pupils are treated differently at special school – I understood this to mean, as far as Ian is concerned, that both academic and social dependence would be promoted. I did not necessarily want disabled pupils at Stapleton High School to be treated *differently*, but I did want their *differences* to be recognised and acknowledged. Only if this were to take place could the school make any claims to being an inclusive institution.

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE FACTS

The journey undertaken by disabled pupils over time, which has contributed to the current level of inclusion and integration in mainstream schools needs examination. The extent to which these young people have been subject to exclusionary practices and policies as well as oppression, requires consideration. According to Barnes (1996, p.3) and Oliver (1996a, p.3) this necessitates engaging a historical perspective and I would also argue, a political perspective. History is generated and reinvented as a result of human behaviour. It can give us an insight into the development of human existence. It cannot, in itself, guarantee the establishment of a more equitable and socially just society, but through knowledge of past practices it can, hopefully enable us to ensure that the struggle for change is both continuous and ongoing (Giddens, 1986, p.4).

It is difficult to identify the precise origins of society's negative attitudes towards disability and disabled people. It has been suggested that our perceptions result from a psychological fear of the unknown and that our views of what is normal are learnt and acquired through ideology and deeply held cultural constructs (Barnes, 1991, p.11 and Cornwall, 1996, p.10). The ability to celebrate difference, to provide equal opportunity and to work towards successful inclusion requires both legislation and the capacity to look inwards to the origins of our own myths, beliefs and ideals (Cornwall, 1996, p.10).

I am ashamed to admit that when I started work at Stapleton High School over ten years ago, I approached classes containing pupils with visible impairments, with trepidation. How would they cope in the classroom situation? What would I do if ...? If I question my irrational fears, I conclude that one reason for them was my previous lack of contact with people with physical impairments. I can honestly say that I no longer have such anxieties. I would, therefore, conclude that ignorance can breed stereotypes and suspicion.

From biblical times there has been a view that a disabled child is bad luck (Cornwall, 1996, p.10). Through the Middle Ages, disabled people were often the subject of persecution and rejection, frequently the targets of ridicule and

amusement. Disabled children were considered to be changelings. Throughout, the idea pervaded that any form of physical impairment was the result of divine judgement for wrongdoings. The link between impairment and evil persisted and the negative views of disabled people were evident in literature of the time (Barnes, 1991, pp.12-13).

Until the seventeenth century disabled people who were rejected by their families relied on Christian charity. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the policy of placing severely disabled people into institutional settings where they would receive long-term, highly organised residential care, slowly increased. Indeed, the number of disabled people confined to such establishments rose and did not fall until the 1950s. Until 1871 Poor Law officials could not detain citizens in institutions against their will unless they were declared insane. Under the Lunacy Legislation (1845) mental illness could only be validated by a doctor. 1845 can, therefore, be seen as significant in terms of the medical profession's control over all aspects of disability (Barnes, 1991, pp.13-18).

The process of industrialization served to compound the situation for those with physical impairments. Indeed, the social conditions and relations associated with capitalist forms of production could be said to be major influences on the creation of disablist attitudes. Whereas before, discrimination had been fragmented and varied, the economic and social environment created by the Industrial Revolution led to discrimination becoming institutionalised throughout society. Three factors; economic growth, individualism and medical science led to the reinforcement of ancient fears and prejudices and provided the impetus for extreme discriminatory practices which included the removal of disabled people from the mainstream of economic and social life (Barnes, 1991, pp.17-27).

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries mark, therefore the origins of the personal tragedy theory of disability encompassing the medical model, whereby people with impairments were seen as figures to be pitied, suffering from long-term illnesses, in need of segregation.

Educational provision reinforced this approach to disability. Children with impairments were regarded as a separate group. The Forster Education Act (1870) established school boards to provide elementary education in areas where there were insufficient places in voluntary schools. The Act did not specifically include disabled children among those for whom provision was made. For such children an emphasis was placed on occupational activity rather than formal education. Some school boards did set out to cater for some disabled children, but this was on an ad hoc basis and had nothing to do with government legislation (Warnock, 1978, pp.8-11).

Ensuing developments saw children categorised in terms of their impairments, in order for them to receive an education. In 1889, for example, the Royal Commission on the Blind and Deaf recommended the introduction of compulsory education for blind children between the ages of 5 and 16. However, it was only in 1893 that a government act required school boards and school authorities to make this provision. In keeping with this continued focus on individual impairments, the Committee on Defective (*sic*) and Epileptic Children recommended in 1898 that so-called 'defective' children of normal intelligence should attend mainstream schools and be provided with transport etc. to enable them to do so. However, these were only recommendations. Twenty three years later the provisions of part 5 of the Education Act (1921) still treated the education of disabled children as an entirely separate category (Warnock, 1978, pp.11-20).

THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

Although implicitly evident since the nineteenth century, the term 'medical model' could be said to have received more legitimation from the (1980) WHO (World Health Organisation) debate concerning the value of terms such as 'handicap', 'impairment' and 'disability'.

The WHO's definition of disability:

the effects of the impairment on everyday activities (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000, p.158)

places difficulties encountered functioning in society at the door of the individual, whilst ignoring the social and economic structures which serve to disadvantage people with impairments (Christensen, 1996, p.71).

The medical model highlights the supremacy of professional opinion and decision-making over the needs and wishes of the client. In fact, it is seen as the responsibility of so-called 'professionals' to *define* the needs of their clients. The identity of the disabled person is viewed, as a result, in terms of sickness; disability being a medical problem requiring medical intervention. This leads to the individual's impairment being their defining feature. For example, an individual is seen as 'deaf' or having cerebral palsy rather than being regarded as a multi-faceted individual (Christensen, 1996, pp.64-65).

Two solutions underpin the medical model of disability: either cure or prevention. With advances in genetic engineering, the latter becomes a more ominous force. Such an approach to disability requires quantifiable means of assessing the nature of the problem in order to be able to suggest a cause or a cure. This appears to indicate that as a starting point there is a notion of what is 'normal'. A notion of what is 'normal' impacts on what is considered socially acceptable. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that disabled people have rejected being defined as abnormal. Indeed, in recent times the view that the medical model should be used to transform disabled people into more 'normal' beings (Hutchinson, 1995) has been an instrumental factor in leading to a rejection of the medical model.

Disabled people have realised that they have a right to define their own disability and that social factors are primordial in the whole concept of disability (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000, p.159).

It would, in my view, be wrong to reject wholesale the medical model of disability, after all doctors and other medical practitioners need to have an

awareness and understanding of disability. However, the concept of providing a 'cure' has to be removed and credence given to the fact that disability is not about impairment. Social relations and the issue of power are important here. Disabled people need to be regarded as experts with regard to their own bodies. They should have some control and choice as to when they need medical support. I must admit that before embarking on this research study this was an area to which I had given very little thought. However, during the course of my conversations with the students, I was struck by their understanding of their impairments and the assessment of the medical care they had or should not have received. One was able to discuss his impairment in some detail:

It's spina bifida – it's hydrocephalus as well! It's spina bifida because when I was born, the skin around my spinal cord wasn't sealed properly. The day I was born, I had to be operated on straight away, but it causes permanent damage to the spinal cord which limits my ability to walk ... It also causes hydrocephalus, but you can be more prone to it when you have spina bifida. I have a shunt which drains the fluid, because it gets trapped.

Another was able to detail not only her medical treatment, but also the problems she had encountered as a result of it:

... When I was two I had rods in my back and I feel that that is a big part, because, I mean, I can't walk a lot because I get a pain in my back ... When I was five, I had a plate put in my hip, which is what actually happened to my hip. I had a plate put in my hip because my hip stuck out and made my legs go in. So, they put it in to straighten it, but obviously they put it too far up, making the muscle shorter, which really hurts when I do a lot of walking.

(Pupils' pseudonyms are not supplied here, as the nature of their impairments could give rise to identification.)

I was left feeling very uneasy as I realised that to-date I too had assumed other people knew better than disabled people themselves, what was required. I feared that attitudes such as mine, born out of ignorance, contributed to the socialisation of disabled people into learned helplessness and dependency creating social relations.

In my research school two instances, one from an interview and one resulting from a conversation with a non-disabled pupil, illustrate the extent to which, culturally, the medical model is in-built in our outlook and approach. The second example demonstrates the difficulty we have coming to terms with a rejection of the medical model, as individual talents and achievements are celebrated. Interviewing one pupil about the physical environment and access provided by the narrow corridors, she stated when questioned about her ability to move round the school using the one-way system:

Z.B.: I was walking round the school and there was a crush round room 19 and I am not saying this to be horrible or anything, but it was a wheelchair which caused it.

(She qualified this by stating that the wheelchair user was going in the wrong direction.)

The implication here was that Zoë felt it was wrong to criticise the offending pupil to me as they used a wheelchair. Their impairment was seen as a primary reason not to comment on the contravention of the school rules. As the pupil was not approached at the time, unfortunately their views on the incident cannot be taken into account.

The second instance provides an example of how non-disabled students are having to accept the multi-faceted nature of their disabled peers. Immediately following the high profile publication of the success of a number of disabled pupils and their non-disabled counterparts at the Kielder Challenge, (an annual, national event, involving teams made up of four disabled and four non-disabled pupils working together to solve problems and score points. Points are won for teamwork as much as for completion of tasks.), coupled with the presentation of the House achievement award to a disabled student, one pupil in an unrelated tutor time discussion commented with reference to the disabled pupils:

Why should they be allowed to stay in at breaks and lunchtime when they want to be the same as everybody else?

To me, although this student continues to perceive the disabled pupil as 'other', this marks the start of the pupil's ability to recognise the disabled pupil as an individual. At the time I viewed this comment as outspoken and unnecessary, but on reflection, it signals the need for the school, to not only provide the opportunities for its disabled students to demonstrate their talents and abilities, but also to take into account the measures it has in place, on a day-to-day basis, to enable such pupils to function effectively in the school community. By, for example, allowing these young people to stay in at break and lunchtime, it could be argued that the ethos of the school promotes the medical model of disability, ie. that these young people need to be cared for and protected, treated and looked after as a result of their physical impairment. The disabled pupils are aware that they have the facility to stay in or to go outside, but the issue has never been discussed with them or with their non-disabled peers. It has not, as yet, been identified as something that needs to be monitored. In the light of comments from a number of pupils during the course of my discussions with them, it could be argued that this is symptomatic of a general lack of debate around impairment and disability, leading to disabled pupils being viewed with suspicion. Katy Connor talks about her shock when one of the first things her friend asked her was about her impairment. She discusses her feelings:

R.: Was it a shock in the sense that people don't ask or was it the way she put it?

K.C.: ... that people don't ask! That was what surprised me! It was good! At least she was asking ... at least she wasn't there trying to figure it out!

Yvonne Gordon sums up the result of lack of discussion and communication surrounding disability issues:

R.: Do you think the school should do more to discuss disability in general?

Y.G.: Yeah, because many people think: 'There goes a disabled person in our school. Should they be here? What is wrong with them?' And I think what is the point in them asking questions when they should already be told? ... {Yvonne replies in the following way when asked about the inclusion of disability issues in the Personal, Social and Health Education programme.}

I mean, we have learnt about drugs, we are now learning about coping with money, jobs, where is disability going to come into it? Probably never if nobody mentions it.

EUGENICS MOVEMENT

The Eugenics Movement began to emerge as the medical model became entrenched in cultural concepts and disabled people were increasingly regarded as helpless and were marginalised. The publication of Darwin's 'On the Origin of the Species' (1859) contributed to its formation. The term 'eugenics' refers to the science of improving the population by control of inherited qualities (Shakespeare, 1998, p.668). The Eugenics Movement centred on the fear that disabled people posed a threat to British and European society. Eugenics' fears were further reinforced by the introduction of IQ tests, the inventors of which stated that intelligence was innate and that the majority of 'defectives' (*sic*) (those with sensory impairments) were ineducable. Eugenics' ideals reached their height during the second world war as the Nazis exterminated between 80 000 and 100 000 disabled people (Barnes, 1991, pp.19-20).

New genetics and genetic engineering continue, in the twenty first century, to give cause for concern as regards the issue of eugenics. Indeed, the Disability Rights Movement is prepared to equate new genetics with Nazi eugenics (Shakespeare, 1998, p.668). Prenatal testing gives parents the right to choose to abort foetuses with identified genetic or other problems. Consequently, the right of the prospective disabled child is placed in jeopardy as parents seek perceived human perfection.

As Shakespeare argues, it is perhaps unhelpful to characterise prenatal testing as straightforwardly eugenic. Genetic screening is implemented in the West through the individual choice of prospective parents, rather than as a result of state control (Shakespeare, 1998, p.667). However, Shakespeare does suggest that the medical

profession can make recommendations that undermine the capacity for free choice and so promote eugenic outcomes (Shakespeare, 1998, p.666).

Genetic engineering raises many important issues. If prospective parents are screened and advised to abort as a result of a genetic problem, this supports the view that a concept of normality exists that should be aspired to in the production of babies. In addition, the idea that doctors can 'play God' serves to reinforce a medical model of disability, with the lives of prospective disabled children dependent on the opinion of the medical profession.

DISABLED PEOPLE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Absolute extermination of disabled people, as advocated by the Nazi regime, served as a direct contrast to the involvement of disabled people in the economic welfare of Great Britain during the second world war. Disabled people were integrated into the workforce, working alongside non-disabled colleagues. More and more disabled people were given skilled and responsible jobs. In all about half a million disabled people were recruited into full-time employment during the war (Humphreys and Gordon, 1992, p.91).

As their value to society was acknowledged, the need for government legislation became apparent. Two government acts were passed towards the end of the second world war aimed at improving life for disabled people. The Disabled Persons Act (1944) sought to make provision for a variety of rehabilitation services for the growing number of disabled servicemen. In addition, it attempted to guarantee that disabled people continued to be employed (Barnes, 1991, p.21). The Act was supposed to ensure reasonable access to paid employment for disabled people, but it failed. The consequence was that following the war the majority of disabled people continued to live restricted lives (Campbell J. and Oliver M., 1996, p.28).

The second piece of legislation, the 1944 Education Act appeared to finally set out to secure educational provision for disabled young people. In principle, it seemed

committed to ensuring that where possible disabled children were educated in mainstream schools. However, in spite of this, it succeeded in setting up a complex system of segregated special schools based on eleven medical categories of disability. Once these categories had been defined, new areas of expertise were created and specialists evolved in specific areas. These specialists, usually non-disabled became professional experts, with more severely impaired young people becoming the responsibility of medical experts (Cornwall, 1996, p.17).

The Act also made it the duty of the local education authority to ascertain what special educational treatment children falling under their jurisdiction required. The local authority had the power to submit a child, once they had attained the age of two, for examination by the medical officer. The parents' wishes were ignored and failure to comply resulted in a fine. Parents did not have the right to appeal against the findings of the medical officer (Education Act, 1944, pp.250-251). More than ever before, disabled young people saw their lives controlled by external forces. The medical model of disability was grounded in the new government legislation. Indeed, the control of 'training' of these young people was firmly rooted in the Department of Health until 1971.

Careful examination of the terms used in the Act reveal how they served to further marginalise the young people. The Act stated that local education authorities should have regard:

to the need for securing that provision is made for pupils who suffer from any disability (sic) of mind or body by providing either in special schools or otherwise, special educational treatment, that is to say education by special methods appropriate for persons suffering from that disability (sic) ... (Education Act, 1944, p.228).

The language in this section supports the medical model of disability and firmly locates the tone of this statement within the personal tragedy theory. The use of the term 'suffer' in reference to a pupil's impairment, implying pain, indicating a medical condition, together with the implication that educational arrangements should be made on the basis of individual impairments, reinforce this fact. In addition, the use of 'special' to indicate the type of education such children should

receive serves to underpin a need for segregation. It gives the impression that specific arrangements have to be made to accommodate such children rather than measures being introduced to ensure that they receive an 'ordinary' education. The term 'special' also legitimises patronising, sentimentalising and dependency forms of relations (Corbett, 1996, pp.2-3).

THE 1950s AND BEYOND!

The 1950s saw the start of a concerted effort on the part of successive governments to reduce the number of people living in segregated institutions. This development, however, did not alter the culture of dependency and passivity that had pervaded policies since the eighteenth century. Remarkably, in spite of this the disability movement began to emerge.

A crucial issue in its development was the fact that disabled people did not have a share in Britain's new-found wealth and affluence. The gap between disabled and non-disabled people was widening – a feature seen to be unacceptable by disabled people. This coupled with the realisation that neither party politics, nor charitable or voluntary organisations were serving their best interests proved key factors. In addition, there was a growing belief that the single issues focused on by single impairment groups, were not only insufficient in terms of satisfying the needs and aspirations of a wider range of disabled people, but they were also divisive (Campbell J. and Oliver M., 1996, pp.46-62).

Technological wealth was just one reason why there was no longer any need for disabled people to be segregated. Their situation could be changed. A mass movement amongst disabled people, controlled by disabled people themselves, was required. The view emerged that disability was not about being under the control of others, medical control in particular, it was about disabled people controlling their own lives with the support they needed. The experts and professionals who had previously dominated their lives, would adopt a new supportive role, assisting disabled people to articulate and to take the lead in their own emancipation. The result was the emergence of the BCODP (now the British

Council of Disabled People, formerly the British Council of Organisations of Disabled People) (Campbell J. and Oliver M., 1996, pp.63-103).

As an emerging social movement, by the end of the 1980s it had become a large, formal structure. Its achievements have been considerable. Like no other disability pressure group it has brought to the fore disabling barriers and negative attitudes that have led to a denial of a disabled person's human rights. In an effort to rid disability of the 'medical model' it has encouraged society to view charitable organisations and segregated institutions as part of the problem. It has supported individuals in their quest for personal empowerment and has managed to encourage disabled people to feel proud of who they are; embracing rather than denying their impairments (Campbell J. and Oliver M., 1996, p103-105).

Disabled people have redefined the problem of disability as the product of a disabling society rather than individual limitations or loss, despite the fact that the rest of society continues to see disabled people as chance victims of fate (Campbell J. and Oliver M., 1996, p.105).

Two examples from my research school illustrate that this approach to physical impairment is permeating through to pupils as they celebrate their talents and refuse to allow external forces to take control. One particular outgoing student realised that he had a talent as a disc jockey. He has now left school to work at this full-time. Whilst a pupil, however, he proved an invaluable member of the school community, officiating at discos for younger pupils and helping to run children's parties. His physical impairment means that he has to use two sticks to move around. At such events as those described, he could be seen leading the dancing. His stage name quite appropriately is 'Styx'. This particular young man has a non-disabled assistant. He is prepared to embrace his impairment, to trade off it, rather than to deny its existence.

Secondly, Suzanne, a profoundly deaf student, now in her fourth year at Stapleton, has been used to always having a learning support assistant with her in lessons. This particular student has recently coped with taking part in the French exchange programme, without her learning support assistant. Suzanne herself now feels she

wants some degree of autonomy in lessons. She believes that she can function effectively without her learning support assistant in certain situations. Her learning support assistant, teaching staff and her parents are prepared to support her wishes. Various discussions have taken place over the past few months. Whilst Suzanne's progress continues to be monitored, she is functioning effectively without her learning support assistant in certain lessons and with limited support in others. She values her increased independence. This is evident as she comments on the benefits of having the same person with her all the time:

S.S.: I think it's good {having the same support assistant}, because this person know everything about me. They know how much you know and if you had a different person with you in the room, they are not going to know how much you know and they are going to give you help when you don't need it.

The two students, representative of disabled people, are not denying, but taking control of and embracing, their impairments. They acknowledge the general need for support in their lives, but want to determine the form and extent of the support they receive, as well as the time when it is necessary. Disabled people are demanding choices and rights in their lives.

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

Following the establishment of the BCODP in the 1960s, a new theory of disability began to emerge – the social model, based on the view that disability is a social creation. Unlike the medical model, the social model takes disability out of the body and mind of the individual and transforms it into a societal problem. People who are different as a result of an impairment, find that they are disadvantaged and oppressed by a society obsessed by 'normality' (Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000, p.160). Oliver (1995a, p.160) offers this social definition of disability:

the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no account of people who have physical impairments ... and thus excludes them from mainstream social activities.

Disability begins to be seen in terms of disabling environments that fail to provide appropriate access to those with impairments. Disabled people are created through their struggles to challenge and remove all forms of disabling barriers and they then begin to be acknowledged as citizens with rights (Humphrey, 2000, p.63).

EDUCATION IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

By the 1960s an increasing number of students were receiving special education, an education that seemed to be failing a large majority of disabled pupils, both academically and socially (Oliver, 1996b, p.80).

The 1970s Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act appeared, on first reading, to offer hope that disabled pupils could start to be educated, on a wider scale, in mainstream schools. Although it made no requirement that existing institutions should be modified to provide access for disabled young people, it did state that new educational buildings should be made accessible. However, the qualifying section of this stated policy gave a 'get-out clause'! to those to whom this new ruling pertained. It added that such facilities should be provided unless this was:

incompatible with the efficient use of resources
(Cornwall, 1996, p.19).

Five years after the publication of this Act, Stapleton High opened as a comprehensive secondary school. The access provided to disabled pupils was merely a useful by-product of the main reason for it being constructed on one level. Its one storey building was in keeping with its geographical, coastal position.

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970) also focused on the need to modify social service provision. The establishment of social service departments, in their present form, soon followed. Various divisions such as occupational therapists and meals on wheels were responsible for disabled people. The unfortunate result was, that almost every aspect of a disabled person's life was catered for by a profession. One study estimated 23 professional helpers were involved in one person's life (Barnes, 1991, p.23). There were positives in the sense that more services were being provided, as well as greater access. However, the way these services were run, reinforced the medical model of disability. A culture of dependence was restated as people with impairments were perceived to be incapable of making any decisions for themselves (Barnes, 1991, p.23).

THE WARNOCK REPORT AND THE 1981 EDUCATION ACT

The second half of the 1970s became dominated by the need for integration. Pressure mounted on the government to do something about the situation. A committee was set up chaired by Mary Warnock to look into the matter. Deliberations began in 1974 and the committee's influential report was published in 1978 (Oliver, 1996b, p.80).

The 1944 Education Act had established eleven categories of impairment. Warnock's committee proposed that such categorisation be replaced by a concept of special educational need. It concluded that labelling children in terms of their impairments did not meet their educational needs. Besides, as some children had more than one impairment, categorisation could even be viewed as misleading. The committee suggested that educational needs resulted from a broad concept of learning difficulty rather than from a medical condition. Warnock (1978) proposed, therefore, and the 1981 Education Act documented the fact, that children with special educational needs should be considered as having a learning difficulty.

1. – (1) For the purposes of this Act a child has “special educational needs” if he has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him (Education Act 1981, p.1507).

It became necessary to subdivide the concept of ‘learning difficulty’ into three sections: mild, moderate and severe (Jenkinson, 1997, pp.20-21). In effect, one set of categories was replaced by another.

It has been argued that negative attitudes do not in fact result from labelling, but from the inadequate social skills and behaviour that often accompany disability. It has been suggested that the way to deal with this problem is not necessarily to remove the categories, but to address the behavioural and social difficulties that produce negative attitudes, through appropriate integrated programmes (Jenkinson, 1997, p.21). I would dispute the view that labelling does not result in negative attitudes.

A second quotation from the Education Act 1981 (p.1507) states that:

*(2) ... a child has a “learning difficulty” if–
(b) he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools.*

How can the problems a young person may encounter be made to sound like their fault? I cite the case of one wheelchair user at Stapleton High. She carries a Statement of Special Educational Need (introduced under the Education Act, 1981). She is categorised in terms of her impairment. As a consequence, her subject staff are required to periodically carry out a review. On having to do this, I was surprised to discover that I needed to account for her academic progress. I began to question why this was necessary in the light of her achievements. I was anxious to know if there was a problem of which I was unaware. I was told, “no” and that this was “standard review procedure”.

All pupils have learning needs. How they are defined, by whom and with what consequences are crucially important questions. The term ‘learning difficulty’ as used in connection with this particular student both individualises and

pathologises the problem. It is in keeping with the medical model of disability. It fails to embrace the social model. This pupil has some physical difficulties requiring support and the learning-based problems she encounters are often the result of the school's inability to cater for her intellectual needs. Until the bureaucracy which pigeon-holes pupils who are labelled as, say, having 'special educational needs' is dispensed with, it is my view that labelling of any description, *will* encourage negative or at least inappropriate attitudes.

As alluded to earlier, resulting from a focus on integration, the Education Act 1981(p.1508) made reference to the integration of disabled pupils in so-called 'ordinary schools'. There had been a growing concern that the number of pupils in special schools was increasing and that integration was not happening on the scale that had been hoped for. The Education Act 1981 stated that statemented pupils should be educated in mainstream schools. However, although it highlighted that this was the duty of local education authorities, it gave the latter, once again, a series of 'get-out clauses':

- (3) ... educating the child in an ordinary school (needs to be) compatible with -*
- (a) his receiving the special educational provision that he requires;*
 - (b) the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he will be educated; and*
 - (c) the efficient use of resources.*
- (Education Act 1981, p.1508)

In effect, local authorities did not need to do anything at all.

Given the misplaced assumption of the Act that more children would find themselves in so-called 'ordinary' schools, a further issue fails to be made statutory. Once in a mainstream school, it is suggested that a child should be able to engage in the activities of the school together with children who do not have special needs. This requirement is, however, qualified by terms such as: as far as this is:

reasonably practicable

and provided that the issues quoted above fall into place (Education Act 1981, p.1509). Yet again local authorities had the excuse not to have to abide by new regulations.

Finally, even if it could be believed that in spite of these restrictions children termed as having special educational needs could be educated in mainstream schools, part three of the Act deals a final blow to integration. It states that if a local authority deems it inappropriate for a child to receive special educational provision in a school, such provision may be made elsewhere (Education Act 1981, p.1509). The Act also emphasises a commitment to the maintenance of special schools (Education Act 1981, p.1517). It is perhaps not surprising that as a consequence of the Education Act 1981 which resulted from the Warnock Report, the question of children educated in segregated special schools continued to be an issue (Swann, 1991, p.80).

The Act goes on to show the extent to which the authorities were to have control over educational provision. A parent whose child was registered as a pupil of a special school was not under the conditions of the Act, allowed to withdraw that child from that school without the consent of the local education authority. In addition, if a parent were to select a school for their child, deemed by the local education authority to be inappropriate in terms of say, the child's special educational needs or the provision of resources, the local authority could, after giving the parent notice, apply to the Secretary of State for direction, determining which school was to be named (Education Act 1981, pp.1515. 1518). The Act did not do anything for the rights of children with physical impairments.

