Transition to Secondary School by Children with Special Educational Needs

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ABSTRACT

The last 40 years have witnessed huge changes in the educational experiences of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), with increased emphasis on inclusive approaches to meeting their needs. This has been reflected in international agreements, also in UK Government legislation and reports during this period. Increasingly, pupils with SEN were educated in mainstream schools and so required to make a transition between schools at age 11. Successful transition from primary to secondary education is important for later well-being and attainment (West *et.al* 2010). Pupils with SEN face increased demands as they move from spending most of the day with a single class teacher in their primary school to the organisational and relationship complexities of needing to work with several different adults during the week in the secondary setting. This research investigated the experiences of children with SEN statements as they made the potentially difficult transition from mainstream primary to mainstream secondary school. It explored those social, academic and personal organisation matters often mentioned by children as of concern to them at time of transition. A largely qualitative approach was adopted, exploring the views of children, parents and school staff about this process and the approaches taken by mainstream schools in an English Local Authority to facilitate the transition experience for the children involved.

Evidence was collected through questionnaires and interviews, and analysed for purposes of this research with the use of vignettes. It was found that the children interviewed looked forward with a mixture of excitement and concern. Most optimism was expressed about the prospect of enhanced opportunities in sport, science and school lunch! There were three broad areas of concern; social concerns ranging from making new friendships to fear of bullying; academic concerns relating to the anticipated increased amount/complexity of the work and decreased support for their specific difficulties; and worries about personal organisation in a larger school with different subjects each requiring specific materials. The eight primary and three secondary schools visited during this research all made arrangements to introduce children to their new school in advance of transfer, with additional activities for children with SEN. Post-transition interviews with the remaining seven participants demonstrated that transition proceeded smoothly, and that any concerns expressed in year 6 were unfounded. The original contribution of this longitudinal research has been to demonstrate the difference between participants' pre-transition expectations and eventual reality, also to ascertain what features participants identified as the most effective in facilitating transition, for a sample of pupils with widely varying SEN.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

'Without aspiration, there is no pressure to know more. And without systematic tools for gaining relevant new knowledge, aspiration degenerates into fantasy or despair. Thus asserting the relevance of the right to research, as a human right, is not a metaphor. It is an argument for how we might revive an old idea… That taking part in democratic society requires one to be informed.' Appadurai (2006, p.167)

The purpose of this research was to explore the crucially important transition of children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) from mainstream primary to mainstream secondary school. A Statement is a formal document produced following Statutory Assessment which sets out the pupil's SEN and how they must be met. This project investigated and described the experience and the views of the children, parents and school staff involved in the process of transition, to explore the expectations and concerns of the children, and critical influences on their experience of transition. Methods of enquiry included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and reviews of documentation. No research of this nature is totally without influence. Inevitably, as a professional with 40 years of working experience in schools, I view the world through a particular lens. I bring to the research task a variety of experiences which shape my outlook, stance and way of working. In several situations the task of negotiating a child's place into primary school was less problematic, for example where minor adaptations such as ramps would allow access. The situation in secondary schools was often insoluble, even in schools which were determined to meet the needs of all pupils in their neighbourhood. For example in one secondary school, all laboratories were on the first floor. The provision of first floor wheelchair access, or a lift, or ground floor laboratories, would have been prohibitively expensive, so it was not possible for the student to attend his local school. This illustrates that even in situations where child, parent and school are all keen to make inclusion work, financial issues can be decisive. My work as an Educational Psychologist required certain styles of working within schools. It brought the obvious advantage of familiarity with primary and secondary schools and experience of having interviewed a wide range of students. However, it also brought a certain 'momentum'; there are various expectations on EPs during their visits to schools, including the EP's own expectation that their advice or input is anticipated or is likely to be sought. It can be difficult to adapt to the completely different role of the researcher. In many situations the 'fresh eyes' of the visitor can perhaps see situations from a different perspective and the observer might be tempted to offer suggestions about how things could be handled differently. For example, when the 'acting out' behaviour of a student is responded to with much attention and pleasant consequences from school staff, peers and parents, an EP might venture to suggest that the reaction of onlookers was serving to maintain this behaviour whereas different responses might modify it. In such circumstances, the

researcher must bear in mind that their role is not to interfere but to remain strictly neutral. This can be frustrating but is an essential requirement; the researcher's role is to observe and evaluate situations, and certainly not to alter them.

A concurrent triangulation strategy was used. It is intended that the outcome of this study will be of use to pupils, parents and teachers, and address what McIntyre highlights as

> *'The gap between teachers' craft knowledge ('the tacit, schematic, intuitive thinking on which classroom teaching depends") and research',* (McIntyre, 2005 p.270)

thus asserting their view that educational research is most helpful when it focuses on issues of direct relevance to those affected by it. As is increasingly common in research involving children, much emphasis will be placed on the voice of the child. As Tangen points out

> *'In recent years there has been increasing interest in understanding children's experiences and perspectives on their own lives.'* (Tangen, 2008: 157)

Drawing on children's experiences and opinions, but also on those of the adults involved, it is intended that this project will make an important contribution to our knowledge of the transition process, and draw out fundamental principles and practices which will be of interest to those who are involved in it. As Robson maintains

> *'(The) behaviour, what (people) actually do, has to be interpreted in the light of* (their) *underlying ideas, meanings and motivations.'* Robson (2002, p.24)

The place of this research within the wider field of research in this area will be discussed in Chapter 2 (Literature Review – Transition).

1.1 Educational Inclusion

There is much to celebrate about the progress that has been made to improve the educational experience of those with special needs. My nonagenarian aunt's descriptions of her work in the 1930s in a mental hospital for children can provide only anecdotal evidence of the appalling conditions which some children with SEN experienced in those times. It is not difficult, though, to find far more robust evidence of how thinking and provision have changed over time. Astonishingly, until 1970 'mentally handicapped' children were regarded as *'incapable of receiving education at school'* (Education Act 1944, Para 57 (3)), until the Education (Handicapped Children) Act 1970 transferred the provision of *training* (note the absence of reference to education) for children from Health Authorities to Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Subsequent legislative milestones illustrate the movement towards increased inclusion of those with SEN into the 'mainstream' of education, starting with The Education Act 1976 which although focussed on the principle of comprehensive schooling, also placed a duty on LEAs in England and Wales to include all disabled children in

mainstream schools wherever practicable. Although not implemented, it set the tone for the Warnock Report in 1978 (DES, 1978), which in turn laid the foundations for the Education Act 1981. This introduced the requirement that parental views must be sought and taken into account, also that children be educated in mainstream schools where practicable. I was closely involved in such developments during the 1980s and celebrated the increasing confidence with which parents sought mainstream education for their children, and the willingness of local schools to overcome their anxiety about pupils with exceptional needs and adapt to meet them.

However, Local Authorities responded in very different ways to the new legislation, and concerns were raised about how the Act had been implemented. These were highlighted in an investigation by the Audit Commission and HMI (1992) which identified serious deficiencies in identification of and provision for pupils with SEN. A management handbook was produced for schools, "Getting the Act Together", and subsequently a further education act produced, Education Act 1993, and implemented in September 1994. Among other things, it set minimum time limits on the various steps in the Statutory Assessment process. One highly significant outcome was the establishment of the Special Educational Needs Tribunal, which gave parents the right to appeal to a three-person independent panel against decisions by their Local Authority. This provided further reassurance to parents that, when agreement could not be reached within the LA, their differences could be taken to an independent body whose decision was binding. This momentum towards continually improving the lot of those with SEN is also evidenced in international initiatives, for example the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which called for all children to be educated in such a way as to permit ... *'the fullest possible social integration'.* Similarly the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) called for inclusive education to be the norm and adopted a Framework for Action.

In the UK, the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) made discrimination on the grounds of disability illegal, although it was not until the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) that this was extended to education. Other important milestones include the Government Green Paper, "Excellence for all children: meeting special educational needs" (1997) which advocated *'comprehensive and enforceable civil rights for disabled people',* and the Government White Paper, "Meeting special educational needs: a programme of action" (1998). Mainstream schools were expected to meet a wide range of special educational needs. In support of this aim, the Government subsequently produced an 'Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools' (Ainscow and Booth 2000) for all schools and LEAs in England and Wales.

The momentum toward increased inclusion was reflected in the emergence of such organisations as the Alliance for Inclusive Education – founded in 1990 – whose members believe that

> *'...education should support the development of physical, vocational and academic abilities through mixed-ability tuition in mainstream schools so that all students have the opportunity to build relationships with one another.*
> ALLFIE website, ALLFIE (2010)

However, there are signs that enthusiasm for inclusive education may be waning in governmental circles. The Coalition Government announced a review of SEN and the special educational needs and disability (SEND) green paper '*Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability'*. (DfE (2010) Although this expressed the Coalition Government's intention to improve the current support system for disabled children and young people, also those with SEN, there are portents of a change direction. The Programme for Government (May 2010) included the following:

> *'We will (improve diagnostic assessment for schoolchildren), prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools and* ***remove the bias towards inclusion****.'*

(Emphasis added) (Section 26, page 29)

It remains to be seen whether the trend towards inclusive education is changing. Meanwhile, some 11 year old pupils who might in previous decades have been educated in all-age special schools – or have moved between special schools with similar classroom organisation – now experience transition between the very different settings of mainstream primary and mainstream secondary schools.

1.2 Transition

Transition is inevitable, and continues throughout life. It is necessary to adjust not only to physiological changes, but also to the changing contexts experienced throughout life, including from home to school, from school to employment or higher education and later life. These transitions can affect our future happiness, success and life chances. For example, West *et.al* (2010) argue that successful transition at age 11 affects future success and happiness. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, they found that pupils' personal characteristics were the most important determinants of successful transition. As in the current study, most pupils in West's study had some pre-transition concerns, which related to both formal and informal aspects of the school experience, but for most, these concerns quickly faded, as Galton *et.al* (1999 and 2003) also noted. However, West *et.al* found, when reviewing the literature, that less able pupils were most likely to have negative experiences. Thus this is a highly significant area of research, given the importance of transition for a child's future and

the historical trend towards greater inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools. However, West *et.al* were critical of much of this research, which prompted their three year longitudinal study of transition from primary to secondary school in Scotland, which is discussed further in Chapter 3.

As will be outlined, the challenges facing pupils, especially those with SEN, increase as they move from primary to secondary School. The current project, prompted by my experience in education during the last forty years and his positive value position in relation to inclusion, is focussed on the nature of these challenges during this period of transition, and how they can be met. Having worked as an educational psychologist with many families as their child with SEN made this transition, and witnessed numerous trials and tribulations faced and how they were overcome, the author regarded this as an important area for research. Clearly, school transition is an inevitable 'rite of passage' for most children, and robust evidence of how this can be facilitated for those with SEN could provide valuable insights for those involved in the process. It is intended that this research will add to knowledge in this area by 'mining' the rich source of participants' experiences.

All children face increased demands and opportunities as they move from spending most of the day with a single class teacher and small number of adults, to the organisational and relationship complexities of needing to work with a greater number of adults in different classroom contexts during the week. The main objectives of this project were to determine whether transition proceeded as participants anticipated, and to identify those elements of the experience of pupils with SEN which are most closely associated with successful transition and subsequent schooling. These objectives are encapsulated in the following research questions.

1) When pupils with SEN statements make the transition between mainstream schools at age 11, how do participants' expectations compare with actual experience?

2) What factors are seen by pupils, parents and school staff as facilitating this transition?

How 'successful transition' is defined emerged from the views of participants and from research literature. Attention will be drawn to the extent to which the findings in such sources as the DCSF report, 'What makes a successful Transition from primary to secondary school?' (Evangelou *et.al* 2008) are reflected in the sample of children in the current study. The DCSF report was a major longitudinal study relating to all children making the transition at age 11. The report indicated that successful transition for children involved:

- developing new friendships and improving their self-esteem and confidence
- having settled so well in school life that they caused no concerns to their parents
- showing an increasing interest in school and school work
- getting used to their new routines and school organisation with great ease
- experiencing curriculum continuity

A number of issues which emerged during this study have mirrored those found in previous research. For example, when Maras and Aveling (2006) looked at primary/secondary transition through six case studies, they found that children with similar needs had very different expectations for close support from their Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). Some parents and carers said that ongoing support and the provision of a 'dedicated space' was more useful than direct LSA input. This is reflected in the current project, and pupils expressed very different attitudes to the close presence of an LSA, as will be described in Chapters 5 & 6. Similarly, schools in this project used various methods of communication with parents, and frequent informal contacts were highly valued and effective. Shepherd and Roker (2005), in a project undertaken for the Trust for the Study of Adolescence, demonstrated that newsletters – distributed to 4000 parents in the UK - were a very effective form of information and support for parents. However, there were issues around the level of literacy of parents and the problems of reaching fathers, also parents with English as an additional language. None of these factors were problems for parents in the current sample, but the issue of accessibility of materials by children is addressed.

Within primary schools, pupils most often work with one main teacher who has support and advice from a SENCo and may also have the support of a Teaching Assistant (TA). Recent evidence suggests that TAs often plan and deliver phonics, reading, literacy, numeracy and many other interventions. This has enabled pupils with complex needs to be educated in a mainstream setting, and has required that TAs be incorporated in the teams – and themselves 'included' (Devecchi and Rouse, 2010). Examples of how this has been achieved appear in Chapters 5 and 6, and staff concerns about inclusion in the absence of such support are explored in Chapter 7. For a flow chart of the project, see Figure 4.3.

1.3 Methodology

Although detailed explanations are provided in the Methodology chapter of why this research was done, what was done, why the specific approach was adopted and why certain methods were adopted but not others, (cf Thomas and Walker 2010) these will be outlined here. The research was prompted by the author's professional experience with pupils with SEN making this transition, and with their parents and educators who grew in confidence as their

expertise and experience in meeting SEN increased. Given my observation that people can have enormously different interpretations of the same situation, affected by their own frame of reference, a subjectivist view of knowledge is adopted. Thus an interpretivist stance is taken, recognising that people develop their own schema and individual 'constructs'. (Kelly, 1955) Whether intentionally or not, we are affected by powerful influences and the researcher must be aware of those acting upon him or her. Although starting from a strongly inclusive theoretical standpoint, I am mindful that *'Research value orientations should not determine research finding'* (Carspecken, 1996). The importance of reflexivity - the process of examining both oneself as researcher, and the research relationship - is therefore acknowledged; the author's own frame of reference must not be permitted to affect the outcome of the research.

The research will be approached from a social constructivist viewpoint, and will also draw on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. This conceptualises a series of concentric circles of 'systems', here with the student seen at the centre (micro system), encircled respectively by parent/carer & school staff (meso system) and external agencies (exo system) and overarching cultural beliefs (macro system). Construction of research instruments began with the scanning of abstracts in academic databases using the keywords, 'inclusion, transition, primary, secondary, SEN and Statement', to draw out relevant recent research. A coding system was devised and initially produced 128 codes and subsequently condensed into 28 second level codes. Finally, three broad themes emerged: academic issues; social issues; and issues of personal organisation, which were the basis of a draft list of questions. These were fine-tuned following consultation with the University's Education Research PhD Support Group. The resulting questionnaire was conducted at a conference for newly appointed SENCos. The purpose of this questionnaire was to provide a system of piloting, to determine whether the issues emerging from the literature through coding and distillation into themes would adequately cover all factors seen as important to the members of school staff most closely associated with, and with increasing expertise about, pupils with SEN. Twenty responses were received from the 24 SENCos present on the course, highlighting their experience of transition. Following this piloting, which confirmed that the key issues around transition were covered, relevant improvement suggestions were adopted, leading to separate semi-structured interview schedules for pupils, parents and school staff.

1.4 Sampling

In order to identify an appropriate sample, SENCos at two secondary schools agreed to indicate which primary schools would be 'sending' pupils with statements of SEN to them in year 7 in September 2011. One of these schools subsequently found that none of their potential students with statements would be coming, so a third school was approached. 20 potential participants from 20 different primary schools agreed to take up the places offered at the two remaining secondary schools. The 20 primary school Head Teachers were contacted by letter at the end of the Spring Term 2011 to explain the nature of the research. They were asked to contact the parents on my behalf and facilitate interviews at school if necessary. Eventually 8 pupils and their parents and schools agreed to take part. Interviews were held with pupils, parents and school staff while the pupils were in year 6, and again after the pupils' transition to secondary school. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed as detailed in the methodology chapter, giving rise to clear and consistent evidence of what 'stakeholders' saw as important to successful transition for students with SEN.

To illustrate the wide range of needs experienced by these seven pupils and the provision made to meet them, vignettes are provided in Chapters 5 & 6 to highlight specific elements which aided successful transition. The key issues arising from the research are summarised in Chapter 7 in order to address the research questions. Whilst studies of transition from primary to secondary schools had been undertaken previously, this longitudinal study provides insights into a specific population of pupils, namely those with widely varied SEN who are the subject of SEN statements. For all of the pupils, participants were interviewed before and after the pupils' transition between mainstream schools. Pupils were chosen specifically because they had SEN statements, rather than because of any identified, specific concerns about their upcoming transition, or because of having narrowly defined SEN. Also, evidence was gathered not only of the pupils' own views about the likely outcome of their transition, but also the views of their parents and school staff. Thus, this constitutes an original piece of research on pupils with unique characteristics. The work undertaken afforded opportunities to identify the key features of essential support for these pupils as seen by those most closely involved, and thus has value in being able to inform future school and local authority practices. The research was conducted in accordance with an ethical code which is informed by the guidelines of the University's Research Ethics Committee and the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011). All participation was voluntary, and based on the informed consent of participants. (Burgess, 1989)

1.5 Concluding Remarks

Over the last 40 or more years there has been an increasing emphasis on the inclusion of students with SEN into the mainstream of compulsory education. Consequently, the issue of transition for children with SEN has become increasingly important as so many have had to make the sometimes challenging transition between mainstream schools at age 11. This project investigated the views of pupils making this transition, and of their parents and school staff involved. Within mainstream secondary schools, pupils face increasingly complex academic, organisational and social demands, which are felt more acutely by pupils with SEN. (West *et.al* 2010) An object of this research was to examine the extent to which participants' expectations of transition were accurate, also to identify those factors most closely associated with successful transition to, and ongoing progress in, mainstream secondary school for pupils with SEN. It was intended that the evidence obtained would help to inform those involved in such transition in the future. This is an important area of research, given the rapidly changing political climate, in which meeting SEN is increasingly being seen as 'additional to or different from' what is already available, rather than what Florian (2007) advocates, *'Extending what is already available'*. It is important to evidence this trend towards increasing educational inclusion and to highlight the increased attention being paid to the development of services for those with specific SEN. The following chapter will set this trend into its historical context by reviewing the literature on educational inclusion in England and Wales. The subsequent chapter will review the literature on transition, with particular emphasis on school transition for pupils with SEN.

CHAPTER 2

Review of literature - educational inclusion

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of educational legislation and developments, principally over the last four decades. It charts chronologically the incremental changes, predominantly at national level but also internationally, aimed at ensuring increased opportunities for children and young people with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools alongside their peers, and touches upon the debate about the merits of this process. It argues that this trend towards greater inclusion of pupils with SEN into mainstream schools is to be applauded, but is not without limits. The implications for pupils at times of transition between schools are considered in Chapter 3.

2.2 Over a century of educational changes

In the hundred years following the Forster Education Act of 1870, provision for pupils who would more recently be described as having severe SEN was assumed to require medical rather than educational expertise. Until the Education (Handicapped Children) Act 1970 transferred the provision of training for children who at the time were labelled as mentally handicapped from Health Authorities to Local Education Authorities (LEAs), children in England and Wales with the greatest learning difficulties were declared *'incapable of receiving education at school'* (Education Act 1944, Para 57 (3)). The 40 or so years succeeding the 1970 Act have witnessed huge changes in the educational experience of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). These are reflected in the vocabulary currently used in international agreements, in UK Government legislation and reports during that period and in the major advances in the provision made for children with SEN, all of which are discussed below.

Over the last five years, the number of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools has remained close to the one in five suggested by Lady Warnock in 1978 (DES, 1978), fluctuating from 19.6% in 2008, to 20% in 2010 and to 18.5% in 2012 (DfE, 2012a) (See Appendix 2:8). Over the same period, the proportion of pupils with a statement has remained stable at 1.4%, but information about the years from 1978 to 2003 is elusive. The response from the DfE Statistics Department (dated 12th July 2013) shows that such historical data are not collated. Nor was this information collated by OFSTED or in School Census figures. (See Appendix 2:2) This lack of data is surprising given that the existing system is drawing to a close and

the Statement is going to be replaced with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which will require education, health and social care services to plan services together and make provision to address the child's needs. Such data will presumably be needed for purposes of comparison and useful in helping to evaluate the effects of these upcoming changes. (See Appendix 2:1 for a list of key legislative changes affecting education in England & Wales.)