This aspect of the Act continues to have repercussions for children and their parents. Stapleton High is, at present, the school designated for disabled pupils in the Borough. When interviewing students, I questioned them over why they and their parents had chosen it as their secondary school, believing that a number of them would highlight its good reputation. However, over half of the thirteen pupils questioned, stated that they had no choice as it was written into their statements. I had believed that at least as a designated school the facilities and

indeed the schooling provided, would lead the disabled pupils to believe that they were being educated in the right place. However, my opinions changed as I interviewed the pupils. It became evident that for many the physical environment was in fact setting up barriers to their learning. Difficulties such as narrow corridors, inaccessible mobile classrooms and restrictive toilet facilities – to be detailed in Chapter 5 - proved both discriminatory and exclusive.

More importantly, from a social point of view, a number of the pupils interviewed joined the school, without friends and the fact that they were having to travel such a distance prevented them socialising with other students. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, but it is worth quoting Katy's feelings which illustrate the difficulties:

K.C.: I have got some friends now, but I was quite unhappy for the first three years ...

There have been a number of criticisms of the Warnock Report. Some have already been highlighted. In an article in the Times Educational Supplement (T.E.S.) in December 1999 (p.27), Baroness Warnock herself, acknowledges, almost twenty years on, flaws in her Committee's recommendations. Firstly, the proposals could not be financed and as the money available for education diminished, authorities began to list a child's need in terms of what they could afford, rather than in terms of what the child actually needed.

Secondly, the introduction of statementing proved to be, in Warnock's own words:

a disastrous mistake (Warnock, 1999, p.27).

As a result of the financial constraints, it became clear that little would be done to meet the needs of a child unless they had a statement. Parents, therefore, demanded that their children be statemented and so delays were encountered before anything was done to support the child in the school situation. Children with specific needs were liable to be overlooked if they did not have a statement

and so in the parents' quest for the appropriate piece of paper, valuable resources were taken up with expensive litigation. In effect, the bureaucratic nature of the process overshadowed any determination to do the best by the children the Warnock Report set out to serve. The interests and requirements of other people were met before those of the parents and the children themselves.

I would add to the criticism of statementing, by identifying problems in the statements themselves. Their format does not allow for flexibility and so situations arise, as the one detailed earlier with the intelligent pupil in year 9. Staff are required to detail her academic development as part of the annual review of her statement. Her impairment is a physical one, she performs at a very high level within the classroom situation. Surely, therefore, this activity would be more appropriate for other pupils in her group. In addition, statements have provided local authorities with the opportunity to nominate a school for a pupil. Parental choice is taken away and local authorities are given an excuse not to have to adapt their other institutions for disabled pupils.

Warnock highlights a third and perhaps the most startling difficulty with the original Report. Her Committee was forbidden from counting social deprivation as a factor contributing to educational need:

... the most strikingly absurd fact is that the committee was forbidden to count social deprivation as in any way contributing to educational needs (Warnock, 1999, p.27).

Not only does this reveal the explicit political intervention of government, influencing the framework and the outcomes of committees of enquiry, but also it enables us to appreciate why the Warnock Report contained contradictions with regard to the nature of need. I would conclude this section by agreeing with Warnock's statement in the T.E.S. article:

Perhaps it is time to rethink the whole concept of special needs (Warnock, 1999, p.27).

This needs to happen in order to help foster inclusivity for *all* pupils. It must also occur so as to ensure that disabled pupils are treated as individuals, rather than pigeon-holed – each requiring the same set of assessments and checks to be made regardless of academic and social ability. It could be argued that disabled pupils *do* encounter social deprivation, as a result of society's inability to provide the necessary adaptations and equipment to enable them to function effectively.

In conclusion, therefore, the Education Act 1981 which resulted from the Warnock Committee Report (1978) appeared to offer greater educational opportunity for disabled pupils. However, although the intentions may have been honourable, the outcomes were ad-hoc and piecemeal and in reality little changed. As Oliver (1996b, p.80) claimed:

... while the education of disabled children has been subject to major educational scrutiny and legislative change over the last twenty years, most disabled children are still being educated in special schools and still receive an education inferior to other children.

THE EDUCATION REFORM ACT 1988

With the Education Reform Act of 1988 came the introduction of the national curriculum. Its inception shifted the focus of the debate about the education of disabled children from where it should take place, to what it should be about. The government declared the national curriculum to be an '*entitlement curriculum*' applicable to all pupils, implying that disabled pupils would be treated in the same way as everybody else (Oliver, 1996b, p.81).

Subsequently, the Act allowed for modification and disapplication of the national curriculum in certain circumstances, at the discretion of the headteacher. In spite of the fact, however, that some special schools up and down the country did not use this facility, the government's inspectorate revealed that curriculum delivery in most special schools was inadequate (Oliver, 1996b, p.81). This view is also in-built into the minds of children themselves. During the interview process I

questioned students about their experiences and knowledge of special schools. Their views could be said to be summed up by one particular student, who though never having attended the local special school, did use the hydrotherapy and physiotherapy facilities to be found there. I asked her if she would have wanted to attend a special school:

Z.B.: No ... I am not academically disabled I am just physically!

The general view was that the Education Reform Act 1988 should include pupils with so-called special educational needs. Indeed, the terms 'access', 'differentiation' and 'entitlement' emerged as key points. However, in reality, the extent to which the Act gave these children any new rights, is questionable. Some children were denied access to aspects of the curriculum to which everyone was seemingly entitled. As a result, their educational opportunities were reduced, their feelings of social inferiority were reinforced and they experienced a clear denial of their rights of citizenship (Oliver, 1996b, pp.81-82 and Cornwall, 1996, pp.24-25).

In terms of content, the national curriculum did not include the issue of disability. There has been a general acknowledgement that certain curriculum material has been both sexist and racist. There has been no acknowledgement that disablism exists; from the material for assessment, through to child's fiction and assumptions about normal child development (Mason and Rieser, 1990, p.88). In recognition of the absence of such issues and the stereotypical view of the 'normal' child, one of my interviewees chose to give an English talk on her impairment. Although she acknowledged that she found it difficult, she wanted to put the record straight and highlight what her impairment actually meant to her.

The focus of the debate might have been shifted with the introduction of the national curriculum, but the arguments over the pros and cons of integration remained of central importance.

INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION

Successive policy makers have expressed the view that ideally, all pupils should be integrated into mainstream education. However, it could be argued that lack of provision and inadequate provision, have resulted in the term 'integration' being inappropriate to describe what should be going on in mainstream schools.

Integration has become synonymous with the physical act of placing students in mainstream and forcing them to deal with the situation in which they find themselves. As Corbett (1996, p.22) states:

"Integration" has come to mean the following in all but the most exceptional of situations: adapt to what exists; do not ask for extra resources; become like the majority; conceal your difficulties; learn to fit in.

This is highlighted in the Warnock Report (1978) where a tripartite view of integration is expounded. Firstly, integration is seen as locational. This describes a special unit or class set up in a mainstream school, for example. Secondly, integration is seen as social. This focuses on children who attend a special class or unit playing with other children at the mainstream school and spending extra-curricular time with them. Thirdly, integration is seen as functional. This refers to the fullest form of integration, where children with special needs join part time or full time in the regular classes of mainstream school and socialise with them at all other times (Kenward, 1996, p.6). None of these three components suggests anything more than the disabled pupil being placed in a certain environment and then fitting in with their non-disabled peers. There is no mention of a pupil's differences or of their identity.

If then, 'integration', which itself has not yet been effectively achieved, is inappropriate, what should we be aiming for? The term 'inclusion' has been coined and developed over recent years to describe what should be happening in mainstream schools. Corbett offers a useful definition of the term, which separates it from the notion of integration:

Whilst integration was the square peg struggling to fit the round holes, inclusion is a circle containing many different shapes and sizes, all interrelating with the whole, and with a caption reading, "Come in. We celebrate difference here. You can be yourself and not struggle to fit in (Corbett, 2000, p.140).

Corbett considers inclusion in three ways. Her views are supported by the tripartite approach to inclusion as defined in the Index for Inclusion (2000, p.9). Firstly, Corbett refers to surface inclusion led by policy and notions of school effectiveness. The Index refers to this as a need to produce inclusive policies, so that the quest to increase the learning and participation of *all* students is at the heart of school development.

Secondly, Corbett identifies the importance to inclusion of structural modifications to the school environment and curriculum. The Index highlights the need to evolve inclusive practices in order to ensure that classroom and extra-curricular activities encourage the participation of all students.

Thirdly, Corbett believes that deep culture – the hidden curriculum of fundamental value systems, rituals and routines, initiations and acceptance, which form the fabric of daily life – is an essential component of inclusion. The Index outlines the need to create inclusive cultures where each individual is valued and accepted as well as being able to function in a stimulating, secure and collaborating community (Corbett, 2000, p.140) (Index for Inclusion, 2000, p.9). These three notions are a useful starting point for further discussion around the concept of inclusion.

SURFACE INCLUSION

If we move away from the policy documents of the 1970s to those of the early 1990s, not only does the idea of inclusion appear far removed from government policy, but even the idea of integration as identified by Warnock appears to occupy a less prominent position in Conservative special educational needs

policy. This is true in spite of strong lobbying by the disability movement (Riddell, 2000, p.115).

We note a shift from the idea of partnership with parents towards the idea of parents as consumers. Indeed, the market place economy has permeated and continues to dominate schooling and education. The principles behind it can be seen as antagonistic towards moves for inclusion. In a struggle to offer parental choice and achieve success as reflected in league tables, it could be argued that institutions have denied certain pupils access. As schools function in an educational market, competing for customers, some have disproportionate numbers of high-achievers. This has implications for other establishments and although credence is now being given to the value-added nature of education an individual receives, all schools are judged by the same league tables.

Therefore, when set against a background of government criteria, it is difficult for the inclusive school to demonstrate effectiveness (Corbett and Slee, 2000, pp.137-138). The challenge, in the present climate, lies in persuading sceptics that inclusion is not incompatible with excellence (Rouse M. and Florian L., 1997 p.114).

Stapleton High School appears to demonstrate that, academically, this is the case. Nearly 80% of pupils achieved 5 A* - C grades at G.C.S.E. in summer 2000 and its results have been consistently high over recent years. Although this assumption is based on purely quantitative data, it would seem to suggest that in terms of academic success, as judged by examination results, the school's inclusion policy is succeeding. Disabled pupils are proving that their presence is not incompatible with good GCSE and A level results. The aim to develop the learning of *all* students, has, therefore, been achieved to some extent.

STRUCTURAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Corbett argues that structural modification is a necessary part of inclusion. This can be seen in two ways: alterations to the physical environment of the school and adaptations to the curriculum.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Stapleton High School is the designated school for disabled pupils in the Borough. Many children come to the school because it has been written into their Statements. Before conducting the interviews with the pupils I felt I was aware that there were issues regarding movement around the school. However, I had under-estimated the extent to which this would be considered a problem. The narrowness of the corridors, the heavy doors and the mobile classrooms appeared repeatedly to pose a hazard, as well as a barrier to learning in some cases, (pupils had to leave lessons early in order to arrive safely at their destinations). This issue will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. However, it is worth noting Suzanne's feelings at this point. She is a pupil with a hearing impairment who indicates the detrimental effect the physical surroundings can have on the learning experience of individual students:

R: What about the actual building? Do you think it caters for disabled pupils?

S.S.: Not really! It is very difficult to hear in some of the rooms!

Problems encountered by individuals were aggravated this academic year. Two pupils arrived in year 7 who needed to use a standing frame for several hours a day. There was no space available where this equipment could be used or stored, without giving rise to safety issues affecting all members of the school community. After lengthy discussions, the standing frames were housed in a purpose built shed, taken out for limited use each day and then returned. The ultimate intention is for them to be kept in a room in the new building, which is at present under construction.

These issues arise for two major reasons. Firstly, the school was not built with the view to providing an inclusive community for pupils with physical impairments, as it was built on one level it simply evolved. It provided the Authority with the environment it needed to integrate its disabled pupils, whilst allowing it to proceed as Imrie (2000, p.21) puts it, with:

spatial amnesia.

The only adaptation was the installation of one toilet for disabled pupils. Secondly, as it has continued to be the sole secondary school of this nature in the Borough, the number of disabled pupils has grown in what is an over-subscribed school, whilst the building has failed to grow and be modified to suit the students. These factors would seem to suggest that integration has taken place – the students are in the school, but environmental inclusion has not, as they struggle to cope with surroundings that are ill-equipped to allow them to function effectively. Structural modification as a necessary part of inclusion, is not merely about access, but also about curriculum issues involving teaching styles and organisational factors.

THE CURRICULUM

The Index for Inclusion, expresses a need for lessons to be made accessible to all students (Index for Inclusion, 2000, p.78). This may require modifications to the curriculum, from both an academic and social perspective. From an academic point of view, as stated earlier, the 1988 Education Reform Act placed an emphasis on what education should be about for disabled pupils. The intention of the National Curriculum was that all children seen to have special needs, should have access to the same curriculum as everybody else. The implication was that only under certain conditions should the National Curriculum or aspects of it, be disapplied (Oliver, 1996b, p.88).

On the surface, therefore, it would appear that access to the same curriculum for all, within a mainstream classroom setting should promote inclusion. David Lowrie, the father of a three-year-old boy with cerebral palsy rejects the provision of a special unit within a mainstream school, preferring special school education to this arrangement. He believes that for inclusion to take place a child should be educated within a mainstream class, concluding that anything else simply serves to highlight the differences (Lowrie, 2000, p.4). Whilst I would agree with the principles behind this viewpoint, I would argue that simply to deliver a common curriculum within a mainstream classroom, does not go far enough.

Differentiation should take place as a matter of routine in the classroom. It is important, however, to consider that this may not just involve the provision of different levels of activity, but also various forms of presentation; aural, written etc. To accept as appropriate a uniform approach to the delivery of material, may provide integration, but it fails to promote curricular inclusion.

Inclusion is more than being present in the classroom, it is about participating in classroom activities (Mordal and Strømstad, 1998, p.115) and so, teaching methods need to be considered. Booth states that inclusion involves using difference as a learning opportunity, as a resource to be welcomed and celebrated (Booth, 2000, p.88). By using the individual's experience, by starting from where the individual is at, there is a greater chance that the individual will feel connected into and involved in, the learning environment. Corbett suggests that a connective pedagogy promotes an inclusive school community (Corbett, 1999, p.100). It is also about assessment procedures and materials used in the whole pedagogical process. French and Swain highlight the importance of disability being present within and disabilism being absent from, teaching materials themselves (French and Swain, 2000, p.21).

The curriculum is not just about getting the academic right, it is also about the social development of the individual. Jenkinson suggests that the expectations of the social benefits of integration have been high and have, consequently met with disappointment. She argues that there is little evidence of firm friendships forming as a result of integration (Jenkinson, 1997, p.52). I would agree with this pessimistic standpoint when viewed from the position of integration.

Inclusion, on the other hand should see friendships formed as routine. According to the interviewees, a number of factors can facilitate this taking place. Crucial to successful social interaction, as far as they are concerned, is the learning support assistant. The successful learning support assistant needs to combine adequate support, with respect for individual independence and the opportunity to allow contact and interaction with other members of the peer group, in a classroom situation.

If an individual's differences are valued and seen to be encouraged, it gives that individual status, confidence and importance. It can help promote a desire to find out more about another's culture. As a consequence, the mystique and suspicion are removed and members of a community learn to live with each other in a more equitable fashion.

DEEP CULTURE

When measuring the success of inclusion, the importance of fundamental value systems cannot be under-estimated. Fundamental value systems define the extent to which certain marginalised groups have their needs properly respected (Corbett, 1999, p.124). I would argue that this refers not only to physical, but also to emotional needs. Barton suggests that inclusion is about ways of thinking and relating to each other in which the dignity and the well-being of all pupils and staff is of essential importance (Barton, 1999, p.140). Consequently, inclusion should be viewed as a struggle for equity and civil rights in which there are consistent confrontations with conflicting values.

WHAT IS AN 'INCLUSIVE SCHOOL'?

Integration of disabled pupils into mainstream schools, has never fully been achieved, but as a concept it is out-dated and needs to be replaced by a quest for inclusion. The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education offers a definition of an inclusive school. It suggests that it should be community-based, that is to say, non-selective, reflecting the community as a whole. It goes on to argue that it

should be barrier-free in that physically, in terms of its building and grounds it should prove accessible to all those who become members. It suggests that it should promote collaboration, working with, rather than competing against, other schools and finally it puts forward the view that an inclusive school should promote equality (CSIE in Thomas, Walker and Webb, 1998, pp.15-16). Wilson (2000, p.298) argues in response to the above, that rather than a definition, this can only be seen as an ideological flavour. What in fact is a community? and surely any school is selective if only by its catchment area. I would argue that the ideological nature of this definition is further reinforced by government policy which through league tables and the promotion of market forces has actively encouraged competition between schools.

I prefer the definition of an inclusive school offered by Booth and Ainscow (1998, p.97). They suggest that it is:

an ideal never fully attained.

Ballard (1995, p.144) contends that this is so, due to the inevitable and valuable diversity of a school's community. Booth (1996, p.98) argues that inclusion is:

an unending set of processes which combine increasing participation with reducing exclusion.

By seeing an inclusive school as an institution in continuous need for improvement it encourages development and change, necessary for the dynamics of a school environment where the diversity and difference of staff and students can never be quantified and where nobody can afford to become complacent.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY ACT 2001

To complete this section it is worth noting the extent to which recent legislation is supporting inclusion. This Act recently implemented, highlights a commitment to strengthening the right of children with additional educational needs to be educated in mainstream schools. In terms of a human rights issue, it appears to allow parents greater flexibility when selecting schools for their children.

Once again, however, the wording of the Act provides local authorities with the opportunity not to have to follow through the proposals. The Act states a need to:

strengthen the right of children with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools where parents want this and the interests of other children can be protected (Explanatory notes to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, p.2).

The Act details the requirement not to treat disabled pupils less favourably, in terms of schooling, but qualifies this by stating:

without justification (Explanatory notes to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, p.3).

It highlights a duty to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled pupils are not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to other pupils, but then emphasises that there is:

no need to remove or alter physical features or provide auxiliary aids and services (Explanatory notes to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, p.3).

It states a need to make progress in increasing accessibility to school premises and to the curriculum, but offers no time-scale or any suggestions as to how this can be monitored. In terms of emphasising the need for students to be educated in

mainstream, a clause exists allowing local authorities not to have to follow this through.

Section 316(3) ensures that pupils with SEN and a statement are educated in mainstream schools unless this would be incompatible with parental choice or with the provision of efficient education for other children (Explanatory notes to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, 2001, p.7).

At least, however, if a local authority or school offers this as a reason for failing to admit certain pupils, it needs to provide explanations as to why this is the case. Given all the discussion and consultation that has preceded it, this Act should make a difference. The concern is that the likelihood of it acting as a catalyst for inclusion is remote. It will, therefore, be important to monitor the extent to which institutions do conform to the new legislative requirements.

CONCLUSION

History may help us to explain how disabling practices, leading to suspicion, discrimination and marginalisation, have evolved over time. However, it could be argued that policy-makers have contributed to an inability to address imbalances and to spearhead the elimination of exclusionary practices even though they have long been acknowledged.

Successive policies have promised radical reform, but whilst governments have paid lip-service to the need for change, a lack of political will, together with a lack of determination to enforce such change, have led to little development. Getting past the rhetoric it is evident that moves for transformation are frequently accompanied by qualifying statements, which in fact require those in authority to do very little. These three examples drawn from the chapter and representative of the last thirty years illustrate the point.

1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act advocated the modifications necessary to provide access for disabled people, unless this was:

incompatible with the efficient use of resources (Cornwall, 1996, p.19).

Education Act 1981 (p.1508)

This suggests that a child should be educated in a mainstream school provided that it allows for:

*(b) the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he will be educated; and
(c) the efficient use of resources.*

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (p.7)

Section 316(3) ensures that pupils with SEN and a statement are educated in mainstream schools unless this would be incompatible with parental choice or with the provision of efficient education for other children (Explanatory notes to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001).

Current legislation, highlighted in the statutory requirements of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice, does provide greater opportunities for parents to test their concerns and contest decisions made by local authorities, in the Courts:

Compliance with Tribunal Orders

25.-(1) Subject to paragraph (4), if the Tribunal, following an appeal to it by a parent, makes an order requiring an authority to perform an action referred to in paragraph (2) the authority shall perform that action within the period specified in paragraph (2) (Special Educational Needs – Code of Practice, 2001, Annex A, p.31)

It is hoped, therefore, that real progress will be made as a result.

School policy-makers have a role to play in the removal of disabling practices. In the quest for inclusion, they have to be entirely clear about their objectives.

Inclusion has to be at the heart of school development, permeating all policies for the academic and social benefit of all pupils (Index for Inclusion, 2000, p.9).

Individual teachers must also play their part. They are responsible for delivering both government and school policy in the classroom. Policy is made at all levels of the educational process and all practices, teacher-pupil etc. are political in the same way as legislation drafted by governments (Fulcher, 1999, p.245).

I would conclude, therefore, that with the appropriate funding and with a commitment to understanding social relations as they exist, all of us as educationalists whether classroom teachers, local authority representatives or government ministers, are responsible for redressing the balance. Disabled people have a right to inclusion. We must all ensure that full inclusion is our ultimate ideal.

My commitment to both the disabled and non-disabled pupils at Stapleton High School, contributed to my choice of subject-matter for this thesis. I embarked on the project with the belief that the institution needed to be inclusive or at least encouraged to move in that direction. This would benefit the whole school community.

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

A research project involving me, a practising teacher, as the researcher and pupils from my school as the main participants, required careful consideration, particularly as regards methodology.

I set out to represent as accurately as possible, the experiences and opinions of my participants. I would be naive to assume that I met with complete success in this undertaking and justify this admission by quoting Wilson (1992, p.181):

I(t) must be recognised that what we choose to observe, what we consider to be data, what we write about and how will always be affected by our personal and institutional values and the underlying assumptions absorbed through our training.

Nevertheless, employing a variety of strategies I sought to determine the best way to hear the previously silent ‘voices’ of the young people involved. Ultimately, I aimed to give participants some degree of ‘ownership’ of the process.

Priestly (1997, p.88) highlights the fact that the dominant discourses of disability research have tended to reproduce two sets of disabling power relations – first between those who ‘do’ research and people who are being researched and secondly, between disabled people and non-disabled people. To these two I would add a third set of disabling power relations appropriate to my research situation; that between teacher and pupil. Barton (1999, p.130) stresses that although teacher expectations and interventions can be positive for recipient pupils, they can also be disabling and disenfranchising. If the participants involved in my research project had had negative experiences, how willing would they be to bear their souls to a teacher at their school, particularly if it involved criticising the institution?

In an effort to break down barriers and to avoid passivity amongst the participants, it was essential for me to seek to challenge the disempowerment of my interviewees and so give them some control over the research production. Total ownership was unrealistic, as I had ultimate responsibility for shaping the thesis. However, I employed a number of measures aimed at fostering a more democratic approach to data creation. When seeking consent for pupil involvement I requested the signature of both the parent and the pupil. I opted to distribute the interview agenda in advance to allow students the right to shape the interview, to refuse to get involved in certain issues if they wished. Following the interview, I issued a transcript of our conversations allowing pupils a further opportunity to withdraw any elements they preferred not to include.

I realised that simply increasing levels of participation did not necessarily challenge or alter the social relations of research production, (Zarb, 1992, p.92), but by employing these methods I attempted to translate participation into control and thus give pupils the chance to have some direction over the proceedings.

Although, as will be detailed later, the process could not be described as emancipatory in approach, I borrowed some principles from the paradigm, as suggested by Stone and Priestly (1996, p.91). They claim that emancipatory research should consist of a willingness only to undertake research that will be of some practical benefit to the self-empowerment of disabled people and/or the removal of barriers. I was keen to ensure that I did not make any promises to the students that I could not keep, but my aim was to transfer ownership of the research process from me, the non-disabled researcher and teacher to the students themselves.

THE REJECTION OF A QUANTITATIVE MEANS OF ENQUIRY

A quantitative approach would have proved inappropriate to the study. With a focus on determinate outcomes, such a procedure would have failed to take into account the variables and complexities offered by the experiences of individual

participants. It is worth focusing on the views of Madge and Fassam (1982, p.22) who stress that it is impossible to talk about the 'typical' disabled child. Each child has individual experiences, needs and achievements. So, in order to gain an insight into what motivated, concerned, affected and inspired each young person, to hear each pupil's 'voice' required a flexibility not allowed for by a quantitative means of enquiry.

VOICE? SPEAK UP SO THAT I CAN HEAR YOU!

In a position to embark on the research process, I realised that I had been preoccupied with the need to select a topic likely to yield enough material to help me gain my EdD., with relatively little thought for my prospective participants. Having reflected on the views of Franklin, (1995) who argued that schools had the power to subject pupils to a series of rules and regulations which directed many aspects of their lives and Whittaker *et al.*, (1998) who acknowledged, that those oppressive practices were fostered in a climate where the voices of children were generally unheard, I began to wake up to the responsibility and opportunity offered to me by the task I was about to undertake. This was further reinforced by Kenworthy and Whittaker, (2000, p.220) who emphasised that for children with 'special needs', school rules and regulations were compounded by legislation which not only refused to hear their voice, but assumed that the child's impairment was 'the problem' or 'the difficulty' preventing them participating in mainstream education. Dunn (2000 p.109) recognised the absence of disabled children's voices and experiences from the research process, a factor further reinforced by Robinson and Stalker (1998, p.7) who highlighted the need to listen to what children had to say, stating:

While there is a well established body of knowledge about the way parents experience life with a disabled child, children's own accounts of their lives are largely missing, their voices have not been heard.

I may have been alerted to the need to hear the 'voices' of those involved, children, who traditionally had been deemed to have 'special needs', but what did I understand by 'voice'? and a 'voice' in what exactly? Swain and French (1998, p.40) detail the complexities of defining the word, not least being whether it refers to an individual or a group. In common with Stone and Priestly (1996, p.91), I would suggest that the term can be applied to both. When identifying the characteristics of emancipatory research they stress the need to give 'voice' to the personal whilst endeavouring to collectivise the commonality of disabling experiences and barriers.

Swain and French (1998, p.40) choose to use the term in several ways – the first as a say in any form of decision-making, planning or evaluation, the second as people telling their own stories and sharing their experiences. From this I began to clarify in my mind the 'voice' I envisaged my participants would have. Immediately this seemed to negate the purpose of the exercise. I, the researcher was imposing my understanding of the term on the participants. They may have had other ideas, but at least this was a starting point. Like Swain and French I wanted my participants to tell their stories and so the facility for them to do this had to be built into the methods used. As far as planning and evaluation were concerned, I would consult individuals to ensure accurate representation, before using any material supplied to me by them, but I would draw conclusions, communicate overall findings and after discussion with the students, make suggestions for change to those in authority. This I made clear to the students involved from the start. They were not involved in the choice of research methodology or the presentation of material.

In terms of social relations, at the end of the research process I considered there to have been a shift to a more equitable balance of power, with me, the researcher assuming a less dominant role. I hoped that throughout the proceedings the participants had felt able to articulate their views, experiences and opinions. Ultimately, however, I was responsible for what was written and for what I chose

to include. I shaped the chapters and their contents. Along with Priestly (1997, p.105) I would admit that at the time of writing the research was probably more empowering to me than to anybody else.

In spite of my influence on the final outcome, I would wish this project to be viewed as a first step along the path of the participants' self-empowerment. I would not claim to have rewritten procedure, but I trust that by the end of the venture I had at least succeeded in breaking one rule – that of silence being golden! Although my participants may not have felt in a position to shout out reality as they experienced it, I hope that they at least felt able to whisper their messages of concern, disapproval and disquiet, in the first forum allowing them to do so!

POSITIONALITY

The institution involved in the research study was a high-achieving comprehensive school in an affluent area. In spite of the school's many successes, as a classroom teacher, I had long been of the opinion that one of its greatest strengths was the presence of the disabled pupils. My opinion was determined not simply by what the school had to offer this particular group of students, but also what this group of students contributed in terms of raising the school's profile and in enhancing the social development of all pupils.

Authenticity and validity have to be concerns of any researcher. However, given my situation these factors were all the more pertinent. Having highlighted issues regarding power-relations and the rarity with which children's voices are heard, the danger of considering such a topic area became clear. Would the pupils feel able to speak openly and frankly to someone they regarded as representative of authority, their subject teacher in some cases? Would I only look, consciously or sub-consciously for the successes rather than the failures in my particular school? I approached all interviews with this uppermost in mind and I tried hard to create

as comfortable and reassuring an atmosphere as possible; an environment in which pupils could express their views and communicate their experiences. I believe I succeeded to some extent. Katy Connor felt able to detail instances of bullying, whilst Graham Connolly was happy to discuss sensitive issues relating to his impairment.

Hill argues that by being a teacher in the school the possibility of compliance is obvious and that asking awkward questions can be made more difficult (Hill, 1995, p.101). Whilst this may be true to some extent, I did, nevertheless feel that by taking steps to eliminate a perceived need for 'compliance', I was justified embarking on such an undertaking. This view is supported by Clough (1999, p.247), amongst others, who in his analysis of the role of the teacher-researcher, argues that the nature of inclusive education positively requires programmes of teacher-research. He suggests that inclusive principles and practices share with the principles and practices of teacher research, a central concern with:

informed participation and institutional transformation.

Swain (1995, p.87) commenting on his research stated that he found it easier to form relationships with students when he was seen to be a teacher rather than having from their viewpoint an undefined role. So, maybe there would be benefits as well.

Secondly, having considered my role as a teacher it was important to examine my position as a researcher – a non-disabled researcher, embarking on a study directly involving disabled pupils. The contribution of non-disabled researchers to disability research has raised questions and controversy within the disability movement. For some, absence of experience of disabling barriers results in their research lacking validity and authenticity. For others, disabled and non-disabled researchers live in a disablist society and so can both contribute to theory and research (Barnes and Mercer, 1997, p.6).

Oliver and Barnes (1997, p.811) fall into the latter category. They are not opposed to non-disabled people doing disability research, but rather suggest that disabled people's opportunity to participate in disability research has remained limited, despite the emergence of an emancipatory agenda. They advocate disabled people playing a far more prominent role in this field. I would agree that the growth and effectiveness of disability research depends on disabled people themselves becoming researchers. Institutions together with books and other materials need to be adapted to facilitate this taking place.

Branfield (1998, pp.143-144) argues against the non-disabled researcher. She believes that as non-disabled people are the ones who are going to have to change in order to end the reality of oppression experienced by disabled people, then the relation of the former to the disability movement necessarily involves some exclusion (Branfield, 1998, pp.143-144). I would dispute Branfield's claims on two counts. Firstly, analysis of my pupil-interviews leads me to believe that not only do non-disabled people need to change their attitude and approach, but also some disabled people do in relation to others with impairments. I would suggest that a hierarchy of impairment was established amongst some of the interviewees, with pupils classifying wheelchair users as in need of greater help, pity and concessions. Yvonne Gordon comments on her relief at not being selected for a competition involving disabled young people:

Y.G.: I didn't go and I'm glad about that, 'cos I thought: 'if there is somebody else who wants to do it and wasn't asked, I'd feel awful ... I mean you have to be in a wheelchair full stop, but I am able to walk and I wouldn't feel right!'

Secondly, I believe that Branfield's view, which eliminates non-disabled researchers from this field, reinforces segregation. The main thrust of my enquiry centred on the need for mainstream, inclusive education and on improving the experience for *all* pupils both disabled and non-disabled. Its outcome has implications for all of those involved and the need for us all to work together

(staff – teaching and non-teaching, pupils – disabled and non-disabled), emerges as an important factor in the process.

Ballard (1998) focuses on the importance of reducing the distance between disabled and non-disabled people in educational services. He stresses the importance of dissolving the category of ‘other’ in order for the rationale for the segregation of disabled students from the educational mainstream to lose force (Ballard, 1998, p.20). Duckett, writing in reply to Branfield’s article emphasises the need for non-disabled people to engage as allies to disabled people in disability studies and to speak up on concerns raised by and in the interests of, the disability movement, rather than having their voice silenced (Duckett, 1998, p.628). In carrying out my research, I aimed to adopt this role.

In summary, in an attempt to continually review my position as a teacher and as a non-disabled researcher, I made a conscious effort from the start of the research process to engage in both reflective and reflexive practices. Before embarking on the study, I conducted a mock interview, with a disabled student not involved in the research. Analysis of my questions and interview technique proved invaluable and informed my interview procedure. I continued to examine my interview procedure, throughout the whole process. My research diary proved invaluable in this respect. It allowed me from the outset to trace my fears, feelings and findings, providing me with a focus for my on-going self-review. It helped me to dismiss, reaffirm, modify and highlight ideas, viewpoints and approaches held from the start. Following the first two interviews, I commented in my research diary on 18 November 2000:

At the end of the first interview I could not believe that I had omitted or bottled out of asking what I felt to be the most sensitive question. I did not ask the first interviewee to tell me about their impairment! I made sure that I asked it second time round and felt that on that particular occasion I should have enquired more into the student’s association with other disabled pupils. In spite of myself I was aware of asking on occasions leading questions and I need to study students’ answers to these very carefully in the final analysis.

OWNERSHIP AND THE ROLE OF PARTICIPATORY AND EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH

The study needed to belong to the students. My ultimate aim was the self-empowerment of the individuals involved. At the very least I wanted them to feel 'ownership' of the research process. Students needed to believe that the research meant something to them. This had implications for methodology. When considering using a qualitative means of enquiry, I had to acknowledge criticisms that attempts to undertake disability research within this paradigm, had resulted in the apparent failure to have an effect on services for disabled people and their quality of life. This criticism was reinforced by the argument that such research is carried out by powerful experts on powerless subjects, with disabled people being forced to adopt passive roles in the research process, as researchers pursue avenues of enquiry that *they* perceive to be important, without taking into account the concerns of those they have chosen to involve (Oliver, 1992; Felske, 1994; Ward and Flynn, 1994). It has been suggested that following their studies such researchers have moved on, leaving their disabled subjects in the same situation as before (Oliver, 1992, pp.101-114). Oliver (1992, p.102) reacts against this, suggesting that:

Disability research should not be seen as a set of technical objective procedures carried out by experts, but part of the struggle by disabled people to challenge the oppression they currently experience in their daily lives.

As the disability movement has gathered momentum the role of the researcher and the researched, in this particular field, have started to take on new significance. In an attempt to rectify the situation described there has been a move towards 'emancipatory' research in the field of disability research. The term was developed as a result of extensive debates within the academic area of Disability Studies. It relates to the confrontation of social oppression at whichever level it occurs, consequently positively affecting the lives of disabled people (Oliver, 1992, pp.101-114). Within the field of disability research there

have been many discussions as to what emancipatory research actually means. These have included using the views and opinions of disabled people to design and conduct research projects on disability issues; using disabled researchers; recognising that disabled people have their own prejudices against other oppressed groups; assessing the validity of disability research which does not improve the quality of life of disabled people and challenging medical models of researching disability issues (Corbett, 1998, p.58).

According to Oliver what makes emancipatory research a new paradigm, therefore, is its ability to place control in the hands of the researched rather than the researcher (Oliver, 1997, p.17). On first consideration, this would seem the ideal way to proceed. However, a number of issues led me to believe that this would be neither effective, nor practicable and that in fact to embark upon the process and only partially succeed, could lead to serious questions regarding validity.

Primarily, Oliver (1997, p.17) points out that emancipatory research is not how to empower people, but once people have decided to empower themselves, precisely what research can do to facilitate this process. Given the belief that children and disabled children in particular, have rarely if ever had their 'voices' heard, their personal empowerment would seem too great a leap forward. Blishen (1969) states that when it comes to decision-making school children are the least powerful interest group in decisions affecting their lives commenting that:

in all the millions of words that are written annually on education, one viewpoint is invariably absent, that of the child, the client of the school. It is difficult to think of any other sphere of social activity in which the opinions of the consumer are so persistently overlooked (Blishen, 1969, p.67).

I would, therefore, support the views of Barton (1998, p.37) who acknowledges that creating the conditions in which emancipatory research can develop is a long-term task.

Secondly, Zarb (1992, p.51) would argue that unless disabled people themselves are actively involved in determining the aims, methods and uses of the research then clearly it can not be emancipatory as it can not lay claim to have any transformative potential.

In the light of the above, my research was clearly participatory, although some possible emancipatory outcomes provided a far-reaching aim of the study. I would undertake to continually review my role as the researcher, being reflexive and self-critical, seeking to be enabling rather than disabling. If my research, long-term, succeeded in positively changing the lives of the students involved then the outcome would be excellent. However, as a fledgling researcher to have embarked on unqualified claims about emancipatory research from the outset, would I feel have been ill-advised.

Having concluded that I was engaged in participatory research, I wanted those involved to feel some ownership of the process. Participatory research has developed from qualitative methodologies and involves disabled people at various stages of the research process, including dissemination of findings. Participatory research is a move away from the perceptions of researcher as expert and disabled person as passive subject (Bricher, 2000, p.789). It could be argued that participatory research is a pre-requisite of emancipatory research as it is a process whereby researchers and disabled people are learning from each other. My feelings on conducting my first interviews confirmed my decision to adopt this means of enquiry. I recorded in my research diary on 18 November 2000:

I was very much aware of the fact that I had entered a world where I had everything to learn and my interviewees everything to teach me.

Oliver (1997, p.26) would argue that participatory research challenges existing structures of power but that is all. It seeks to improve existing social and material relations of research production without ultimately eradicating them. This approach would be an appropriate and difficult task for my research.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Having accessed pupil files for background information, in an attempt to personalise the interviews as far as possible, I embarked on the process. I rejected the use of structured interviews as I set out to allow interviewees to develop areas of relevance and value to them. Bell (1996, p.93) highlights the fact that the structured interview is completed by the interviewer rather than by the respondent. It could be said to amount to little more than a face-to-face questionnaire (Parsons, 1984, p.80).

However, to have used a completely unstructured interview format would also have been inappropriate. I wanted to create as comfortable and as reassuring an environment as possible. In addition, as a new researcher I was of the opinion that the high level of interviewer expertise required to carry out totally unstructured interviews could prove a problem and I was concerned that trying to extract common threads may prove difficult. There was also the time factor. At the analysis stage, the time needed to do justice to all data collected during unstructured interviews is considerable (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.7).

I opted for the semi-structured interview technique. It seemed to give structure whilst still allowing flexibility in terms of the order and make-up of questions. Such an approach still allowed me to probe responses, to elaborate and ask for clarification, and it gave informants the opportunity to answer in terms of what they saw as important (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.7).

Having decided to interview learning support assistants as part of my research study, I selected eight, a third of those working at the school. I sought their involvement by asking them verbally. All those asked, agreed to take part. In advance of the interviews I issued some guidelines detailing the areas I hoped to cover. I gave them the opportunity to refuse to discuss sensitive issues, but all subjects were tackled by all interviewees. I knew that many of them felt strongly about certain issues and I wanted to hear what they had to say.

In my own personal interview agenda I had a number of set questions, but far fewer than those used with the pupils. The conversations developed from what the learning support assistants had to say, from what they perceived to be important and from what they wished to discuss. I opted not to issue the learning support assistants involved with transcripts of their interviews. I decided that as they knew me and felt confident with me, they would tell me as the interview progressed or following the procedure if there were areas they did not wish to include. The procedure I adopted with the young people involved was slightly different.

INTERVIEWING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

I opted to conduct semi-structured interviews with both the pupils selected and the learning support assistants subsequently involved. However, although the interview format was the same, my technique with each group was different. I have already outlined difficulties relating to power-relations. Embarking on interviews with the young people, as a non-disabled teacher and adult, put them and me in a difficult position. I had been aware of and concerned about this issue from the embryonic stages of the research process. I noted in my research diary on 29 February 2000:

I also need to be aware not only of the fact that the students I hope to interview are vulnerable, but also the fact that in many cases I am their teacher. Will I get accurate results? I don't quite know the way round this at the moment.

After some reflection, I sent out letters to obtain consent, to sixteen pupils. I requested a signature from both them and their parents. Thirteen pupils agreed to be interviewed. However, as Arksey and Knight (1999, p.116) point out, power and status differentials between children and adults mean that it is difficult for

young people to refuse to participate in a research study such as mine. Had so many of them agreed to be involved because they were afraid of saying no?

I was aware that this may have been why they consented, but given that they had agreed, I had to approach the process in as sensitive and careful a manner as possible. Arksey and Knight (1999, p.116) drew to my attention the fact that young people have less control than adults over the nature of their involvement in the interview procedure. I needed the young people to feel that they *did* have some influence over the whole experience. I had to gain their confidence, establish trust and provide an atmosphere likely to encourage communication and to facilitate conversation.

When preparing the interview agenda, I considered whether or not it was appropriate for me, or the students, to always use verbal means of communication. I stated in my research diary on 29 February 2000:

How I word my questions, whether indeed I always use verbal means of communication - this will need to be thought through!

I decided that verbal communication was appropriate. I was mindful of the need to ask questions containing language that the pupils would understand, whilst not patronising the students by over-simplifying the language used.

Having established my interview agenda, I took the step of issuing it to pupils a few days prior to the interview taking place. I wanted to put the volunteers at their ease and point out to them that the questions were to be used as a basis for the interview, but that the conversation could develop in the light of what was said. I also wished to assure them that if there were any areas they felt unable or unwilling to cover, they were at liberty to refuse to answer. I reiterated the fact that *they* were doing *me* a favour and informed them that following the procedure they would be issued with a transcript which they were free to read through and veto if they so decided.

I knew there were drawbacks to this approach. Transcripts may contain valuable material which I would be unable to use, if pupils decided what they or I had said was inappropriate. In fact, no pupil withdrew material. In addition, given that the interviewees were free to take the questions home and possibly discuss them with their parents, answers given may reflect their parents' views rather than the students. The opportunity to prepare written responses was also evident. Those involved may feel that they needed to tackle the exercise as a set homework, issued by a member of the teaching staff. This could lead them to answer as they felt necessary, rather than as they actually felt. On completion of the process, I reflected upon my concerns.

In some instances pupils *had* prepared responses. However, I believe that this did not hamper the spontaneity of proceedings. Pupils felt confident; they knew what they were being asked and in many instances their detailed answers acted as a springboard for unprepared questions which they were able to answer in equal depth and with the same degree of confidence. All the young people spoke competently and eloquently on the topics covered. One of the students, Yvonne Gordon *had* gone through the interview agenda prior to our meeting. She had thought carefully about her answers to the questions. She could not, however, plan for my follow-up questions, but the fact that she had a clear idea of the issues for discussion, enabled her to approach the process in a calm, relaxed and confident manner. I believe this was true for the other respondents.

R: Tell me about your disability – are you happy for me to use that term?

(A question on the agenda issued to pupils prior to the interview)

Y.G.: I don't mind 'disability', but when you think about it 'dis-ability' means that you are not able to do anything, which I'm really sick of, because when people see you in a wheelchair, they think: 'Oh, look! She's dumb! I had someone come up to me and say: (Yvonne imitates in a very condescending voice!) 'Would you like a lollipop?' And I went, 'No, thanks!' I think I was eating a Mars bar! When you think of DIS-ability – it

means you can't do anything! I like to think, yeah, disability is the right word, but I just think like, physically challenged ...!

R: But, Yvonne, it comes down to, who is doing the disabling? Is it the society around you that is disabling you?

(This was an unprepared follow-up question)

Y.G.: Yeah, I'm just physically challenged, because yeah, O.K. I need a wheelchair for round school, but disabled, it means disabled, you're not able to do anything! I mean I looked it up in the dictionary and it meant physically challenged, but it meant in a way not, what's the word, not able to do anything!

R: Not capable?

Y.G.: Yeah, that's it! Not capable! I thought I'm capable! I'm capable of writing! I'm capable of walking! I just need a bit of time to do it!

This section of this particular interview was just one example which led me to feel justified in issuing an agenda in advance. Clearly, the questions had led Yvonne to reflect and consider her own situation. She had used the dictionary and applied and discounted meaning to her situation. Her preparation had enabled her to answer the first question cited here in depth, but it had also helped her to give a mature and considered response to the second question quoted above. I would not presume to believe that the process had given Yvonne the opportunity to empower herself, but it had facilitated her ability to take a step in the right direction. I hope that Yvonne felt valued for what she had to say and that she welcomed the opportunity to speak for herself about her experiences. Karl (1995, p.14) observes that a sense of empowerment comes from:

*being recognised and respected as equal citizens,
and human beings with contributions to make.*

This was my aim as I undertook the interviews with the pupils concerned. Reay points out that the presence of the researcher always influences the narrative which emerges (Reay, 2000, p.150). This view is reinforced and developed by Moore and Sixsmith in relation to conducting interviews with children. They express concerns that even if the adult's own agenda is subjugated it is unlikely to

be silenced in the process of accessing a child's views (Moore and Sixsmith 2000, p.151). I share the concerns of these researchers. Through reflexivity, self-analysis and self-criticism I tried to be mindful of the dangers, but I undoubtedly put my adult interpretation on the answers given by the students. However, I hope that in the interview situation I was able to provide a comfortable environment, where those involved not only felt capable of expressing their viewpoints, but also encouraged to share their experiences.

SAMPLING

When considering factors appropriate to sampling I explored and rejected certain procedures. I felt that having opted to conduct semi-structured interviews probability sampling would have proved inappropriate. Such an approach seemed to lend itself to groups larger than my thirteen pupils and eight adult participants. Non-probability sampling appeared more feasible. Non-probability sampling was evident in my choice of school – the contact was already established, it being the school in which I taught.

I employed purposive sampling as far the pupils and the learning support assistants were concerned. Given that the school was the designated secondary institution for pupils with physical impairments, in the Borough, I selected all disabled pupils in years 8-13 as potential interviewees. I decided not to involve year 7 pupils, given that they had only just joined the school and had enough to contend with without taking part in the study. By including all disabled pupils, I had the opportunity to interview students of different ages, with varying academic and physical abilities, functioning with and without learning support assistants.

As far as the learning support assistants were concerned, I concluded that they were a diverse group in terms of experience, qualifications and strengths. I chose interviewees who offered the greatest variety as far as these fields were concerned. I wanted to include those who worked with individual pupils and

those who worked with a selection of students; and even though only two of the learning support assistants in the school were men, I was keen to gain their perspective and so chose one man to be involved in the process.

By using purposive sampling I was able to hand-pick my participants albeit on my judgement of typicality and using this method I was able to build up a sample tailored to my specific needs (Cohen and Manion, 1980, p.103).

ETHICAL ISSUES

Codes of ethics are very general, they do not even pretend to provide unambiguous guidance concerning particular situations or definitive answers to specific activities
(Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.128).

Although, as Arksey and Knights's comment would suggest, no strict guidelines exist regarding ethical conduct, as a non-disabled adult and teacher, conscious of the power-relations issue, I felt a particular responsibility towards the vulnerable young people I was interviewing. I needed to establish their trust and protect their interests. I knew, therefore, that I had to take measures to ensure that they felt secure, as regards the confidentiality and appropriateness of the project.

I considered that one of the most effective ways in which to carry out ethical research was to build good channels of communication. Consequently, I informed the young people of procedures at every stage of the process. Initially, this involved issuing a letter that required both the parents' and the pupils' signatures. I felt that by doing this, I was giving the young people some control over the process in its initial stages. The act of seeking informed consent can succeed in transforming people from passive objects into active subjects (Alderson, 1995, p.130). This seemed to me to be an essential component of participatory research.

In both the letter to parents and pupils and in the follow-up stages, I clearly outlined the reasons for the project and sought to reassure students as to anonymity. All pupils and the schools cited were issued with pseudonyms. As far as the learning support assistants were concerned, the need to preserve anonymity as regards gender, was also essential, given that there were only two male learning support assistants on the staff at the time of writing. I chose to issue this group of people with numbers rather than with names.

Once the interviews were underway, further considerations were necessary. Arksey and Knight (1999, p.127) cite undue intrusion into personal and private spheres, as a possible harm of the research process. For this reason, I took measures to ensure that pupils felt comfortable refusing to answer questions that they felt were inappropriate. Pupils were issued with core questions prior to the interview, at which point they were given the right to veto topic areas. This possibility was further reiterated at the start of the interview itself.

DATA ANALYSIS

There is no single right way to analyze qualitative data ... There are many different ways of analyzing qualitative data ... What links all the approaches is a central concern with transforming and interpreting qualitative data – in a rigorous and scholarly way – in order to capture the complexities of the social worlds we seek to understand (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, pp.2-3).

The research project provided the interviewees with a forum in which they could discuss their lived experiences and during the course of my conversations with them, I felt that I developed a deeper understanding of each individual. I had, therefore, a responsibility at the write-up stage, to capture the complexity of their different interests and concerns and to compose an analysis which reflected these. Whichever analytical strategy I chose, the need to accurately represent each participant's views – was of paramount importance to me.

I sought permission to record each interview on audiotape and was glad that I had done so. The ability to repeatedly listen to segments of interview, enabled me to read, not only into the words used by the participants, but also into those not used. In addition, the study of intonation and stress yielded important data. For example, the pleading in Yvonne Gordon's voice as she re-enacted a conversation that she had had with her father, demonstrated the extent to which she wanted the opportunity to meet with her friends on a social level, at a birthday party:

*Y.G.: I'm like: 'OH PLEASE LET ME GO!
 {Capital letters denote the pleading in Yvonne's voice.}*

The written text does not do justice to Yvonne's desire to go to the party, in the way that the spoken word does.

It could be argued that listening and then transcribing is a laborious and time-consuming process, but I saw it as a valuable opportunity to get closer to my interviewees' perspectives. In reality, the procedure of listening and re-listening kick-started my data analysis, beginning with the production of the first transcript and I would agree with Atkinson and Heritage (1984, p.150) who see the creation and use of transcripts as research activities in their own right, involving close and repeated listenings to recordings, which often reveal previously unnoted recurring features of the talk.

I did not want to lose sight of the close relationship I felt I had established with my pupil-interviewees in my analysis of what they had shared with me - valuable information was emerging from listening and re-listening to what the students had to say. The scope for ongoing reflection seemed vital and it was one of the reasons why I rejected the use of computer-aided analysis. I felt that the relatively remote and impersonal nature of computer-based analysis would negate the reflective purposes and value of my research, as I saw it. Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p.12) argue that computer-based analytic procedures rest on such tight forms of coding data, that coding and analysis become treated as synonymous.

They suggest that storage and retrieval of data, as opposed to analysis are the main uses of computer software.

I recognise the fact that, ultimately, I made my own sense of what the students had to say. Riley (1990, p.69) acknowledges the limitations on interpretations of qualitative data, stating that a researcher can only offer a personal interpretation and that all other interpretations are possible. However, by adopting the system I will outline, I did at least feel that there were opportunities for reflectivity and a greater chance that the pupils voices could be heard.

So, how did I formulate meaning? I read, re-read and read again, the pupil transcripts and then began organising the data in my notes and in my mind. Initial sorting helped me to link different segments of data and by highlighting and then cutting and pasting, I was able to bring the fragments together. This enabled me to create data categories, which I was able to define as having some common property or element (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.27). Strauss (1996, p.31) advocates this kind of sorting and coding of data as an essential organising analytical procedure, opening up enquiry and enabling the researcher to move towards interpretation.

Carrying out this procedure of slowly working through the data, allowed me to immerse myself in what the pupils had to say in a way that a computer program probably would not have allowed. With the research questions in mind, I sought meaning from the transcripts. On completion of the process, I investigated what Seale (2000 p.147) refers to as 'uncategorized activities'. He argues that their inclusion allows them to be accounted in the same way as searching for deviant cases. An example of where this analytical strategy was useful for making sense of the transcripts can be seen in my analysis of this extract from my interview with Katy Connor, a year 11 student. I asked her about her plans for the future:

R: Have you any idea what you want to do when you leave school?

K.C.: My mum wants me to go to uni!

- R: Do you want to go to uni?*
K.C.: I don't like school much, but my mum wants me to get an education, so there is no point being stubborn!
R: You go for whatever you want to go for! Is it just the idea of the work, or is it just something that doesn't appeal to you!
K.C.: No, it doesn't!
R: Have you thought of an eventual career?
K.C.: No! Something at home!

This discussion surrounding Katy's future does not seem relevant to any of the identified categories. However, it would be wrong to dismiss it. It would seem to reveal that Katy, an intelligent girl, has few or no aspirations as far as her career is concerned. She is prepared to accept her mother's suggestions. Study of the rest of the interview shows the problems Katy has encountered at school, both in terms of making friends and in terms of bullying. This section would appear to support earlier evidence that Katy lacks confidence and fears initial social encounters.

Sorting and labelling the data is important, but in itself it is insufficient. It is a necessary process on the road to interpretation, but it cannot provide, on its own, an answer to the research questions. What the analytical approach I chose did for me was to help me organise my thought patterns. It encouraged me to continually ask questions, to reflect on the emergent categories the data was falling in to and to start building theoretical explanations. It was as a result of this immersion in the themes and anomalies of what the interviewees had told me that clearer meaning began to surface.