2.3 Changes reflected in changing vocabulary

This trend towards educating children with SEN alongside their peers has been variously described as 'mainstreaming' in the United States of America and 'normalisation' in Scandinavia and Canada - although the term 'inclusion' is now the internationally accepted term. However, well before the term 'inclusion' gained currency in the field of education, those with additional needs were discussed under the broad heading of 'special educational needs' (SEN). Corbett (1995) explored the way in which the language of special needs emerged, from terms like 'idiot', 'imbecile' and 'moron' which became used as terms of abuse, and how the imagery is changing as negative labels are displaced by those reflecting pride and confidence. Booth (1999) has consistently argued that the term SEN is unhelpfully limited as a way of addressing educational difficulties, since it assumes that these result from learner deficits, and can overlook other barriers to learning which exist in the educational system. Consideration of educational inclusion always happens within a specific political and societal context, as will be made clear in this chapter. Inclusion can be represented in many ways, for example as an ideological stance, as a national and/or local policy, as particular pedagogical practices, as a specific placement or as the personal experience of those involved. Within this project, the focus will be on the personal experience of those involved with children placed within a mainstream school.

2.4 Definitions of inclusion

There continues an internationally widespread belief that no child, including those with SEN and disabilities, should be denied educational opportunities enjoyed by others. This has been debated under the general heading of 'inclusion' and taken by many to mean students being educated alongside their peers without SEN. Attempts to define 'inclusion' are widespread. Lipsky and Gartner (2000, p17) suggest that, 'Inclusion is the development of a unitary system that has educational benefits for both typical students and students with special needs. It is a system that provides quality education for all children'. Ainscow, Booth and

Dyson (2006:5) define it as, *'A principled approach based on a set of values which emphasise access and participation, justice and equity'.* They also assert that the aim of inclusion is to reduce exclusion and discriminatory attitudes, including those in relation to age, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and attainment.

Some define inclusion with reference to the characteristics of the establishments in which 'inclusion' is happening; for example Rouse and Florian (1996) described inclusive schools as problem-solving organisations with a common mission that emphasises learning for all students. Moving this forward, Florian (2007:12) argued that

> *'It is the process of providing something 'additional to' or 'different from' that which is 'otherwise available' in school that defines special educational provision. The task is not to defend what is 'special' about this kind of provision but to challenge complacency about what is not 'otherwise available'.'*

Since this thesis focuses on students in mainstream schools, the word inclusion will be taken as meaning inclusion within a mainstream school setting. The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) talked of integration – locational integration (in mainstream school), social integration (for social and extra-curricular activities) and functional integration, (with pupils experiencing the same 'academic' curriculum). The term 'integration' implied that pupils had to adapt to school, not that schools had to adapt to accommodate a greater diversity of pupils. (Mittler, 2000) The term 'inclusion' seems to have entered gradually into educational vocabulary. As Thomas and Vaughan (2004) (cited in Ellis, *et.al* 2008) suggest, there was no declaration in the move away from segregation that the ultimate aim was inclusion and no definitive event or revelatory piece of research that has led to the current situation.

2.5 The role of special schools

Some commentators– for example those based in the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) - argue that true inclusion would mean that all children were educated in mainstream classes with minimal withdrawal. (See their inclusion charter (CSIE, 1989) cited in Hornby (2001). Arguing from a human rights perspective, Rustemier (2002) argues that the existence of segregated special schools is a form of institutional discrimination. While every effort should be made to help mainstream schools to meet an increasingly wide range of needs, the needs of pupils with the most profound and multiple difficulties are best served in highly resourced and staffed special schools, in keeping with Farrell's (2000) term, 'educational inclusion'. Such an approach is reflected in the Green Paper produced by the then Labour Government, *Excellence for all Children* (DfEE, 1997), which stated:

> *"There are strong educational, as well as social and moral grounds for educating children with special educational needs with their peers. We aim to increase the level*

> *and quality of inclusion within mainstream schools, while protecting and enhancing specialist provision for those who need it."* (DfEE 1997, p43)

Farrell (2000) conceptualises three types of inclusion: *full inclusion*, which he feels wrongly suggests that all children should be included in mainstream or their human rights are denied; *mainstream inclusion*, but he argues that by emphasising the value of the mainstream school has implications for the morale and status of pupils, parents and staff involved in non-mainstream provision; and his preferred alternative *educational inclusion* which removes the emphasis from where the education takes place, and focusses on engagement in an appropriate educational experience.

Hornby (cited in O'Brien (Ed) 2001), advocated a shift from the aim of full inclusion to *responsible inclusion*, implying that some of what has been implemented or advocated in the name of inclusion is irresponsible. In the same vein, Lindsay (2003), made the point that the quest for 'full inclusion' is based on a combination of perceptions of children's rights and moral imperatives which although espousing a system for all children can create one which is not effective for all. Farrell (2001) suggested that arguments for inclusion based solely on human rights are logically and conceptually naïve. Similar caution about unlimited inclusion is reflected in a collection edited by O'Brien (2001), entitled *Enabling Inclusion: Blue skies...Dark Clouds?* Clearly, the title implied that despite the authors' commitment to inclusion, they acknowledged that difficulties might be encountered, especially when stakeholders felt it was externally imposed and impractical. They too argued that inclusion was about more than placement and should focus on its impact on the individual learner.
In my personal view, special schools should have the expertise and resources to meet the most complex needs, but should also include the remit to provide 'outreach' support to support and train staff in the local mainstream schools, as for example provided in the 1980s by Heltwate School in Peterborough, under the Headship of Neville Hallmark.

Such systems were clearly implied within the former Labour Government publication, *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES 2004) which stated that

> *"Inclusion is about much more than the type of school that children attend: it is about the quality of their experience; how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school".*

Also that: *"special schools providing education for children with the most severe and complex needs and sharing their specialist skills and knowledge to support inclusion in mainstream schools"* (DfES 2004, pp. 26).

A radical way of making such expertise available is to establish a federation of schools including a special school. Todd (2007) mentions one such, The Dartington Village

Federation, which consists of a primary, secondary and special school and all-age special school, all under the same roof and with a single governing body.

2.6 Evaluating inclusion

OFSTED (2004) suggested that outcomes at individual pupil level of the different types of provision were not necessarily clear. The only type of provision that was found to be proportionately more effective than others was mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision (OFSTED 2006). The clear implication is that there are special schools of varied merit, just as is the case with mainstream schools. The critical element therefore was not location, in terms of either special or mainstream, but the quality of provision available there. The widely varying views about the purpose of inclusion mean that there is no agreement about how to evaluate its effectiveness, either short-term or long-term. This could be based on quantitative criteria such as pupils' academic progress, either eventual achievement or 'added value'; exclusion figures; fewer special schools, etc. but the 'objectivity' of these measures is only illusory, since so many other variables beside location can influence the outcome. Whatever criteria are measured, it is important also to investigate students' qualitative experiences and opinions during and after their education, because of their influence on their well-being and future happiness. Hence the central focus on participants' experiences within this project.

Another complicating factor is the wide variation in local, regional and national approaches to identifying and meeting SEN, so that there are wide variations between LAs, for example in the number of special schools and the numbers of pupils with statements. However, such measures may give very little indication of the experiences of individual pupils with SEN. For example, consider one LA which devolves a high proportion of SEN finances to schools and closely monitors the experience of pupils, and another which holds most SEN finances centrally and allocates them only to pupils with statements, but does not examine annual reviews. Nationally held statistics about these two LAs could give a very misleading picture of the 'success' of each LA in meeting SENs. Similar issues arise when comparing the approaches taken by schools, since definitions of SEN tend to be relative, so for example a school serving a socially or economically deprived catchment area might have several pupils with challenging behaviour but have teachers with appropriate experience, and put arrangements in place to meet these pupils' needs and so have few or no exclusions or SEBD statements. A nearby school serving a more affluent and privileged population might rarely experience a child with such difficulties, and so permanently exclude or press for a statement on their one errant pupil. Once again, statistical attempts to understand such situations could be very misleading, which again reflects the need for qualitative information when analysing SEN provision and practices.

2.7 Major milestones in education and inclusion; competing agendas?

In the UK the gathering momentum towards greater inclusion became increasingly evident in the 1970s, and although the Education Act 1976 - which placed a duty on LEAs in England and Wales to include all disabled children in mainstream schools wherever practicable - was never implemented, it set the tone for the Warnock Report (DES, 1978). This report, following a wide-ranging investigation into special education in England, Scotland and Wales, concluded that the inclusion into mainstream school might not be right for all children, and that special schools would always be needed. The report replaced the 10 'categories of handicap' contained in the 1944 Education Act (blind, partially sighted, deaf, delicate, diabetic, educationally sub-normal, epileptic, maladjusted, physically handicapped, speech defect) with the concept of Special Educational Needs. It thus subtly altered the concept of special education away from a system of categorisation of the child's impairment or disability and towards the child's special needs which made it more difficult for them to learn than most children of the same age. They recommended that reference should be made to:

> *'those children who, on the basis of a detailed profile of their needs prepared by a multi-professional team, are judged by their local education authority to require special educational provision not generally available in ordinary schools' (Warnock Report (1978, p.45).*

In that sense, the report reflected a move away from a medical model and towards an educational/social one. It also proposed that the views of parents of disabled children should always be gathered and used in the assessment process.

This was certainly a key feature of the subsequent Education Act 1981, which introduced the requirement that parental views must be sought and taken into account. Furthermore, the Act also put a legal requirement on LEAs to educate children with SEN in mainstream schools given three provisos: that the school could meet the child's needs; that the education of other children was not adversely affected; and that it was compatible with the efficient use of resources. These provisos have been confirmed in every subsequent act including the more recent planned overhaul of SEN provision discussed below. When the 1981 Act came into force in April 1983, it offered considerable support to those who sought mainstream education for children, introducing the process of Statutory Assessment and giving parents the right of appeal. Thus, when parents insisted that their child with SEN should be educated in a mainstream school, Local Authorities and SEN Tribunals could only decline this request in clearly prescribed circumstances. This philosophy remained intact in all subsequent legislation, which is considered below. Consequently, mainstream schools have been required to meet increasingly complex needs, including learning difficulties, social / behavioural difficulties and sensory & physical impairments. Pupils with such needs have

thus needed to make the transition between mainstream schools at age 11, hence this research to investigate the experience of this process for those involved in it.

In any account of educational legislation in the England and Wales (and Northern Ireland), it is essential to mention the Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988 (see Appendix 2:3). Although its main focus was not on students with SEN, it made reference to children with SEN Statements to remove any potential anomalies, asserting that those with SEN were entitled to a broad and balance curriculum. Although it introduced a National Curriculum, which applied to all maintained schools but not independent schools, it stipulated that for children with SEN statements, it was permissible for the provision specified to exclude the application of provisions of the National Curriculum (NC), The legislation discouraged disapplication and required that before doing so, schools should explore the flexibility available within the full National Curriculum, which allowed pupils to be taught at earlier key stages if this would enable them to make progress. If however it was clear during statutory assessment or at the annual review of a pupil's statement that such modifications were insufficient, disapplication could be agreed from all or part of the National Curriculum study or assessment arrangements. In such cases, the statement had to state which aspects of the National Curriculum were to be disapplied, what provision would be in place instead, and how a broad and balanced curriculum would be maintained. It also required that the disapplication be reviewed at each annual review of the statement. Clearly, adherence to this requirement would have major implications at time of transition, when modifications to the pupil's curriculum were being adjusted.

Given that under the heading 'SEN' are children with profound and multiple learning difficulties with little apparent spontaneous response to sensory stimuli, unable for example even to visually track a moving light, it is clear that disapplication is sometimes appropriate.[1] However, since disapplication from assessment could remove children with the lowest attainments from a school's SATs (Standard Assessment Tests) statistics, and thus enhance a school's 'league table' position, it is important that LAs carefully scrutinise and monitor disapplication requests. Indeed it was ERA that introduced the notion of competition between schools, effectively a disincentive to mainstream schools to including pupils with SEN. Clearly, schools which can attract the most academically able pupils and discourage, disapply or exclude the least able have a 'head start' when it comes to statistical comparisons of examination success. This is what Gewirtz (2002) calls, 'The shift from

[1] Given that extremely low attainments of some children in schools, it seems bizarre that disapplication did not apply to the statutory requirements to provide a balanced and broadly based curriculum, to teach religious education, sex education, careers education and collective worship.

welfare-ism to post welfare-ism.' She describes post-war education in England and Wales as 'corporatism', moving from a meritocratic phase to a comprehensive phase *'characterised by a partnership between the central state, the LEA and teacher unions'.* (p2) Bureaucratic administration and professionalism – including relatively autonomous teachers in cooperation with advisors, inspectors and support staff – ensured co-ordinated provision. She describes the post-welfarist era as replacing distributive justice with a commitment to market 'democracy' and competitive individualism. The ERA also introduced Grant Maintained Schools (GMS), centrally funded by Government and separate from Local Education Authorities (LEAs). However, it required head teachers of GMS to inform the LEA of any pupil for whom they considered the LEA might be required to determine the special educational provision. This was to ensure that students attending GMS had the same rights as pupils in LEA schools to a Statement of SEN and the associated provision.

During the same years the move towards more inclusive education was not confined to the UK, and was reflected for example in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), which called for all children to be educated in such a way as to permit … "the fullest possible social integration" (Article 23), subsequently interpreted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to mean that inclusion is a goal for all children. Although still not ratified by the USA, this Convention was ratified by the UK in 1991.The Education Act (1981) had perhaps been the most significant milestone on the road to enhancing the educational experience of children with SEN. However, in the following decade there were widespread concerns about the slow pace of the Statutory Assessment (SA) process, the lack of clarity in Statements of SEN and differences between LEAs in their interpretation of what constituted a special educational need. This led to an investigation by the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) (1992) into educational provision for pupils with SEN, which identified serious deficiencies in identification and provision for pupils with SEN. It criticised the time taken to complete the SA process, the vague wording of needs in statements, the lack of certainty about what provision would be made and the very weak arrangements for annual reviews of statements.

These criticisms were noted, and helped to shape the Education Act 1993 (HMG) (implemented in September 1994). The Act set minimum time limits on the various steps in the SA process. Its most significant outcome was the establishment of the Special Educational Needs Tribunal, which provided a mechanism for appeals which was outside of and demonstrably independent from the LEA. It still specified that pupils should be educated in mainstream schools where possible, but not if this 'is incompatible with the wishes of the parent'. This reflected the increasing momentum towards the voice of the client/participant in educational decisions, although in this case the parent and not the child. The issue of the

child's voice is addressed in the following chapter which reviews the literature on transition between schools.

Just as the Education Act 1981 and the Education Act 1993 set England and Wales on a course towards greater inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream, so the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) did so on an international scale. The Statement called on countries worldwide to endorse inclusive schooling and to make practical and strategic changes in order to make this happen. It called for inclusive education to be the norm and adopted a Framework for Action, which was agreed by 92 countries and 25 international organisations. It emphasised the necessity and urgency of providing education for all children, young people and adults within the regular education system. It advocated that children with special educational needs should have access to regular schools. It says that ordinary schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic difficulties or other conditions. All educational policies should stipulate that disabled children attend the neighbourhood school they would have attended if they did not have a disability. Paragraph 2 states

> *"Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all."*
> (Paragraph 2p (ix))

This influential document is widely quoted without criticism by those advocating inclusion. However, Dyson (1999) argues that it maintains a rights-based tone across areas that would be better seen as subjects of debate or research, as discussed above.

2.8 Further governmental initiatives relating to SEN

In the UK, the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) made discrimination on the grounds of disability illegal, but did not specifically mention access to education. This anomaly was not addressed in the Education Act (1996) (which did however draw together a wide range of educational legislation), but in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) which will be reviewed in greater detail later in this chapter. The Green Paper, "Excellence for all children: meeting special educational needs" (DfEE1997) emphasised the then Labour government's support for all mainstream schools to become more inclusive, and for the first time spoke of a commitment to *'comprehensive and enforceable civil rights for disabled people'* (p4). Following widespread consultation on the 1997 Green Paper, the Government produced the White Paper, "Meeting special educational needs: a programme of action" (DfEE 1998) setting out how the Government intended special education to develop and providing increased central Government spending on inclusion. However, it drew back somewhat from the Green Paper's enthusiasm for inclusive education, advocating

a developing role for special schools. Notwithstanding this, mainstream schools were required to cater for an increasingly wide range of special educational needs, and 11 year old pupils who might previously have been educated in all-age special schools – moving between schools with similar classroom organisation involving one principal classroom teacher with additional adult support – were now faced with a transition between the similarly pastoral setting in a mainstream primary school to the more formal organisation typical of secondary schools.

A Disability Rights Task Force was set up by the Labour Government and produced a report, "From Exclusion to Inclusion" (1999) on civil rights for disabled children in all situations, which advocated that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 should be extended to cover the field of education, previously an obvious and serious omission. Further evidence of the Labour Government's commitment to inclusive schooling came in 2000 when it provided the comprehensive pack of materials and activities, *Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools* (Ainscow and Booth 2000) to all schools and LEAs in England and Wales. This was a wide-ranging set of materials produced for schools, to help them develop more inclusive policies and practices. Schools were invited to use the Index to adopt a self-review approach and identify any barriers to learning and participation resulting from the school's culture, policies and practices.

Among the many 'indicators' suggested for review was indicator B1.5 (p40), asking whether all new students were helped to settle into school. This was supplemented by a series of ten questions (p59), including:

- Does the school have an induction programme for students?
- Does the induction programme take into account student differences in attainment and home language?
- Is there support for students who have difficulty memorising the building layout when they first join the school?
- When students are due to transfer from one school to another, do staff in each school collaborate to ease the change?
- Are steps taken to familiarise students with the school before they transfer from pre-school or primary school?

This was a typical example of the authors' attempt to create a thorough and detailed document to support the development of inclusive practices in schools. They later noted that schools which used the Index as part of their self-assessment found that

> *'the materials, helped them to identify issues for development that might otherwise have been overlooked and to put them into practice'* (Booth and Ainscow, 2002, p.1)

Within the *Index for Inclusion* the authors refer to barriers to learning and participation, rather than special educational needs, a term which they too argue has considerable limitations, conferring a label that can lead to lowered expectations and deflecting attention away from the difficulties experienced by other students without the label. At first sight, such an attempt to provide all-encompassing suggestions may seem over ambitious. However, the Index needs to be seen as an important milestone rather than an end point. Throughout the document are reminders that inclusion should be seen not as a single event but as an ongoing process, and that inclusive educational policies should be seen as dynamic and evolving. Also, as Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006, p.3) point out

> *'Even if we know a considerable amount about the implications of inclusive values for any particular context, we still do not know how best to put them into action, since making sustained principled changes within schools is notoriously difficult.'*

Schools could use the Index to scrutinise their own practices, decide their own priorities for change, and evaluate their progress. Perhaps the most serious disadvantage of the Index was that its adoption was not mandatory on schools and not routinely evaluated in OFSTED inspections. However, some Local Authorities have developed their own evaluation tool, for example Leicestershire, which offers a self-evaluation SEN Framework (SENSEF – 2010) and is available on the LA website. Also, for schools seeking a form of formal recognition of their inclusive practices it is possible to apply for the 'Inclusion Quality Mark'. This involves support and evaluation from a team of experienced educationalist drawn from senior management posts in schools and local authorities, and these

> *'Assessors and advisors in the UK examine how we meet the ever changing needs of a diverse community in delivering an inclusive education.'*
>
> Inclusion Quality Mark (2004)

Thus, even though Local Authority SEN support teams are diminishing – as is evidenced later in this thesis – support and advice are available to schools which seek them, and which give priority to this area.

One issue which affected many children who in earlier decades would have had to attend special schools was that of physical impairment, which of course many schools would have been prompted to re-consider in light of the Index for Inclusion. Difficulties of physical access to buildings had been tackled piecemeal by individual LEAs, but in 2001 this issue was addressed in a bulletin from the (then named) Department for Education and Employment (DEE), imaginatively entitled, 'Building Bulleting 94: Inclusive School Design' (2001), which advocated that all school building design should ensure the maximum possible access for students with special needs. The absence of such a requirement earlier meant that problems

of physical access sometimes made it more difficult for schools to admit pupils with physical difficulties.

Also in 2001, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) (SENDA) addressed the anomaly mentioned above, that the DDA (1995) did not refer specifically to education. Not only did the 2001 Act do so, it also removed two of the provisions of the 1996 Act (incorporated from earlier legislation), so that a disabled child could go to mainstream school provided only that it was compatible with the wishes of their parent, and that there was efficient education of other children – a proviso that was written into the initial legislation. It also required LEAs to have in place arrangements for resolving disagreements between parents and schools or the LEA, without recourse to the Tribunal, but without limiting their right of appeal to the Tribunal if earlier attempts at resolution failed. As well as the 26 week time limit within which LEAs had to produce a Statement if one was appropriate, there were also strict time limits on the appeal process and implementing Tribunal decisions – particularly important when educational placements were dependent upon Tribunal outcomes.

A second part of SENDA came into force in September 2002, to amend the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, requiring schools not to discriminate against disabled students in arrangements for admission and educational provision. It also required LAs to produce plans for disabled pupils, so that they had increased accessibility to the curriculum, to the school environment and to information. Associated with this legislation was statutory guidance on inclusive education from the DfES, "Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs" (DfES 2001). This statutory guidance provided practical advice on the operation of the inclusion framework. All schools and local authorities in England were required to have regard to it. This guidance made clear the then Labour Government's strong commitment to greater inclusion in mainstream schools, and established seven principles of an inclusive education service, including two from CSIE's Index for Inclusion. It required schools and LEAs to develop an inclusive ethos, and to remove barriers to inclusion, using tools like the Index for Inclusion: Booth and Ainscow, (2002) (See Appendix 2:4). In brief, the principles highlighted that inclusion is a process by which schools, LEAs and others develop their cultures, policies and practice to include pupils. Also, that all children can be included when teachers have appropriate training, and all involved seek to remove barriers to learning and participation. Finally, although there might be a time when mainstream school was not right for a child, this should not prevent later consideration of inclusion.

Given that educational legislation is not written in terms that encourage wide readership, it is the documentation that reaches practitioners that determines how requirements and proposals are understood. A very obvious example of a Government publication of the latter

sort was the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), published in 2001. This was a very important milestone in the move towards improved assessment and provision for pupils with SEN, and came into force on 1st January 2002. From that time local authorities, schools, early education settings and support agencies such as health and social services, have had to have regard to the code. It was intended to help schools and LAs to obtain the best value from the resources and expertise they invest in helping children with SEN. It was formed following consultation between July and October 2000 with LAs, schools, SEN voluntary bodies, the health and social services, and others and the draft was approved by Parliament. This included definitions of special educational needs themselves in a move which reflected the bureaucratic need to record types of need when planning future provision, and ironically a return to a form of classification of SEN abandoned by Warnock. It also emphasised parental responsibility and working partnership with parents. The Code also looked at involving pupils in assessment and decision-making, provision in the early years, statutory assessment of children under compulsory school age and the role of the SENCo.

In addition to a series of regulations, the SEN Code of Practice also included sections on: working in partnership with other agencies; identification, assessment and provision in early education settings, the primary phase and the secondary sector; statutory assessment; statements and annual reviews. This was a comprehensive publication which, as well as listing and clarifying regulations, provided accessible information to help service providers ensure that their practices were fit for purpose. Of particular relevance to the current study is the Code's mention of *transition*. The Code placed much emphasis on transition beyond school for pupils with statements, including the requirement for a Transition Plan starting in year 9, but also on transition from primary to secondary school. (p60: 6.9) It advocated close liaison between schools, also that secondary schools should make full use of information from the primary school. It also suggested an induction day for transferring pupils, secondary SENCOs attending year 6 annual reviews of pupils with statements and appropriate planning of the pupil's curriculum and first year 7 Individual Education Plan (IEP). In addition it suggested ongoing observation and assessment, providing regular feedback to all teachers and parents about the pupil's achievements and experiences and using assessment outcomes when planning the next steps of the pupil's learning. It also stressed the need for early identification and assessment for any pupil who may have SEN. These features were all evident in the schools visited for the current research.

In schools in England and Wales, children and young people with SEN are presently considered as having one of three levels of increasing need: School Action, School Action Plus and 'Statemented'. At School Action stage the child's teacher seeks ways to support the pupil in class and will work with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to find ways to support the child's learning. School Action Plus is used where the pupil has not

made adequate progress under. At School Action Plus the school will look for external advice from the Local Authority's support services, such as a learning support, behaviour support, specialist advisory services such as those for pupils with autism, or an educational psychologist; the local Health Authority such as a Speech and Language Therapist or Occupational Therapist; or from Social Services. There will also be more detailed planning of interventions for children at School Action Plus, involving an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and regular reviews. For pupils whose needs appear to be severe, complex and long term, a Statutory Assessment may be requested and the Local Authority must agree to this unless it is unreasonable. This involves the collection of reports termed Educational, Medical and Psychological Advice, and input from parent, on which evidence the Local Authority will decide whether or not to issue a Statement, detailing the pupil's needs and how they are to be met. Parents are entitled to appeal against the Authority's decision not to assess, or the content of the Statement, and have access to a Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal if they remain dissatisfied. This had the very positive effect that parents who felt that Local Authority proposals for meeting their child's SEN were inappropriate or insufficient had access to an entirely independent panel.

Increasingly, the emphasis has been on outcomes for individual children – see for example *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2003) – and during this period of change, schools and school staff were required to adjust to new relationships with the LA and support services. Adding to this potential confusion for teachers in considering what was meant by SEN were two broadly drawn approaches to conceptualising SEN, i.e. a medical model which focussed on 'within child' factors and a social model which emphasised the child's environmental experiences. However, for a pupil 'with SEN', the main focus for teachers was to determine whether he or she made 'adequate' progress. This close focus on improving academic and social opportunities for children with special educational needs continued over many years, and included reports on specific aspects of SEN, including:

- The Salt Review of teacher supply for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) (DCSF Report-00195-2010) highlighted shortcomings in this area. There was limited formal training for education staff working with pupils with PMLD, including two distance learning courses in England – one at Birmingham University and one at Manchester University; the Salt Report also recognised courses at the University of Northampton and the London Institute, leading to Master's degrees.
- The Bercow Review of and action plan for services for those aged 0-19 with speech, language and communication needs (DCSF-Report-00632-2008) advocating closer working between education and health services.
- The Rose Report on identifying and teaching children with literacy difficulties and dyslexia (An independent report for the DCSF, June 2009)

- Aiming High (for disabled children; improved support for families) (HM Treasury - DfES, 2008) The intention was that all families with disabled children should have the support they need to live ordinary family lives. It provided a resource list including some publications and tools to help services put the *Aiming High for Disabled Children* programme into practice, listing the service type that each resource applied to, and explaining where they were available from.

2.9 Changes in response to shortcomings in SEN arrangements observed by parents, practitioners and researchers

Despite this increased emphasis on improving arrangements for meeting SEN came under increased criticism from parents and interest groups. These concerns were highlighted in a report on SEN by the House of Commons Select Committee on Children, Schools and Families (July 2006). In 1978 Baroness Warnock had sought to ensure that the needs of those with the greatest educational difficulties were not overlooked. She proposed the adoption of a broad category of SEN rather than the rigid classification of 11 types of handicap introduced in the 1944 Education Act. Her 1978 report led to legislation which moved the emphasis onto a formal (subsequently termed statutory) assessment of need, and the requirement for the LA to produce a statement setting out what was required to meet the assessed needs. The legislation brought with it several positive and lasting benefits. There was an expectation of early intervention, including the requirement that medical agencies inform LEAs of any child who, at the age of 2, was likely to have SEN. Of special note was the requirement that parental views should be taken into account, including written parental advice as part of the assessment process and that parental and pupil choice would be taken into account when placement decisions were made.

Many parents were determined that their child with SEN should be educated alongside their local peers, which brought with it the expectation that mainstream schools would develop increasing expertise in meeting SEN. The demands that this placed on teaching staff and pupils differed in primary and secondary schools. In the latter, pupils had to re-adjust to a much larger community and the varying styles of several different teachers each day, as opposed to the pastoral single teacher model seen in most primary schools, also to the more 'academic' nature of the curriculum.

However, like many legal systems, the statutory assessment or 'statementing' process often led to disagreement, acquired a lengthy appeal process and became increasingly bureaucratic and expensive, monopolising scarce resources. This is something which Baroness Warnock readily acknowledges, both in her pamphlet, 'SEN – A New Look' (re-printed in Terzi, 2010: p11) and in subsequent articles, for example:

'There are far more children statemented than we ever envisaged. It has ceased to be about what the child needs and has just become a battle for resources.'[2]

(Times Educational Supplement, 11th May 2008)

Such concerns, and specifically the Select Committee Report (2006) led to the Labour Government setting up an inquiry under the chairmanship of Brian Lamb, to see how best to increase parental confidence in the system. Lamb produced a number of interim reports, and his final report *The Lamb Inquiry: special educational needs and parental confidence* (DCSF 2009) made 51 recommendations falling into four key areas:

- The focus should be on targeting teachers and resources on increasing educational outcomes and achievements of children with SEN, which are too low.
- Parents are crucial partners in the process and have much expertise in meeting their child's needs. They should be given clear information and opportunities for face to face meetings with officers who understood the need for such partnerships and are skilled in establishing them.
- The statutory assessment process should be retained (there was no recommendation to amend or remove it) but those implementing it should ensure that they adhere more closely to the spirit of the SEN Code of Practice, and make the process more easily accessible to and understandable by parents.
- There should be a key focus on accountability. There should be much more emphasis on the voice of the child. No school should be rated by OFSTED as 'good' unless it meets the needs of children with SEN, and governors should focus more closely on SEN. More use should be made by Government of the data it collects, to improve quality and to hold authorities to account.

This was a meticulous and wide-ranging report which addressed the key shortcomings in the operation of LA systems for meeting SEN. It was accepted in full by the then Labour Government. The Children, Schools and Families Act 2010 introduced provision for an additional right of appeal for parents where the LA decides not to make any changes following a review of a statement of SEN and the parents believe that changes are necessary. The government published its 'Implementation Plan' on 24th February 2010. One outcome of Lamb's interim reports was to prompt the production of a revised account of arrangements for Statutory Assessment and Statements, "SEN – A Guide for Parents and

[2] This view seems illogical in the face of evidence that the numbers of pupils with statements is falling (see Figure 2.1). However, Baroness Warnock is perhaps comparing the current figure with her 1978 estimate that around 2% of pupils would have severe, complex and long-term needs.

Carers – (revised 2009) DCSF". This comprehensive guide aimed to help parents understand:

- what special educational needs are;
- what they can do if worried that their child may be having difficulties at, or before school
- how they can help their child;
- what early education settings and schools can do to help their child;
- what local authorities and other services can do to help their child; and
- their rights and their child's rights.

Although Baroness Warnock seemed to demur from her 1978 Report, Norwich (2010), disagreed with her self-criticism that the concept of SEN implied that all children with special needs were the same. Norwich points out that the concept as expressed in the 1978 Report specifically recognised a gradation of need, and helpfully moved to a focus on required additional provision to meet them. Nor did he accept her contention that SEN Statements should now become a ticket to special school, since some children with SEN – for example those with emotional and behavioural difficulties or autism – might be under the same roof as all children but emotionally excluded. She was clearly moving away from the trend towards educating children in mainstream schools so strongly advocated in such agreements as the Salamanca Statement (1994). Norwich was concerned that Warnock did not take account of the need for a continuum of provision, and was *'closing down on a separatist revolution'* (Terzi, 2004, p74) when what was needed was a comprehensive co-ordinated system at national and local levels. Both Warnock and Norwich bemoan the unclear criteria for triggering a Statement and the unequal number of Statements between LAs and the different provision for children with similar SEN. However, they do not investigate the reasons for these differences, for example decisions by LAs about the extent to which resources for students with SEN are devolved to schools.

Both Warnock and Norwich argue for an evidence-based analysis of this area, within the context of comprehensive co-ordinated provision. Warnock emphasised the importance of good quality teaching of basic skills in primary schools to reduce the number of children with SEN. She also deplored the fact that the recommendations of the Tomlinson Review (2004) were not implemented, which at secondary school advocated a broader curriculum with more vocational subjects and a unified system of qualifications. Terzi (2010) concluded that what Warnock and Norwich have in common is

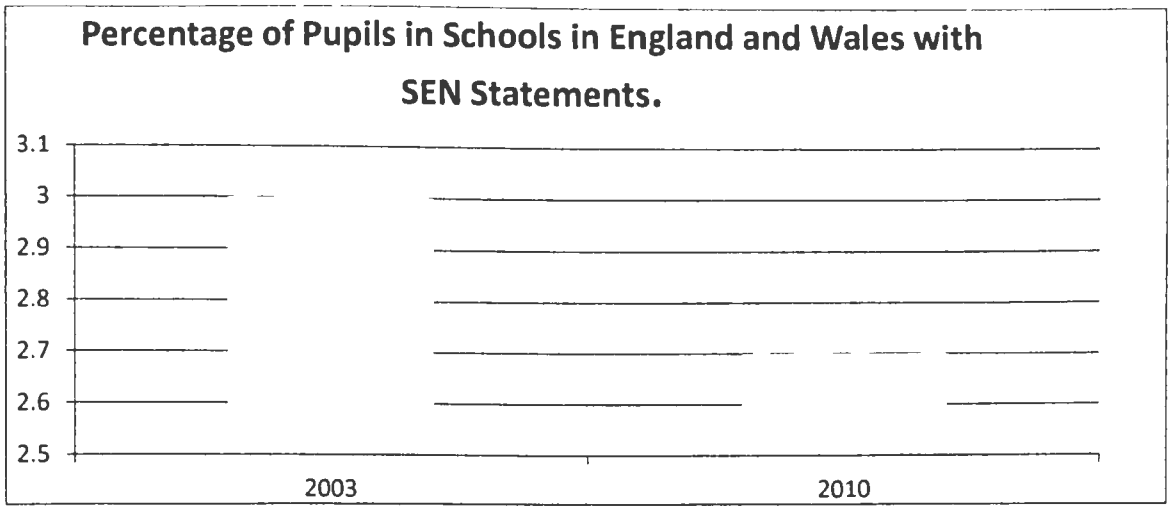
> *'a common voice in their expression of the moral concern for the well-being and flourishing of these and all children'.* (p163)

Thus, the Labour Government commissioned a report into SEN by Ofsted, and their wide-ranging report, "Special educational needs and disability review – a statement is not enough" was published by OFSTED on 14th September 2010. Inspectors visited 22 local authorities

and a very wide range of providers from both maintained and independent education sectors, also work-based learning providers, and care homes. Their report provided an evaluation of the operation of the legislative arrangements for those with SEN, and covered education from 0 to 19, also the input of social and health services. They found, as the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) anticipated, that something like one in five school-age children continued to be identified as having SEN. Whether this indicates that Lady Warnock's estimate was accurate, or that those deciding on the SEN status of pupils were influenced by this figure, would be hard to determine. Although it is also true that an OECD report on inclusive education states that it has been widely accepted in many countries that something like 15 to 20% of students will have special needs at some time in their school careers (OECD 1999), there remains the possibility that systems of assessment, and available provision, lead to figures of this sort, in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

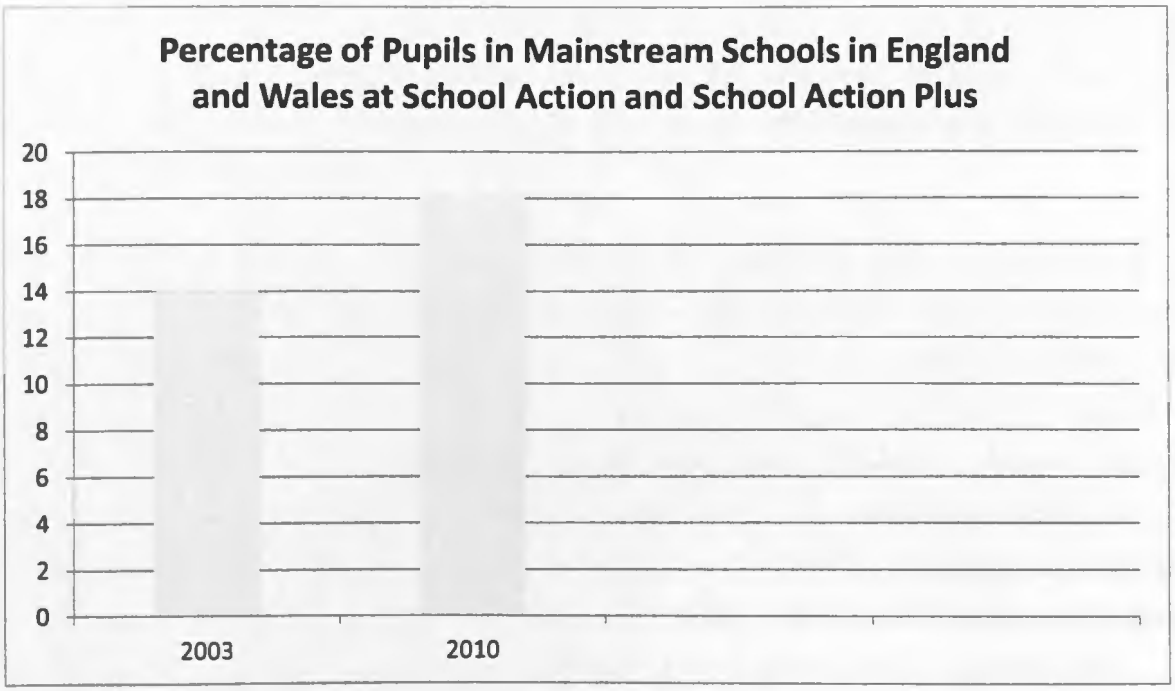
From 2003 to 2010, numbers with statements had decreased from 3% to 2.7% (Figure 2.1) (DfE Statistics), thus this is a diminishing population from which to draw a research sample

Figure 2.1



This might in part explain why percentages of those at School Action and School Action Plus had increased from 14.0% in 2003 to 18.2% in 2010 (Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2



Significantly, this (2010) OFSTED report argued that up to half of the pupils at School Action would not have been so identified if their school had provided better teaching and learning for all pupils, and that expensive additional provision was being used to make up for poor teaching and pastoral support. This is both a philosophical and a political stance. Some commentators (e.g. Dessent, 1987) argue that a special need is created every time a learner is asked to do something beyond their current capability, without the necessary input. Carrying that argument 'ad infinitum' can lead to diametrically opposite conclusions; either that all children have learning difficulties because they are not able to perform as required, or no child need ever have SEN provided that appropriate tasks are set for them! The politician required to balance an education budget would be more likely to adopt the latter view, and might interpret this phrase as justifying reducing SEN budgets.

The SEN and Disability review (Ofsted 2010) found that the system was working well for some children and led to high aspirations and increased independence, especially when there was close monitoring of pupil progress leading to rapid intervention and detailed evaluation of outcomes. However, assessment approaches and thresholds for securing additional support varied widely across education, health services and social care. In some individual cases observed, different assessments were *'a time-consuming obstacle to progress rather than a way for effective support to be provided'*. (P3) It found that parental perceptions of widespread inconsistency in identification and assessment of their child's SEN were well founded. Support at School Action and School Action Plus was often inappropriate and/or of poor quality, and the provision of a Statement was no guarantee that a pupil's

needs would be met. Inspectors found little difference in the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils across primary and secondary mainstream schools and special schools and noted that mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision were particularly successful in achieving high outcomes for pupils academically, socially and personally. (Ofsted 2010: Key Findings)

The research found that the development of provision was often based on the historical structure of what was available, rather than on any strategic analysis of local requirements. However, the report took no account of the extent to which LAs adjusted to local variations in need, nor did they attempt to evaluate the varying approaches which LAs took to allocating resources to SEN. It did, however, suggest wide-ranging and necessary changes, covering assessment, provision, monitoring and accountability. Ellis, Tod and Graham-Matheson (2008) argue that the inclusion 'agenda' has often competed with contrasting and opposing systems such as school performance competition, a set curriculum and attainment assessed with reference to age. Educational policies relating to these competing agendas have developed in parallel, rather than as co-ordinated developments informing school practice. Publications by the incoming Coalition Government such as the Indicative Code of Practice and associated Draft SEN Regulations published within the Children and Families Bill (DfE 2013) would indicate that the emphasis may increasingly shift away from 'the inclusion agenda' and towards these other systems.

2.10 Most recent developments – a changing tide?

The incoming (2010) Coalition Government asked the Department for Education (DfE) to review arrangements for SEN. Subsequently, the special educational needs and disability (SEND) green paper '*Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability' (DfE, 2011)* outlined the Government's intention to improve the current support system for disabled children and young people, also those with special educational needs and their families. One outcome is that this system is due to be replaced with a 'school based category of SEN', and the Statement is to be replaced with a more extensive Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) (DfE, 2012b). There are indications that the Coalition Government intends to change the direction set in previous years towards increased inclusion, since its Programme for Government (May 2010) included the following:

> *'We will (improve diagnostic assessment for schoolchildren) prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools and remove the bias towards inclusion.'* (Emphasis added) Section 26, page 29

A new code is being developed which will replace the current Code of Practice, the learning difficulties assessment guidance and the inclusive schooling guidance. It will be shorter but will aim to include all essential information for schools, colleges, LAs and health agencies.