To interpret and derive meaning from the data, the methods I employed were informed by the Glaser and Strauss 'grounded theory' approach (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.162), (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The development of grounded theory involves constantly searching and comparing the first few transcripts, in an effort to establish analytical categories which address the research questions (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.162). The constant reflection involved in making the analysis meant that I could also deviate from the research questions if the data

started to suggest that this was appropriate. As I progressed through the research journey, early analysis was complemented by further rounds of data collection, each of which served to refine the way I was organising and thinking about the data. In this way, as a researcher, I was able to establish links between the analytical categories and explore emerging concepts and theories by seeing how they stood up to further data (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p.162).

In terms of the learning support assistants at Stapleton High School, I began with the view that they provided welcome support to the students with whom they worked. This view was modified as I studied further interviews which seemed to suggest that the nature of the support offered made for either a positive or negative experience. This interpretation was further modified as interviews revealed that if the nature of the support was inappropriate, students could easily feel excluded. I concluded, therefore, that their approach to their job was of crucial importance in the inclusion process.

The effect of employing these reflective analytical strategies on the pupil-interview data, was dramatic. It convinced me to alter the direction of the rest of the research project. Initially, I had intended interviewing teaching staff as a follow-up to my interviews with the students. However, I opted instead to approach the learning support assistants at the school. I recorded in my research diary on 5 April 2001:

It is becoming clear that Learning Support Assistants have a vital role to play in pupils' socialising! There are so many examples of the pupils' experiences of their Learning Support Assistants! Teachers are rarely mentioned! Is this because I am a teacher and they do not want to upset me? I need to investigate further!

SUMMARY

The journey towards interpretation is complex, searching and involves continual questioning as regards the validity of meaning. I question the extent to which the

ensuing chapters accurately reflect the views and experiences of my participants and can only judge success in representation of their views by the positive reactions of both the pupils involved and of the learning support assistants.

CONCLUSION

There is a danger that an obsession with currently fashionable research methodologies whether quantitative or qualitative will mean that methodology dictates the research question rather than the research question determining the appropriate methodology (Jenkinson, 1997, p.82).

I set out to ensure that the research questions did in fact determine the appropriate methodology. Although certain obstacles stood in the way of my objectives, I hope I succeeded to some extent.

I wanted to hear what the young people had to say as regards their academic and social experiences of school. I wanted to discover what affected and contributed to, their inclusion. Ideally, the research would have been emancipatory. The young people would have formulated the agenda and dealt with issues determined by themselves. This approach, however, was not possible for a number of reasons.

Firstly, as documented by researchers such as Kenworthy and Whittaker (2000), Dunn (2000) and Robinson and Stalker (1998), children's voices are rarely heard. The facility allowing them to express their views and opinions is a new one and although self-empowerment was the ultimate goal of my research study, I had to be realistic. To have embarked upon the research process without providing any guidelines would have risked failure. I opted, therefore, for participatory research. This gave the young people the opportunity to be involved in the research process at each stage, without giving them the ability to control proceedings.

Secondly, having considered my positionality as an adult, teacher and non-disabled researcher, I was struck by the issue of power-relations. In an effort to reassure participants, to gain their trust and confidence, I felt the need to provide some structure to the proceedings. I approached my interviews with the young people in a different way to my interviews with the learning support assistants. I provided the young people with clearer guidelines as regards the interview agenda. It could be argued that this restricted their freedom to discuss important matters, I would suggest that the way in which it was done helped reassure them that it was acceptable to challenge the system and express personal opinions.

Selection of the sample for the project proved straightforward. As I was teaching in the school, I was able to employ non-probability sampling as regards the choice of institution. I targeted the young people and learning support assistants to be interviewed, therefore, I used purposive sampling as far as the participants were concerned. Ethical issues did, however, prove a major concern during the course of the study. The young people were vulnerable and consequently, I was continually questioning my motives and reviewing procedure. I was aware of the privileged position in which I found myself. Never before had these students been provided with such a forum. I had to get it right. Self-review, reflexivity and reflectivity, were essential throughout the interview process and in the data analysis - my research diary proved invaluable in this respect.

When considering methodology and my responsibility in the whole process, one issue remained paramount, I wanted to represent the situation as it was, as closely as possible from the eyes of my interviewees. My approach did have its drawbacks, but I hope that in the ensuing chapters which reflect my findings, the voices of those involved can be heard, providing justification for my choice of methodology.

BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Disabled people have been marginalised and excluded in Western society for centuries (Oliver, 1983/1996, p.271), none more so than disabled children (Middleton 1992, p.271).

INTRODUCTION

The movement promoting mainstreaming for disabled children gathered momentum following the publication of the Warnock Report in 1978. It was believed that mainstreaming had many advantages, including the establishment of environments whereby disabled pupils could be 'integrated' and consequently educated alongside their non-disabled peers (Kenward, 1996, p.6). It was assumed that placing disabled pupils in mainstream classrooms would result in increased social interaction between them and their non-disabled peers.

The movement achieved its objective only in the sense that integration was widely accepted as a principle, but it failed, in many instances, to be implemented in many local education authorities. Little research attention was given to the individual factors which should make for success (Jenkinson, 1997, p.59). The number of disabled pupils who found themselves successful members of mainstream schools was limited. Mainstreaming and indeed integration became synonymous with placing pupils who existed first as a segregated group, in so-called 'ordinary' schools and forcing them to conform to what existed with little regard for their individual differences or experiences.

Difrancesco (2000, p.108) argues that research carried out since 1980 is clear:

Both academically and socially kids do better in integrated settings than in segregated settings – stuff good teachers have known all their lives.

I would argue that both academically and socially children do better in *inclusive* settings. Inclusive schooling is not synonymous with integration or mainstreaming, nor is it solely concerned with the education of students with impairments, but rather the philosophy underlying it is that schools have a responsibility to meet the curriculum needs of all the children, using full school resources to provide an education for each student. In addition, a second aim of the inclusive schools' movement is to enhance social skills and community participation (Jenkinson, 1997, pp.140-141). The school setting at the centre of my research provided integration, but did it foster inclusion? This was at the heart of my study.

FULFILLING POTENTIAL! – ACADEMIC BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Using quantifiable evidence I examined the progress made by the disabled pupils during their time at Stapleton High School. I acknowledge that such a procedure has its limitations and fails to take into account factors outside the results themselves. Nevertheless, it seemed to be the clearest evidence available to suggest progression or lack of it.

Why consider the academic development of students at all? My initial thoughts on the research topic were grounded in the belief that academically and socially disabled pupils needed to feel they were getting a 'good deal' in mainstream education. In the early stages of my thesis, I believed that these two aspects would be dealt with equally in my findings. Indeed, early entries in my research diary reflect a concern with the academic development of disabled pupils at Stapleton:

31.1.00 Yvonne has had quite a bit of time off school as a result of illness. She has worked very hard to maintain the same standard as her peers ... Arrived to the lesson 40 minutes late today – she had been to physiotherapy. As a consequence she found it difficult to follow the remaining 30 minutes. Could the physiotherapy session have been conducted at some other time?

22.3.00 I continue to be concerned about Yvonne. I have the class 3 times a fortnight and she misses half of the Monday morning first lesson in order to see the physiotherapist.

I would not wish to dispute my anxieties, which still remain as far as scenarios such as the above are concerned. However, as I interviewed the pupils, including Yvonne, worries about their academic development, their ability to achieve their potential and the role of the class teacher in the whole process seemed to be of limited significance. I reminded Yvonne that she had regularly been absent from my lessons. Given that she was making progress in my subject she dismissed my concerns and moved on to the next point. It could be argued that I did not ask the right questions, that I did not give pupils sufficient opportunity to discuss this issue in depth, or that as a classroom teacher known to some of them, but not all of them, they felt uneasy criticising or challenging what was going on in the classroom. Having considered these factors and having studied their interviews I concluded that this was not the case. There were issues relating to curriculum content that will be examined later, but the pupils' openness as far as a number of other sensitive areas were concerned led me to believe that their academic development was not a major issue for them.

This was true for all but one pupil interviewed. William had a real problem with the fact that he had, on arrival at the school, been placed in what he termed a 'special needs' class' for Maths. When interviewed, he was in his fourth year at Stapleton High. He had moved sets during his time there and found himself in a higher group at the time of interviewing. He saw the fact that he had managed to progress as proof that those responsible for his original setting were wrong.

R: Are you happy with the way in which disability issues are handled in school?

W.C.: I think they are handled too far!

R: Do you? Can you explain what you mean by that?

W.C.: Like when I first came to the school, they put me in the lower set for Maths, saying 'Oh! It's Special Needs!' Well, I'm pretty good at Maths and I don't really need to be in the lower set and they said, 'Oh, no! It's just that people with special needs go into it and it wasn't anything to do with lower

curriculum, but it was like you did the most basic stuff you can think of in Maths!

R: So, did you move out of there quite quickly?

W.C.: Well yeah, no, it wasn't quickly, but I got to my SATS {Standard Assessment Tests – taken in year 9} last year and I proved them wrong, that I'm better than that!

R: So which class are you in for Maths now?

W.C.: I'm in Intermediate Studies class.

I believe that here, the issue is not necessarily whether or not William was appropriately placed, in the 'special needs' set for Maths, when he arrived at the school. Analysis of school procedure for setting, proved as equitable and fair as possible. Based on prior achievement, it would appear that William was correctly positioned in year 7, his first year at Stapleton High. It was to his and his teachers' credit that he had, whatever his motivation, been able to make enough progress to warrant his moving into a higher ability group. I believe, that rather than this example serving to illustrate problems regarding academic development, it serves to reinforce social difficulties discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Two factors emerge from this incident. Firstly, a breakdown in communication is clearly evident. Even though there was a clear rationale behind the setting arrangements and even if this had been explained, the fact remains that William was not clear as to why he had been placed in that particular class. Had his progress to date been discussed and the possible benefits of him being put into the small 'special needs' group highlighted, he would probably have more readily accepted his placement.

In the absence of a clearer explanation, William blamed his impairment. In citing his concerns earlier on, it is obvious that he equated physical impairment with academic impairment. He believed that his impairment set him apart from the mainstream and was, therefore, responsible for him finding himself in a class set aside from the mainstream.

He recounted his year 7 experiences as a year 10 pupil and in hindsight saw his differences as equalling inferiority. It may seem reasonable to assume that even

though he had attended a mainstream secondary school for over three years, although he felt integrated, he did not experience full inclusion. He felt that his differences were not celebrated, rather they were disabling. The absence of a forum to discuss disability issues within the school, could be in part to blame for this. This will be covered in depth later on in this chapter. However, to sum up, William must have felt that the institution of which he found himself a part, did not foster his active and meaningful participation, nor was it in a position to allow him to fulfil his potential.

William believed that he was being treated as academically inferior, at Stapleton High School. I would suggest that it was not necessarily academic inferiority, but rather a general perception of inferiority fostered by an establishment that needed to make a greater commitment to inclusion. However, throughout the interviews, a general viewpoint emerged from answers given to questions related to special schools. When asked about the advantages and disadvantages of special school education, several of the pupils both those who had and had not previously attended a special school expressed the belief that the latter was academically inferior.

K.C.: ... my mother thought I was bright enough to move out {of the special school}. She thought I was restricted at Bishop Stephen ... I don't know! I mean Bishop Stephen was not very challenging at all ...!
(a former pupil of a special school)

Y.G.: {in reference to Stapleton} it's more. it's more, it's better. You did not really learn anything in Bishop Stephen. (a former pupil of a special school)

R: Would you have wanted to go to that school?
(special school)

Z.B.: No!

R: Why not?

Z.B.: I don't know! I think it's because it was a special school. I am not academically disabled (sic), just physically! (pupil's whole career spent in mainstream schools)

Academically, disabled pupils at Stapleton seemed to benefit from an inclusive education, in the sense that measures were in place allowing them to access the same curriculum as their non-disabled peers, to take the same examinations and to achieve results commensurate with their ability. In examinations, for example, pupils were provided with enlarged papers, amanuenses and readers, if necessary. In terms of GCSE and A level results, Stapleton is a good school.

However, it would be remiss not to mention the growing tensions that exist, in the present political climate, between school improvement concerns and the values underpinning inclusive education. Schools under pressure to perform well in league tables face dilemmas if over-subscribed. Should they accept pupils with physical impairments, or children with learning difficulties, risking the possibility that academically they may experience problems? If such pupils are admitted into the institution will resources be channelled in their direction to ensure that they perform to the best of their ability? The studies carried out by Semmel et al. (1995, p.156) reveal that mainstream schools which produce the best outcomes for the majority of students in terms of academic achievements, do not necessarily produce the best results for disabled students, even when criteria based on specially designed measures of academic performance are considered. I would argue that most of the pupils interviewed *did* feel that academically, Stapleton was fulfilling their educational needs to some extent. One of the pupils interviewed serves as a useful example. He relies on a reader and amanuensis, both during lessons and for his examinations. In his GCSEs he achieved five A*s and six grade Bs. Perceived academic success cannot, however, be considered the sole indicator of inclusivity.

FORMING FRIENDSHIPS! – SOCIAL BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

... when compared to those without disability (sic), the quality of social experiences of children with disability (sic) is poor (Baker and Donnelly, 2001, p.71).

Madge and Fassam (1982, pp.62-67) suggest that disabled children have more difficulty than others in forming and maintaining friendships and that social life is in general far more restricted. Writing in 1982 they argue that any attempt to evaluate the 'success' of a scheme to integrate disabled pupils into mainstream education should take into account the pupils' ability to make friends under such conditions.

WHAT IS 'FRIENDSHIP'?

Before analysing the students ability to form friendships, it was important to discover what they understood by the term. Friendship is difficult to quantify. As individuals we all have differing understandings and expectations of this voluntary relationship. When commenting on the interviewees' viewpoints I draw on the factors most commonly identified by them.

Allan (1989, p.17) echoes the views of Paine, 1969; McCall, 1970 and Jerrome, 1984, when he defines friendship as:

a voluntary, informal and personal relationship

Indeed, friendships are the only *voluntary* relationships we form in our lives.

Duck (1991, pp.6-7) focuses on the characteristics of a friend.

He describes a friend, in ideal circumstances, as someone who is open, affectionate, trusting, helpful and reliable, who respects our privacy and does not criticise us in public. He goes on to suggest that important aspects of friendship include: care, support, loyalty as well as putting high priority on the other person's interests. In answer to the question: 'What makes X a good friend?' the young people I interviewed did cite some of these qualities, as well as adding many other merits of their own.

Whatever their understanding of the term, why did the young people place such an emphasis on the importance of friendship? In fact, why do we need friends at all? Crucially, we all want to belong and to be accepted. We do not want to feel

socially rejected. Friendships give us a sense of inclusion, a sense of being a member of a group. Friends help us to see where we stand as regards other people (Duck, 1991, pp.12-15).

In adolescence, people become aware that different degrees of friendship can exist. Adolescents learn to expect different things of their friends; focusing on intimate sharing, secrets, private knowledge, trust, loyalty and genuineness. Indeed, friends are an integral part of school life. It is often within friendship groups that young adults make sense of their experiences (Vlachou, 1997, p.14). Most importantly adolescents concentrate on the possibilities of self-development through friendships, that is to say they select friends who help them to develop their personality and their identity (Duck, 1991, pp.143-160).

I would suggest that the young people I interviewed saw the development of friendships as representative of their inclusion; a means to express and develop their identity and to have it accepted.

WHAT MAKES 'X' A GOOD FRIEND?

Four factors emerged during the course of the interviews, which appeared to form the essential components of friendship as far as the young people were concerned. Primarily, they saw a good friend as somebody who shared their interests. Yvonne talks about her friendship with one of the girls in her class:

Y.G.: And then she started going to dance club which I used to go to and we just became really good mates and now she is in our teaching set ...

Steven focuses on his main reasons for developing friendships with two boys:

R: Tell me about those friends! What made them good friends?

S.E.: One of them was because we used to do all the same things and the other one was good at football.

Attwood and Gray (accessed March 2002, p.1) discuss the concept of friendship, basing it on four levels between early childhood and adolescence. Level three, representing approximately nine to thirteen year olds is said to be based on common interests. The benefits of developing friendships based on shared interests cannot be under-estimated. However, soon after this initial encounter Yvonne was unable to pursue her interest in dancing due to her physical condition. Fortunately her friendship had already been formed. Restricted access to sporting and extra-curricular activities, together with distance needed to travel to school, can make sharing interests with contemporaries difficult for pupils with physical impairments.

The second crucial factor identified by the pupils interviewed, was the importance of being able to confide in their friends, particularly as regards their impairment.

*R: Do your friends know about your impairment?
Do they ask about it?*

*K.C.: _____ and _____ {gives the names of two of her friends}
know. ... it's one of the first things I tell people when
I get friendly with them, so they know!*

Duck (1991, p.17) suggests that friends provide us with the opportunity for self-expression and the facility to reveal private details about ourselves. An indication as to the depth of our relationship with another person may be the extent to which we feel able to relay sensitive information about ourselves. The lack of opportunity to discuss disability issues in Stapleton High School will be detailed later in the chapter. This state of affairs must make the young people more guarded as far as sharing information about their disability is concerned and much more in need of having to share that information given that it forms an essential component of their identity.

Yvonne highlights the benefits of openness, detailing the care and support she received from her friend at a particularly difficult time.

- R: *Do your friends know all about your _____
{name of her impairment given}?*
- Y.G.: *_____ {gives the name of her best friend} knows
a lot! Sometimes it will be the day after I have been
to the hospital and I'll be really upset ... and she will
say: 'what's wrong?' and I'll tell her and she'll just
say: 'well, what's going to happen?' So, she asks!*

Graham on the other hand, focuses on the difficulties of self-disclosure. He recognises that the more you reveal about yourself, the more vulnerable you make yourself and so the more trust and confidence you are having to express in your friend's loyalty (Duck, 1991, p.74). Although able to outline his impairment, he did not feel able to disclose all the details for fear of ridicule.

- R: *And what about your friends, do they know about your
impairment?*
- G.C.: *Em ... most of the details! ... There are a few details
I don't give them ... There are bits they may find more
amusing!*

The issue here is that if Graham had felt that he could trust a friend implicitly, he may have been able to share even the most sensitive information about himself. Graham, as will later be revealed encountered problems interacting with peers.

Thirdly, the interviewees saw a friend as somebody who was there to 'help them out', both verbally and physically:

K.C.: my then best friend ... actually stood up for me.

Yvonne discusses her involvement in a dance competition:

*Y.G.: ... it was fun, apart from the lift being broken, so
I asked _____ {gives the name of her friend}
if she could give us a hand down the stairs and
she said, 'yeah, hop on!' I hopped on her back
and she went down the stairs ...*

At their most successful, arrangements, such as this one between Yvonne and her friend appear natural and normal. Yvonne's friend was quite happy to lend the physical support her friend needed, just as say, in another friendship one pupil may help another with homework. She saw her friend's need and met it. Whilst I would not advocate a student being put in danger as a consequence of a friend's actions, such situations promote social inclusion more than any other. They provide an opportunity for the student to function as part of their peer group, free from adult support. LSA1 provides an excellent example of this when discussing the relationship of one of her former students with his friends:

LSA1: '... the boys he was with ... seemed to sense what he needed. I mean _____ {gives the name of his best friend} was absolutely wonderful, even to the point where if he had an itch they would lift his arm before he asked them to... They just seemed to do things automatically. There was always somebody who would offer, partly because of his personality.

Fourthly, the students valued their friends' efforts to *involve* them in everyday events. This supports the view that friendships are important in the sense that they make us feel as though we belong.

R: What makes _____ and _____ {names of friends given} good friends?
S.S.: Well, they both talk to me, they don't leave me out of things! _____ {gives the name of one of the girls} just talks to me when we get together! She likes talking about her friends and everything! I like that sort of thing! I like people to talk about anything and everything, but some of my friends don't do that!

This seemingly normal form of interaction was obviously valued by Suzanne, who felt it contributed to her sense of belonging.

Although not overtly stated by the young people interviewed, the value of friendships in helping to promote self-esteem, to form identity and to foster

inclusion, can not be ignored. Asher and Gottman (1982, p.132) state that childhood relationships of which friendships are a part, affect not only an individual's social success but also their educational achievements. Friendships contribute significantly to a student's experiences of school. I have cited positive experiences of friendship, but have also hinted at the difficulties.

As this chapter will reveal, situations in which many of the disabled pupils find themselves, positively discourage the formation of meaningful friendships. Pupils need to have the confidence to make the first move when it comes to forming a new relationship. Friendships start when we do something sociable (Duck, 1991, p.64). The absence of the facility to allow disabled pupils the opportunity to interact with peers can leave students unaware of how to behave in seemingly ordinary situations. For, example, Graham's reaction to a fellow pupil asking to borrow a piece of equipment was seen as inappropriate by his learning support assistant.

LSA6: ... there was a situation where one of the children in year 7 came up to him and asked if they could borrow something and he said: 'No!' and I said: 'That's wrong! If you want people to come to you and be your friend, you are going to have to give!'

More disturbingly, it can lead an individual to lack self-confidence and to view their inability to make friends as the result of personal inadequacy. This was true for Katy:

K.C.: I was bullied for two years ... {she goes on to talk about the pupil who bullied her}. She is a popular girl and I am not.

Research indicates that sense of community, emotional stability, communication, provision of help, maintenance of self-esteem, provided by friends, serve to support and integrate a person's personality (Duck and Lea, 1982, p.24). The students interviewed gave examples of instances where this was in evidence.

However, the important influence of friends on the development of identity and the sense of inclusion serve only to reinforce the fact that where friends are absent from a student's school experience, the social and possibly the academic development of that individual are affected.

Carrying out and consequently studying the interviews with pupils, it became clear that social experiences formed a major preoccupation. The more I analysed the interviews before me the more I objected to Stobart's (1986, p.2) comments:

... integration will only be a successful learning experience, particularly for the handicapped, (sic) if there is a deliberate structuring of the situation and if behaviours are targeted and reinforced by teachers and/or peers. For many handicapped (sic) children this is likely to involve training in social skills.

The comments dating back to 1986 suggest that the disabled pupils themselves require training in social skills. They seem to ignore the obstacles I was becoming increasingly aware that such pupils needed to overcome, in order to develop any meaningful social experience of mainstream education. This form of emphasis on the expertise and actions of professionals underplays the significance of the development of peer-friendships and forms of interaction. Even where there is an acknowledgement of the importance of friendships and social interactions, their lack of realisation is attributed to individual deficits (Baker and Donnelly, 2001, p.82).

Although I feared the reality of Jenkinson's statement:

There is little evidence of firm friendships forming as a result of integration (Jenkinson, 1997, p.52).

I would suggest that there *should* be evidence of firm friendships forming as a result of inclusion.

My research suggests that the issue is about institutional deficits. Four areas emerged as significant barriers to friendship: travel implications, lack of extra-curricular and sporting opportunities, the absence of disability issues on the school curriculum and the involvement of learning support assistants.

TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS

Stapleton High is the school designated for pupils with physical impairments in the Authority. As a consequence, pupils travel to school from distances as far away as ten miles. For five of the students I interviewed Stapleton was their local comprehensive school, the other eight arrived daily in taxis, by public transport or with parents, from all over the Borough.

I had assumed that pupils would have felt privileged to be members of a school with such a good reputation. Having listened to the views of my interviewees, my initial assumption proved to be unsupportable. All of those interviewed for whom Stapleton was not their local school, expressed a preference for attending their local comprehensive had it been available to them. Thus, there appeared to be a divide between those pupils for whom Stapleton was their local school and those pupils who had to travel a considerable distance to get there. Local pupils appeared to have a wider circle of friends. They seemed more confident in the knowledge that fellow primary school pupils knew about their impairment. Steven gives the following response when asked about his friends' knowledge of his impairment:

S.E.: Some of them know, some of them who have gone through Christ Church {local primary school} with me, they know a lot, but the ones at Stapleton don't know much ... In primary school I had to go out of lessons quite a lot to have hearing tests, so they would say: "where were you today?" and that!

Jenkinson (1997, p.40) sees it as a child's right to attend their local school, Vlachou (1997, p.146) also highlights its importance:

Proximity is of great significance in the creation of friendships, and to ignore its importance is to ignore a core element in the generation of interactions that can lead to the making of friendships.

Even the most outwardly outgoing pupils living at a distance from the school appeared to have to go to extraordinary lengths outside the regular school day to be able to socialise with their peers; the mobility issue aggravating the situation in many instances. Katy relies on her friends to travel to her house seeing herself as fortunate due to her proximity to the local train station:

K.C.: I am very lucky actually because I live about 5 minutes' walk from the station and they live on the station at _____ {Katy states where they live} so they know their way to my house from the station.

It is worth noting that this particular student led a very lonely existence until four years into her secondary education at Stapleton. She saw the advantages of Stapleton in terms of her academic development, but favoured the social experiences at her special primary school. She traced back what she considered to be, her problems socialising and her lack of confidence, to the fact that she arrived at the school and was faced with pupils who already knew each other from primary school:

K.C.: I felt that they all knew each other from primary school and they'd all known each other since they were little and if they wanted to talk to me they would. That is why I was very lonely for a few years, because I couldn't make the first move. I can't do that!

Graham talks about his feelings on arrival at Stapleton:

G.C.: I was a bit worried, I didn't know anybody and I was starting totally over again!

Even those pupils who readily made new friends, found it difficult sustaining and developing friendships outside school, due to distance. Suzanne when probed actually saw very little of her friends outside the school day.

S.S.: I don't see my friends because they live quite near each other ...

Gillian informed me that she had a best friend, Emma, but again emphasised that they saw very little of each other outside school due to distance.

The chance to socialise was seen as a real treat by Yvonne who discussed in detail her keenness to attend a friend's party. The arrangements required for this to take place would be taken for granted by other pupils. In Yvonne's case, however, her father had to accompany her on the train to the destination of the party. She then had to travel home by taxi; herself and her father sharing the cost. Her eagerness to be involved was evident as she re-enacted the conversation that took place with her father as she pleaded with him to allow her to go:

R: So, do you have problems if you want to see your friends outside school because you live in _____ {place where she lives is given} Or do you see them outside school?

Y.G.: I don't! It's only if I have been asked to a party. I'm like OH PLEASE LET ME GO! {pleading in her voice}

In only one instance did a pupil interviewed, travelling from outside the area, appear to spend time with his friends on a regular basis and that was as a result of his non-disabled friend allowing him to stay at his house on a Friday and Saturday night:

I.B.: ... because I live in _____ {Ian states the place he lives}, I stay at his every weekend ... He has been dead good in that because otherwise I wouldn't be able to go out at night. I would have to go home at about 5.

Interestingly, I interviewed one pupil for whom Stapleton was his local school, but who had developed his impairment during his time there. I asked him how he would have felt if he had had to move to Stapleton from another school due to his impairment. His first concern was for his friends.