The Indicative Code of Practice and associated Draft SEN Regulations have all been published within the Children and Families Bill 2013. (See Appendix 2:6) Perhaps the most important change will be new statutory guidance on SEN that reflects the new, single 0-25 system, to replace the current guidance split into pre-16 and post-16 systems. It will cover issues in the Bill such as the local offer - the LA's description of what is locally available. This is to be welcomed, provided that arrangements are in place so that parents, including those with low literacy or with English as a second language, are fully informed about what is available. It will also require that parents are offered personal budgets so that they can make their own decisions about which services to purchase, although it is not clear how this will affect long-term planning of local services if uptake by parents becomes unpredictable. There is also a move towards joint commissioning between different agencies and the requirement that agencies work together to meet the needs of children and young people from 0 to 25. Also the FE sector will, as never before, be required to have regard to the code when addressing the needs of young people with SEN. I very much welcome these developments, having observed the difficulties faced by parents of 19 year-olds with profound and multiple learning difficulties as these students leave the education sector and face an uncertain future and very limited support. It is most encouraging that attention will now be paid to this key period of transition for those young adults with the greatest needs.

More recently, there has been much concern that the new Government's plans for academies may be of considerable disadvantage to children with special educational needs, and time will surely tell. Concerns, for example those expressed by the Alliance for Inclusion (Allfie briefing, July 2010: see Appendix (2:7) include that:

- Special schools can apply for academy status, and would be funded directly from the Department for Education. LAs might be tempted to place more children in special schools that become academies, to reduce costs, especially when facing cuts.
- There is no independent exclusion appeals process for parents and pupils if they consider that exclusion is unjustified.
- Academies are answerable directly to the Secretary of State, which could lead to there being no co-ordinated provision for pupils with SEN within each Local Authority.

After a meeting with the Michael Gove (Minister) 'ALLFIE' reported that he said he wanted parents to have the right to choose mainstream education and to be confident their child would get the right support. However, they further reported that he was less clear how this would happen!

Clearly we live in rapidly changing times. There were few milestones in educational legislation in the hundred years between 1870 (the Forster Act) and the 1970 Act - the 1944

Act being the most significant. Since 1970 there has been an explosion of such legislation as described above, in keeping with a broader inclusive philosophy. Many argue similarly that inclusion is only possible given appropriate teacher expertise and ethical decision-making. Dee, Devecchi and Florian (2006) use the notion of 'informed eclecticism' to describe the way in which teachers make pragmatic and ethically informed decisions on how best to facilitate learning. Their view is that well-informed teachers can make decisions based on their knowledge and expertise. They also argued that the eclectic use of strategies was instrumental to the achievement of being, having and doing. As Higgins et.al argue,

> *'This (inclusive) approach deconstructs difference and rejects the notion of a normal group of children, encouraging teachers to adopt pedagogical practices that enable diverse groups of children to work together as caring, cohesive and inclusive learning communities.'*
> (Higgins *et.al*, 2009:480-1; 481)

As advocated by Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) inclusion should not be viewed as relating principally to those with SEN, disability or behaviour problems but should also focus on reducing exclusion and discriminatory attitudes, including those concerned with age, social class, ethnicity, religion and gender. Thus, national policies for SEN, inclusion and 'standards' are not always compatible. Frederickson and Cline (2011) point out that while the focus of 'mainstreaming' efforts has been individual students with SEN, the focus of inclusive *schooling* has been the creation of a school environment supportive of all students and including those at risk of school failure for a variety of reasons; SEN, poverty, homelessness, seasonal migration patterns or sociocultural and linguistic differences. (Frederickson and Cline, 2011, p.100) This would mean that pupils in the community would be educated together, and grow up with a better understanding of the range of needs and cultures of people in their neighbourhood.

Some argue that this inclusive rhetoric is not evident in reality. For example, Runswick-Cole (2011) draws on the concept of ableism (Campbell, 2001:44) that is

> *"A network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species typical and therefore essential and fully human"*,

to question Cameron's original assumption that there has been a bias towards inclusive education in England. Runswick-Cole (2011) argues that the inclusion agenda has been compromised by the view of successive Governments that inclusion is a response to the learning difficulties experienced by individual students, rather than understanding inclusion as being fundamentally about equity and recognising and supporting the richness of social diversity.

Notwithstanding such perceived shortcomings, there is sufficient evidence of successful inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools in England (as will be discussed in relation to participants in this study) to suggest that there has been progress in including those with SEN. Things could be better, of course – but they could indeed be worse. Despite these differing views about the progress of inclusion, pupils with SEN *are* included in mainstream, thus the focus of this thesis on the question of what mainstream schools do to make the transition successful.

Evidence of the continuing determination by organisations such as UNICEF to improve the lot of children with disabilities is nowhere more evident than in the latest UNICEF report, The State of the World's Children (2013). The report points out that too many children with disabilities continue to face barriers to their participation in the affairs of their communities, and makes nine recommendations for action, including ratifying international conventions; fighting discrimination; dismantling barriers; ending institutionalisation; supporting families and involving children and young people in decisions which affect them. (For key recommendations see the Executive Summary and a link to the full report, Appendix 2:5.) Of particular note is the provision of an Executive Summary in 'Easy Read' format, an encouraging attempt to make this directly available to those with learning difficulties.

This hard-won approach to meeting SEN had until recently seemed well-established, effective and inviolable. However, counter-arguments are emerging. The coalition government's plans to rationalise this legislation are at first sight welcome, however they seem not to share the inclusive philosophy – albeit perhaps imperfectly expedited - of previous administrations. It remains to be seen whether the philosophical tide towards inclusive education is changing. In economically challenging times, eventual political decisions in this area will no doubt be influenced by pragmatic considerations. Politicians and educational administrators are not alone in having to work within budgetary limits. It is to be hoped that all involved will be ethically guided by research into what works best, and will use available resources to secure that outcome, rather than use finite resources as a reason not to explore inclusive approaches. While the London 2012 Paralympic Games brought many people with special needs to the attention of the majority, it is to be hoped that those making decisions about provision will take account of the views of the people with SEN who are affected by them. Much progress has been made in meeting the needs of those with SEN in the context of an inclusive pedagogical approach which for Florian and Spratt (2012) is one which

> *'Seeks to provide appropriate support whilst avoiding the stigma of marking certain children out as different' (p16)*

Press commentary on Lady Warnock's later pronouncements on SEN suggested that she had performed a 'U-turn' since her seminal work leading to the 1981 Act, in that she now saw a place for special schools in the country's educational system. (For example, see the Daily Telegraph, 9th June 2005.) This was a misconception, as nowhere had she suggested that all pupils should attend mainstream schools. Although the policy in England was that the proportion of children educated in special schools would reduce over time, the need for specialist provision for a small number of children with severe and complex needs was always assumed. (DfES 2004) However, as DfES (2004) noted in relation to England:

> *"The proportion of the school population educated in special schools varies greatly between local authority areas, reflecting both the historic pattern of provision and local commitment to supporting the inclusion of children with higher levels of need in mainstream setting"* (DfES 2004:,pp 36).

This again illustrates the difficulty of evaluating inclusive approaches at a national or local level, which highlights the important role of qualitative analyses of the experiences of those pupils, parents and school staff involved.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an overview of legislation developments and debates, principally over the last four decades, charting the incremental changes intended to offer increased opportunities for children and young people with SEN to be educated in mainstream schools alongside their peers. It is not anticipated that all pupils' needs will eventually be met in mainstream schools; it is broadly accepted that special schools for those with profound and multiple difficulties, perhaps set up also to support local mainstream schools, will always be required. Although none of the pupils in the current study would warrant educational placement in such an establishment, some would no doubt have been placed in special schools for the 'delicate' or those with 'moderate learning difficulties', were it not for the historical trend discussed above, towards greater inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream educational settings. Some children with SEN in special schools will spend the whole of their school life in a single establishment, but most pupils with SEN who are educated entirely in mainstream schools typically move between the different cultures of primary and secondary sectors at age 11. The following chapter will review the literature on transition, with particular reference to mainstream school transition at age 11 of children with an SEN Statement.

CHAPTER 3

Review of Literature – Transition

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter gave an overview of how legislation over recent decades reflected the increasing trend towards inclusion, including educating children with SEN alongside their mainstream peers. It outlined the associated debate, ending with recent Government statements which indicate an impending move away from this trend in England. Many studies have considered the needs of students with specific SEN who, following the momentum toward greater inclusion outlined in the previous chapter, have in past decades increasingly been educated in mainstream schools and thus experienced transition between schools with different organisation at age 11. This chapter will discuss transition generally, including developmental theorists' conceptualisations of staged transition, and review literature exploring school transition for children at age 11, with particular emphasis on transition for those with SEN statements, which is the focus of this thesis. Reference will also be made to the transition of pupils with specific types of need, and to the range of approaches aimed at easing transition, including those which aim to ensure that the child's views are heard and taken into account. Two general themes appear within this chapter: the readiness of students for transition, and the readiness of mainstream schools to prepare students with wide-ranging needs to make the transition between differing academic/ curricular worlds, and school cultures.

Throughout human history, philosophers have commented on the inevitability of change, for example Heraclitus of Ephesus (c.535 BC - 475 BC) suggested that, *'Nothing endures but change.'* This is of course true of human growth and development from birth to old age. Although change is a continuous process, it is often characterised as a series of transitions between stages, such as those characterised by Shakespeare as 'The Seven Ages of Man' in As You Like It (See Appendix 3:1).

3.2 Conceptualising Transition

Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead (2008:1) provided a comprehensive definition of transition. They say:

> *'Transitions are generally linked to changes in a person's appearance, activity, status, roles and relationships, as well as associated changes in use of physical and social space, especially where these are linked to changes of setting and in some cases dominant language. They often involve significant psychosocial and cultural adjustments with cognitive, social and emotional dimensions.'*

Transition can be conceptualised as either vertical or horizontal passages (Kagan and Neuman, 1998: 366). *Horizontal transitions* occur on an everyday basis and are movements we make between various spheres or domains of our lives (for example, between home and school or work). These structure our temporal and spatial movements and help to organise our day to day lives. *Vertical transitions* are key changes from one state or status to another, often associated with 'upward' shifts (e.g. from nursery to primary school; from primary to secondary school, from school to work, etc.). Crafter and Maunder (2012) describe transition between historically related activities in a single direction, such as primary to secondary school transition, as *'lateral transition'* (P11). Although this thesis will focus principally on such lateral transition between formal mainstream school settings, it is important to acknowledge the various ways in which transition has been explored.

There have been several attempts to conceptualise the spectrum of vertical transition into a series of key turning points, notably by the developmental psychologist Piaget, who proposed that there were discrete stages of child development involving clear differences, rather than a gradual increase in the complexity of the child's behaviours and concepts. His theory focussed on development rather than learning, and his goal was to explain the processes by which the child develops into a reasoning, hypothesis-testing individual. He conceptualised development as an ongoing reorganisation of mental processes resulting from biological maturation and environmental experience, with children learning through addressing discrepancies between their current knowledge and new discoveries in the environment. Piaget's cognitive theory is based around three basic elements; schemas, the building blocks of knowledge; processes that facilitate transition between stages (equilibrium, assimilation and accommodation) and four stages of development – sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational.

However, the idea that children develop in progressive stages is open to criticism – for example a student of Piaget's, Margaret Donaldson, in her book, *Children's Minds (*1978) argued that Piaget often underestimated the abilities of younger children and overestimated the abilities of adolescents. She suggested that

> *'Pre-school children are not nearly so limited in their ability to 'decentre', or appreciate someone else's point of view, as Piaget has for many years maintained'*
> (Donaldson, 1978: 30-31)

For example, she argued that Piaget's view that children under the age of seven remain very egocentric, cannot perceive both sides of a situation and cannot classify objects was incorrect. She suggests that the tests which Piaget used were too abstract for his young participants to understand. Piaget also assumed that children explore the world as a single individual, overlooking the crucial role of language and social relationships in the development of their thinking. Indeed, even Piaget conceded that development does not

always follow such a smooth and predictable path. Piaget's research methods too are open to criticism; his theory evolved largely from observations of his own three children, and others in his small research sample of children who were all from families of highly educated professionals. Given such an unrepresentative sample, it is not credible to generalize his findings to a larger population. Also disputed is Piaget's view that all children inevitably move to the next developmental stage as they age, when others (such as Erikson, 1968) argue that environmental factors may play a far more significant role in development. This concurs with my own view, based on personal professional experience of observing considerable improvements in children's development following adaptations made to their environment.

More recent research indicates that children display many abilities at an earlier age than Piaget suspected, for example that many 4- and 5-year-old children understand their own thought processes and those of others, and can take the perspective of another person, indicating a far less egocentric stance than Piaget postulated. This illustrates the importance not only of ongoing research into transition, since different evidence thus emerges, but also of focussing on the perspective of any child who is the subject of the research. In his consideration of psychosocial development, Erikson (1950 & 1968) places much greater emphasis than Piaget on the effect of the individual's environment on their development. In a similar vein, transition and its consequences can be thought of either simply in terms of the individual's inherent characteristics, or conversely in terms of the individual responding to their environment. In this thesis, although pupils' individual characteristics will be described, it will be argued that it is important to think in social terms when looking for different solutions to the issues around transition. Erikson also extends the consideration of developmental stages into adulthood, postulating eight stages through which a healthily developing human will pass from infancy to late adulthood. In each stage, the person confronts, and hopefully masters, new challenges. Each stage builds upon the successful completion of earlier stages. The challenges of stages not successfully completed may reappear as future problems.

Also, mastery of one stage is not a necessary precursor of movement to the next. Erikson envisages the individual's advancement through the stages as a function of negotiating their biological and sociocultural forces. Each stage involves overcoming a psychosocial crisis of these two conflicting forces (see table below). An individual who reconciles these forces will emerge from the stage with the corresponding virtue. For example, if an infant enters into the toddler stage (autonomy vs. shame & doubt) with more trust than mistrust, he or she carries the virtue of hope into the remaining life stages.

Table 3.1 Erikson's 8 Stages of Psychosocial Development

Stage	Ages	Basic Conflict	Important Event	Summary
1. Oral-Sensory	Birth to 12 to 18 months	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding	The infant must form a first loving, trusting relationship with the caregiver, or develop a sense of mistrust.
2.Muscular-Anal	18 months to 3years	Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt	Toilet training	The child's energies are directed toward the development of physical skills, including walking, grasping, and rectal sphincter control. The child learns control but may develop shame and doubt if not handled well.
3. Locomotor	3 to 6 years	Initiative vs. Guilt	Independence	The child continues to become more assertive and to take more initiative, but may be too forceful, leading to guilt feelings.
4. Latency	6 to 12 years	Industry vs. Inferiority	School	The child must deal with demands to learn new skills or risk a sense of inferiority, failure and incompetence.
5. Adolescence	12 to 18	Identity vs Role Confusion	Love relationships	Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity.
6. Young Adulthood	19 to 40 years	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Relationships	The young adult must develop intimate relationships or suffer feelings of isolation.
7. Middle Adulthood	40 to 65 years	Generativity to Stagnation	Parenting	Each adult must find some way to satisfy and support the next generation
8. Maturity	65 to death	Ego integrity vs despair	Reflection on and acceptance of one's life	The culmination is a sense of oneself as one is and of feeling fulfilled.

Available at: http://web.cortland.edu/andersmd/ERIK/sum.HTML (Accessed 16th July 2013)

It has proved difficult to evaluate objectively Erikson's theory, since many different factors are involved in establishing an identity, and for each individual the synthesis of the parts is unique. Also for most, issues around parenting occur much earlier. Furthermore, one method used by Erikson to test his theory was the biographical case study, using famous men; it can be difficult to apply these methods to help an individual who is experiencing role confusion. Other criticisms include that his theory does not account for adults who, as a result of changes in their life, develop a different understanding of themselves; also that he shares Freud's conclusion – based on studying boys and girls aged 10 to 12 constructing scenes from toy figures - that personality differences between sexes are biologically based, originating in the possession or lack of a penis. Here is yet another illustration of the range of ways in which transition can be conceptualised. Of closest relevance to the current study is Erikson's observation that the child must deal with demands to learn new skills or risk a sense of anxiety, inferiority, failure and incompetence. The issue of pupils' anxiety is discussed in the findings chapters.

3.3 The inevitability of transition

It is clear then, that everyone experiences transitions throughout their lives; they need to come to terms with new situations, and arguably the new settings into which they move need also to re-adjust. These transitions arise as a result of normal human growth and of planned or unplanned events and changes that occur in everyday life. For adults, major transitions might include entering university and/or starting a new job; getting married; expecting a child; becoming a parent; changing job; having a child enter school, prepare for university, get married, have their own child. For some they will include going through a divorce or separation; for some caring for a spouse or elderly parent or losing a spouse or close family member. For most they will eventually include retirement and the need to readjust to another change in routine and demands. Each transition brings new challenges, and how we respond and react to these will influence eventual outcomes.

Even before adulthood, the individual experiences a wide range of personal, social and cultural thresholds including transition into and between schools and from school to work or further education. One major transition happens when children first enter school, which can of course be traumatic for both children and parents, when children from widely different backgrounds and with varied starting points come face to face with the culture of school. Anderson *et.al,* (2000) place emphasis on the students' 'preparedness' – a general heading which encapsulates many factors explored in this thesis. Kennedy, Cameron and Greene (2012) suggest, transition into school is best viewed as a dynamic cultural and ecological process, experienced differently by different children, families and educators and grounded in a unique interaction of cultural characteristics and beliefs.

The child's ability to adapt to such a dynamic and evolving environment is likely to directly affect their sense of identity and status within their community over the short and long term. The child's success or failure in passing between educational settings is influenced by many factors, which will be explored during the course of the current study, with specific reference to school transition at age 11 for children with SEN, and the arrangements made to ease the process.

3.4 Earlier focus on educational transition

The idea of making special arrangements to ease transition is not new. For example the Plowden Report (1967) noted that

> *'Some secondary schools invite new entrants to spend half a day in the school in the term before entry. Another proved device is for new pupils to come a day before the rest.'*

Clearly, transition is not a new feature of schooling, nor is the awareness of the need for both student and school to make preparations to facilitate this process. However, the presence of

one mention in a national report does not demonstrate that issues faced by students have been subsequently addressed. This thesis investigates the current 'state of play' for a small sample of children with SEN making the transition between schools in one English County. The Plowden report went on to optimistically suggest that,

'By the second day they can begin work in earnest.' Plowden Report (1967) *(Page 162) 439*

From the evidence of what happened in the schools investigated for this thesis, the first week in the new school was largely devoted to helping children to become familiar with the staff, expectations, routines and school facilities.

3.5 The experience of transition to secondary school

Several researchers (Measor and Woods, 1984; Anderson *et.al*, 2000; Rice, 2001; Pratt and George, 2005) have argued that transition from primary to secondary school requires readjustment to new structures, cultures, educational practices and expectations, and that many pupils are worried by myths about difficult work, strict teachers and pupil bullies. Hargreaves *et.al* (1996) see transfer as a time of triple transition: from childhood to adolescence, from one institutional context to another and from one social setting to another. Darmody (2012, p.531) describes these institutional differences as the school environments having different 'institutional habitus'. Students, too, bring their own 'reality'. As Robson (2002, p. 24) maintains

> *'(The) behaviour, what (people) actually do, has to be interpreted in the light of (their) underlying ideas, meanings and motivations.'*

Many pupils express some concerns prior to transfer, relating to formal arrangements such as school size, and informal issues including making new friends. Waters *et.al* (2012) found that 31% of grade 8 students in an Australian secondary school experienced a 'difficult' or 'somewhat difficult' transition and so were more likely to experience poorer social and emotional health. Likewise West, Sweeting and Young (2010), who drew on data from a 9 year, longitudinal, school-based study of over 2000 Scottish pupils' school transition in the West of Scotland, concluded that:

> *'Cumulative evidence ... strongly suggests that the impact of primary-secondary transition goes beyond immediate post-transfer anxieties to have a much more significant, longer-term effect on pupil well-being and learning'.* (West, Sweeting and Young, 2010, p.46)

Successful transition from primary to secondary education is clearly important for later well-being and attainment. In examining those factors which account for differences in transition

experiences, these authors found that secondary school factors appeared to play no part, primary school factors to play some part, and pupils' personal characteristics were the most important. However, their research did not collect data on pre-transition concerns and anxieties, and no data were collected on schools' transition policies – factors which were taken into account in the current thesis. Following their international review of the literature, McGee *et.al* (2003) at the Ministry of Education, Wellington, New Zealand found that students need to make positive adjustments to their new school and classes so that their wellbeing is maintained and their learning is coherent and continuous. They found a strong positive correlation between the extent to which students experienced difficulty following transition and their likelihood of dropping out of formal education.

However, Evangelou *et.al* (2008) found that for most, anxiety is relatively short-lived - very much in accord with the tenor of Plowden's comments. In Evangelou's study, only 3% expressed ongoing anxiety at the end of the first term. Galton, Gray and Rudduck (1999 and 2003) similarly found that anxiety was rarely long-lasting. West *et.al* (2010) found, in reviewing earlier studies in preparation for their own research, that among those most likely to have negative experiences of transfer were pupils who were less able, indicating perhaps that school provision was not sufficiently differentiated for them. However, they noted widely varying methodologies and perspectives in previous studies, and an absence of evidence about the *link* between described experiences and changes to (mostly learning) outcomes. This omission prompted their three year longitudinal study of transition from primary to secondary school in Scotland. They found that personal attributes were more important than socio-demographic ones, and pupils most likely to have negative experiences were indeed those with low ability, but also those with low self-esteem or poor preparation for transition. Significantly, they found that quantitative methods gave a more favourable picture than qualitative ones – perhaps related to the wording of the questionnaires used.

In examining one informal factor affecting transition, Weller (2007) used the concept of social capital – the resources brought from our social networks – to examine friendship trajectories as children transfer from primary to secondary school. In this detailed three year study, in which she argues that peer formation is an important part of learning, she looks at the use of social capital by children and parents during transition. She highlights the effect of initially having acquaintances/friends from primary school, arguing that old friends provide a 'comfort zone' while pupils settle in, but points out that primary school acquaintances are unlikely to develop into friendships unless pupils are allocated to the same class.

She found that children who transferred alone were more anxious and less excited about transfer. However, those transferring alone to a 'more desirable' school settled well, but

those transferring alone because their friends went to a better school, or those who went to a school not selected by them or their parents, often hankered after primary friendships. Her most striking conclusion was that *'winners and losers in the choice process are also often winners and losers in friendship formation'.* (p350) Although the concept of social capital is frequently debated - see for example Weller (2010) - this is increasingly in the context of social cohesion, identity and diversity. Since this thesis will not be addressing the nature of identity and the dynamic nature of social networks, the concept of social capital will not be addressed further here.

3.6 The effect of transition on academic performance

Many international studies produce evidence that students' academic attainments fall following transition. Respondents to the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (INCA) thematic probe carried out by the NFER for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) (Whitby *et.al*, 2006) reported dips in performance in the first year after primary-secondary transfer in Ireland, Italy, Spain and Tasmania. Studies in USA (Barone *et.al,* 1991; Simmons *et.al,* 1991; Gutman and Midgeley 2000; and Reyes *et.al* 2000) have reported a decline in students' grade point average (GPA) after school transfer. This is important because a decline in grades may impact on student motivation, and increase the likelihood of dropping out of school. (Anderson *et.al,* 2000) However, more recent research across a wide range of countries and states suggests that the evidence for such a dip is not strong. Whitby *et.al,* (2006), for example, investigated this phenomenon in 14 countries by looking at policy documents, research reports and responses to a questionnaire. Of 14 countries/states responding to the questionnaire, nine said that there was a dip, and only one stated categorically that dips did not occur. However, none of the 14 was able to produce clear supportive evidence of a dip in performance in their country/state. Four countries acknowledged this lack of evidence and that they were not sure whether or not a dip had occurred there. Evidence from both policy and research documentation indicated that a dip was observed in many but not all of the countries studied. One consistent finding, though, was that least progress was made by students during their middle years (age 11-14), the period when most pupils transferred from primary to secondary education. The authors concluded that the risk of a dip following transfer may result from the student's specific experience of change, and the mismatch between their expectations and the actual experience in their new school. They add that the specific study of dips in achievement occurs less frequently than research into the broader issues of transfer, transition and motivation, and indeed dips in performance will not be investigated in this project, which focuses on qualitative experience of the participants.

3.7 Accounting for the differences in researchers' conclusions

As West *et.al* (2010) noted, different researchers come to different conclusions. Qualitative studies have tended to report that transition has a large influence on self-identity and well-being (e.g. Tobbell, 2003) whereas quantitative studies have not (Measor and Woods 1984; Pratt and George, 2005). This may result from inappropriate wording of the questionnaires, or because participants find it easier to respond frankly when interviewed – perhaps in the expectation that the listening adult may be in a position to resolve their concerns - but are less willing to be frank about problems when responding to questionnaires, etc. There may also be a temporal factor at work. Lohaus *et.al* (2004) suggest that the impact of transition may vary according to the time when the data were collected. The above factors will be considered during the course of the present study, as also will be the extent to which the perspectives of pupils and adults coincide – another area in which different researchers come to different conclusions. Zeedyk *et.al* (2003) found much similarity between pupil and parental views, and suggest it is reasonable to assume that *'a causal relation may exist between the two; if a parent becomes aware of a child's concerns they may well come to share them, and vice versa'* (p70). However, Topping (2011) in his review of 88 studies, found that teachers' and children's perspectives were very different, the former principally concerned with attainment and the latter with socio-emotional issues. Given the extent and nature of Topping's work, I would give greater credibility to his work than to that of Zeedyk *et.al*'s single study. The extent to which the findings of this thesis accord with the above will be discussed in chapter 7.

Another reason for such differences may be that there is sometimes a change in research emphasis over time. For example, when referring to transition research in 1999, Galton, Gray and Rudduck (1999) concluded:

> *"Most research … has focused on the personal and social effects of transfer on pupils. Only a small number of studies… have considered the impact of these changes on pupils' academic progress." (p5)*

Four years later they reported (Galton, Gray and Rudduck 2003) much greater emphasis on curriculum continuity and progression, amounting to 46% of 'recent' initiatives.

Further, the effect of puberty is often emphasised as being a critical factor. Demetriou *et.al* (2000) suggest that peer influence and puberty have more effect on pupil performance than anything the school does. However, Arens *et.al* (2013) looked at transition in Germany, which takes place when pupils are aged 9, before most reach puberty, and found a similar dip in performance to other studies, which suggests that the onset of adolescence is not the key factor. The preceding section set out to illustrate that transition happens throughout our

lives, that transitions into and between schools are very important, and that researchers have come to different conclusions about what affects the outcome of transition. The following section reviews the literature on how transition can affect different pupils differently.

3.8 Transition of different groups of pupils

Transition can affect pupils with different starting points – i.e. with different academic levels, socio-economic backgrounds, social skills, gender, sense of belonging, resilience, race, ethnicity, confidence etc. - in different ways. Lucey and Reay (2000) point to the differential effects of socio-economic background, but also note that as well as anxieties there is, *'a very real sense of excited anticipation with which the children's talk in our study is infused'* (p191). Evidence of the importance of socio-economic factors comes also from Burgess *et.al* (2008), who found that the peer groups of pupils from low-income homes, as measured by pupils' eligibility to free school meals (FSM), were more fractured, in that primary schools with a higher percentage of FSM pupils are more likely to disperse these children across a large number of secondary schools. Also, at the age of 11 they were more concentrated within lower performing secondary schools. Children from homes in poverty or ethnic minorities had greatest difficulty, especially from homes with limited parental encouragement. Another factor is that although parents may choose for their child any mainstream school which has vacancies, their ability to negotiate the process is unequal. Where parental income enables children to be transported to a distant school, or parental understanding of 'the system' and negotiating skills are high, their choice is inevitably greater than for families which lack such resources. This feature was also reflected in the SEN and disability review; 'A statement is not enough' (OFSTED 2010) which was commissioned to evaluate how well the legislative framework and arrangements served children and young people who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. The authors found a virtually unanimous feeling that the extant SEN system was unfair, and that those able to understand the system had faster and quicker and superior access to resources and support.

So the goal of 'equal opportunity' becomes hard to achieve.

Graham and Hill (2003) compared the experiences in Scotland of black and ethnic minority pupils with white pupils and found that transition to secondary school had a negative effect on confidence for both groups, but more so for children from minority ethnic backgrounds. Thus, there is much evidence that socio-economic, racial and ethnic issues can affect a pupil's educational placement and experience. In the following (methodology) chapter, attention will be drawn to the fact that none of my sample is from an 'at risk' group; non-white (Graham and Hill), of low socio-economic status (West *et.al* 2008) or with English as and additional language (EAL) (Galton *et.al* 2008), nor does any experience a combination of

these issues. The reasons for and the implications of this will be discussed, relating to sampling issues. Another way in which students enter secondary school from different starting points is in having different levels of social skills, also previous home and school experience, as discussed earlier. Gender differences in friendships groups were also evident. Measor and Woods (1984) found that those with established friendship groups were at an advantage. Boys tended to be part of larger groups. Girls had smaller friendship groups and some best friends; many were concerned about losing friends during transition and some had 'contingency friends' in case best friends were missing. Jackson and Warin (2000) noted that gender plays a key role in the establishment of identity at times of transition.

Much research has looked at risk factors at time of transition, and their effect on academic and social progress. Gutman, Sameroff and Cole's (2003) quantitative study looked at the interactive effects of 10 environmental risk factors and the preschool child factors of IQ and mental health and their effect on Grade Point Average (GPA) as students in the USA moved from first to 12th grade. Their modelling showed that high-risk students (including those with low language skills on entry to school, in poverty, whose parents had non-qualified jobs and/or low educational level and / or poor parenting skills and/or with single parenthood and in schools with more lower income children) had lower grades and more absences from 1st grade to 12th grade than did low-risk students. This may be accounted for by the fact that 'high-risk' students have fewer resources at home and more frequent health difficulties associated with deprived home circumstances. Child factors had significant effects only for low-risk students. For low-risk students, higher IQ and better mental health improved their GPA trajectories, but this was not observed in high-risk children. This strongly indicates that high-risk factors are so influential that they outweigh the effects of 'higher IQ' and better mental health. From this, the clear implication can be taken that attempts to improve transition outcomes need to address these high-risk factors, for example using early intervention programmes to focus on raising language skills before school entry and on improving parenting skills. To this purpose, one important development was the establishment of 'Sure Start' Children's Centres, launched in 1998 in the UK to provide integrated services for young children and their families. The centres are open to all parents, carers and children; help and advice are available on many matters, including child and family health and parenting.

Bailey and Baines (2012) sought to increase understanding of pupils who were most vulnerable during transition. The risk factors they looked at (behaviour, maths attainment and having English as an additional language – (EAL)) only predicted the Teacher-Rated School Adjustment outcome. However, the variables most predictive of Pupil-Rated School Adjustment outcomes were principally resilience factors – Support, Self-Efficacy, and Emotional Sensitivity. They argue that

> *'These findings illustrate the importance of the pupil themselves feeling supported, and being able to control their reactions and emotional stability, in order to feel that they are progressing academically in their new school.'* (p59).

However, these differences may appear because risk factors are often characterised by observable behaviours or measurable factors such as free school meals (affecting teacher ratings), whereas resilience factors are internal constructs (which pupils hold about themselves). Nonetheless, the authors' application of this concept of resilience when studying transition does allow the pupil to be considered as an active participant in the process. One aspect of resilience is of course the extent to which pupils feel that they belong to the group in which they function. Sancho and Cline (2012) investigated how this sense of belonging might contribute to children's experience of starting a new school and found that the development of friendships, relationships with the form and peer acceptance was central to establishing a sense of belonging.

Crafter and Maunder (2012) argue that there is a tendency in some educational literature for discussions of transition to focus on the physical move between educational contexts, and although these are significant examples of change, a more complex picture of what transition means is emerges from socio-cultural frameworks.

They thus take a Vygotskian perspective and propose a sociocultural framework for helping make sense of transition experiences with reference to internal processes for an individual, and see transition as involving social interaction and active participation with other members. Since each learner has different needs, difficulties and support requirements

> *'Generic, one-size-fits-all approaches may not address individual requirements'* and *'education would benefit from adopting more personalised, flexible, comprehensive, multi-faceted approaches to transition support, which accommodate individual variability'*.(p16)

Whereas this might be feasible for pupils with SEN or those in receipt of additionally resourced specialist support, financial constraints are likely to preclude the provision of individually-tailored experiences for every pupil entering secondary school.

Having thus attempted to conceptualise transition as an inevitable feature of life, and explore the varied findings of research into transition for students with various characteristics, this chapter will go on to discuss the research into transition for children with SEN, which is the key focus of this thesis.

3.9 Transition for pupils with SEN

As discussed above, West *et.al* (2010) found, in reviewing earlier studies in preparation for their own research, that among those most likely to have negative experiences of transfer were less able pupils. Looking at the wider range of children with SEN and disabilities, Evangelou *et.al* (2008) found conversely that pupils with special educational needs *'did not experience a less successful transition than other children'*(p iv). However, those with SEN were more likely to have problems with bullying – which inhibits successful transition – than other children. 37% of their sample were bullied compared to 25% of children without special needs. Also, curriculum continuity was greater for children with SEN, presumably because of earlier and more individual transfer arrangements, of the sort to be discussed in subsequent chapters of this thesis. Evangelou *et.al* point out that social adjustment, institutional adjustment and curriculum interest/continuity are the key factors associated with successful transition.

Hughes, Banks and Terras (2013) reviewed the literature on transition to explore its impact on the concerns and psychosocial adjustment of children with SEN compared to 'typically developing children' and concluded that successful negotiation of the complex factors associated with this move has the potential to impact on children's adjustment. This endorsed similar findings 13 years earlier by Anderson, Jacobs and Schramm (2000). However, the literature reviewed by Hughes, Banks and Terras (2013) was limited in number and scope, the majority involved children with specific learning difficulties, measurement instruments used varied widely and only two involved a longitudinal design, so difficulties might have been present before transition. It is therefore difficult to determine from their review, the extent to which children's psychosocial well-being is affected by transition.

Many studies have considered the needs of students with specific SEN who, following the momentum toward greater inclusion outlined in the previous chapter, have in past decades increasingly been educated in mainstream schools and thus experienced transition between schools with different organisation at age 11. Although the quasi-medical approach of the 1944 Education Act, which referred to eleven categories of handicap, was replaced in the 1981 Education Act with the concept of SEN, the new legislation continued to apply to this very wide range of pupils, where their SEN required additional provision to be made. Clearly, the process of transition may be experienced differently, according to pupils' differing needs.

For example, pupils with autism appear to find transition very hard (Moxon and Gates 2001), with the increased movement particularly difficult to cope with. It is not difficult to understand why pupils with any or all of the classic 'triad of impairments' associated with autism might struggle to develop the skills required for successful transition. Impairment of social relationships / skills / interaction will clearly make it difficult to form new friendships in a new

school. Impaired imagination and inability to envisage situations which have not been previously experienced will affect the pupil's ability to anticipate the new setting. Finally difficulties with communication and language – for example with expressing themselves, talking without taking account of the needs of the listener and not understanding all levels of communication - will make transition difficult for the child with autism but also for their peers, who will need help to understand why some pupils on the autism spectrum behave and communicate as they do.

Maras and Aveling (2012) highlight the work of Cumine, Leach and Stevenson (1998) which suggests an early visit to the school to learn the school layout, providing a network of pupils to act as guides, staggering arrival and departure times to reduce the need to move in heavy 'traffic', and having pictures of the next class, to help prepare the pupil for lesson change. Such considerations would of course be helpful to students with autism but also for a wide range of students during the process of transition, with or without SEN. From their own research, Maras and Aveling note that what most helped transition for students with autism were: lengthy and frequent visits with LSAs or teacher/parent/carer; a dedicated room/personal space; positive reactions from other students; LSA (if relationship is good) available to aid continuity and transition; the receiving school able to be flexible and adaptable: and if, as noted by Weller (2007), the child moves with friends. These findings are incorporated into their recommendations, in which they re-iterate that children with similar needs may require different support, which should be tailored to their needs. This topic is addressed later in this thesis. However, what concerned these children most were practical issues and continuity. Tobin, *et.al* (2012) held focus group and follow-up interviews with parents of 6 children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). They found that "preparation, communication and coping skills were core to these parents' experience of transition to mainstream secondary school". (See Figure 3:1 below)

Figure 2: A summary of the interaction between themes.

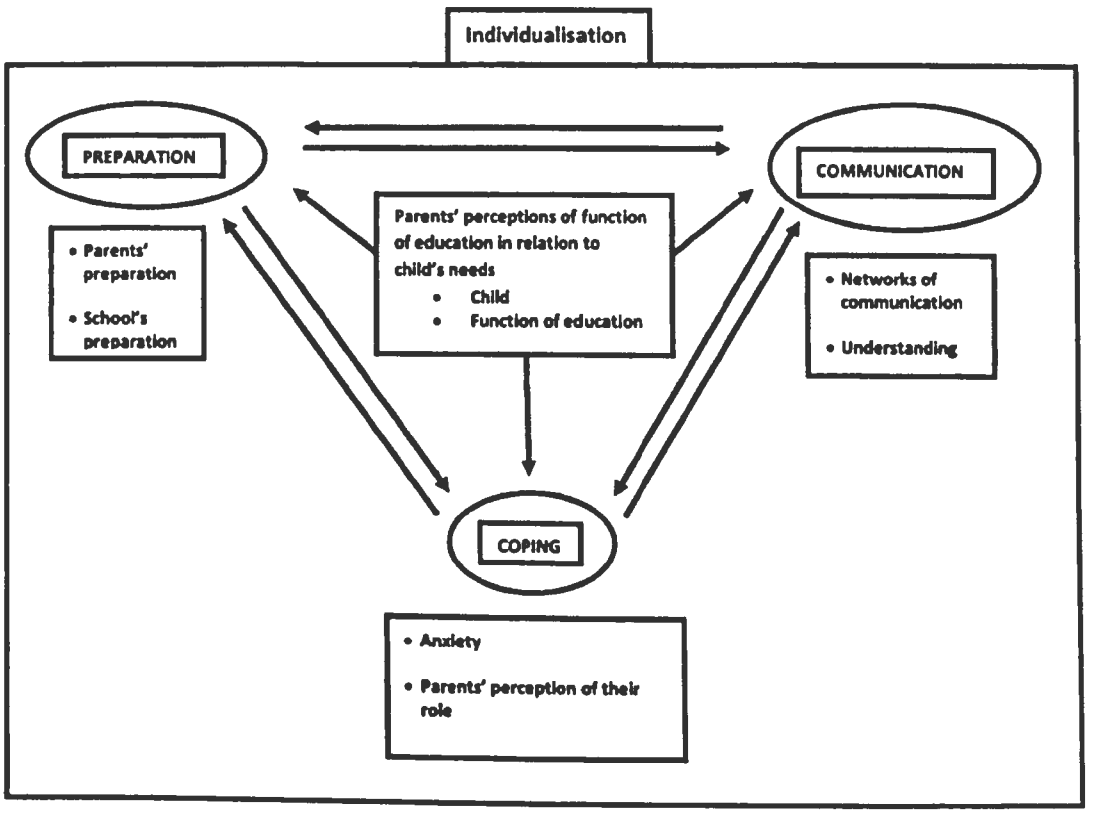


Figure 3:1 A Summary of the Interaction Between Themes. Tobin (2012, p.79)

Parents in Tobin's study reported that there was too little support for them regarding options and transition planning, and a lack of understanding among secondary school staff. In their view, schools and Children's Service Authorities did not begin transition arrangements early enough, and preparation should begin in year 5, the penultimate year of primary school. (This will be re-visited in the Chapter 7 of this thesis.) The process of choosing the 'best' school made parents think deeply about what function they expected education to play in their child's life, but parents typically reported that the measure of successful transition would be whether their child was happy in their new school. The authors argue that, although Lindsay (2007) proposed that inclusion was synonymous with the word 'mainstream'

> *'For at least some of the parents interviewed, this goal of successful inclusion in mainstream education was perceived as unrealistic.'* (p82)

They suggest that considerations should be given to whether children with ASD might be better supported within specialist provision in mainstream schools. This highlights an important question in every debate about inclusion; at what point is there sufficient evidence that a pupil's needs can best be met in a special school? Has every attempt been made to adapt provision in mainstream schools to meet the needs of the pupil with SEN in mainstream classes, with support from local specialist staff and settings? If, despite such

adaptations, the pupils' needs cannot be met in mainstream, what sort of separate specialist provision is appropriate? Although Tangen (2008) argues that research focussing only on SEN runs the risk of reproducing certain stereotypes, and *'Instead, research should be conducted in ways that promote agency, mastery experiences and inclusion'*, (p163) evidence in these literature review chapters suggests that research focussed on SEN *can* be conducted in ways that promote these characteristics. So wide is the range of needs described as 'SEN' – as evident from the participants and events described in this thesis - that SEN research can indeed promote such factors. Additionally, most approaches to easing the process of transition to secondary school developed for those with SEN are equally relevant to all pupils, so research which initially may seem narrowly focussed can have broader application.