R: How do you think you would have reacted if you had gone to _____ {name of another school given} and then you had had to come here?

C.N.: It depends if my friends were all there!

The geographical barrier puts pupils at an immediate disadvantage. Even if pupils form friendships within school in spite of other pupils knowing each other from primary school, only those pupils whose friends and families are prepared to overcome distance, can reinforce those friendships outside school (Baker and Donnelly, 2001, p.75). Newton et al. (1995, p.75) argue that only in those situations do long term friendships result. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.75) states that this disconnection between school and family environments deprives children of potentially rich and necessary social opportunities.

It was clear that distance was a factor, particularly at a school where the vast majority of pupils came from local feeder primary schools. The interviews seemed to suggest that disabled students arriving in year 7 with friends from primary school, on the whole, settled quicker, appeared more confident and enjoyed a more positive start to their secondary school education.

SPORTING INVOLVEMENT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

... it is rarely possible to eliminate physical disabilities (sic), but it is possible to prevent them becoming social handicaps and this is the principle of normalisation which aims not to make people normal so much as to make their conditions normal.

There are many areas in which the normalisation of physically disabled (sic) children can be encouraged, but perhaps of foremost importance is in their social life. Clubs or trips should in the main be integrated (Madge and Fassam, 1982, p.147).

Pupils informed me of the difficulties they encountered if they wanted to stay behind after school to take part in clubs or other events. Travel restrictions often meant that they had to leave at the end of the school day. As I analysed the interviews certain pupils appeared to detail the fact that friendships were forged and reinforced through taking part in sporting activities, football teams, for example. Steven, a local boy cited being the captain of the football team as the best aspect of primary school. When asked what made his friends 'good friends', he stated:

S.E.: One of them was because we used to do all the same things and the other one was good at football.

I began to question the whole concept of out-of-lesson activity and its implications for social interaction. I was consequently struck by the number of references to this area in the interviews carried out. Pupils were keen to take part in extra-curricular activities, but apart from a few students involved in music and drama groups, participation was limited. The young people were conscious of physical restrictions preventing them from joining in. Zoë speaks about after-school clubs of which she is aware:

Z.B.: I know there is gymnastics and badminton and dance. I know quite a lot of them, but I can't really do them.

Yvonne and Chris also highlight difficulties undertaking after-school pursuits that would interest them:

*Y.G.: I really, really, really want to do this tennis, but no go!
So, that is what I would love to do, the tennis club!*

C.N.: Duke of Edinburgh would be good for my applications... I knew from the start that it would be too hard if I tried.

I considered the extent to which their inability to participate was just unfortunate, or actually damaging. I concluded the latter. Lesley Campbell at Mencap underlines the need for schools to look at the way that children with additional needs are integrated into the extra-curricular life of the school (Campbell, 1999, p.1).

The personal benefits resulting from involvement include improved self-esteem and opportunities for social interaction. Yvonne discusses the value of an after-school sports' club at the special school she used to attend.

Y.G.: That really did good stuff. It really gave people confidence.

With the provision of equipment, staff – including learning support assistants and improved travel arrangements, pupils can be provided with important extra-curricular opportunities. This is borne out by LSA6:

R: Do you think that there are enough after-school facilities and extra-curricular activities for disabled pupils to get involved in?

LSA6: Not in this school, not at all!

R: Do you think there is a tendency to think that they {disabled pupils} can't do it {in relation to sport}?

LSA6: When I first came here for instance, I thought: 'No, they can't do that!' Now I think to myself: 'If they want to do it, let them have a go!'

LSA6 now actively involved in the sporting development of disabled pupils at Stapleton High School, arrived at the institution with preconceived ideas relating to what they believed the pupils could and could not do. Their perceptions have obviously changed as they have worked with the young people concerned. It would seem to me that in the quest for a truly inclusive institution, this adds

weight to the argument later discussed concerning the dissemination of information relating to disability issues and the opening of channels of communication. Once measures to facilitate the necessary interaction are in place, myths surrounding the capabilities and limitations of disabled pupils can begin to be dispelled.

Teamwork, camaraderie and good communication skills seem to me essential components of sports such as football, netball and hockey. The pupils I interviewed were aware that sporting clubs involving these activities took place outside school. However, in spite of the sporting prowess of many of the students in swimming, wheelchair racing and cricket clubs, unconnected with the school, only one pupil interviewed took part in regular, organised, extra-curricular school sport. Another pupil had previously been a member of a lunchtime dance club, but felt her physical condition no longer allowed her to take part. It was, however, through that activity that she had met her best friend:

Y.G.: And then she started going to dance club which I used to go to and we just became really good mates ...

It was interesting to note that Ian, the student travelling a distance to school who stayed with his friend at the weekend seemed to have forged his friendship with a group of boys through playing football. When asked what he did at breaks and lunchtimes, he stated:

I.B.: ... play football! That's all I do really.

Ian's sport was played on an informal basis. He was not a member of a school club or team.

It became clear that many pupils were missing out on the opportunities to socialise offered by sporting activities; not only in after-school clubs, but also during P.E. lessons. Many of them felt that such classes could be more inspiring. A number of them spent their time playing sports such as table hockey, with their

learning support assistants - interaction with their peers being denied. Katy commented that she would like there to be more sport available to her:

K.C.: I would like to be able to do something else but I couldn't say what! ... I used to do lots of different things. In year 7 we used to go outside on the field, take a basket ball and play my version of footy, but now that care assistant has left and I do things like I.T.

Gayle also highlighted the need for greater variety.

R: Do you enjoy P.E.?

G.L.: It gets a bit boring after weeks ... I have to do it all over and over again!

Gayle was commenting here on the fact that the school operated a rotational system of sporting activities for her year group in order to allow pupils to participate in as many different sports as possible. However, due to her impairment, Gayle was limited to one activity and as the other groups changed she had to repeat the same activity week after week.

There was only one sport where pupils were able to practise and compete on a team basis and that was boccia. (Boccia is a form of bowling specifically designed for pupils with physical impairments.) Many pupils spoke enthusiastically about the medals that they had won at county level. One of the pupils spoke at length about boccia competitions taking full days to complete. She described the whole experience:

Y.G.: It's a team effort! They think that if you roll the winning ball, then you are the winner! You are not – the team is – because all you have said is: 'what do I do?' ... So, it's a team effort!

The need for social interaction and co-operation in this situation is clear. The sense of achievement resulting from working together is evident in Yvonne's comments. However, I refer back to the quote from Madge and Fassam at the

beginning of this section; this activity is open to disabled pupils only. I would not under-estimate the importance of pupils with physical impairments interacting with their disabled peers, but the lack of involvement of non-disabled pupils does not make for inclusion for either group of students.

After-school music and drama clubs took place at Stapleton but once again travel restrictions made staying behind difficult. Pupils felt barred from the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme open to year 10 upwards. A number of them felt the 'expedition' component was beyond their capabilities and although this section could be replaced by an element for disabled pupils, it was not at the time offered in school and pupils had not enquired about it.

R: The Duke of Edinburgh, is that something you would like to get involved in?

GiC.: Yes, because there is a disabled one that I can do!

R: Right, so that might be something to be looked at really, mightn't it? So, could you sign up for the Scheme?

GiC.: No, because there are walks that I can't do!

R: And in the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme for disabled young people, are they replaced?

GiC.: I don't know!

The variety of activities: skill-based, sport, community service, offered by the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, are beneficial to all pupils. These activities engender social interaction, independence and self-confidence. It should be possible for teachers and/or learning support assistants to provide disabled pupils with the same entitlement as all other students.

A lunchtime club had been available at one time for disabled pupils and a friend. Pupils were able to take along their non-disabled peers and could play a variety of games including table tennis. It was welcomed by the students.

R: Are there any extra-curricular activities that you would like to see at Stapleton, that we don't do?

GiC.: It would be good if they had a disabled club (sic) like they used to!

Katy who has already been identified as one of the pupils who had problems settling at Stapleton comments on her approval of the club:

K.C.: I didn't really have any friends as such and then this lunchtime thing started and it was good! And then _____ and _____ {gives her friends' names} came along, so I didn't go, but I was actually annoyed! It would have been better if it had started earlier. It would have given me something to do at lunchtime!

The fact that this club took place at lunchtime, made it accessible to students unable to alter after-school travel arrangements. It provided a much needed forum for disabled pupils to meet with each other and with their non-disabled peers; to socialise, to share experiences and to take part in organised activities. Changes in the school day have contributed to the closure of this club.

Whilst acknowledging that there are issues regarding sporting activities and extra-curricular provision at Stapleton, one activity stood out as a positive example of social interaction, a symbol of inclusion – the Kielder Challenge. The event takes place every year on a regional and ultimately a national level if teams get that far. It involves disabled pupils and their non-disabled peers carrying out a number of challenges and problem-solving tasks. As well as marks being awarded for success, marks are awarded for communication skills and teamwork. Ian and Zoë sum up the importance of an event such as this:

I.B.: You walk round and speak to each other rather than you do at school! The people who went I don't normally speak to! I didn't really know them! It gives you an opportunity to get involved with other people.

Z.B.: Team work and mixing with everybody! (seen as the most positive aspects of the challenge)

Regardless of the challenges themselves and the success achieved, both Ian and Zoë commented on the value of the peer-group interaction, offered by the Kielder

Challenge. They saw this as the most positive aspect of the endeavour. The formalities of the classroom restrict opportunities for socialising and as has already been stated and will be reiterated, disabled pupils have little chance to form relationships with other students on an informal basis. The Kielder Challenge allows this to take place, whilst giving those involved the opportunity to express themselves.

Extra-curricular activities and sporting opportunities provide schools with a chance to demonstrate inclusivity. Elements of practice at Stapleton are doing that. However, there are areas for development. Inclusion is about organisational issues and school ethos which promote the view that a physical impairment should not be a bar to involvement. It is about increasing the participation of students (Booth, 1998, p.248), as it is through involvement and interaction that pupils gain confidence, self-esteem and develop their sense of identity. Research suggests that even though disabled pupils in mainstream schools have higher self-esteem than their disabled peers in special schools, the experience of mainstream has less effect on boosting the self-esteem of those with impairments than those without (Hirst and Baldwin, 1994, p.59).

Evidence implies that extra-curricular involvement can be instrumental in developing confidence and self-esteem. Suzanne one of the students interviewed, took part in the French exchange. It was the first time she had been away from home. She travelled to France without her learning support assistant. She spoke about her experiences:

S.S.: ... It gave me more confidence, it made me speak more French than I normally do in class!

French et al. record Paul's views on the sporting opportunities offered at his special school. He states that they gave him independence and the opportunity to do things that he would not have been able to do in an integrated setting (French et al., 1997, p.30). Yvonne discusses an after-school sports' club that took place at her special primary school:

Y.G.: ... they had this after-school club. It's a kind of athletics for wheelchair people, for disabled. It had like tunnels, climbing stuff! It was one for many people. It was football for wheelchairs. That really, really did stuff! It really gave people confidence...

Oliver (1995b, p.67) rejects special education . Segregation can never be applauded. He did not attend special school himself. His critique of it, therefore, is conceptual, analytical and political. He concludes that:

nothing short of a radical deconstruction of special education and the reconstruction of education in totality will be enough – even if it takes another hundred years.

However, whilst accepting that the principle behind special education is wrong, it would be inappropriate to reject it wholesale without learning from its experience. It is evident from Paul and Yvonne's perspective that mainstream education could learn lessons from extra-curricular provision in special schools. I am not suggesting that as far as extra-curricular activities are concerned, disabled pupils should work together exclusively, as in the special school situation, but rather with both other disabled and non-disabled pupils. However, perhaps fears regarding safety of involvement and feasibility could be allayed, if mainstream staff were to witness the use and organisation of facilities and equipment in special school settings.

DISABILITY ISSUES

It is interesting that disabled people in mainstream schools also stress the importance of being with friends and with people who understood their disability and impairment (Shaw, 1998, p.23).

I have examined the issue of pupils arriving at school faced with friendship groups established at primary school, of pupils prevented from interaction with

their peers at extra-curricular clubs and in sporting activities and now a third barrier to social inclusion; pupils viewed with suspicion by their non-disabled peers. What are the reasons for this? Madge and Fassam (1982, p.30) during the course of their research asked pupils if they had the opportunity to discuss their impairments. The over-whelming response was that they did not have that opportunity. I too questioned students. I wanted to know if they were able to discuss their impairments and their experiences with their peers, if they were willing to engage in such dialogue and the extent to which they felt disability issues formed a part of the curriculum.

Pupils tended to share information about their impairments with their friends on an ad hoc basis, revealing the information they felt necessary. Many felt that openness facilitated the breaking down of barriers encouraging non-disabled pupils to view them with less suspicion and less wariness; Katy commenting on one of her friends' attempts to glean information:

K.C.: ... one of my mates, one of the first things she said to me was, "well, O.K., so what's wrong with you?" I didn't mind, but it was a shock it really was. She was very, very blunt!

R: Was it a shock in the fact that people don't ask, or was it the way she put it?

K.C.: No, that people don't ask, that was what surprised me and it was good, at least she was asking – it surprised me – at least she wasn't there trying to figure it out.

Yvonne suggests the drawbacks of fellow pupils not having information!

Y.G.: ... many people think, "there goes a disabled person in our school, should they be here? What is wrong with them?" And I think what is the point in them asking questions when they should already be told?

It became evident that reticence to openly address disability issues or to provide a forum for their discussion leads to a mystique being attached to the whole concept of disability and the formation of narrow, often misguided views of what it

actually means. This can serve to distance disabled pupils from their non-disabled peers. It was possible to glean from comments made by pupils that the general perception was that disability equalled wheelchair user. Surprisingly this view was frequently prevalent amongst the interviewees themselves. There were negative consequences of this. Zoë, commenting on the reasons why she felt she could not continue with boccia tournaments stated:

Z.B.: Because there are a lot more people who are disabled, as well that have come to this school, I don't feel I could, 'cos a lot of people might want the chance and because sometimes, because I am not in a wheelchair that I am not considered disabled.

She goes on to suggest that she sees this as a problem:

R: Does this worry you?
Z.B.: It does, because sometimes like, people don't really know about my condition and they don't take into account that I could slip and break ...

I asked Yvonne whether or not she had been involved in the Kielder Challenge. She had been on standby but felt that her participation in the event would have been wrong:

Y.G.: I thought if there is somebody else who wants to do it but wasn't asked I'd just feel awful, 'cos the Kielder Challenge, I mean you have to be in a wheelchair full stop, but I am able to walk and I wouldn't just feel right ... with me not being fully in a wheelchair I thought that is just not fair.

Davis and Watson (2001, p.681) suggest that children draw from the adult discourses of differentiation to label each other; their interpretation of each other's abilities creating social distance between them. I would also suggest that whilst the outcome may be the same, children also draw from school policy and ethos. This featured strongly as I began to consider where this view of disability had

come from. I concluded that contributory factors were school-related. For example, wheelchair users were allowed to stay in at breaks and lunchtimes, with a friend, whilst other disabled pupils had to go outside. No justification as to why these pupils were allowed this privilege seemed to be offered to other students in the school. Secondly, pupils who were wheelchair users invariably had a full-time learning support assistant with them. I analysed my research sample. Five pupils used wheelchairs the majority of the time. Four of them had learning support assistants with them all the time. The fifth student had refused support at the end of year 7. Two pupils used wheelchairs some of the time. They had learning support assistants with them some of the time. Six of the pupils interviewed did not use wheelchairs. Only three of them had learning assistant support.

I felt that consequently pupils established a hierarchy of impairments, with wheelchair users at the top. The interviews seemed to suggest that such pupils believed they were viewed as different. School treated them differently. The problem was that rather than the differences being celebrated, lack of knowledge meant that they were cautiously acknowledged with negative consequences for the wheelchair users and for the disabled students who due to the absence of a wheelchair often had their differences ignored.

Madge and Fassam (1982, p.150) identify the difficulties in operating differential treatment. They make the point that pupils notice allowances made for some and not for others and that making such allowances can frustrate and embarrass the disabled child. This may have been why Graham, a wheelchair user was so keen to approve of the fact that failure to complete homework carried the same consequences for him as it did for his non-disabled peers. I would argue that differential treatment is sometimes necessary, but that if it is to be viewed positively the reasons for it need to be clearly explained. Vlachou (1997, p.45) suggests the implications of failing to do this. She points out that if positive discrimination is not presented carefully it can have socially segregating effects by reinforcing negative peer attitudes.

DISABILITY ISSUES AND THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The child is forced to fit into already existing educational and social processes and practices, which afford little space for investigation or understanding of difference (Davis and Watson, 2001, p.674).

I asked pupils if they felt that the school curriculum addressed disability issues. The overwhelming response was that it did not. Pupils believed that its inclusion would go some way towards raising awareness, towards demonstrating to other pupils what they felt they had to offer, towards as Madge and Fassam (1982, p.147) stated earlier, making their conditions normal and towards an understanding of 'disability'.

R: Are you happy with the word 'disability'?

Y.G.: I don't mind 'disability' but when you think about it 'dis-ability' means you are not able to do anything, which I am really sick of, because when people see you in a wheelchair they think: 'Oh look! She's dumb!' ... I mean, sometimes I get sick of people noticing that I am in a wheelchair. I mean I know that I am in a wheelchair, no need to point that out to me! Or, they'll come straight out. I don't mind people saying: 'why are you in a wheelchair?' I mean, if they want to know they can!

R: Is there any space do you think in the curriculum to introduce something to do with disability issues ...?

K.C.: I mean I would like it to be known, but I don't think that I would like to be around.

Katy goes on to discuss the fact that she opted to deliver her English talk on the subject of her impairment. I asked her how she felt people responded:

K.C.: They were asking questions. They realised there was a lot more to it than _____ {gives the name of her impairment}. It was quite good actually... because people make assumptions ...

*I first noticed it when I came here
- people see a wheelchair and they think "thick!" ...
because I am in a wheelchair they assume that
I need to be in a special school.*

Yvonne and Katy imply that they do not mind giving out information, but what they do object to is people making assumptions without any prior knowledge or understanding. This clearly indicates the need for a positive view of disability and a definition of the term which locates the difficulties in attitudes, practices and expectations, as external to the individual.

Vlachou (1997, p.170) states that:

*Children should be encouraged to reflect on
disability issues and to be critical of restricted
notions of normalcy.*

Where did pupils feel this reflection could take place? Where could information be disseminated and issues discussed? A number were of the opinion that the Personal, Social and Health Education lessons (PSHE) could prove an appropriate forum. Yvonne, again, in response to my questions about the inclusion of disability issues in the PSHE programme argued that:

*Y.G.: Yeah, that was what I was going to mention!
I mean we've learnt about drugs, we are now learning
about coping with money, jobs, where is disability
going to come into it? Probably never if nobody
mentions it.*

In support of Vlachou's comment quoted earlier it was interesting to note Chris' views. He was the only student interviewed who felt that he did not want issues surrounding disability, his impairment in particular, being discussed. I asked him if his friends asked him any questions about his impairment:

*C.N.: No!
R: Would you want them to?*

C.N.: No, not really, because I am just a normal person!

Chris, relatively recently impaired was, like the majority of pupils, operating within restricted notions of what he perceived to be normal. Until there are further opportunities such as the one afforded to Katy with her English class, disabled pupils will continue to encounter discriminatory notions of normality and difference (Davis and Watson, 2001, p.672).

Cook et al. (2001, p.308) argue that inclusion cannot be realised through the denial of disability. I would suggest that Stapleton is failing to provide opportunities to discuss disability issues, perhaps operating on a 'taken for granted' set of principles. In so doing it is, maybe unwittingly, denying disability. French and Swain (2000, p.27) state the importance of realising that the denial of a disabled person's identity as a disabled person is an oppressive act in itself. I would suggest that in seeking to develop a way forward, it would be useful to listen to the pupils themselves. The feeling was that disability issues needed to feature on the curriculum. The only question was how that could be done:

... it is our belief that full inclusion is only likely to be achieved when policy decisions are built on disabled children's own lived experiences as articulated directly to policy makers or as collected within empirical studies. ... If real change is to occur disabled children and their allies must gain a share of the power in educational institutions (Davis and Watson, 2001, p.685).

Gaining a share of the power involves giving students the facility to take control of decisions affecting them, as well as the opportunity to express themselves. As chapter 5, *Creating Barrier-Free Environments* shows, disabled pupils at Stapleton High School have not been allowed to take control as far as the new block to be built for them is concerned. Plans have been drawn up without their input.

Aims for the development of an inclusive institution should be reflected in school policy. Therefore, disabled pupils deserve the opportunity to share experiences and to discuss disability issues with other students. In so doing, concepts of normality can be changed and pupils can be allowed to function effectively, on their terms, within the school community.

LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

The fourth perceived barrier to social inclusion concerned the school's learning support assistants. Baker and Donnelly (2001, p.77) argue that at the extreme, aides favouring an autocratic style, characterised by domineering tendencies can inhibit friendships, social experiences and interactions (Baker and Donnelly, 2001, p.77).

Interviews with pupils consistently revealed that the role of the learning support assistant was a crucial influence on the social experiences of the disabled pupils involved. I had thought in the early stages of my research that I would go on to interview teaching staff, but as a result of my findings I believed it necessary to change direction and speak to a third of the school's learning support assistants. Comments such as:

W.C.: ...when I did have them {learning support assistants in class}, they are not exactly helping you!

and

R: How do you feel about having a learning support assistant with you during lessons, to help with lifting etc.?

GiC: It's really useful!

reflect the disparate and often passionate feelings aroused by the presence of adult support in the classroom. Analysis of interviews with both the pupils and the

learning support assistants revealed that the actions, attitudes and approach of the latter had a significant effect on inclusion, from an academic and more importantly, a social perspective. I will examine the implications in greater detail in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

... it is a matter of school reform, not pupil placement; it is about fitting schools to pupils, not socialising pupils to pre-set norms of learning and behaviour
(Hegarty, 1991, p.90).

This chapter is about barriers to inclusion. It is easy to integrate pupils into mainstream schools, but integration does not offer an effective participatory experience for either disabled pupils or their non-disabled peers. Pupils need to experience inclusion. Inclusion is not just about altering the experiences of disabled young people, but about giving each individual the opportunity to flourish both academically and socially.

There were many positives at Stapleton High School, regarding the academic development of its disabled pupils; including the student who achieved 11 GCSEs all at grades A*-B. However, although the pupils interviewed did not regard academic progress as an issue, I would not like to state conclusively that there were no concerns. As the next chapter will reveal, over-zealous learning support assistants can, for example, prove a barrier to students fulfilling their academic potential.

Lack of opportunities for social development regularly featured in the interviews with students. Pupils travelling long distances to school were disadvantaged from the start of their secondary school career, as other pupils arrived in friendship groups from the feeder primary schools. Travel arrangements often meant that pupils were denied the opportunity to share interests with their peers and to get involved in after-school activities. In addition to travel difficulties, many extra-

curricular activities and in fact sporting activities carried out in P.E. lessons, were just not available to the disabled pupils. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that students keen to develop their social skills, welcomed opportunities provided by events such as the Kielder Challenge. It allowed them to get involved, often for the first time, in teamwork activities and gave them the forum to express themselves and their personality, away from adult support.

There were individual experiences revealing strong friendship bonds between disabled pupils and their non-disabled peers. Yvonne highlighted the efforts of her non-disabled friend who saw it as quite normal to help her down the stairs of a local theatre on her back. This hardly addresses the necessity of accessibility from a human rights' perspective. Indeed, such friendships must not be allowed to move accessibility and the responsibility for change from governments, schools and local authorities, but it does reveal the positive and possible results of social interaction at its best.

Although many of the positive academic and social experiences were achieved in spite of the system and not because of it, the on-going quest for an inclusive institution does seem worth pursuing and the role of the learning support assistants in this process is worthy of particular consideration. The system has potential for improvement only if we actively seek to change and develop it. Accepting the status quo cannot be an option.

LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

INTRODUCTION

In the initial planning stages of the thesis, I intended to follow up my pupil interviews with discussions with selected members of the teaching staff. However, during the course of my conversations with the students and as a result of my analysis of the transcripts, I changed my mind. I was struck by the infrequent references made to what I had indulgently considered to be an essential group of people. I remarked in my research diary on 18 November 2001:

Where are the teachers? Do we make such a little contribution to pupils' lives that we are not even worthy of mention? Or am I being conceited to assume that we are the ones who make a difference?

Were the interviewees guarded in their replies as I was a member of the teaching staff? I dismissed this consideration given that the pupils openly discussed sensitive information. Had I asked the wrong questions? Careful study of the interview agenda revealed opportunities for pupils to detail the contributions teachers did or did not make to their inclusion. Was it possible, therefore, that teachers were not the major players in the academic and social lives of these students at Stapleton High School? The more I studied the pupil interviews the more aware I became of the references made to the learning support assistants at the school. Their involvement in each student's individual experience of school seemed to provoke often emotional responses and considerable discussion. Who were they? and how were they involved?

I decided that interviewing a group of learning support assistants would prove relevant to the subject matter of my thesis. I opted to interview eight, just under a third of those employed at the school –seven women and one man. I selected my interviewees to include staff who had been amongst the first three or four learning support assistants at the school and those who had been there a relatively short

period of time. I elected to include staff attached to just one pupil and staff who worked with a number of different pupils. One of the learning support assistants also had a disabled son at the school. All those asked agreed to take part.

LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANCE IN SCHOOLS – A BRIEF HISTORY

Special schools have employed classroom assistants for many years. In the past such staff were often referred to as nursery nurses and had obtained the NNEB qualification. Their role tended to be one of assisting the teacher by, for example, helping pupils to get changed for P.E. It was not until the late 1970s that the role of assistants in special schools began to expand into other areas of work.

Influential courses such as the Education of the Developmentally Young – EDY (Foxen and McBrien, 1981, p.9) and Portage (White and Cameron, 1987, p.9), were targeted at assistants as well as teachers. In addition, ‘room management’ schemes (e.g. Thomas, 1985, p.9) were designed to demonstrate how the role of teacher and assistant could be interchanged so that both groups could work with children in all areas of the curriculum (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 2000, p.9).

Assistants began to enter mainstream schools. They continue to grow in number. This, together with the development of their role, reflects a movement towards making education more inclusive and reducing the likelihood of marginalising pupils with additional needs. The importance of learning support assistants is highlighted in the DFEE report:

Assistants ... have the potential to play a key role in helping to make inclusive education effective for all pupils including those with statements
(Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 2000, p.9).

In 2000, estimates of the number of learning support assistants in mainstream schools, reached 80 000. Government promises to fund an extra 20 000 full time posts by 2002 should now take this figure to 100 000 (Shaw, 2001, p.2).