3.10 Approaches focussed on specific groups but having wider application

There is thus much research into the transition of students at age 11, including much which focusses on specific groups, including those with SEN. This section will look more closely at research which attempts to identify factors which facilitate transition at 11 for those pupils. Many researchers have explored factors which might support pupils through periods of transition. Within this thesis it will be argued that these factors apply to a far wider range of pupils than the original focus. For example, in considering the transition of six pupils with a medical diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Thompson *et.al* (2003) highlight a number of features of secondary schools which would be beneficial, as they would to all students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Among these are a caring ethos, good pastoral support and experience of meeting the needs of such children. They suggest that pupils should be prepared for travelling to school, for orientation in school and for the academic curriculum. They propose several activities such as role play and circle time, and a classroom post box where the pupils can express any concerns. They suggest that the primary school should help the pupil to practise self-organisation, and pass accurate information to the SENCo at the receiving school. These wide ranging and helpful recommendations are of course applicable to a large proportion of children with and without SEN.

Similarly focussing on six case studies, the research mentioned above by Maras and Aveling (2006), examined primary/secondary transition for children with SEN, specifically three with emotional and behavioural difficulties, two with autistic spectrum disorders and one with Down's Syndrome. However, many of the issues seen as helpful to transition were clearly applicable to all pupils, such as the continuation of support and addressing personal anxieties. Similarly, many of the suggestion by Cumine *et.al* (1998) for children with ASD including an early visit to the school to learn the school layout, providing a network of pupils

to act as guides and help to prepare the pupil for lesson change would clearly be appropriate for most, if not all children, to ease transition. The particular approach used by Maras and Aveling *(ibid)* influenced the design of the current research, as is discussed in the methodology chapter.

They also noted that the expectations and preferences of children with similar needs varied, for example, their need for close support from their Learning Support Assistant (LSA). The authors highlighted several interventions shown from the literature to have been helpful, for example new students shadowing older students, mentoring, school visits and orientation days, support for parents including booklets and student-produced media presentations, also student handbooks and pen-pal letters. Each of these is discussed and evaluated in subsequent chapters. They too comment that research into transition for children with special needs gives a mixed picture, with some suggesting that there is no difference in how children with and without SEN experience the move, others finding the converse. It may be that different stressors may have different effects depending upon the students' specific SEN. This would account for the fact that some with SEN seem not to experience transition less favourably than those without SEN. The current project however sets out to consider factors which facilitate transition for those with SEN, and not to make comparisons with other students.

Another project which focussed on a small number of case studies was that undertaken by Jindal-Snape, and Foggie, (2008), who interviewed nine children anticipated to have difficulties during this transition. Three were finding it difficult to deal with transition even at the follow-up. They noted that a child's internal attributes, family, peers, school systems, professionals and community all had great influence on the outcome of their transition to secondary school. This is yet another illustration of the wide range of issues which can influence the process of transition. However, within the constraints of the current qualitatively-focussed thesis, it was not intended to undertake psychometric assessments of students' internal attributes, nor sociometric investigations of students' relationships within school or their wider community.

Gutman, & Midgley, (2000) studied 62 African American families living in poverty and found that on average, students from these families experienced a significantly greater decline in grade point average across the transition than did their peers. They further found that students with high levels of both parental involvement and perceived teacher support, also those with high levels of both parental support and school belonging had higher grade point averages across school transition than students with high levels of one or none of these factors.

Thus, parental and perceived teacher support, which will be considered in this thesis, appear to be associated with higher academic attainments.

Recurring suggestions thus far include: the requirement for preparation including self-organisation, travelling to and orientation in the new school; school visits and orientation days; exchange of information between schools and between schools and parents; a caring ethos, good pastoral support; opportunities to express any concerns; the continuation of support; the provision of 'a dedicated space' and older students 'mentoring' new ones. Some researchers advocate very specific initiatives aimed at benefitting pupils who are changing school, for example Anderson (2011) suggests that all teachers should spend some time visiting or teaching in other key stages, in the interests of the professional development of all staff involved.

This was one improvement suggestion made by participants in the current project, which will be discussed in chapter 7. This proposal might be possible in certain circumstances. For example, secondary school teachers whose examination classes had left could be released to spend time in primary schools observing or supporting in lessons. Their presence might possibly enable primary teachers to be released to visit the appropriate secondary school. More radical suggestions, such as year-long teacher exchanges between different teachers in different school phases, would be more difficult to arrange and in most circumstances would require additional training or updating of skills. This would certainly help teachers to understand the constraints and requirements of teaching in their colleagues' schools, but headteachers might consider it disruptive to the smooth running of 'their' school, especially during the period of readjustment for exchange staff.

Thompson, Meadam, Fansler, Alber, and Balogh (2007) advocated using a family assessment portfolio, with the following sections: All about me; Meet my family and friends; Learn about (disability/medical condition); Look what I can do; Things to remember and finally Words from people who know me. Clearly, the more detailed the information made available to the receiving school about a student's attainments and needs, the more likely it is that they will be able to make appropriate provision. This is also dependent upon staff in the receiving school having the time and inclination to read and take account of this information, sometimes related to whether the student is receiving additional support. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, some staff take the view that it is better to give the incoming student a 'fresh start'. However, where the student has complex needs, this would mean overlooking potentially valuable information which could enable appropriate provision to be expedited.

Greenhough *et.al*, (2007) reported on a project aimed at helping teachers, pupils and parents find new ways of exchanging knowledge between home, primary school and secondary school. They found that sharing knowledge can address the dip in attainment which often accompanies transfer, and help children adjust more easily to their new school, which again endorses the approach of Thompson *et.al*, (2007) of the importance of a full exchange of information.

The extent to which those with SEN are welcomed into school can be reflected in their official documents. In her comparative study of Ireland and Estonia, Darmody (2012) concludes that structural inequalities could be addressed if school admissions policies were to use more inclusive selection criteria.

However, the effectiveness of policies depends upon the extent to which they are put into practice and monitored. Darmody further suggests whole-school transition approaches, maximum support to students and closer home-school and inter-school links, which again are dependent upon determined execution by school managers and staff. Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead (2008) argue that more studies are needed to explore the impact of educational programmes that reflect and adapt to children's diverse local environments, as reflected in the following UNCRC statement from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):

> *'Theory and evidence from early childhood research has a great deal to offer in the development of policies and practices, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of initiatives and the education and training of all responsible for the well-being of young children.'* (UNCRC, 2006: 53)

There is thus evidence of an emphasis on what can be done to help schools to accommodate the needs of a wide range of students, not just on how students must adapt to their new environment. As evidenced above, many secondary schools invite students to experience their new school in advance of transition, some for a day or two, but some even weeks before. Maun and Trend, (2009) investigated secondary school teacher attitudes to the scheme used by their school of admitting children four weeks before end of their final year in primary school. Once again, teachers were mindful of the need to address children's social and emotional re-adjustment. The authors found apparent cognitive motives in planning documents and meetings, the perceptions of teachers were clearly focussed on the affective.

This is noticeably at odds with Galton, Grey and Ruddock's (2003) finding that teachers' emphasis had moved from the social to the academic, and would suggest that this extended induction period allowed teachers to better understand their new students' social and

emotional needs during school transition. The relative importance of social and academic factors, as expressed by participants in this thesis, will be outlined and discussed in later chapters.

3.11 Student voice

Notably absent from the Plowden Report (1967) was any mention of seeking students' views about transition. This has certainly changed over the intervening years, and much more emphasis is now placed on the pupils' voice. For example, the views of children and young people were sought in the development of 'Every Child Matters' (DfES 2003) and the National Service Framework for Children (DfES and DH 2004). The DfES stated that children have, *'important contributions to make to the design and delivery of services they receive, including education.'* (DfES 2004:34) However, such contributions were nowhere evident in the latest Government Green Paper on SEN and Disability (2012). There are of course specific ethical issues when undertaking research with children; it has long been accepted that children themselves must give informed consent - the process of voluntarily agreeing to participate in research based upon complete disclosure of all relevant information – before they can be included in research studies. See for example National Children's Bureau (NCB) Research Highlight 193 (Harker, R. 2002) which emphasised that the growing recognition that the learner is central to any research directly affecting them requires careful consideration of the research methods used. They noted that the challenge for researchers was to use techniques and strategies that respect and accurately reflect the views and opinions of learners.

To investigate how far student perceptions contributed to the formation of interpersonal relationships at the point of primary/secondary transition, Tobbell and O'Donnell (2013) used participant and non-participant observations, also interviewed 65 pupils in 2 schools before and after transition. A very prominent emergent theme was that of courtesy or lack of it on the part of the school staff, as perceived by pupils; 'courtesy' is taken to mean those social behaviours which are acceptable in a society and underpin interpersonal relationships. With no assumption that their findings were generalisable, they sought to understand how context could construct relationship. They argued that during school transition, close attention needed to be paid to systems and practices to provide opportunity for staff–student interpersonal relationships to form, and that this finding was particularly relevant to school management and policy makers. They concluded that decisions about learning and teaching in the first year in a new school needed to be made with a focus on providing opportunities for relationship formation.'

Once again, the affective and social aspects of the students' day-to-day experience emerge as highly important to them. Brighouse (2003:2) notes that nowadays, even eleven year old children have their views consulted and taken seriously by their parents in selecting schools'. Although he is a strong advocate of consulting children because this helps adults to understand that children's interests are well met, he argues against the view promoted by 'some child liberationists' (p.2) that children have a right to have authority over their own circumstances'. He suggests that pupils' views should be regarded as consultative not authoritative, since children are dependent and vulnerable but have the capacity to develop into non-vulnerable and independent adults. He concludes that the authority which adults have over children's lives brings with it the responsibility to serve children's interests well, but if the adult regards the child's voice to be authoritative, the adult is failing in their duty.

This approach and attitude is evident in the responses of the adult participants – especially the parents – in the current project. However, the truth is that some adults do fail in their duty to safeguard children, and indeed some cause them harm. Brighouse's understandable proposal that adult experience and wisdom should guide children's lives must not preclude abused children from understanding that alternative help is available when their closest adult(s) behave inappropriately. Clark and Moss (2001) discussed whether very young children's views and experiences could become the focus for reviewing quality in early childhood provision. Arguing that children are experts in their own lives, they advocated a *'mosaic'* approach as a framework for listening to young children's perspectives through talking, walking, making and reviewing together. They suggested that to help gain a deeper understanding of young children's lives in a range of settings, use could be made of children's own photographs, tours and maps, to supplement interviews and adult observations. The focus of this approach is on children under five, but it can be adapted to work with older children, particularly those with communication difficulties or for whom English is an additional language. However, since the pupils in the current study had no such difficulties, this approach was not adopted in this thesis, as is discussed in the methodology chapter.

For older students, some have advocated a technique called 'Forum Theatre' (FT), which belongs to a collection of methods called, 'The Theatre of the Oppressed' (Boal, 2002), cited in Hammond, 2013). In a typical FT project, non-actor participants work together with facilitators (who might be actors) to develop a performance about their shared challenge. In Boal's project, the focus was transition, and a variety of techniques was used to empower non-actor participants to share their voice through performance. The Educational Psychologist (EP) Hammond (2013) undertook one such project in a very small rural school (32 pupils, 3 staff), and found it a creative way of eliciting and advocating the views of

children. However, he concluded that EPs might be unable to secure funding for such a non-mainstream intervention, compared to a technique with a wider evidence base.

In the current climate of reduced central resources and increasingly 'out-sourced' support services, it would be unrealistic to expect such initiatives to be widely adopted. Olson (2003, in Kuhn, 2007) argued that in the final analysis, it is the students who decide what they will learn, not the teachers, and the teacher cannot change the student's belief system or way of thinking without the student's permission. He suggests that educators should pay attention to what students think they are doing at school - what sense it makes to them - so that students come to value the activity, engage with it and incorporate it into their identity.

Accordingly, the current research will place considerable emphasis on the students' views of the transition process, and go beyond an analysis of adults' views. It may be possible for children and young people to participate in decision-making at various levels. There may be times when it is appropriate for teachers and adults to be more active in guiding children, as Brighouse (2003) suggests, and other times when they should they step back and allow the children to make the decisions. Hart produces his eight-step *Ladder of participation*, showing increasing degrees of pupil participation and different forms of cooperation with adults.

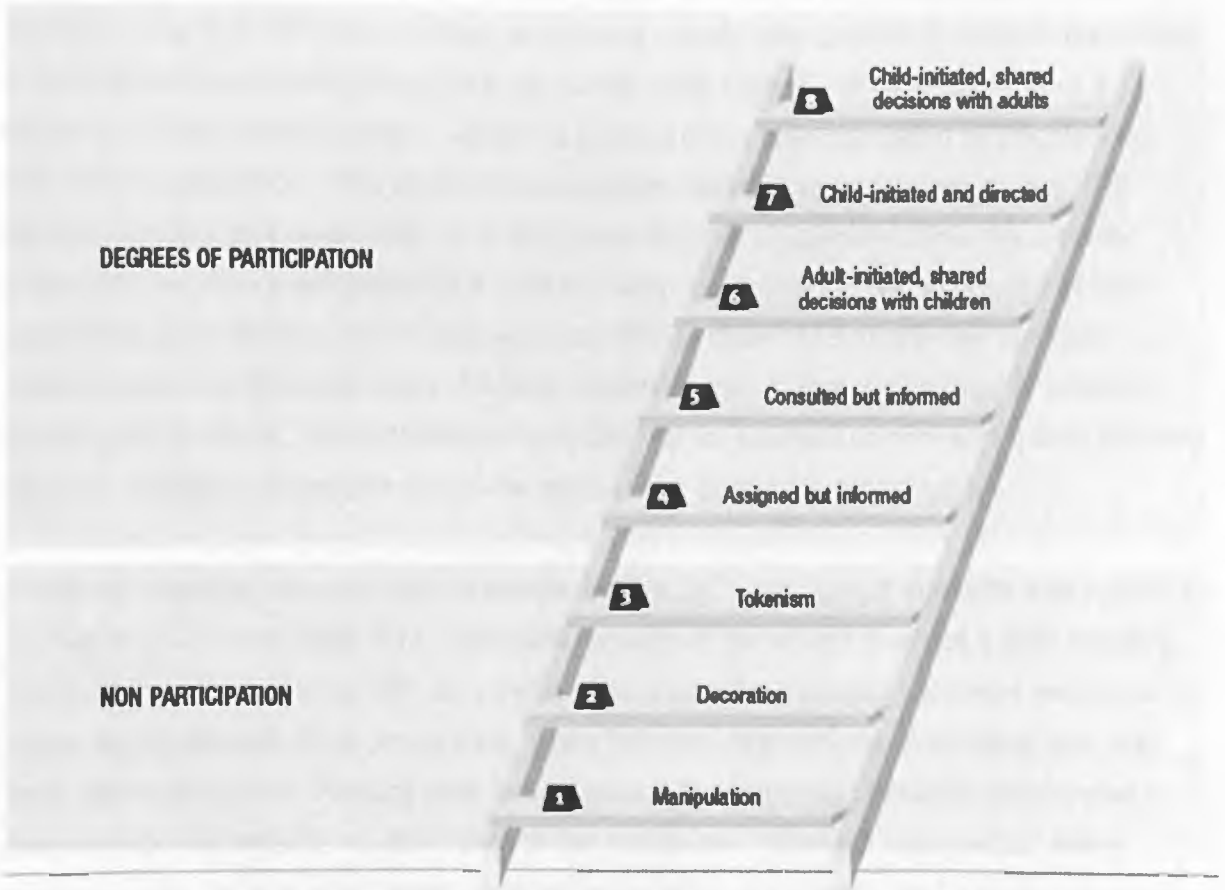


Figure 3.2 Hart's "Ladder of Participation", (1997)

Hart (1997) calls the three lowest steps on the ladder "non-participation", and emphasises that many projects claiming to involve children could be characterised as non-participation rather than as belonging to the higher steps on the ladder or what he calls "real participation". In the current research, examples are highlighted of pupil input to transition decisions at age 11, at levels which can be characterised at levels 4, 5 and 6.
Shier (2001) argues that this is actually an adaptation of Arnstein's (1969) 'Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation'. They propose an alternative model to Hart's, based on five levels of participation.

1. Children are listened to
2. Children are supported in expressing their view
3. Children's view are taken into account
4. Children are involved in the decision-making process
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making

He offered an ordered sequence of 15 questions as a useable tool for individuals, teams and organisations working with children.

Some discussions of pupil voice include contributions from those who propose a very radical approach, for example Fielding (2009) who suggested 'radical democratic alternatives'. He bemoaned the fact that those children and young people who typically contribute their views in educational settings tend to come from middle class homes. He extended this to a discussion of our political system, which he pointed out is now populated by people who rarely have experience of the world of work outside politics, typically coming via a PPE degree, working as a researcher, in a 'think tank' then as a Special Advisor for a senior political figure, then a candidate for a safe MP seat. He pointed to two examples of 'truly democratic communities', one a regime run by Bloom (from1948-1955) was in a non-selective school in the East End of London, Bloom sought to remove the fear of authority, punishment or failure, The organisation was centred on a school council and a daily meeting, which according to Bloom prevented the school from becoming authoritarian.

The other example was a residential special school for 'maladjusted' students with aged 5 to 12, run by Case from 1958-1974. Again the running of the school involved a daily meeting. The agenda always started with discussing children whose activities had been restrained in some way by the will of the community. There followed negotiations of activities that staff were then able to offer. Fielding puts these forward as examples of radical genealogies to demonstrate that there is no alternative to the status quo. Although many would share Fielding's wish for increased democratic representation at all levels, and a person-centred approach to education, there is a certain lack of realism in any expectation of a move away

from the commodity-based, 'market-led, high performance' (p11) educational system espoused by the current, and all recent, UK Governments. There can be no greater illustration that such radical democratic alternatives are unlikely to take hold, than the fact that Fielding has to go back 50 years to find examples of how the system once operated.

Cook-Sather (2010) conceptualises 'voice' as meaning active student participation in developing approaches to education. She uses the concept of liminality[3] to shape her thinking on how education can be conceptualised and practised. She has developed programs in which students act as pedagogical consultants to prospective secondary teachers and to practising college faculty members. Clearly these are likely to be of value to teachers in training who mostly have limited or no experience of interacting with secondary school students in teacher-student relationships, also to college faculty members who may have been out of the classroom for some years. However, it is difficult to see how new entrants to the profession can enhance the effectiveness of pupil voice in the wider school organisation. Neither is it clear how Cook-Sather intends to influence school managers and political leaders who are best positioned to affect such student influence.

3.12 Conclusions

Two very broad themes emerge from the literature on transition, namely the readiness of the pupil for transition, but also the readiness of schools to support the transition of students with wide-ranging needs, not only into the academic/curricular world of secondary school, but also the school culture. Despite the obvious omission of any reference to the pupil's voice, the recommendations made in the Plowden report, which advocate close contact between schools and between school and parents, otherwise remain entirely relevant. (See Appendix 3:2) Anderson *et.al* (2000) stress the importance of curriculum continuity, collaboration and preparedness (academic, independence, conformity, and coping mechanisms), and support from others (information, resources, emotional support and peer support).They argue that the lower the preparedness, the more support is needed, and that transition can become 'the beginning of the end rather than a new beginning' (p. 336) unless much attention is paid to supporting the process. As Lucey and Reay, 2000 argue, easing the pupils' concern involves bringing the largely imagined world of the secondary school into the 'known' experience of the year 6 child.

Issues raised by pupils as they anticipate their future experiences in secondary school will be discussed in the findings chapters. It is apparent that much can be done to prepare children

[3] When someone moves into a new phase or setting and does not have social status or rank. They are likely to be anonymous, obedient and humble, and adhere to expected forms of conduct, dress, etc.

for the move to secondary school, including what schools can do to prepare for the transition of children with very different starting points. However, Government thinking in England, as reflected in official publications, clearly places most emphasis on the former. For example, Kennedy, Cameron and Greene, (2012) note that the DfE's approach to Children's Centres, and the introduction of a new 'progress check' at age 2, focuses on getting children ready for school, rather than getting schools ready for the wide range of rich experiences, skills and knowledge each child displays.

The necessary conditions for successful inclusion of pupils with SEN apply equally to their successful transition into and between schools. Stephen and Cope (2003) suggest that for educational opportunities to become inclusive, it is imperative that schools consider how they can accommodate to the needs of all young children, rather than how the children can either be shaped to fit the institution or risk exclusion.

Teachers and others involved with children making school transition at age 11 now have available to them a wide range of resources. For examples of such resources, see Appendix 3:3. There is evidence in the following chapters that some schools are ahead of Government thinking in this respect, and indeed make considerable efforts to adjust to a wide range of special educational needs experienced by their pupils. These two literature review chapters have detailed the move towards greater inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream schools and the concomitant need to facilitate the transition from mainstream primary to secondary school of students with SEN. This research project, which was indirectly prompted by Baroness Warnock's seminal work more than three decades earlier, follows seven students with SEN statements as they make this transition, and the following chapter sets out the research methodology involved.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters reviewing literature on inclusion and transition led to two key research questions. The current chapter describes the methodology used to collect data in order to address these questions, which relate to whether participants' anticipation of transition was reflected in reality, and which factors were seen by participants as most helpful to transition. The research involved 45 semi-structured interviews using schedules devised following responses to questionnaires by a county-wide sample of SENCOs. Atkinson (2003) argues that semi-structured interviews allow participants to express themselves at sufficient length, while enabling systematic comparisons of responses. The interviews were undertaken with pupils, their parents and school staff before and after the pupils' transition from primary to secondary school. They focussed on the three aspects of academic, social and personal organisation issues faced during this period, which arose from the review and analysis of the literature. 'Before and after' analyses of participants' perspectives on transition were undertaken.

An earlier project which also focussed on a small number of case studies was that undertaken by Jindal -Snape and Foggie (2008), who interviewed nine children anticipated to have difficulties during this transition. Pupils in this purposive sample were known to be, or anticipated to have, problems with transition. Five were in the first year of secondary school, two in the second year of secondary school and two in the last year of primary school. Six months later, follow-up interviews were undertaken with six children - four in the second year and two in the first year of the secondary school. Three were finding it difficult to deal with transition even at the follow-up. They noted that a child's internal attributes, family, peers, school systems, professionals and community all had great influence on the outcome of their transition to secondary school, indicating the wide range of issues which can influence the process of transition. Having available such previously published work to which I could reference my own was helpful when establishing my own methodological approach to data collection. However, the originality of the research reported within this thesis is that all of the pupils involved were followed from primary school or middle school into secondary school. Furthermore, the pupils were selected because they had SEN statements, and were not restricted to those for whom difficulties were specifically anticipated during transition. Within this work I have followed young people through an important period of transition from primary to secondary schooling, seeking a range of views about this experience. Many previous

studies have considered transition either prior to or after the event, and have looked at the perspective of specific individuals (often pupils) rather than taking a more holistic approach.

It is acknowledged and confirmed throughout this chapter that although the pupils agreeing to participate in this research had a wide variety of special educational needs, they and their families were drawn from a very restricted socio-economic stratum of the population. It is equally important to acknowledge a similarly limited range of features in the schools which these students attended. The characteristics of the schools are discussed within Chapter 7 (Findings). All seven primary schools served populations with relatively low social needs, illustrated by low levels of free school meals and pupil premium payments. They also served few pupils with English as an additional language, but such pupils made good or excellent progress. All had very welcoming reception areas and reception staff, and SENCOs who cheerfully took time from all their other duties to discuss with me the needs of the pupils involved and arrangements for their transfer to secondary school. Although difficult to articulate precisely, there are several characteristics which determine whether a school passes my, 'Would I be happy to have my own children come here?' threshold. However, they include the fact that pupils are well cared for by adults and relationships are excellent; the industrious nature and friendly countenance of the pupils and staff; the patient and pleasing way in which staff engaged with the pupils, also the amount of time and energy given to make appropriate provision for pupils with special educational needs, facilitated by a SENCO with a clear understanding of what was required by the school's most needy pupils. In all schools, parents of pupils with SEN I spoke to held the school in high regard, and this was reflected in OFSTED reports, which also said that pupils with SEN made good progress towards their learning targets. All schools (apart from one described as 'improving') were judged by OFSTED to be 'good' in all inspection categories. There was very infrequent mention of inappropriate behaviour and these incidents were quickly addressed; all reports noted behaviour to be good overall, reflected in good relations between pupils and staff and a happy atmosphere, also that pupils reported feeling safe at school. Feedback from parents about school standards and relationships with the school was positive, and all schools were found to have well-motivated and effective Teaching Assistants. Thus although the schools varied in size, they were very similar in their positive atmosphere and evident success. Their similarities and very limited differences are summarised in tabular form. (See Appendix 4.13) Clearly, in the same way that the two secondary schools were equally successful in their induction of pupils with SEN into year 7 despite differences in staffing, these seven primary schools were equally successful with their pupils with SEN and with the transition of the pupils in this sample, despite differences in size. There were far more similarities between these schools than differences (with the obvious exception of the middle school) which again can be fairly levelled as a criticism of the nature of the sample.

4.2 Context of research

As discussed earlier, the Warnock report (DES 1978) and the Education Act 1981 (DES 1981) were key milestones in the increasing trend for pupils with complex special educational needs (SEN) to be educated alongside their peers in mainstream schools. With the later establishment of special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos) under the revised SEN Code of Practice (DfES 2001) and increasing expertise among class teachers as a result of extended professional development programmes and changes to initial teacher training, more children had their special needs met in mainstream primary schools (Powell, Smith, Jones and Reakes 2006). These changes have brought new demands upon school staff, not least those responsible for ensuring the successful transition of pupils with SEN from primary to secondary schools. These changes were addressed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

4.3 Frame of reference / philosophical stance

The overall approach to this thesis was social constructivist, seeking to understand the essence of participants' experience and understanding of the process of transition. The social constructivist approach involves investigating phenomena through the perceptions and understanding of the individuals experiencing them. In this project it involved individual interviews with people, an analysis of the meaning and 'essence' of their experience, and representing findings from the perspectives and interpretations of these participants. Given the small sample involved, although it is possible to draw out key points, it would be inappropriate to draw wide-ranging conclusions. Lester (1999) argues that research of this nature can be powerful in highlighting factors and how they affect individuals, but must be tentative in suggesting their applicability to the population from which the participants were drawn.

Philosophically, the author takes a subjectivist view of knowledge, having observed over many decades that two people's interpretation and recollection of the same event can vary enormously and even be diametrically opposed. Thus, when judgements and conclusions are made about observed phenomena and situations, these are affected by personal viewpoints. In seeking not to allow these to affect research outcomes, it is important that the researcher acknowledges, reflects upon and takes account of these.

Alcoff (2002:17) argues that

> *'Pure neutrality is an illusion that excuses the refusal to engage with self-reflexivity'.*

In undertaking this project, I have striven not to be influenced by his own professional frame of reference as a teacher and as a psychologist, including for example opinions and perspectives about SEN thresholds. While acknowledging that social constructions are

formed by the researcher as well as by participants, it was crucial to operate as a neutral observer, for example avoiding offering any opinion about the nature and deployment of resources. People form views based on their subjective experience, and this is a crucial aspect of what is to be explored during this thesis. The author contends that there is an underlying reality but that it is perceived differently by different observers, hence the approach in this project of exploring and comparing the views of different participants about the same situation. In thus studying participants' subjective consciousness I initially considered taking a phenomenological perspective, first articulated by Edmund Husserl in the early 1900s. Husserl explained that phenomenology did not involve metaphysical or theoretical conjecture, but looked at particular examples without theoretical presuppositions, before then determining what was essential and necessary to these experiences. Husserl, (1931) However, given my professional background I clearly did not start without pre-conceptions, and a social constructivist approach was adopted.

I start from the viewpoint that there is reality independent of whether it is observed. The old conundrum, *'If a tree falls in a forest and nobody hears does it make a sound?'* (Williams, 1981, paraphrasing William Fossett, 1754) raises various questions relating to perception of natural world reality. For example, if people did hear, but at different distances, or with variously impaired hearing, their perceptions would to some extent differ. In this case, the observer is passive, and has no control over the event. However in educational settings, for example in the classroom, those involved can and do contribute to the experience – the social world reality. The teacher devises the learning situation within certain constraints (including the National Curriculum and available resources) and so creates the experience for others, but pupils/students are not all simply passive recipients, but they themselves contribute to reality through their interactions with the adults and peers.

So although there is arguably an objective reality, for example the expectations articulated in the National Curriculum, school policy, etc., it is experienced, and contributed to, differently by the different participants. It is important to start from each individual's experience as defined by their perceptions of a certain reality – so called 'methodological individualism' – the view that social occurrences can only be understood by examining how they result from the motivations and actions of those involved - Arrow (1994). I contend that the reality we perceive is actually there whether we perceive it or not, but since we are part of that objective reality, we shape it whether or not we actively take part in it. Reality influences our thoughts and our thoughts influence reality. To broaden the range of perceptions considered, the research design extended beyond the views of pupils and those in direct contact with them, to include consideration of the views of external observers (OFSTED inspectors) of the context in which the transitions took place.

I sought to understand people's personal constructs (Personal Construct Theory - Kelly, 1955) when working as a psychologist. Kelly argued that in order to understand their own personal psychology, everyone needed to structure their own recalled experiences. He regarded human beings as proactive agents – clearly placing a social constructivist emphasis on how people make sense of their experience. He used the phrase *man as scientist* to describe how people test their own understanding or 'constructs' against new experience and actions, and modify their constructs as appropriate, in response to incongruity. I have come to appreciate the range of different constructs people bring to the same situation, and will therefore be relying upon elements of a constructivist approach in this research. There is a clear overlap between personal construct theory and constructivism – so much so that the *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology* changed its name in 1994 to the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology.* Constructivism maintains that mental structures and operations are not acquired passively but are constructed actively from experienced phenomena by the mind, in a developmental path from an initial state, rather than a progression towards a pre-determined final state. (Burman, 2007) Although different individuals may take different paths, in my (social constructivist) view, people who arrive at shared meanings do so through negotiations / interactions.

This overarching theme of this approach is that we all come to comprehend new information or situations with reference to our existing schema. Naylor and Keogh (1999) point out that the central tenet of this approach is that learners can only make sense of new situations with respect to their existing understanding. Learning is an active process in which learners construct meaning by linking new ideas to their existing knowledge.

I contend that learning involves perception and interpretation and memory, all of which inform the development of personal constructs. Moving beyond the notion of personal construction by individual learners, Vygotsky explores the notion of social construction within the community of scientists and argues that learning can be regarded as a process of enculturation – adapting to and assimilating the culture in which one lives. (See Hodson and Hodson, 1998) Although each learner constructs knowledge personally, this learning is both individual and social; we construct meaning as we learn within a social context, which affects what we learn. Constructivism/Interpretivism contends that a learner builds a personal interpretation of the world based on experiences and interactions; knowledge is rooted in the setting in which it is used. By putting together knowledge from different sources, learners create novel and situation-specific understandings to deal with new situations or problems. Constructivism/Interpretivism argues that there are many ways of 'constructing' (Kelly 1955) the world and its elements; meaning is imposed by the individual rather than existing in the world independently, as objectivism would argue. As noted earlier, Robson (2002) maintains

that people's actual behaviour must be interpreted in light of their underlying ideas, meanings and motivations.

So the constructivist perspective describes learning as a change in meaning constructed from experience. As Jenkings (2010) points out, this still requires that the learner actively engages with, participates in and commits to the process. (Quotation deleted)

Perceptions can also be contributed to by predispositions, which are affected by past experiences that have shaped our individual ways of making sense of and articulating the reality we experience. Whether intentionally or not, we are affected by powerful influences and any researcher must be aware of those acting upon him or her. This is nowhere more evident than in the work of Margaret Meade, as revealed by the critique of this by Freeman (1992). The researcher must be alert to the dangers of seeking the hoped-for answers, and of partisanship. Freeman cites evidence in Meade's field notes and correspondence and concludes that, under pressure from her supervisor (Boas) she accepted the hoax of two 24 year old Samoan women, rather than what emerged from any of her field notes or discussions with all the other women she had spoken to. It also offers an example of a furious reaction from 'the establishment'. There was much emotion in the immediate response from academic anthropologists – see: Humanities, Social Sciences and Law: Academic Questions (1992)

Freeman (1992) calls this

> *'... The tribal theory of truth; It is this relativist anthropological attitude that gives rise to the highly unscientific notion that the scientific status of propositions can be decided by a show of hands at a tribal get-together.* (This is) *the phenomenon of paradigm hold: that is, the way in which many individuals cling adamantly to a paradigm that has been shown to be completely inadequate.* (p. 6)

Thus, it is important to be aware that a shared understanding based on socially constructed meaning may not be accurate, even though it may be widely held by a given 'authoritative' body. Clearly, all researchers, whether into Higg's Boson, climate change, education or whatever, need to be mindful that strongly held convictions should remain open to challenge and revision. Within this thesis, my aim was to guard against this danger by drawing on evidence from extensive and varied sources, including the participants (pupils, parents and school staff), the locally available documentation and wide-ranging academic literature.

Although I do not consider myself to be what Carspecken (1996) would call a highly value-driven researcher, and I do not feel compelled to conduct research as a way of bettering the oppressed and the downtrodden my professional and personal background has of course influenced my value system - for example, an emphasis on inclusive education for children with wide-ranging SEN.

However as Carspecken points out, personal orientation does not define the facts; good critical research must be unbiased. Carspecken's view (based on Habermas's theory of communicative action and discourse ethics) is that critical epistemology differentiates between three ontological categories rather than realities. He suggests that there is a subjective ontological category (existing state of mind, feelings, to which only one actor has direct access). He talks of three 'truth claims': subjective truth claims, which are claims about true subjective states; objective truth claims, which are claims that certain events or objects exist; and normative/evaluative truth claims; about which others should agree to the rightness, goodness and appropriateness of certain actions. He argues that different truth claims require different kinds of backing to win the support of others.

The current research is largely focused on individuals' perspectives on the transition process, and thus involves *subjective truth claims*. I bring my own perspective to the research, but will demonstrate to the reader that, by being continually self-reflexive and remaining open to feedback about any apparent subjective influence, this has not influenced the outcome of the research. As Robbie Burns says in his poem (To a louse)

'Oh wad some Power the giftie gie us, to see oursels as ithers see us!' (Oh would (I wish that) some Power the gift had given us, to see ourselves as others see us.) It is essential that all research is open to critical appraisal, especially any which points to findings which are not supported by the evidence cited and/or indicate any lack of objectivity on the part of the researcher.

4.4 Research Design

Carspecken (1996) proposes a five-stage research model, and although he does so under the heading of critical ethnographic research, the model can be applied more widely. Stage 1 is collecting data from an **etic** or outsider, perspective in relation to social and cultural perspectives. Stage 2 involves the analysis of these relationships to expose underlying assumptions. At Stage 3, the dialogical stage, the researcher engages further with the participants to gain an insider's, or **emic**, perspective with echoes of Habermas's (1981) theory of communicative action. In Stage 4, the researcher links the findings to other similar settings and at Stage 5 explains these discoveries in broader social theory terms. (After Hardcastle, Usher and Holmes, (2006))This largely reflects the approach taken within this thesis, Stage 1 being a review of literature and initial questionnaires, Stage 2 involving the analysis of these and the construction of interview schedules, Stage 3 the interviews with participants, Stage 4 linking these back to findings from the literature and Stage 5 the analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

Ragin (1994) acknowledges that research in Social Sciences can produce varied outcomes when he says that different studies highlight different aspects of a single topic, so no study

on a topic can be regarded as definitive. Similarly Whitty (2006:160) argues that since the 'evidence-based' teaching profession faces huge challenges in an ever-changing world, in which what works one day might not work the next, research which is defined too narrowly would be of very limited value.

Taking the opposite view, Goldacre (2013, p.7) champions the supremacy of randomised control trials (RCTs), and says that national policies should be determined by them. He argues for:

> *'Putting RCTs at the heart of the policy-making process; not only can they reveal if our existing policies are effective but RCTs have the potential to transform the way we create and implement social policy across the country, from education to health, from welfare to crime.'*

However, Goldacre fails to acknowledge the effect of the multiple variables involved in any of these areas, which cannot be controlled and which will affect outcomes. On which topic, Goldacre is not clear about which outcome measures should be considered. For example, schools serving deprived areas may succeed remarkably in persuading children to come to school and engage with the curriculum, without ever achieving high grades in public examinations. Where would such success feature in the Goldacre analysis? In schools with rapid pupil turnover and varying immigrant populations, how could research be replicated? Finally, the effectiveness of research depends upon the extent to which it informs practice, which requires findings to be disseminated in ways that practitioners will find convincing, understandable and relatable to their own practice. This is less likely to be the case with RCTs. James (2013) argues that much of what research demonstrates to be effective may be unaffordable. She therefore suggests thinking in terms of evidence *informed* (rather than evidence *based*) practice, with research seeking to inform the educational zeitgeist/climate. A 'tongue in cheek' but telling illustration that randomised control trials are not always appropriate is given by Smith & Pell (2003) in their article, 'Parachute use to prevent death and major trauma related to gravitational challenge: systematic review of randomised control trials.' Their 'tongue-in-cheek' contention is that everyone might benefit if radical protagonists of evidence based medicine participated in a randomised control trial of the parachute. So far, no such research has been undertaken!

There are senses in which the approach will involve advocacy, since the research seeks to improve the experience of children with SEN as they transfer to secondary school. Firstly, the researcher seeks the views of children, so giving them opportunities to contribute actively. As noted in the previous chapter, some commentators advocate putting children at the heart of decision making - for example Fielding (2009), who suggests that schools would thus be truly

democratic communities. Others however (such as Brighouse (2003)) suggest that pupils' views should be regarded as consultative not authoritative.

This is a view which I share, with the caveat that all children should know how to seek protection from any authority figure who seeks to harm them. So in this project, in addition to pupils' views, the views of parents and school staff were also sought, including what could be done to improve the transition experience for pupils; in that sense these adults are asked to be advocates for the pupils.

My underlying philosophy (discussed in Chapter 2) is that children with special educational needs should be educated alongside their peers in mainstream settings unless evidence demonstrates that, even without major adaptations, their needs cannot be met there. This of course raises questions of objectivity. Although my stance on inclusive education might be seen as partisan, it will be demonstrated in this thesis that this has not affected his approach to identifying those features which contribute to successful inclusion. I spent 24 years as a psychologist working with parents who, as they would say, 'fought' for their child to be educated in mainstream school. It was evident that, where the receiving school made worthy efforts to meet the needs a child with considerable SEN, this had a positive impact on provision for other children in the school with a wide range of needs. Such experience (and my interpretation of it) brings the risk of straying yet further from a postpositivist perspective, placing even more pressure on the researcher to demonstrate that research outcomes are sufficiently rigorous to withstand academic scrutiny. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001) suggest that

> *'This requires the researcher to pay particular attention to alternative values, views, meanings and explanations, while remaining alert to biases and distortions.'* (p55)

Since the research sets out to investigate the transition of pupils with SEN statements as they transfer to secondary school, and is thus *'real-world practice oriented'* (Cresswell, J. 2003:6), the approach adopted was pragmatic. As Valentine (1997) suggests, adjustment to the secondary school environment can be difficult for most pupils, as they take this major step towards independence and are required to re-adjust to a much larger community and the varying styles of several different teachers each day, in different accommodation settings, as opposed to the pastoral single teacher model seen in most primary schools. As discussed in previous chapters, what emerged from the literature was that issues around transition could be grouped under the three broad headings of academic, social and personal organisation challenges. The current research investigates these challenges and explores approaches taken by mainstream schools in an English Local Education Authority to address them, and the views of children, parents and school staff about them. Research instruments were generated and revised through questionnaire surveys, used in semi – structured interviews, and analysed for purposes of answering the research questions.

I have not made individual assessments of students' attainments or social skills before transferring, but instead provided summary information about these features based on the accounts of the participants. The social constructivist, pragmatic approach taken has been very largely qualitative, since what was being sought was an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives. It was for this reason that semi-structured interviews were undertaken, to enable participants to expand on their own experience while still retaining a structure which enabled comparisons over time. The research also involved reviewing other material data such as school policies & OFSTED reports and observing the extent to which these policies were evident in practice, and were valued by participants. However, the approach remained broadly qualitative. Sandelowski (2000) argues that researchers can unapologetically describe their method as qualitative, and describe any other overtones, instead of inappropriately naming or implementing these other methods.