The number of learning support assistants at Stapleton High School has gradually increased over recent years. It currently stands at twenty five. The complexity of learning support assistants' work, together with the responsibilities they shoulder, have expanded beyond that of classroom assistant, helping pupils change for P.E., to playing an important role in children's learning, (Shaw, 2001, p.2) and I would qualify that statement by suggesting that 'learning' reflects both academic and social progress.

WHAT IS A 'LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANT'?

Having studied the evolution of the job of a 'learning support assistant', it seems useful to offer a definition of the term. The document produced by the Alliance for Inclusive Education (2001, p.1), suggests the following:

They support children with physical impairments, learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Research at Stapleton High School would indicate that although this offers a simple, generic description, the reality of what it actually means is far more complex.

When I embarked upon the interview process with the learning support assistants, I was already conscious of the views and thoughts of the pupils involved in the research study. In an effort to determine what the learning support assistants themselves believed their job entailed, on a day-to-day basis, I decided to use their job description as a starting point. I was surprised to discover that my eight interviewees had either never seen a job description, possessed one that was out-of-date, or had obtained one through necessity; it forming an essential part of a portfolio for a training course.

R: *Do you have a job description?*

LSA1: *No, not that I know of!*

R: *Do you have a job description?*

LSA6: *I have got an old one for a care assistant and that was when I first came here, but I have never had one since!*

R: *And does that relate to what you do?*

LSA6: *It does, but it could do with being up-dated ...*

R: *Do you actually have a job description?*

LSA2: *Yes!*

R: *And does what you do resemble it in any way at all?*

LSA2: *No! I do have a job description because we had to get one for the portfolio, but things have changed! The role of the teaching assistant changes from child to child and from class to class!*

Given the comments of LSA2, difficulties quantifying the job must be acknowledged. Fletcher-Campbell (1992, p.178) writing about special education, suggests that the role of the learning support assistant is possibly the least clearly defined of all, varying widely depending on individual pupil needs and teacher preferences. Nevertheless, although it is obvious that learning support assistants need to respond to different situations, it seems that the absence of even a set of up-to-date guidelines leads many at Stapleton to act purely on instinct, common sense and developing experience, even in the classroom. One consequence of this is discontentment amongst the learning support assistants, a number believing, for example, that they are working a lot harder than their colleagues.

LSA1: *... people are working so differently, because they haven't got any guidelines ... I actually asked if last year we could be given brief instructions, because there was so much ill-feeling about people not pulling their weight and there was a lot of 'bitching' going on about it ... People are just doing things their own way!*

The plethora of job titles currently and formerly in use, (one recent survey found that there were twenty one different job titles – Baker, 2002, p.2), serves to reinforce the confusion that leads to disparate decisions being made about the nature of the job. The variety of comments from the learning support assistants I interviewed, when asked about the job title best suited to what they do, illustrates the difficulties:

LSA6: If you look at it, when I came here, I was employed as a Care Assistant and since then I have been a Learning Support Assistant and now we have been told that we are Teaching Assistants! Even the job name has changed and we haven't really been told that!

LSA1: I think Learning Support is a good description because it does describe what you actually do! Care Assistant tends to be out-dated because that is someone who deals with the person's personal needs - you are not dealing with anything academically –you are, but not in the title – I think it is way out-of-date.

LSA4: I think that Learning Support Assistant sums it up really – but in my case I am a Care Assistant! I am Gayle's carer, not her LSA!

LSA5: I think Learning Support is pretty much right – or possibly Teaching Assistant – in some cases in the school we do assist the teaching of the children – I certainly don't like carer – although possibly some of the LSAs see themselves as that I don't think they should do and I don't think the children should see them as that because it's something more like primary school – carer! and it doesn't hold quite the same stature as it should do here!

Farrell, Balshaw and Polat (2000, p.92) suggest that the job title is a key issue to consider in an effort to reduce confusion about the nature of the job. They highlight the fact that the job title should be defined in such a way as to avoid ambiguity about the main purpose for learning support assistants being in the school, that being, to assist teachers in helping pupils to learn. They go on to

suggest that 'Learning Support Assistant' should be used for all assistants who work in schools:

The label 'LSA' should place those employees firmly within the mainstream purpose of teaching and learning.

I began to consider the implications of the range of titles used by my interviewees. I feared that some terms could be considered derogatory, helping to create a negative view of the learning support assistants thus undermining the work that they do. LSA5 refers to difficulties with the term 'carer'. I had also heard pupils refer, condescendingly, to classmates' assistants as '*their helpers*' and was struck by comments in Shaw's report. She had interviewed learning support assistants and noted the views of some of those involved:

... the name helper has become devalued and lacks respect. It sounds like Santa's little helper. It's basically somebody's dogsbody (Shaw, 2001, p.4).

More worrying, however, than the derogatory nature of terms such as 'helper' and 'carer', are the connotations attached to such titles. It seems to me that they promote an attitude of dependence amongst the pupils involved, consequently perpetuating a medical model of disability. As I embarked upon my studies of the learning support assistants at Stapleton High School, I hoped that the use of such terms would prove ill-suited to the reality of situation.

For the purposes of this thesis I refer to the staff interviewed as Learning Support Assistants. It appears, after studying all their responses, that this is the term with which they feel most comfortable. I believe that their role is to support pupils' learning, both 'academic' and 'social'. I would suggest, however, that, at its most successful, it is more far-reaching than that. Evidence from interviews with both the pupils and the learning support assistants would indicate that they are or should be instrumental in promoting individual pupils' experiences of inclusion. Consequently, it could be argued that the term 'Inclusion Assistant' is most applicable.

HOW IS THE LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANT VIEWED?

Lack of clarity regarding the role of the learning support assistant, together with confusion concerning the title most applicable to the job must have repercussions for all members of the school community. We have already witnessed the effects on the learning support assistants themselves. Analysis of interviews also reveals bewilderment and uncertainty on the part of parents, teachers and pupils as to their function in the everyday life of the school; the result being antagonism, misunderstanding and damage to the reputation of learning support assistants working hard to support the pupils with whom they work.

THE VIEWS OF PARENTS

Whilst an increasing number of pupils have the provision of a learning support assistant written into their Statements, lack of communication leads to little information being passed on to parents in advance of their pupils attending Stapleton High School. Consequently, parents are often unclear as to the nature of support their children should receive. Two instances from the interviews reveal how difficulties can arise as a result.

LSA1 witnessed an instance of bullying where the student with whom they were working, on a full-time basis, was victimising another pupil. LSA1 reported it to the child's Head of House. (On arrival at Stapleton High School pupils are divided into four pastoral groups, known as Houses. They are placed in the same House as their siblings if they have any. Each House has its own assemblies and pupils have the opportunity to represent their House in sporting activities.) The child's mother demonstrated her annoyance to the learning support assistant with a phone call and in a subsequent review meeting:

LSA1: ... her mum rang me up and gave me a right rollicking down the phone – she was awful and when in the review this came up, she said: 'I can't understand it, nobody has had a problem with her before – if you don't want to be her her carer, I'll find somebody who does!'

It would appear that the child's mother had assumed that the learning support assistant's role was simply to look after, care for and protect the pupil – certainly not to have her chastised. The learning support assistant in their actions had in fact demonstrated concern for the child's social development (and that of the victim) and had acted accordingly. Had a *learning support* role been emphasised prior to the child's arrival at the school, it is possible that this situation would not have arisen.

The second example concerns a student who seemingly requires the full-time presence of a learning support assistant – including breaks and lunchtimes and inevitably trips out:

LSA4: It's like the Alton Towers Trip. I said to Gayle: 'Ask your mum if she wants me to be with you all day.' She came back and said: 'of course she does – of course you have got to be with me all day.'

I interviewed this student as part of my research study. I remarked at the time, as did her learning support assistant in the subsequent interview, that although she required such input in school, at weekends she would go into town and go swimming with her friends, without any adult support. Had her mother accepted the fact that the learning support assistant's role was to promote the child's independence, thereby facilitating inclusion, maybe the situation could have been re-examined.

THE VIEW OF TEACHERS

Teachers don't always understand our role. They think it's useful to have an extra pair of hands. But what we are aiming for is how to get an effective learning situation (learning support assistants' views reported in Shaw, 2001, p.11).

The absence of clear guidelines concerning the role of learning support assistants in the classroom has repercussions on the relationships of the latter with the teaching staff. Although teachers at Stapleton High School are probably more used to having assistants in the classroom than their colleagues in other schools, it still does not alter the suspicion with which they are viewed by certain teachers.

*LSA1: ...each teacher is different, one instance was _____
{gives the name of one of the teachers} who
actually said: 'you are here to help... I am the
teacher'*

*LSA4: All the teachers I have met have treated myself
fine.*

*LSA3: Some {teachers} are a bit off-putting and don't
like you in lessons, they treat you a bit funny ...*

Even when learning support assistants have been accepted in the classroom, who decides without a clearly defined school policy, whether they are there for an individual pupil, or whether they should be working with all members of the class? It appears from my discussions with the interviewees that they are permanently playing games of diplomacy– trying to assess the requirements of each individual member of staff. LSA8 explains some of the dilemmas encountered:

*LSA8: It is knowing what you are expected to do. It
is not only knowing the pupils, it's knowing the
teachers ... Some want you really involved and
enjoy you being involved ... somebody else will
just want you to sit there and say nothing – you
are working with that child and that's it!
Don't move!*

If a teacher favours a learning support assistant working with an individual pupil, this can give rise to further issues. Does it prevent the teacher having to have any contact with that pupil? Shaw reports the views of the assistants she interviewed:

The teacher looks at you and thinks there is an LSA. Let them get on with it. They have hardly any contact with the child. That is not inclusion. That is putting the child at the edge (views of learning support assistants reported in Shaw, 2001, p.11).

Once the learning support assistant has established the required approach in a given classroom, the next challenge concerns the extent to which they feel able to discipline pupils. Analysis of the interviews would indicate that they feel uneasy disciplining pupils and that it is something certain teachers are not happy for them to do. LSA7 encountered a very hostile reaction from a member of staff when they addressed the problem of noise in the classroom, preventing them from hearing what the boy they were working with was saying. The account of LSA7's experiences reproduced below reflects the conflicts encountered trying to respect the teacher whilst still doing what they feel is right for the student and the class. This provides a further example of the unclear and undefined role of learning support assistants in mainstream secondary schools.

LSA7: I want to quote an instance – it was with Chris – the teacher wasn't there and an English teacher had come to oversee that they did what the class was supposed to be doing and Chris was quoting, but I couldn't hear what Chris was saying because of the noise in the classroom. Now as far as I'm concerned, it's the teacher's responsibility ... I let it go for a while and Chris was saying: 'I can't hear, it's too noisy!' I said: 'Just leave it for a while to see if the teacher says anything!' Nothing was said, so I just turned round to the three girls behind! The whole class was in uproar and I said quietly: 'Would you please be quiet, because I can't hear what Chris is saying!' The teacher was sitting at the desk in front of me, so she could hear what I said. But it just carried on and I thought that might have helped her realise that we were struggling. She did nothing about it, so I just said to the teacher: 'Do you think that you could ask them to be quiet because I can't hear?' and she was very annoyed, very annoyed and that made me feel, 'What can I do?'

The difficulties surrounding the disciplining of pupils is further reinforced by LSA2, who appears to have worked out a solution to the confusion surrounding the whole issue.

LSA2: ... they {the teachers} need to know what our role is and how we can discipline ... When I was taken on, the understanding was that you don't discipline and I didn't and at times you can be very frustrated. I still don't {discipline}, but I try to be a good role model in the classroom. I will do whatever the teacher says – you know what I mean, so that you hopefully set an example.

THE VIEWS OF PUPILS

LSA8: We feel as though some staff treat us as second-class citizens, if I can say so. If their attitude is like that in the classroom it rubs off on the pupils.

Negative attitudes of teachers, lack of understanding by parents, it is perhaps not surprising that certain pupils hold learning support assistants in low esteem. Many pupils fail to understand who they are and are shocked to discover that they are being paid to do a job.

LSA1: _____ {gives the name of a pupil} said to me the other day: 'Miss do you get paid for this?' I said, 'Yes, I don't do it for love!' He said: 'Oh, is it your job?' 'Yes' I said. I couldn't work out where he was coming from! 'Oh, I just thought you were _____'s {gives the name of the pupil with whom she works} mum! I think this is quite common ...

(The pupil questioning this LSA's role in the school is a non-disabled member of the class who does not benefit from learning support assistance.)

A number of pupils lack respect for learning support assistants, believing them to have little or no authority over them:

LSA1: I know some people have had problems this week with bad behaviour from year 7s and they have said: 'you're a helper, who do you think you are? – you are not allowed to tell us off'

LSA7: ... they {pupils} can be very rude to us and because we haven't got any power they know that we have got to take it a step further – that personally we can't do anything and sometimes it is annoying because of the way they treat you.

Frequently, therefore, due to the negative connotations associated with the learning support assistants, pupils fail to want to work with them, believing that assistance from them signifies low ability, stupidity even on their part. LSA6 and LSA8 discuss the attitudes of certain students:

LSA6: ... they turn round and say: 'I don't need you, I don't want you!'

LSA8: I often find that about Year 8 they rebel against you! I have had that with every child I've worked with. They say they don't need you and they don't want the help and they get this mental block ...

LSA7 reinforces the hostility many learning support assistants encounter when facing disinterested pupils:

LSA7: Yes, sometimes it is quite humiliating the way they speak to you – it can be quite upsetting really!

Shaw (2001, p.11) reports:

Children too may sometimes look down on a person who they see as just a 'learning assistant' and there is a pervasive attitude in society that helpers are inferior to those in charge.

COMMUNICATION ISSUES

The valuable role learning support assistants can play in the drive towards inclusion, has already been hinted at. However, the extent to which this group of people can be effective in this regard is questionable, given the confusion attached to their role and the fact that they themselves do not feel included in the school community. There are several reasons for this. The attitude of parents, teachers and pupils has already been discussed. The principle reason, however, encompassing the above, could be said to be the lack of communication between them and other agencies within the school.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION REGARDING PUPILS

The interviewees cited cases where they were expected to work with young people without having prior knowledge of family circumstances or of their physical impairment; factors that would have proved invaluable in their dealings with them.

LSA8: For instance, we got this child that appeared in P.E. in a wheelchair for me and I didn't know this child was here and nobody else did, which I was expected to cope with and I was coping with two children in two wheelchairs, not knowing what this other child's problem was.

LSA3: I didn't know much about her life history. I didn't realise her dad wasn't in the picture and sometimes you can say things and then realise what you have just said – it's quite hard.

Teaching staff are given access to this information. Without such information, learning support assistants trying to strike up a relationship with certain pupils, can appear insensitive and incompetent.

Teachers are required to complete individual educational plans (IEPs) for some pupils, on which they are required to set targets for those students in their particular subject. Although this would be relevant to the learning support assistants working with individuals, only one interviewee had had access to just one IEP.

R: And to what extent have you been given IEP information for Colin?

LSA7: Nothing at all!

R: Do you have access to say, when working with Katy, what her IEPs are and her action plans for each subject?

LSA3: I haven't seen one!

R: So you wouldn't know what the subject teacher was targeting with Katy?

LSA3: No! But I have seen one in Review, but I didn't keep hold of it, so I couldn't say off the top of my head what it was!

R: And to what extent have you been given from subject staff IEP information for Chris?

LSA7: Nothing at all!

R: So, here again, you wouldn't know what, say, in French, were the issues that were being targeted for Chris?

LSA7: No!

This is one example of the barriers that exist to inclusive practice and it demonstrates a failure to maximise the potential academic development of individual students.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION REGARDING SUBJECT MATTER

Lack of communication regarding the subject matter of lessons being attended, can undermine a learning support assistant's success in the classroom situation. Many interviewees believed that time should be set aside for teachers and assistants to discuss subject matter, particularly in subjects where the assistant felt less confident.

LSA7: ... the kids soon pick up if you don't know what you are doing and that's useless.

If you are going in with a boy, say, in year 9 or 10, with Geography and you have only seen them once before, I would have to say to him, can I see your book? Let's have a look at what has been going on before. ... You have to waste 5 or 10 minutes trying to find out what they have been doing, because you haven't seen the teacher before.

LSA3: I think we should know lesson plans – at least have some idea when we go into lessons – even just a basic outline like we are doing say, angles in Maths today.

The lack of opportunity to discuss the subject matter of lessons in advance clearly puts learning support assistants at a disadvantage. The failure to be able to confidently explain lesson content undermines their professionalism and reinforces a negative view of their role in the classroom, in the eyes of the pupils. Time needs to be built in, in advance of the lesson, to allow some discussion to take place, whenever possible, between the learning support assistant and the teacher. A more long-term solution, discussed later, could be the allocation of a learning support assistant to a department. This would encourage communication between learning support assistants and the teaching staff, whilst giving the former the opportunity to get to know the subject matter of at least one curriculum subject.

LACK OF MEETINGS

The interviewees were of the opinion that if they had access to staff meetings where pupils were being discussed – many of whom they were dealing with – they would feel better informed in the classroom.

R: And what about staff meetings, do you feel that it would be useful to be involved in those as well?

LSA7: I think that it would be very useful, but you are made to feel like lepers when it comes to meetings – you daren't even go in and get coats. You are looked on as if: 'What are you doing here?' 'Off you go, time to go home!'

R: Would it help to be involved in staff meetings where we are all together?

LSA4: Yes, I think so, because we are members of staff and we have got to know about certain individuals.

R: Yes, because the ones that are being discussed are the ones you need to know about!

LSA4: Why shouldn't we know about them? I mean, O.K., I read the board every Tuesday, but it would be nice to sit in and actually be told, rather than coming in every Tuesday morning reading the notice board.

(Staff meetings are held on Mondays after school. The minutes are put up on the staff notice board.)

Lack of meeting time to discuss issues with each other was also seen to be a problem. Such opportunities would be useful to develop a sense of team spirit, as well as to give the chance to discuss which strategies work best with which pupils.

R: And do you {as a group of learning support assistants} actually have staff meetings?

LSA7: No, nothing ... All we have is this rushed five minutes in the morning when we are handed out little bits of paper. There are no meetings on specific problems that have arisen.

Clearly, there is evidence to build up a depressing picture of learning support assistants in the school setting. Undervalued and with low self-esteem, they appear excluded from the mainstream as, without any sense of direction and in the absence of clear communication, they struggle to deal with unappreciative parents, teachers and pupils, unclear as to their role. However, there are positive signs. Most of those interviewed were keen and enthusiastic and all were committed to their pupils. Two further obstacles – salary and training – lie in the path of their reputation. These will be outlined and discussed before reference is made to the pupils interviewed and their direct experiences of their learning support assistants.

SALARY

I do not know where this story will end as I cannot see into the future, but the stream of helpers will inevitably flow on and will never run smooth until the system is changed and LSAs are trained and paid properly (Alliance for Inclusive Education, 2001, p.7).

Seven out of the eight interviewees felt strongly that the salary they received for the job that they did, was poor. This feeling was aggravated by the absence of any form of pay structure. No consideration was given to the qualifications of individuals, (the interviews revealed that qualifications ranged from two learning support assistants who had degrees to some who had no qualifications at all); nor was there financial acknowledgement of experience, (staff who had been at the school ten years, received the same salary as those recently appointed).

LSA2: The fact that I have sought to do further study – I would like to see that in some way rewarded ... The fact that I have got qualifications from studying when I was younger, I think that should be taken into account and I know that it isn't.

LSA1: I don't think that it's fair that somebody with our experience is paid exactly the same as somebody who comes in September with no experience at all and no qualifications.

There was just one exception to this, the interviewee, who declared themselves happy with the payment they received. This particular staff member had been employed as a nursery nurse in another school and as a result of redeployment had been appointed as a learning support assistant at Stapleton High School. As a consequence of redeployment they received a nursery nurse's salary, plus an additional allowance for working with children with additional needs. This was nearly double the income of the other learning support assistants carrying out the same duties.

It seems hardly surprising that this created tension amongst the learning support assistants and that many lacked the incentive to participate in training courses which would be of no monetary benefit to them.

R: Do you think there should be some kind of pay structure where you could move up a scale?

LSA3: Well you can in the NNEB go up, but of course, even though I am trained, I am an LSA, so I get the basic rate! ... All the LSAs here are on different pay and I can't see the difference!

R: Since working here have you been offered the opportunity to do any related courses?

LSA7: No - I don't think that I would go down that road anyway – further courses – I know what I am doing!

LSA4: ... really, at the moment there is no incentive to do any training, because it's not going to make any difference!

It was also understandable that they felt reluctant to engage in any extra-curricular activities or to shoulder additional responsibilities. Some did commit themselves to occasional additional work, but their goodwill could not be relied upon. As

Shaw points out, learning support assistants expected to take on additional duties or to work after hours without remuneration, cannot help feeling that they are being taken advantage of (Shaw, 2001, p.12).

Not only is poor pay a disincentive when it comes to recruitment and retention, it can undermine the importance of the job and can contribute to its poor status. Shaw points out that decent pay, respect and professional status tend to go together. She goes on to quote the views of some of the learning support assistants she interviewed:

Unless they give us more money and make it a job with a reasonable wage which you can live on you are not going to raise the profile of learning support as a profession in its own right. People will not want to come into it. People will only ever use it as a stop gap because the money is so low
(Shaw, 2001, p.12).

LSA7 reiterates these views:

LSA7: I think that for some people perhaps, they might come into this job and sit back and not give as much as they could, because they may think they are not being paid very much ... I think they are in danger of losing good care assistants who are prepared to give quite a lot, especially higher up in the school with people with higher qualifications who can help pupils with special needs doing 'A' levels. If they want to keep people in the long term, they need reward.

TRAINING

Virtually all training providers stressed the urgent need for there to be a nationally recognised and accredited training programme for LSAs that is linked to salary and career ... (Farrell, Balshaw and Polat, 2000, p.7).

Although there seems to be improved opportunities for training, access to the range of courses and training programmes available to serving teachers to enhance their 'professional development' still seems to be denied the learning support assistants interviewed.

R: When you came were you offered training straight away?

LSA1: No, we have always had to ask for it!

R: As you started were you offered any training?

LSA6: No, I wasn't! I was really just thrown in at the deep end!

R: And have you been offered any training to help you?

LSA4: Not specifically, no!

R: And once you got the job, were you offered any training of any kind?

LSA5: Not initially, no, none at all!

This coupled with non-existent financial benefits of attending training courses, appeared to restrict the participation of the learning support assistants interviewed. In spite of this, however, those who did engage in some form of training derived personal reward from the courses they attended.

LSA2: I have taken any opportunity that I can really ... I have also completed the Learning Support 01 and the Advanced City and Guilds in the job itself. I am glad that I have done it and I have learned quite a lot from it.

LSA6: Yes well it {training} makes you look on the situation differently ... for example, a different environment for a different child or a different disability (sic) – a different learning experience – what you would do – so, yes, it has helped.

Shaw reports that in the survey carried out by Manchester University, selection criteria for learning support assistants stressed the importance of personal qualities over experience and qualifications (Shaw, 2001, p.9). Given therefore, the disparate experiences – academic and work-related – it would seem essential in an effort to ensure best practice that training be seen as a priority for learning support assistants, to enable them to capitalise on their personal qualities whilst enhancing their professional skills.

SUMMARY

Poor pay, inadequate training, communication difficulties, under-valued by parents, teachers and pupils and their status further damaged by comments from the general secretary of the NASUWT, Nigel de Gruchy, who although reportedly misinterpreted, compared classroom assistants to '*pig ignorant peasants*' (de Gruchy, 2001, p.1) - it is amazing that the learning support assistants I interviewed remained so committed and dedicated to the pupils with whom they were working. They felt marginalised and excluded; ironic, given that the prime reason for their employment was to facilitate the inclusion of pupils academically and socially 'on the edge' of mainstream education. Given this primary aim and the situation in which they found themselves, how successful could they be in fulfilling their objectives? and how successful would their pupils perceive them to be? Shaw (2001, p.2) quotes one of her interviewees:

What's happened to inclusion for learning supporters?

and then suggests:

While families, educationalists and politicians emphasise supporters' vital role in the inclusion process, supporters themselves often rely on personal commitment and belief to sustain them against feelings of isolation, uncertainty and exploitation (Shaw L., 2001, p.2).

LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS AND THEIR INPUT WITH PUPILS WITH PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS

It is important to outline the background to the situation in which the learning support assistants and the disabled pupils with whom they work, find themselves. Many of the disabled pupils I interviewed, arrived at Stapleton High School with a statement requiring full-time learning assistant support. Pupils experiencing exclusion from the mainstream as a result of having to travel a distance to school and as a consequence of lacking access to sporting and extra-curricular activities, for example, find themselves thrown together with adults who too feel marginalised and excluded. In such circumstances can the pupils' academic and social experiences be enhanced or are they set to be hampered, by the presence of their learning support assistants?

ACADEMIC BENEFITS

Many of the pupils I interviewed acknowledged the benefits of practical support to their academic development. In the classroom situation, pupils felt that the presence of their assistant helped them to access the curriculum more readily.

R: And how do you feel about having somebody with you all the time?

G.C.: Em ... it's useful for note-taking. I wouldn't manage without it properly!

R: Now, you have a learning support assistant with you don't you, really just for movement between lessons, how do you feel about that?

GiC.: It's useful really!

In terms of external examinations, learning support assistants acting as readers and amanuenses prove invaluable in enabling pupils to achieve their potential at G.C.S.E., AS and A level.

Pupils seemed most comfortable with learning support assistants acting as facilitators. A number of the disabled pupils interviewed were academically able. Many did not appreciate their learning support assistant sitting next to them for the whole lesson. This frequently led to ill-feeling and criticism, particularly, when, as has been stated, due to lack of planning and discussion with the classroom teacher, the adult assisting appeared to know only as much as the student. I noted the comments of one of the year 10 students interviewed who had had a learning support assistant with him in year 7 and whose parents believed it no longer necessary after that time:

R: Are there any lessons now where you feel you could do with support?

W.C.: No, I am fine! ... You are getting them support worker people - that's going too far! They are not really qualified! It doesn't really help you!

The disabled pupils interviewed appeared to more fully appreciate the contributions made by their learning support assistant when they wandered around the classroom, assisting the academic development of *all* pupils.

S.S.: I don't have my learning support teacher with me all the time! - not in all lessons ...

R: So was that your choice? Why did you make that decision?

S.S.: She ended up doing nothing, because I wasn't asking for help. There was no point in _____ {gives the name of her learning support assistant} sitting there all the time!

R: So, they were just sitting with you? Did they ever work with anyone else in the class?

S.S.: _____ {gives the name of her learning support assistant} works with other people in Maths. I don't find Maths very difficult!

R: So, are you happier if they are wandering round the classroom?

S.S.: {hesitant} ... Yeah! because I can just call them if I need some help!

Skär and Tamm (2001, p.928), researching into the role of assistants in Swedish schools lend their support to the practical approach to learning assistance in schools. They conclude that the young people they interviewed were most in favour of someone who could be described as a 'professional assistant', someone meeting the following criteria:

The 'professional assistant' was thus an assistant who met the expectations of the law (LSS), i.e. the assistant was a human aid that carried out what the disabled children and adolescent hands and feet, ears, eyes and/or cognitive ability could not.

This view of the learning support staff as professional assistants was supported by the most encouraging reactions of my pupil-interviewees. Pupils seemed most positive when their learning support assistants appeared unobtrusive, carrying out specific tasks that they knew they were unable to perform for themselves. They wanted facilitators to help them access the curriculum, but still valued their independence. If they could do it, the pupils wanted to, even if it took them some time.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

On the positive side, a number of the learning support assistants interviewed, stressed the growing confidence of the pupils with whom they worked. They highlighted the improvement in their pupils' ability to form friendships and to socialise on a variety of different levels.

LSA2: There are times when I just leave her to talk to her friends and if she is interacting and getting on well, I leave her ... She has definitely matured. She has become more independent in her own learning and in her relationships with her friends. She has started to make more friends and this is her growing confidence.

A few of the pupils interviewed felt that in spite of having learning assistant support, they had been allowed to develop their relationships with other pupils. Where pupils' social experiences were most positive, it seemed that their learning support assistant was able to stand back and thus facilitate peer group interaction as in the case of LSA2, quoted above. LSA1 provides further evidence of this when they discuss their relationship with a pupil with whom they used to work. The student in question had a number of very good friends who usually gave him the physical support he needed, rather than that having to come from the learning support assistant:

LSA1: ... he always had plenty of friends and I didn't used to go into tutor with him – I used to deliberately do things that left him – not in any danger, obviously - but left him, where I could, the ability to socialise so that I didn't cramp his style.

However, this was not the usual viewpoint. Many of the pupils found it difficult to form friendships. Travel difficulties and lack of access to sport and to extra-curricular activities have already been seen to be contributory factors, but these factors combined with over-zealous learning support assistants often resulted in feelings of isolation and marginalisation for the pupils concerned. One pupil recognised the problems of having a learning support assistant permanently attached to him. At the end of year 7, he instigated a move away from any form of support. When interviewed he stated:

I.B.: Well, it's an independence thing really! If I had a helper full-time I wouldn't have the mates I have now! ... because, it's just the way you think straight away! It's like: 'a teacher with him all the time you can't even speak to him!'

This was a student who lived at a distance from school and so stayed with one of his friends each weekend in order to be able to socialise.

My growing concern about the role of learning support assistants in the social development of pupils was heightened following analysis of my interview with Katy Connor, a student who had a learning support assistant attached to her during lessons and at breaks and lunchtime. She had attended a special school, where, as she stated:

K.C.: I didn't actually have a care assistant. Well, I had one in in the classroom, but at breaks and lunchtimes I was free and when I was younger I wasn't allowed to leave the classroom, but when I was a bit older I used to wander round with my mates ...

... {commenting on now having a learning support assistant with her all the time} ... It hasn't really been a problem. In a way it has been an advantage, because you are never alone! But with a care assistant all the time you feel like you are glued to them – because I have a care assistant with me all the time, I have one who never leaves my side and in a way it is annoying, because they are always there!

This student spoke about the number of friends she had had at the special school she attended and cited the absence of a carer as the best thing about her special school. She also spoke in depth about the difficulties she had encountered forming any friendships at Stapleton High. This worrying finding led me to question whether in terms of deployment of staff and resources, mainstream schools such as Stapleton were providing a less meaningful social experience for these pupils than their special school counterparts. Madge and Fassam suggest that in order for integration and I would argue, inclusion, to be meaningful, it must lead children to spend most of their time with other children (Madge and Fassam, 1982, p.14).

Although there were exceptions, the situation seemed at its worst where one learning support assistant worked exclusively with one child. The advantages of full-time one-to-one support should not be ignored: a pupil can get to know their learning support assistant who in turn can understand the way that they work and parents have a contact name if the need for direct communication arises.

Shaw (2001, p.16) suggests in her findings, that used correctly, one-to-one support can prove to be:

an empowering and progressive social system.

She goes on to argue that a well-trained assistant, models respect, supports friendships and facilitates communication (Shaw, 2001, p.16). I would argue that without clear guidelines and a uniform approach to the role of the learning support assistant, the likelihood of this occurring is remote. I would suggest that the disadvantages of full-time, one-to-one support outweigh the advantages. The learning support assistants themselves recognise the difficulties:

R: ... do you think that it is better for them to have just one person?

LSA3: No, I think a variety because they get so dependent.

LSA5: ... Personally, I don't like one member of staff attached to one child ...

Although some support assistants attempted to develop their pupils' social skills, the pupils' ability to communicate with adults rather than their peers could not be denied:

R: How did you find working with him? How did he mix with his peers in the school?

LSA6: Not very well to start off with! There was a situation where one of the children in year 7 came up to him and said: 'Can I borrow ...?' and he said 'no'!. If you want people to come to you and be your friends you are going to have to give! So, I told him that and he has been a lot better! But, I think people were still stand-offish with him in year 11! ... They were wary of him!

R: How did you feel about the amount of time he would spend with adults rather than with other pupils?

LSA6: That was what was brought up in one of his reviews, that he had spent a lot of time talking to adults instead of children.

This particular student had an uneasy relationship with other pupils. Katy Connor, cited earlier saw her learning support assistant as the way out of a lonely existence at Stapleton High. Johnston (accessed October 2000, p.1) in his research study concluded that disabled children's school day was dominated by interaction with adults rather than peers leaving:

few opportunities for autonomy and age-appropriate behaviour.

Fletcher-Campbell (1992, p.178) supports this viewpoint suggesting that the presence of full-time one-to-one support can hinder the development of independence and group participation.

Dependence on adult involvement perpetuates a medical model of disability. I had hoped that this would not have proved the case at Stapleton High School. Davis and Watson (2001, p.675) argue that disabled children are taught a discourse of dependency and charity defining them as reliant on others. One of the learning support assistant's backs up this theory:

LSA5: ... seemingly every child who has a statement comes in with 100% support and depending how it is interpreted, it is obviously of help to the children, but sometimes I think it is not as helpful as it should be. Personally, I don't like one member of staff attached to one child – in other words as a carer, which the children begin to see them as, because I think you lose your effectiveness when you get too close – they get too close to you. You become like a surrogate mum to them and I don't think it is good for the children, because they come to you with every problem and don't solve their problems themselves.

This statement from LSA5 reinforces the need for a definition of the role of the learning support assistant in mainstream schools. Clearly, the allocation of one learning support assistant to one pupil carries the risk of reinforcing the pupil's dependency on an adult. The danger here is, that rather than mainstream

education providing a liberating experience for the young people, promoting independence and inclusion, it sidelines them, isolating them from their peers, perpetuating the viewpoint that they are incapable of socialising and achieving, even on the most simple level. Surely, this is a retrograde step, which goes against the principles of inclusive practice.

SUMMARY

The importance of the personal qualities required to be a learning support assistant cannot be under-estimated. Shaw (2001, P.24) in her analysis of the learning support assistant states that it is:

*a complex job which demands diverse skills
and substantial qualities of character.*

Those I interviewed cited diplomacy, confidence, patience, approachability, a sense of humour and excellent communication skills, as being amongst the essential components for the job. Indeed, the consensus was that potential learning support assistants should be employed first and foremost on the basis of their qualities rather than their qualifications.

Such qualities can be used to motivate, inspire and develop pupils both academically and socially. However, the extent to which the majority of learning support assistants can gain satisfaction from their job and the extent to which the majority of pupils can derive benefit from their presence, is questionable when, in the absence of any clear guidelines, they act on individual skills and qualities alone.

Personal qualities must go hand in hand with clear direction, training and an understanding of inclusion. Pupils seem to flourish where support is available, but not intrusive, where help is offered, but not enforced, where pupils are allowed to make and rectify their own mistakes, without correction. Failure to

allow pupils the freedom to be independent members of the school community can lead to dependence and isolation, the very antithesis of the aims of inclusion.

THE WAY FORWARD

At a time when teaching staff find themselves under pressure to produce the right results and to deal with an ever-increasing workload, learning support assistants have a lot to offer to the institutions in which they work. It is clear, however, that if their contributions and potential are to be acknowledged, their role must be re-defined, or in fact, defined for the first time.

LSA6: ... I just feel that we could be given more responsibility and that would help the school as a whole!

This I would argue, is not only my opinion, but also that of the pupils and the learning support assistants themselves. Learning support assistants should not be viewed as replacements for teachers in the classroom as has been debated, (BBC News, 12 November 2001, p.1), but rather as inclusion assistants facilitating the involvement of *all* pupils. If it were clear that the inclusion assistant was present in class to aid any pupil in need, it may help improve their reputation with all pupils. If a greater number of pupils felt able to call on an assistant's aid it would help prevent the present situation whereby individual pupils feel different, feel isolated, lack independence, due to reliance on assistant-support. If the inclusion assistant were attached to a class rather than to an individual pupil it may encourage pupils who at present are permanently attached to an adult, to interact more readily with their peers. The Index for Inclusion (2000) advocates the use of the learning assistant to support any pupil in need. This is reiterated by Shaw (2001, p.15) in her report on learning support assistants and inclusion. She suggests that rather than assistants being attached to specific named children, they should be regarded as being part of a team able to support the diversity of pupils as the individual need arises.

For their job to be more meaningful, the nature of it, as has already been suggested, has to change. Its profile also needs to be raised. This can only occur if a career structure is put in place, pay is improved and training made more readily available. This would go some way towards enhancing employees' professional status whilst improving retention.

LSA6: If they don't start bringing in different levels, different pay scales, they are going to find that they have a shortage of people, because I was even considering going back to my old work.

Farrell, Balshaw and Polat (2000, p.79) in their study of the management and role of learning support assistants, discuss the need for a unified career structure, together with a nationally recognised pattern of training linked to career progression. Baker (2002, p.3) in his article highlights the call for a structured training and promotion scheme allowing for clear progression.

Estelle Morris, the Secretary of State at the time, announced in January 2002, that teaching assistants were to get the recognition they deserved. Indeed, at present two-year foundation degrees to upgrade their knowledge and qualifications are being piloted by three universities, whilst others are developing programmes to enable learning support assistants to qualify as teachers (Education Guardian, 2002, p.1). It is to be hoped that government and/or local authority funding will be made available to enable existing learning support assistants to take up these opportunities.

It has been suggested that learning support assistants' salaries could dramatically increase with the introduction of a career structure, with the top learning support assistants earning as much as some teachers. Proposals would appear to acknowledge qualifications and experience, allowing learning support assistants to plan and assess with classroom teachers, to take small groups and even to cover classes on occasions (TES, 2002, p.17). For this to be successful, the scheme would need to be financed by government money. Learning support assistants

would need to be clear as to their role and their job would have to be viewed as a position in its own right and not as a solution for teacher shortages. Time would have to be built in to allow discussion and preparation with the classroom teacher. This would then go some way to helping to solve communication difficulties.

The allocation of inclusion assistants to specific curriculum departments rather than to individual pupils, would, I believe, enable them to feel better prepared, more confident, increasingly able to support *all* young people in the class and, most importantly, included.

R: Do you think it would be useful for you to be attached to departments?

LSA3: I think it would, because some LSAs don't like certain lessons – they have trouble trying to transfer the information from what the teacher has said, trying to explain it to the child and most of them like different subjects. Obviously, I like Maths so I would go for the Maths' Department and could go on Maths' courses and be trained and then obviously you could help the child better!

Support for this approach is highlighted in the experiences of Angmering High School, West Sussex where learning support assistants are attached to departmental faculties rather than to individual pupils. It is seen to be successful for two reasons. Firstly, it makes learning support assistants less likely to be over-protective of pupils, thereby making it easier for disabled students to mix with their peers. Secondly, it allows learning support assistants to build up expertise and good working relationships with teachers in particular subject areas (Angmering High School, 1999, p.1).

Other channels of communication should be improved in an effort to enhance the reputation and standing of the job. This would help inclusion assistants to feel included themselves. The expected role of the assistant should be detailed to pupils, parents and teachers.

R: How do you see the future of the job, ideally and realistically?

LSA1: Ideally, recognition for what we do – not just financially, but generally. I think, a raised profile with parents as well, so that they realise that we are professional people and that a lot of us have done all these courses and we are not just there to wipe noses.

CONCLUSION

The learning support assistants, key figures in the quest for inclusion appear undervalued. They have long been employed in special schools and yet, have seemingly happened upon mainstream secondary schools quite by accident, the latter offering few guidelines governing their involvement. I was struck by their professionalism, commitment and determination to have their students succeed and yet I realised that their job was an impossible one. Undermined at times by teaching staff, under-paid and under-trained, they felt that they lacked both status and respect.

Many of the learning support assistants felt ill-informed, victims of poor communication and consequently, unclear as to their remit. Ironically, although present to promote the inclusion of the pupils with whom they were working, they themselves felt excluded and sidelined by the institution. The far-reaching consequences of the confusion surrounding their role and responsibilities, cannot be under-estimated. Interviews with both them and the pupils were revealing. At worst, learning support assistants working with individual pupils were promoting a model of dependency, as pupils were denied the opportunity to make mistakes and solve their own problems. At best, learning support staff were acting as professional assistants, supporting pupils in a discreet and unobtrusive manner.

The way forward demands standardisation, so that the best of what learning support assistants have to offer can always be at the forefront. Staff need to be trained and properly remunerated for the work that they do. Channels of communication must improve and teaching staff, possibly through departmental

links, need to articulate and discuss their requirements. Only if such measures are taken, can these valuable staff members feel included and so work for the inclusion of *all* students. As will be evident in the next chapter, physical barriers to inclusion can be removed; and I would argue that with planning, so too can human barriers.

CREATING BARRIER-FREE ENVIRONMENTS

BACKGROUND

Writings about disabled people are usually aspatial or lack geographical forms of reference. This is curious because geography is fundamental to an understanding of the social, economic, and political opportunities and/or constraints underpinning the lives of disabled people (Imrie, 2000, p.5).

As has been cited earlier, Stapleton High School is, at the time of writing, the only secondary school in the Borough designated for pupils with physical impairments. The school evolved as such by chance, as it was constructed on one level due to its geographical position on sand dunes. When it opened in 1975 there were two disabled pupils. In the years to 1985 a small number of disabled pupils from the local area attended the school. In 1985, as a result of the Warnock Report and the 1981 Education Act, Stapleton High School was designated by the local authority to be the mainstream secondary school in the Borough, for pupils with physical impairments. At the time the only adaptations were two ramps, one to the Science block and one to the main entrance.

During the first term following its designation, the Special Needs Co-ordinator began liaising with local special schools to explore equipment and furniture which would make the task of what was termed at the time, integration, more manageable. As the number of disabled pupils in the school increased specialist equipment was installed in the Home Economics Department including a moveable sink and a work unit and ramps to mobile classrooms were built. Adjustable desks were purchased and the local authority financed lap-top computers, large screen monitors, video-caption recorders for televisions and enlarged texts for visually-impaired students.

Moves were made to improve the building's accessibility. However, with a present figure of more than twenty five pupils with physical impairments, the

degree to which initial modifications continue to be adequate and effective is questionable; also of concern is the amount money that has been made available to develop facilities beyond the initial investment.

In 1995 with 1117 pupils on roll, of which just under twenty had physical impairments, Ofsted identified accommodation inadequacies and health and safety issues in relation to the school premises, commenting that on occasions they proved detrimental to the quality of learning. Rooms were regarded as too small for some group sizes, restricting activities in Art, Music and P.E. in particular. Noise due to the air-conditioning and heating system was seen to be an issue in certain areas.

In spite of these factors, however, the only comments made in relation to accommodation and the pupils with physical impairments, centred on the fact that the school was ramped throughout and that there were sufficient toilets for disabled pupils. The extent to which the accommodation difficulties suggested, were compounded for disabled pupils, can only be guessed at. There was no mention of the detrimental effects of the physical environment on this group of students in the report (Ofsted Report, 1995, 7.6 (iii)).

Five years later, at the start of my research project the school underwent its second Ofsted inspection. In 2000 with 1175 pupils on roll of which more than twenty five had physical impairments, accommodation was seen to have improved as far as science was concerned, although issues relating to Art, Music and P.E. were still identified. No reference in this report was made to accommodation for disabled pupils. A general comment suggested, however, that pupils with additional needs were fully included in the school community and that relationships were good. It detailed the fact that such pupils participated equally in the life of the school, including the sixth form (Ofsted, 2000, paragraph 27).

Although in their recommendations the inspectors focused on the school's need to press for improvements in accommodation in Art, Music and P.E. in particular, there was no mention of any need to improve facilities for the disabled pupils (Ofsted, 2000, paragraph 37).

Was I therefore to assume that the pupils *did* feel included and that the physical surroundings provided as appropriate and effective a learning environment for them as they did for other pupils in the school? Evidence suggests that such an assumption would have been inappropriate and that there were difficulties that had not been identified. Barton highlights the fact that emphasis is usually placed on altering the child and not the school and that therefore, historically, little attempt has been made to identify or measure the disabling factors in the school environment (Barton, 1996, p.74).

This is reinforced by documentation such as the 1994 Code of Practice (p.74), which suggests that it is the individual's impairment that makes the physical environment inaccessible. Children are described as having special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. A child is described as having a learning difficulty if they have:

a disability (sic) which either prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for children of the same age in schools and colleges within the area of the LEA.

The statement remains in the new Code of Practice (2001, 1.3, p.6). It is interesting to note that the same section of the Code of Practice 2001 (1.3, p.6) stresses that a child must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language in their home is different from the language in which they are to be taught. I would suggest that a pupil with an impairment should not be described as having a learning difficulty simply because the school or the local education authority fosters a disabling environment by failing to provide the facilities necessary for that child to access the curriculum.

A substantial section in the Index for Inclusion (2000) examines issues relating to the physical environment and accessibility. It highlights the responsibility of LEAs in this particular area (Index for Inclusion, 2000, p.11). It puts forward for

consideration a number of questions. I intend to use four of them as the starting point for each of the four sections of the chapter. I am focusing on these questions in particular, as analysis of the interview data and developments within the school, provide thought-provoking insights in response to each of them.

THE SCHOOL BUILDING AND ITS ACCESSIBILITY

- ii Is the school concerned with the accessibility of all aspects of the school building and grounds, including classrooms, corridors, toilets, gardens, playgrounds, canteen and displays?*
(Index for Inclusion, 2000, p.65)

Stapleton possesses a number of mobile classrooms. The position of them and access to them, are problematic. One pupil saw her ability to enter these classrooms via the very steep ramps, as a daily challenge. Another pupil highlighted the difficulties of being out in the mobiles for tutor time everyday, as well as for a number of lessons:

K.C.: The thing is with wheelchairs, especially electric ones, they go at one speed only. So, if it is pouring with rain, you still have to go, whereas somebody with legs can run and they can run fast, but me in my wheelchair goes from slow to stop and if I get a cold and then a chest infection, I could die.

Careful consideration of Katy's impairments would have been all that was required to prevent a situation arising whereby she found herself outside the main school building for her daily tutor period. Although undoubtedly the need to cater for each individual's needs and requirements is an onerous task, the obligation to at least try to do so, is a prerequisite in the quest for inclusivity.

Just under half of the pupils interviewed suggested that there were problems relating to the corridors. Zoë's comments about the narrowness of the corridors are valid. The school was originally built with far fewer pupils in mind:

*Z.B.: I mean we are supposed to be a designated school!
... the corridors are not wide enough. Some people who
are in wheelchairs and who have big electric ones are
just not getting through, because if everyone is on one
side and they are in the middle and there are lockers
down there as well!*

Zoë looks at the practicalities of the situation, but the inherent dangers are also evident in the scenario outlined. Katy voices her concerns:

*K.C.: ... you have got to go with the flow, you cannot stay
in the class when everyone else has gone and you have
to move with everyone else and it's really scary.*

One pupil humorously discusses her experiences. She outlines her feelings when she first experienced the corridors at Stapleton.

*Y.G.: 'I'm going to suffocate in the corridor!' because
I had visions of me getting stuck in the corridor and
getting shoved along with the pupils, which actually
happened in H.E.!*

When asked for comments regarding possible improvements Ben suggests:

*B.R.: I'd probably make bigger corridors! They are tiny
and if you get pushed you can't move!*

Although he did not mention the corridors in particular, just one pupil interviewed, a wheelchair user, commented positively about the ease with which disabled pupils could move round school. It is worth noting that this student is physically very strong and fast given his athletic training programme.

- R: And what about the school building, does it cater for disabled pupils?*
- G.C.: Yes, it's quite easy to get through the doors and that!*

The health and safety issue obviously gives cause for concern and the introduction of a five as opposed to a four period day, has made the situation more pertinent. The use of a one-way system around the school has eased matters, but the impact of the difficulties encountered on the quality of learning experienced by the disabled pupils, cannot be ignored. Some pupils either have to leave lessons early, or have to arrive to lessons late in order to avoid the crush. As a consequence, their academic development must be affected. Missing the end of lessons denies pupils a summing up of the material covered together with an explanation of homework, whilst missing the beginning of lessons prevents the opportunity to be involved in the start of new topics and material.

In addition to the academic effects on pupils, the social impact of building difficulties, in this instance the corridors, on disabled pupils, must also be considered. If pupils have to use part of their break and lunchtime simply to get to the correct room in order to avoid the crush in the corridors, the amount of time they can spend with a group of friends in an informal setting is reduced.

In addition to the corridors, it would also appear that the lack of toilet provision is affecting the academic and social development of disabled pupils at Stapleton, providing a further barrier to inclusion. Although the 1995 Ofsted report commented on the adequacy of the toilet facilities, at the time of writing there is just one toilet for disabled pupils. Since 1995 the number of pupils needing to use it has risen. The result has been the need to timetable slots during the day when disabled pupils can visit the toilet, necessitating the removal of pupils from lessons at set times. This may ease the lunchtime queue, but in the search for inclusion this is a retrograde step, promoting a model of dependency, denying pupils the same basic rights as their non-disabled peers.

In the light of the issues highlighted here, the reference in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (p.3) to a school's duty:

... to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled pupils are not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to pupils who are not disabled (but there is no duty to remove or alter physical features) ...

seems surprising as it gives little scope for progress to be made as far as disabled pupils are concerned. Not only does this statement prevent the school from having to act to improve the physical environment, it also gives the local authorities a get-out clause. This is another example of what Massie (1994) terms the 'weasel clause'. In response to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 which required new buildings to be made accessible to disabled people, Massie (1994, p.19) comments on the qualifying statement:

unless this was incompatible with the efficient use of resources.

Such a statement, Massie argues, gives authorities the go-ahead to do nothing at all.

The statement from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 is qualified in the new Code of Practice outlining duties for schools from January 2002. It suggests that in a move to provide greater accessibility, schools need only undertake *minor* building alterations such as improving the acoustic environment. In a footnote, it states that responsibility between the L.E.A. and the school for particular building works will depend on the scope of formula capital allocation to schools in the particular Authority (Code of Practice – Special Educational Needs, 2001, p.97). There is a further example of this approach in the introduction to the Code of Practice – Special Educational Needs (2001, p.iv), where it is argued that the reasonable adjustments duty on schools, does not require the removal or alteration of physical features. This all gives cause for concern. The lack of financial commitment or of a concrete requirement to make significant improvements to accommodate disabled pupils, calls into question the likelihood of necessary changes being undertaken at all.

The Code of Practice – Draft Version (2001, 6.23-6.36, pp.44-48) gives suggestions as to how *reasonable adjustments* can be made by institutions to ensure that disabled pupils are not placed at a substantial disadvantage. It suggests that *reasonable adjustments* assume the involvement of disabled pupils in every aspect of the life of the school. It gives as an example a disabled pupil meriting the lead role in a Christmas production for whom the stage is inaccessible and suggests that a *reasonable adjustment* may be to change round the proposed acting area and auditorium to allow the pupil to take part.

I would agree that all avenues need to be studied in order to allow a pupil maximum participation. However, I would venture that in many situations the only course of action is substantial financial outlay. Stapleton High School is small in terms of space available. It was built to house far fewer pupils than the number it presently contains. To give one example, as stated earlier, there is only one toilet that can be accessed by disabled pupils. None of the other toilets, including staff toilets allows for wheelchair access. Therefore, the school can only improve the situation by financing the construction of new toilets, or the alteration of existing toilets.

During the course of the academic year 2000-2001 students in the sixth form were surveyed to gauge their agreement to convert one of their toilet areas to allow disabled access. Although the majority of sixth form students agreed to the proposals, it was decided that a more suitable solution to the difficulties was the construction a new toilet block for disabled pupils, involving considerable expenditure.

In addition to corridors, classrooms and toilets, lack of access to sporting opportunities has also proved to be an issue at Stapleton High School. Careful analysis of the situation reveals that the only way in which issues can be resolved, is through the financing of improved sporting facilities and equipment. LSA6 who has a particular interest in the sporting development of disabled pupils, comments on the pupils' ability to get involved in sporting activities and suggests the reasons why this is not always possible:

- LSA6: When I first came here, for instance, I thought: 'no, they can't do it!'. Now I think to myself: 'if they want to do it, let them have a go!'. If they can't do it, you just say, 'well, adapt the equipment!'*
- R: Could facilities be improved?*
- LSA6: A lot! We could do with a new mobile, because the one we have got is a disgrace! It has been condemned and so we can't use it and that limits us on a rainy day! When the other children are doing cross-country, we are stuck in the dining room playing boccia and that's not right! We could do with a lot more equipment! ... I believe we are getting a Special Needs' Unit which we have been waiting on for five years!*
- R: What will it involve?*
- LSA6: Separate changing areas – at the moment when they change for PE they have to go into the disabled toilet (sic) and there is usually a big queue... We could do with somewhere to have a table tennis table and weights spread around ... The new unit is going to have different toilets and changing rooms and we need that! We probably need more than that!*

Accessibility to P.E. facilities was also identified by the students:

- R: Do you think, because obviously the school is designated for pupils with physical impairments, that it caters sufficiently for disabled pupils?*
- G.L.: It doesn't in P.E.!*

Given the comments by LSA6 and by Gayle Lander it is hard to see how the necessary improvements could be made without quite major alterations to the building. It would be possible to put up a table tennis table on a temporary basis, in the existing area available, but given chronic shortage of space, the much needed changing facility could not be provided without substantial financial investment.

Shevlin et al. highlight difficulties encountered by disabled pupils in Physical Education. Their findings suggest that pupils interviewed felt excluded from

mainstream sports' classes; one of the reasons being that the school involved in their research project was ill-equipped to cater for the needs of disabled pupils (Shevlin et al., 2002, p.165).

This situation is replicated at Stapleton High School. In an effort to access more funding, the school applied for a lottery grant, but was unsuccessful. This resulted in one member of staff running the London Marathon to raise money for sports' wheelchairs. In addition, at present there is a bid in to the Local Authority, seeking money from the Schools' Access Initiative, (which I have been fortunate enough to be able to support in the light of my research). If successful, it will provide an astroturf pitch for pupils at the school.

These findings would, therefore, seem to call into question statements made in the Code of Practice 2001. Financial support for environmental developments would appear to be necessary on occasions, in order to make significant building alterations to provide access for disabled pupils. From September 2002 the responsible body for schools, i.e. the governing body, in the case of maintained schools, will be required to produce its own accessibility plans. In addition, to a number of other requirements, each plan will need to contain strategies for improving the physical environment of the school. Governing bodies will have a duty to publish information about their accessibility plans in their governors' annual report to parents (DFES, Accessible Schools..., 2002, p.5).

Failure to invest adequately in building developments and in equipment results in:

exclusionary built environment and teacher practice
(Shevlin et al., 2002, p.166).

In other words, for disabled pupils already struggling for inclusion, the gap between them and their non-disabled peers is widened and made more visible as a consequence of building and equipment restrictions.

DISABLED NON -WHEELCHAIR USERS!

- i. *Are the needs of deaf, blind and partially sighted people, as well as people with physical impairments considered in making the buildings accessible?*
(Index for Inclusion, 2000, p.65)

In reference to the school's accessibility, it was interesting to note once again, evidence of a hierarchy of impairments amongst my interviewees. The majority of comments made by both wheelchair and non-wheelchair users focused on difficulties encountered by wheelchair users – narrowness of corridors, accessibility to mobile areas etc. Having conducted a number of interviews where this viewpoint was highlighted I too fell into the trap of believing that the physical environment was inappropriate solely for wheelchair users.

However, I conducted one of my final interviews with Suzanne, a student with hearing difficulties. I do not know why I was surprised to hear her state in response to the question:

R: What about the actual building? Do you think that it caters for disabled pupils?

S.S.: Not really! It is very difficult to hear in some of the rooms!

Noisy air-conditioning and heating appliances do cause problems for hearing-impaired students and the failure to provide carpeted classrooms or a loop system throughout the school must aggravate the situation. Clearly some members of the teaching staff fail to acknowledge difficulties caused by inappropriate surroundings to pupils experiencing hearing difficulties. Steven Eddington in his interview comments on this issue:

R: And how do you feel that you are treated by the staff?

S.E.: Quite well! Some of them have been quite difficult with me, but most of them have been quite good!

R: In what way difficult?

S.E.: Like not making sure that I am at the front and if I keep asking them they lose patience and say: 'Why weren't you listening?'

A heterogeneous body of disabled pupils presents a series of challenges to any institution. Indeed, in the case of Stapleton High School, it could be argued that each of the twenty five plus disabled pupils has their own particular needs and requirements. However, inclusion demands the acknowledgement of individual differences and the implementation of measures to facilitate their accommodation. In Steven's case, in the instance cited, his difficulties had gone unnoticed, possibly because his impairment was not immediately obvious. However, had the pupils with a hearing impairment been clearly identified and had staff been issued with a set of guidelines, or had they got together with hearing impaired pupils to discuss effective approaches in the classroom, it is possible that the situation outlined could have been avoided.

DEVELOPMENTS

iv Is disabled access (sic) part of the building improvement plan? (Index for Inclusion, 2000, p.65)

In the light of the obvious difficulties, acknowledged by the pupils themselves, it was encouraging to be able to answer 'yes' in response to this question. In 2001 construction work got underway to improve facilities for the disabled pupils at Stapleton. The intention is to provide improved toilet, shower and P.E. facilities together with storage space and a new medical area. The building work is being financed by the local council which has gained funding from central government via The Schools Access Initiative.

ARE THE NEW FACILITIES APPROPRIATE?

- iii Are organisations of disabled people consulted about the accessibility of the school?
(Index for Inclusion, 2000, p.65)*

Articles 12 and 13 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child state that:

Children, who are capable of forming views, have a right to receive and make known information, to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account in any matters affecting them. The views of the child should be given due weight according to the age, maturity and capability of the child (Code of Practice – Special Educational Needs, 2001, p.27).

As has been stated, part of the new building project at Stapleton High School is being financed, via the local authority (the Schools' Access Initiative), by central government, as part of an initiative to improve access to school buildings. Funding for such projects has in fact been available to local councils since 1996. However, it is only in the last few years that there has been a significant rise in the amount of money issued to local education authorities, for the project. In spite of this seeming awareness of the need to break down environmental barriers that contribute to exclusion, Barton's comments, made in 1996, unfortunately still apply. He stated that most of the decisions regarding access are made by non-disabled people, who make little or no attempt to consult people with impairments. As a result, new constructions and adaptations can end up being expensive wastes of time and resources (Barton, 1996, pp.75-76).

The absence of communication at Stapleton High School, as regards the new building project, was apparent. Although from within the school, the nurse and the physiotherapist were consulted, the disabled pupils set to benefit from the development were not asked for their views or opinions and the local council did not, as far as could be ascertained speak to any disability organisations. Not only can a lack of consultation result in senseless expenditure, more importantly as

potential users of new developments are denied the opportunity to comment on the likely success and effectiveness of initiatives, it can prove a further barrier to inclusion. Lloyd-Smith and Tarr's (2000, p.160) comments prove particularly pertinent. They acknowledge that involving young people in the decision making process is an integral part of an effective inclusion process.

CONCLUSION

If Stapleton wishes to be considered an inclusive institution it needs to develop and adapt its physical environment. It is encouraging to note, therefore, that work is underway to improve facilities; although lack of consultation with relevant organisations regarding the new development is unacceptable. The physical environment must foster the independence of each and every pupil, as far as is possible. Failure to develop the surroundings can have a detrimental effect on the academic and social development of pupils.

Shevlin et al. in their research project acknowledge the social impact of environmental difficulties. They found that basic access and mobility issues could affect school relationships with both teachers and peers. They discovered that participants with certain impairments had to rely on their peers to gain access to school facilities (Shevlin et al., 2002, p.162). It could be argued that the disabled pupils' reliance on their non-disabled peers provides a means of enhancing a caring and supportive culture where all pupils are interdependent. I would, however, support the findings of Shevlin et al. They conclude that over-reliance resulting from inadequate environmental adaptations marginalises the students and alters the balance of their relationship with their friends (Shevlin et al., 2002, p.162). The disabled pupils consequently find themselves in a subservient, less valuable role in peer group friendships. Ballard and McDonald (1999, p.101) remark on the need to address this issue:

The social implications of a helping relationship clearly need attention.

The need, therefore, to enhance accessibility at Stapleton is undeniable. However, the fact remains that lack of access to other establishments continues to deny disabled pupils the right to attend their local school. The effects of this situation have been detailed in the chapter three. Local education authorities do have a number of sources available to them to help fund disability access projects, including the Schools Access Initiative, specifically for disability access projects in mainstream schools. There was a total of £50 million available in 2001-2002 (DFES, Accessible Schools ..., 2002, p.19). Stapleton's local education authority *does* intend to use this money, allotted to them by the government, to help improve accessibility in several other primary schools and three secondary schools in the Authority. This will ease the problems at Stapleton and although still not ideal, it will allow pupils and their families greater choice. It is to be hoped that these establishments will learn from Stapleton's experience and will seek to consult disability organisations representing all forms of impairment, in order to provide the best possible facilities.

Initially the cost of adaptation of a mainstream school may be high. This may be seen as excessive, particularly for what could be perceived to be a small number of students. The fact remains, however, that it is a basic human right, which *can* have wider benefits for the community. The Index for Inclusion (2000, p.65) asks schools seeking to provide inclusive environments to consider the following:

- vi. *Is accessibility seen as about including disabled staff, governors, parents/carers and other members of the community as well as students?*

Coopers and Lybrand (1992, p.75) recognise the cost of opening up access for students into neighbourhood schools, but go on to suggest that:

... the conversion of public education premises to permit effective access for adults with disabilities (sic) (parents, Governors, staff and the general public) should itself be a priority irrespective of how many pupils with disabilities (sic) subsequently go there. It is not unreasonable to regard some of the premises conversion cost talked about here as reflecting this more common general purpose.

This all seems to bode well for the future. However, in spite of the implication that local education authorities and schools have the necessary finance to make appropriate alterations to premises, the amount of money available, given other essential expenditure is still woefully short of that which is required.

Consequently, this leaves other schools lacking facilities in the immediate future. Accessibility to public buildings is a human right not a good idea. It is essential for inclusion. It should be a priority for local and central government, whatever the cost.

CONCLUSION

'The conclusion', an inappropriate appellation to describe the point I feel I have reached in this research process. Paradoxically, the stresses and strains of the last few years have led me not to an end, but to a new beginning.

I had, in the embryonic stages of the study, looked forward to this opportunity of finally getting my life back to normal, of drawing to a close the greatest challenge I had ever faced and of moving on. I can move on, but I do so a changed and hopefully a better person for the experience. I have learnt a lot, both about and from, the pupils and the learning support assistants I have interviewed, but I have learnt as much about myself. I see this juncture as a new start in terms of both my attitude and approach to teaching. I have reassessed, modified and developed and hope this will be of benefit to all my pupils. More importantly, however, I would like to see this point as a new start for the disabled pupils and learning support assistants at Stapleton High School.

In publishing their contributions, I acknowledge and value their involvement in this research study. I appreciate that the outcome of my findings will not result in major changes, but I sincerely hope that some progress will be made and that school policy will be influenced.

Davis and Watson (2001, p.685) echo the importance of this taking place:

it is our belief that full inclusion is only likely to be achieved when policy decisions are built on disabled children's own lived experience as articulated direct to policy makers or as collected within empirical studies ... If real change is to occur disabled children and their allies must gain a share of power in educational institutions.

The interview process encouraged the young people to reflect on and to consider, themselves and in so doing, led them to formulate and articulate their feelings and points of view. This move, leading towards self-evaluation and recognition of identity represents, in some small way, the beginning of the transfer of control.

This is essential if disabled people are to feel valued in society, if they are to feel included in the mainstream.

The research process was participatory and the young people felt able to challenge and contradict, probably for the first time. The interview process leading to some degree of self-awareness and self-worth could prove to be the start of a journey towards emancipation. Christensen (1996, p.64) reminds us that historically disabled people have had their identity defined for them in terms of sickness, including pathology or disorder. Peters (1996, p.215) highlights the importance of the sense of self and the need to redefine oneself as an individual and to validate one's personal biography of unique lived experiences. Therefore, if the disabled pupils at Stapleton High School can begin to take responsibility for the definition of their identity, then there is a chance that they can start to move towards self-empowerment and the ability to affect their own lives:

a pedagogy of disability must empower disabled people themselves to become political advocates through a process of developing a positive self-identity. In this way of thinking, the positive personal identity is a precondition for a political self-identity (Peters. 1996, p.215).

As a development, this is long overdue in the school situation. In response to the first of my three research questions, educational provision for pupils with physical impairments has evolved *slowly* over the years. Some may even argue that it has stagnated, apart from pockets of improvement. In spite of the rhetoric, the good intentions and the promises of a better future have too often eluded disabled young people.

Successive governmental policy-makers have articulated a commitment to mainstream provision, but careful reading of a stream of Acts reveals a series of qualifying statements that legitimate inaction and inertia on the part of those implementing the policy. The struggle for integration continues. However, integration in itself is insufficient. Many disabled pupils who have beaten the system and found themselves in mainstream schools, have felt isolated and excluded. The implications of the implementation of the latest legislation have

yet to be seen. It is hoped, however, that this legislation will prove a support in the struggle for the realisation of inclusive social relations and practices.

Integration has not been easy, but the ethos surrounding this concept once achieved, fails to promote the rights of the disabled pupil. Integration perpetuates a medical model of disability. It concerns itself with the need to place children in a mainstream setting whilst encouraging them to adapt to existing norms. It does not allow for personal development or difference.

The integration argument suggests that on the grounds of human and educational rights, everyone should have access to regular schools and classrooms. Access does not in itself guarantee full participation or more equal outcomes (Rizvi and Lingard, 1996, p.22).

We do not need educational evolution, but educational revolution. It is not enough to offer disabled pupils the opportunity to attend mainstream schools, their presence has to be acknowledged, accommodated and celebrated. The social model of disability recognises disability as a collective problem, not an individual deficit. Therefore, it is the responsibility of those in authority to ensure that through making the appropriate modifications, disabled pupils can feel a part of the mainstream.

Stapleton High, the designated school in the Borough for pupils with physical impairments, has experience of disabled pupils dating back twenty years. It clearly promotes integration, but does the school offer inclusion? In response to my second research question, I conclude that, in terms of academic and social development, disabled pupils do experience some inclusion. There is, however, room for improvement. This gives some cause for concern. Given the nature of inclusion, i.e. the commitment to value diversity and celebrate difference, there is no room for complacency. It has to be worked towards and there has to be determination to have it succeed. If Stapleton, with all its experience, is having difficulty promoting inclusion, what is happening in other institutions?

At Stapleton High access issues and the role of the learning support assistants place obstacles in the way of academic inclusion. However, Stapleton is a high achieving secondary school and quantifiable evidence seems to suggest that pupils are fulfilling their potential. In fact, their academic development did not preoccupy the interviewees.

Pupils' social experiences are more problematic. There are positives. Ian saw his friends as the most important aspect of school:

R: What is the best thing about Stapleton High School?

I.B.: Best thing is probably that I have met lots of new people - loads of good mates!

Yvonne's friend proved essential, understanding her feelings and helping her to get around, whilst Chris wanted to be with his friends at all costs! Chris developed his impairment during his time at Stapleton High School. I asked him how he would have felt if as a result he had had to change institutions:

R: How do you think you would have reacted if you had gone to _____ {name of another secondary school in the area given} and then you had had to come here?

C.N.: It depends if my friends were all there!

However, the majority of pupils interviewed experienced difficulties. Distance travelled, lack of sporting resources and extra-curricular activities, lack of discussion surrounding disability and the role of learning support assistants, were all seen as major obstacles to social inclusion. For the reasons cited, many of the disabled pupils had difficulty forming friendships. Socially, they felt excluded from the mainstream.

There are solutions to the difficulties encountered. Firstly, making all secondary schools in the Borough accessible, would allow pupils the opportunity to go to their local comprehensive with their friends, reducing the need for lengthy daily journeys. Government money devolved to local authorities in the form of the Schools Access Initiative will improve the situation in the Borough in which

Stapleton finds itself. Three other secondary schools will be made accessible in the coming year. Clearly, this needs to be promoted to include all secondary schools.

Secondly, financial outlay can help to improve sporting and extra-curricular facilities. Money needs to be made available for this to take place. The school has a bid in with the local authority at present to provide astroturf to enhance sporting provision for disabled pupils. In the quest for inclusion, disabled pupils need to be given the same rights as their non-disabled peers.

Thirdly, lack of discussion surrounding disability issues was a problem for a number of the interviewees. They felt that whilst their differences were ignored and their experiences overlooked, they could not feel fully included. Myths and superstitions surrounding their impairments and their presence in the school built up and some disabled pupils felt misunderstood by non-disabled pupils and some disabled peers. There are opportunities, for example, in the Personal, Social and Health Education programme to facilitate discussion taking place and this is something that needs to be actively pursued and worked towards.

Fourthly, the role of the learning support assistants was of major concern. Disparate approaches led to disparate pupil experiences. Learning support assistants clearly have a significant effect on the social development of the pupils with whom they work. They featured strongly in the pupil interviews. Consequently, I chose to interview eight of them. They raised many issues. It is evident that for their benefit and more importantly, for the benefit of the pupils, they cannot continue to operate as they have been doing. Streamlining their function, raising their status and including *them* in the mainstream could only serve to help improve the situation. Serious staff development in terms of disability equality awareness training would prove beneficial. However, carried out on an individual basis, this would, in itself, be insufficient. A collective, whole school approach is required, with the opportunity available for teaching and non-teaching staff to work together; supporting, encouraging, sharing and even arguing with, one another, in the quest for inclusive practice.

If some of these measures are put in place at Stapleton High School, it can make claims towards the establishment of a more inclusive institution. Creating an inclusive setting does not just have a positive effect on one group of young people – i.e. the pupils with physical impairments, but on all children. The pursuit of this and the desire for inclusivity to mirror school ethos has to be the way forward.

My third research question focused on environmental issues. Quite clearly lack of physical access did lead to exclusion. The narrowness of the school's corridors, the lack of facilities – sporting and otherwise, together with poor toilet provision were just a few of the factors marginalising the disabled pupils at Stapleton High School. The introduction of a one-way system around the school, attempted to deal with the corridor situation. In addition, during my study the school was undergoing building work intended to improve facilities and increase the number of toilets, for the disabled pupils. Whether this will actually promote inclusion remains to be seen, as the failure to consult any disabled people before its construction calls into question its effectiveness and appropriateness.

I would like Stapleton High School to benefit from my findings and I hope, in particular, that they will be of use to the schools within the Borough who have just been allocated money for accessibility. There are a number of possible areas for future development. I would like to examine in depth primary school experiences of disabled pupils, and compare them with life in secondary school. I would be interested in tracing the views and opinions of the parents of the pupils I interviewed, to ascertain their experiences of the mainstream setting. I would also like to follow-up the pupils I interviewed in five/ten years time to track their experiences of college and the workplace.

The question remains, is Stapleton High School an inclusive institution? If I can answer 'yes' to this question, then I firmly believe that the academic and social experiences are as positive as they can get. My answer, however, is not yet, but there is potential. The school has made some inroads in the quest for inclusivity, but as has been outlined, there is room for improvement. An inclusive institution does not just benefit one group of young people, but all young people and indeed it can be more far-reaching than that:

The struggle for inclusive education is part of a wider struggle to bring about an inclusive society in which all individuals and groups enjoy full and equal membership. As such, it involves asking questions and making demands that are disturbing because they challenge the familiar and the way in which our own societies are organised (Armstrong and Barton, 1999, p.262).

In that quest for an inclusive society, my research experience has, I believe empowered me to ask questions and to challenge. I hope it has inspired those involved to do the same.

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APPENDIX 1

All pupils involved in the interview process were given pseudonyms. When quoted the initials of their pseudonyms are used.

Z.B.	-	Zoë Bretherton
I.B.	-	Ian Brown
GiC.	-	Gillian Chadwick
W.C.	-	William Collins
G.C.	-	Graham Connolly
K.C.	-	Katy Connor
S.E.	-	Steven Eddington
G.G.	-	Greg Gascoigne
Y.G.	-	Yvonne Gordon
G.L.	-	Gayle Lander
C.N.	-	Christopher Norton
B.R.	-	Ben Robinson
S.S.	-	Suzanne Stephens

APPENDIX 2

Copy of the letter issued to parents and pupils:

Dear *(parents and pupils addressed by name)*

I have taught Modern Languages at Stapleton High School for over ten years. During my time at this highly successful school, I have always felt that one of its greatest strengths has been the number of disabled pupils who attend - a strength not in terms of what the school offers to this particular group of pupils, but in terms of what they bring to the life and community of the school.

I have, as a consequence of my belief in successful inclusion, opted to research into the academic and social experiences of disabled pupils at Stapleton, as part of a Doctor of Education programme. My findings will form the basis for a 50,000 word thesis. For this reason I am writing to request permission to interview _____ . The interview will last between thirty minutes and one hour. I would like to be able to record the interview on audiotape in order to gain as accurate a representation as possible of what is said. In advance of the interview, I will forward to all pupils participating an agenda detailing topics to be covered. Following the interview a transcript will be produced, together with a summary of the interview, which pupils will be free to comment on and to change if they feel it inaccurately represents what was said. There may be a follow-up interview, either on an individual or a group basis.

I wish to assure that as far as possible confidentiality will be maintained. At the write-up stage a pseudonym will be used for the name of school, as well as for all participants.

I hope that as a result of my research to be able to confirm good practice already taking place within the school and to be able to make recommendations for future development. I would be extremely grateful for and interested in, any contributions _____ has to make. Please do not hesitate to contact me at school to discuss the project further.

I would appreciate it if you could complete the form below and return it to me at school by _____.

Many thanks for your co-operation!

Yours sincerely

C. Ainsworth (Ms)

(A return slip was included requiring a signature indicating agreement to take part, from both the pupil and their parents.)

INTERVIEW AGENDA

Copy of the interview agenda issued to pupils in advance of the interview.

1. How old are you?
2. Which year are you in at school?
3. How long have you been a pupil at Stapleton?
4. Which primary school did you go to?
5. What was the best thing about your primary school?
6. What was the worst thing about your primary school?
7. Can you tell me, how, if in any way it was different from Stapleton?
8. Did you have a lot of friends at primary school? Tell me about them!
9. Did you have a best friend? Tell me about him/her!
10. What is the best thing about Stapleton?
11. What is the worse thing about Stapleton?
12. And at Stapleton do you have a lot of friends? Tell me about them!
13. Do you have a best friend? Tell me about him/her!
14. How do you spend your breaks and lunchtimes?
15. What extra-curricular activities do you know about at Stapleton?
16. Do you take part in any of them?
17. Why?
18. Why not?
19. Who do you take part in them with?
20. Are there any extra-curricular activities that you would like to take part in but cannot?
21. Are there any extra-curricular activities that you would like to do but are not offered by school?
22. What do you know about the Kielder Challenge? Have you taken part in it? Why? Why not?
23. Which sporting activities have you been involved in, both during P.E. lessons and extra curricular? What about Boccia?
24. In terms of school subjects, which subject(s) do you enjoy the most and why?
25. Which subject(s) do you enjoy the least and why?
26. Which subject(s) are you best at?
27. Which subject(s) do you find the most difficult?
28. *(if appropriate)* Tell me about your work experience placement – how much choice did you get? Where do you hope to go?
29. Do you have a learning support assistant?
30. Do you have the same person with you for all lessons?
31. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
32. Do you have a learning support assistant with you at break and/or lunchtime?
33. As well as the learning support assistant have you had contact with any other professionals other than teachers – eg. physiotherapists / speech therapists etc?
When do you go to see them? Tell me how you feel about that!

34. Tell me about your impairment – are you happy for me to use that term? – Help me to understand what it means to you on a day to day basis?
35. How much do your friends know about your impairment? Do they ask?
36. To what extent do you think that the school's curriculum addresses disability issues? Would you do anything differently?
37. How do you feel you are treated by teachers, other staff and by pupils?
38. To what extent does the school building cater for disabled pupils? Is there anything you would change?
39. What do you know about 'special schools'? What do you think the difference is between Stapleton and a special school?
40. Which type of school do you think you prefer and why?
41. I notice that you live in _____. Has travelling to school been a problem? Does it mean that you see your friends less frequently?
42. Why did you come to Stapleton? If you and your family were choosing secondary schools again would you choose Stapleton? If not why not?
43. What are you hoping to do when you leave school? How useful has individual careers' advice been?
44. Finally, is there anything you would like to add, or anything you would like to say that you have not already had a chance to?

Copy of the interview agenda on which the interviews with the learning support assistants were based. This was not issued to interviewees in advance.

INTERVIEW AGENDA – LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

- 1/ *Background, training and qualifications*
- 2/ *The job itself*
- 3/ *Role with pupils*
- 4/ *Role with teaching staff*
- 5/ *Position in the school*

BACKGROUND, TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

- 1/ How long have you been an LSA?
- 2/ What are your qualifications?
- 3/ Immediately prior to starting the job and in the initial few months – how much training did you receive?
- 4/ Since being employed have you been involved in any work-related training courses? How useful have they been?
- 5/ Is there any training you would like to undertake?
- 6/ Do you see the job as well-paid for what you do?
- 7/ What personal qualities do you feel you need to be able to do this job effectively?

THE JOB ITSELF

- 8/ Do you have a job description?
- 9/ How does that match what you are actually doing?
- 10/ (If they have been doing the job a while) How has your job changed over the last few years?
- 11/ Do you work with one pupil or a variety of pupils?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of this?
- 12/ What is the nature of the difficulties experienced by your particular student(s)?
- 13/ Did you feel you knew enough about your student(s) before starting to work with him/her/them?
Does this matter?
- 14/ Would you prefer to be attached to departments to develop expertise in individual areas, rather than being attached to pupils?
- 15/ By what title do you feel you would like to be known?

ROLE WITH PUPILS

- 16/ In one research project a Learning Support Assistant commented that the pupils saw her and her colleagues as 'mums'! How do you feel about that?
- 17/ Do you feel you have a role to play in the academic or social development of the pupils you work with? or both?
- 18/ To what extent do you feel you are helping pupils to become independent learners?
- 19/ Do you spend breaks and lunchtimes with the pupils you work with? How do you feel about that?
- 20/ How do you feel about the amount of time the pupils you work with spend with adults?
- 21/ To what extent do you feel that the social development of pupils is hampered or enhanced by working closely with a Learning Support Assistant?
- 22/ What do you feel is the best way to encourage your pupils' interaction with members of his/her peer group?
- 23/ Do you feel you are instrumental in helping to develop the confidence of the pupils you work with?
(Can you give examples of this?)
- 24/ To what extent are you involved in individual pupil's review procedures?
- 25/ Do you see it as your job to contribute to the participation and development of all pupils in a classroom setting?
(In your view, are you in a classroom to support an individual child or group of children, or to support the whole class?)
- 26/ How do you feel you are viewed by pupils – both those you work with and those you do not?
- 27/ Do pupils behave differently with Learning Support Assistants than with teachers?

ROLE WITH TEACHING STAFF

- 28/ To what extent do teachers understand your role in the classroom?
(What could be done to improve this?)
- 29/ In relation to the rest of the pupils in the class, how far do teachers get involved with the individual pupils that you work with?
(I want to find out here if teachers think they do not need to bother with those pupils because the Learning Support Assistant is there)
- 30/ Do you feel appreciated and valued by teaching staff?
- 31/ Do you feel you are there to support the teacher in the classroom?
- 32/ Would you like to be involved in lesson planning to a greater extent?
- 33/ Do you think being attached to a Department would facilitate greater involvement?
- 34/ What do you feel would be the ideal relationship between the teacher and the learning support assistant?

ROLE WITHIN THE SCHOOL

- 35/ Are you made to feel as though you have an essential role to play in the school community?
- 36/ Do you have staff meetings? Would it be useful to have them? (with or without teaching staff?)
- 37/ Do you have a lot of dealings with parents? Do you feel that this is something that could be encouraged?
(If so, why? If not, why not?)