Methodology is defined by Wellington (2010:129) as, *'The activity of choosing, reflecting upon, evaluating and justifying the methods you use.'* Cresswell (2003) cites Crotty's (1998) contention that four 'what' questions should be considered when designing research. What epistemology (theory of knowledge) informs the research? What theoretical perspective lies behind the methodology? What methodology (plan of action) to use? What methods to use? Thomson and Walker (2010) similarly pose four questions when evaluating research. What did the researcher do? Why did s/he do it? Why did s/he adopt this approach? Why did s/he adopt these methods and not others? This chapter has sought to address these issues.

4.5 Objectives of the Research

To explore the views of school students with SEN statements in their final year at primary school, and their parents and school staff, about the students' upcoming transition to secondary school.

To explore the views of these participants during the students' first year at secondary school, and whether the experience turned out as they had anticipated.

To identify those elements seen by students, parents and school staff as influential during the process of transition.

This gave rise to the following:

4.6 Research Questions

1) Pupils with SEN statements making the transition between mainstream schools at age 11; how do participants' expectations compare with actual experience?
2) What factors are seen by pupils, parents and school staff as facilitating this transition?

Clearly, to answer such questions required detailed discussion with individuals including seeking and carefully clarifying participants' responses and a comparison of responses from individuals. Thus, a broadly qualitative approach was adopted, which was deemed most appropriate within an interpretative inquiry which places high value on the perceptions of the individuals engaged in the study.

Although, in discussing methodology, Billig (2004, p.13) suggests that

> *'The approach of the traditional scholar can be considered anti-methodological, in that hunches and specialist knowledge are more important than formally defined procedures.'*

I take a different view, and argue that although my background in special education might bring helpful insights into the research process, it could not supplant the need for sound methodological approaches. Indeed, one of my central aims is to further develop my own understanding of this field.

Thus, as Ragin (1994) points out, the beauty of social research is that it tempers & clarifies the concerns and interests of the researchers involved. He further argues that the discipline of social research is strengthened by its primary audience - social scientists. He is reassured that the representations that social scientists construct are accountable to the community of scholars, are based on carefully chosen ideas and evidence, and informed by rigorous, well-tested methods and theories.

However, I will contend that any evaluation of research should include that of impact beyond the academic audience, acknowledging that even in strictly positivist research, effect is easier to demonstrate in some fields (e.g. the development of the smallpox vaccine) than in others (e.g. the effect of particular teaching styles on academic outcomes).

Within this approach, I will tend towards what the German philosopher Windelbrand (cited in Hirschheim, 1985), called an ideographic approach – a tendency to specify, more characteristic of humanities research; as opposed to a nomothetic approach – a tendency to generalise, which is more typical of research in the natural sciences. However, in the paper quoted, Hirschheim himself seeks to, *'make the case for methodological pluralism irresistible.'* When discussing the issue of mixed method research, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004:24) prefer the term *'mixed research' or 'integrated research'*, which they

regard as broader and more inclusive, although they adhere to the mixed method term in their articles. They argue that mixed method research is a third paradigm, which bridges the schism between quantitative purists, who believe that social science should be objective, generalisable and hypothesis testing, and qualitative purists who argue that research is value-bound, and that generalisation is neither desirable nor possible. They further argue that it is unhelpful to adopt such extreme positions.

> *'We contend that epistemological and methodological pluralism should be promoted in educational research'* and that *'All researchers should be free to use* (the other's methodology)'. (p15)

They point out that many subjective decisions are made throughout the research process, for example what to study and what instruments to use – but this is of course not only true of mixed method research.

I am beginning to recognise my own position as a 'soft relativist', respecting the views and opinions of different groups, with what Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) describe as respect for, and interest in, comprehending and portraying individual and group differences. They cite what Johnson and Turner (2003) call the fundamental principle of mixed research, that multiple data should be collected, making use of different methods, approaches and strategies, so as to produce a mixture with complementary strengths and *'non-overlapping weaknesses'*. (p18) This was my initial aim, so a mixed methods approach was explored for this project. It was intended that the outcome of this research would inform educational practitioners, and acknowledges the view of Christ (2011) that Mixed Method Research is primarily conducted to improve the human condition.

This is neither to suggest that this is only possible with mixed method research, nor that my approach is in some way 'evangelical'. But one intention of the research is to see that, where transition is happening in inclusive settings, those involved are aware of what can be done to help the process. Indeed, although I was open to employing mixed methods, it became increasingly clear that the enormous and sufficient richness was to be found in the individual experience, perceptions and values of the participants to answer the research questions. For this reason, the research focussed increasingly on qualitative methods as being most appropriate to an interpretative inquiry of this nature. The intention was to elicit and hear first-hand about participants' experiences of the transition process. This is in keeping with the view of Robson (2002) who advocates that the researcher should choose the most appropriate method for their own purposes. His view is that it is now considered acceptable in applied fields such as education to use designs based mostly or entirely on methods that generate qualitative data. Despite having a mathematical background, I have reservations about statistical approaches to research into small populations, given the potential that arises

from errors of measurement, hence the intention to become immersed in the data and adopt an ideographic rather than a nomothetic approach.

> *'The openness of qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction and to do justice to that complexity, to respect it in its own right. Hard to answer, context-bound questions emerge along with unexpected patterns and new understandings through the evolutionary nature of qualitative inquiry.'* (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, pp6-7)

As was discussed in both literature review chapters, the quantitative research cited did not find in-depth analyses of the views of those involved in the transition process, which is why the current project focuses on qualitative methods. Shenton and Hay-Gibson (2009) point out that qualitative research plays an important role in the gaining of insight into issues that cannot be addressed appropriately through the quantitative method. Christ (2013) highlights the reiterative and interactive spirals through which the research proceeds, which I have adopted in the current thesis. Another feature of the research will be that views will be sought from those at different points in what Bronfenbrenner (1979) calls Ecological Systems; the students themselves for their direct experience and perspective (micro system); their family and school staff for their views about the child's experience and about the provision made in order to ease the process of transition (meso system). Support from the Local Authority would represent the exo system, the overarching cultural beliefs the macro system, but these will not be explored beyond the literature review, when changes to legal requirements are discussed. Aspects of time (the chronosystem) will be discussed only insofar as they relate to the transition process. Bronfenbrenner's theory regards the individual as developing within a context which is itself changing – able to influence his environment at the same time as the environment influences the individual. This is in accord with Vygotsky's view, that development is the result of interactions between the individual and his environment.

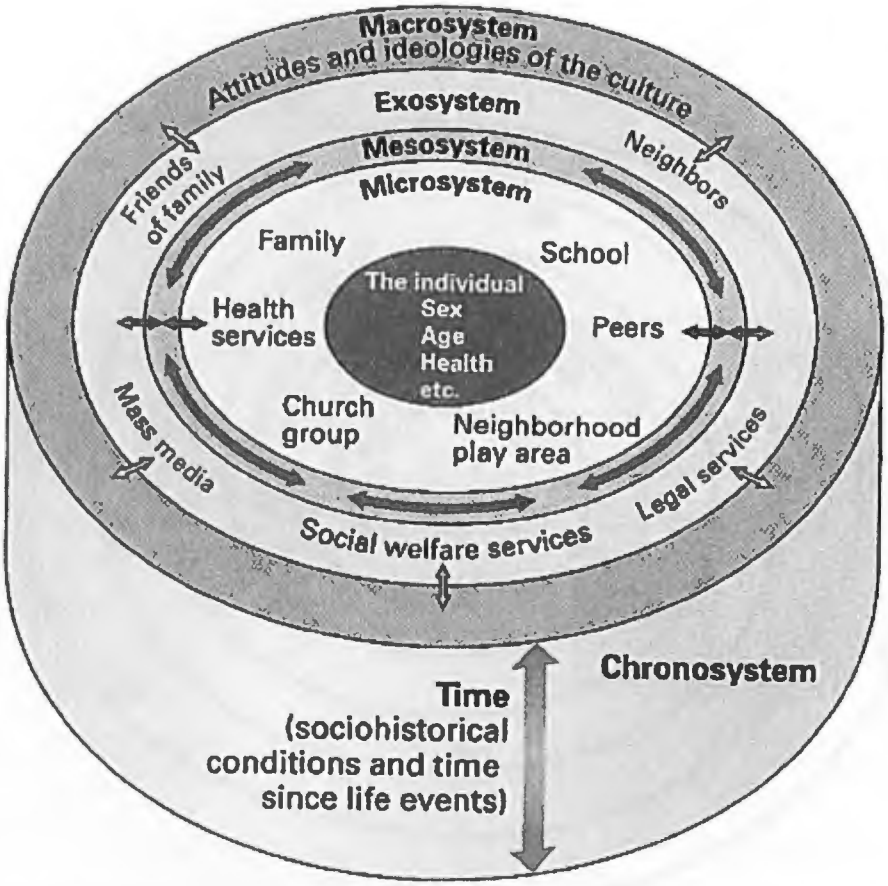


Figure 4.1: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory: downloaded from:
http:/impactofspecialneeds.weebly.com/bronfenbrennersquos-ecological-systems-theory.html

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, Denzin & Lincoln (1998).

I will also have regard to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) 'Conditional Consequential Matrix', which they offer as an analytic device to stimulate analysts' thinking about the relationships between macro and micro conditions/consequences both to each other and to process.

Macro conditions/consequences are those which are broad in scope and possible impact, as opposed to Micro conditions/consequences which are narrow in scope and possible impact. They see these micro and macro conditions/consequences interacting in complex ways through what they call 'paths of connectivity'.

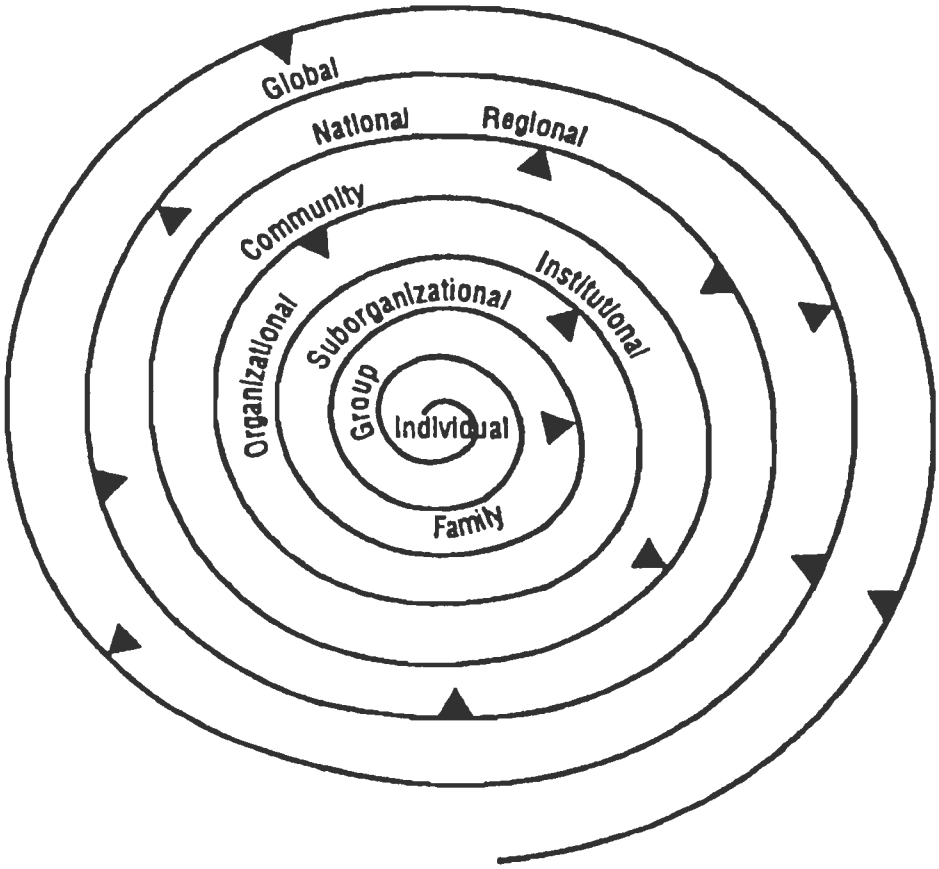


Figure 4.2: Strauss and Corbin's Conditional Consequential Matrix

This prompts the researcher to try to understand as much as possible about the phenomenon being investigated and the context in which it occurs – in this case transition of those with SEN between mainstream schools. It is also important to bear in mind that macro conditions/consequences such as national and local policies, as well as micro ones, such as student and family phenomena, should be part of their analysis; that the macro conditions often intersect and interact with the micro ones and so become part of the situational context. It is also important to analyse the data in ways that reveal the extent to which the paths taken by conditions affect the subsequent actions/interactions and consequences - Strauss and Corbin's 'paths of connectivity'. Strauss and Corbin of course proposed the method of Grounded Theory, in which theory is generated from the data generated from the research, although they recognise that this is not appropriate in all situations. This approach was considered but rejected, it being recognised that personal experience within this field had brought with it certain preconceptions likely to have an, albeit unintentional, influence on any theory generated.

Thus, both Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and Strauss and Corbin's (1998) Conditional Consequential Matrix offer ways of conceptualising the interactive systems within which people operate and which influence their lives. The focus of this thesis has been on the views of people operating within these different levels and the interactions between them. The following table illustrates how, within this thesis, they have been viewed as interrelating.

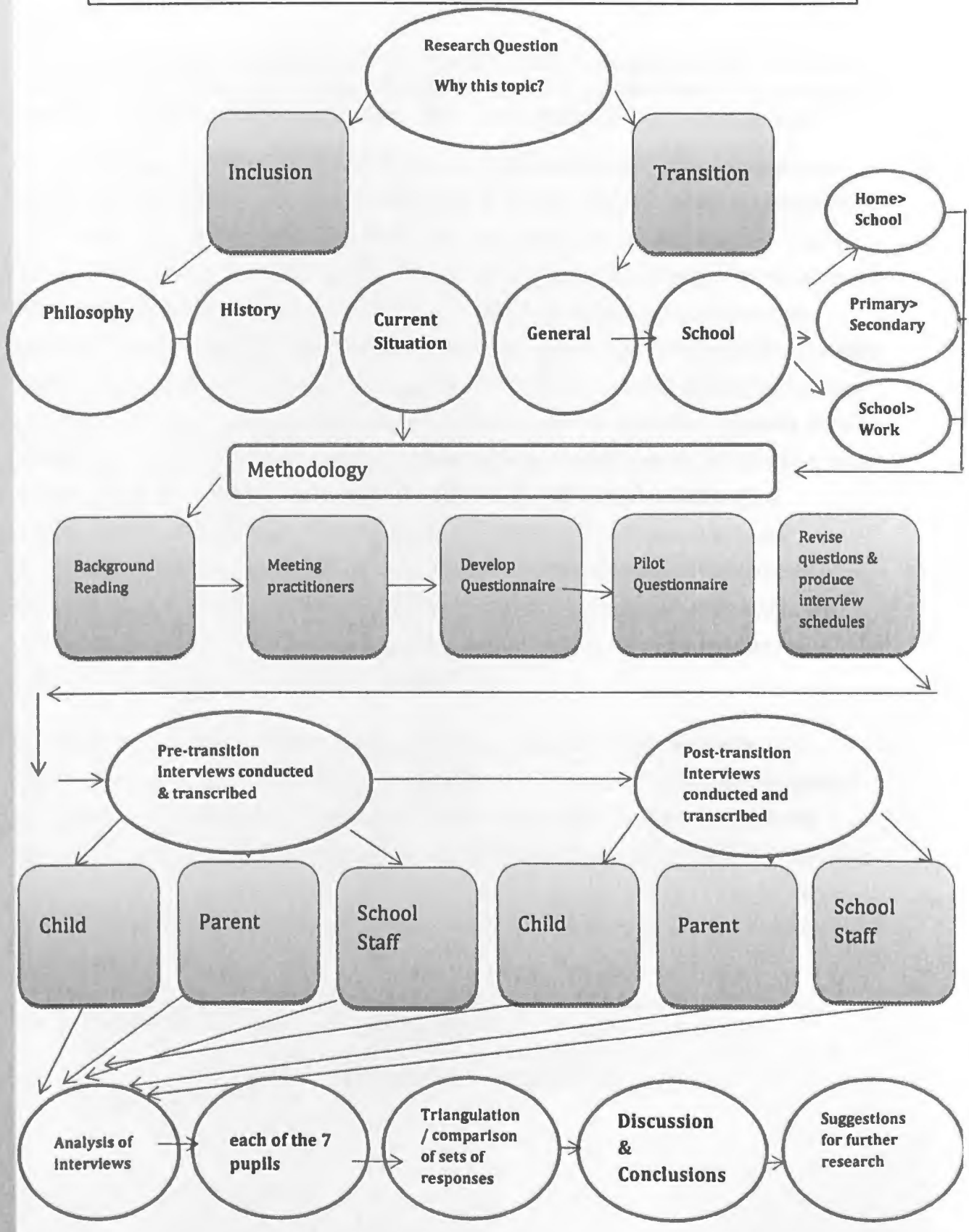
Table 4.3 Conceptualisation of Systems and Interactions

Level: These systems are envisaged respectively by the commentators as concentric circles, or as a spiral. Both note the variation in impact at the different levels, and although the micro conditions have limited global impact, it is these which impinge most closely on the individual and are the focus of the current thesis.	**Bronfenbrenner:** Argues that the individual changes within a system which is itself changing over time, and in which adjacent systems interact.	**Strauss & Corbin:** Draw attention to the relationship between micro and macro conditions/ consequences both to each other and to the process. Like Bronfenbrenner, they see these conditions interacting, which they so do so through 'paths of connectivity'	**Focus in this thesis:** For each student here, information was sought at each level. Interaction between the student, parent & school was the key focus. The macro level is addressed in terms of the influence of LA arrangements, national legislation and international agreements. This illustrates the complex interplay between the different levels of conditions
Student	Microsystem	Individual	Student's experience of transition
Peer Group		Group	Peer influence
Parents and siblings		Family	Input from parents and influence of siblings
School		Institutional	School staff and systems, and how pupil and parent interacted with them
Neighbourhood	Mesosystem	Community	The clear place of the school within the community was evident, and often emphasised by schools
Local Authority (LA)	Exosystem – Friends of family; neighbours; social welfare systems	Regional	LA procedures affect how the Statement is monitored and the timing of the transition process.
Country	Macrosystem – Attitudes & ideologies of the culture	National	Legislation and attitudes to inclusion
International		Global	Aspirations reflected e.g. in the Salamanca statement and UNHCR
Time line	(Also 'Chronosystem' – socio-historical conditions & time since life events.)		The transition process

4.7 Outline of Project

Research Question	Procedures	Participants	Stage of Research
1) Pupils with SEN statements making the transition between mainstream schools at age 11; how do participants' expectations compare with actual experience? 2) What factors are seen by pupils, parents and school staff as facilitating this transition?	1) Supervisors consulted & literature reviewed 2) Questions drafted 3) PhD students & SENCos Consulted 4)Questions revised 5)Sample obtained 6a) Pupils, parents & school staff interviewed pre-transition 6b) Pupils, parents & school staff interviewed post-transition 7) Responses collated 8) School SEN policies & OFSTED reports reviewed 9) Data analysed 10) Vignettes and findings produced 11) Summary and Conclusion produced	1) 20 Newly-appointed SENCos; 2) 8 children with SEN statements moving from Yr6 to Yr7 3)Their parents 4) Their school staff	Year 1: Procedures 1,2,3,4,5 &6a Year 2: Procedures 1,6b,7,8 &10 Year 3: Procedures 1, 9, 10, 11

Figure 4.4: School Transition at age 11 for Children with Special Educational Needs



Phase 1

Phase 2

Phases 3

Phase 4

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4.8 Overview

This research involved 'triangulation'[4] – (cross-referencing the responses of the different participants) - and drew upon a range of methods including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and reviews of documentation; the principal research focus was qualitative.

The research gathered the views of children with SEN statements before and after their transfer from mainstream primary to mainstream secondary schools. It also investigated the views of their parents and school staff who supported them through this process. It did so through semi-structured interviews based on issues gathered from a review of literature and from consultation via questionnaire with 20 local SENCos. Relevant documents were reviewed, including schools' SEN policies and the sections of their OFSTED reports relating to SEN. These reflected each school's approach to SEN, the extent to which their policies were followed, and the emphasis which each school placed on transition. Vignettes were included, in order to illustrate the range of special needs experienced by the students, their specific issues and concerns, and how they have been addressed. So although a combination of research methods is used, the aim has been to produce qualitative representation of participants' experiences. As Ragin (1994) suggests, the challenge of social research is to build potent and informative depictions of social life that add to the continuing discussion of social life called social theory, and concurrently to embrace systematically a range of evidence about social life.

Although it is intended that the findings should be in some sense generalisable, it is acknowledged that this will be limited to what Bassey (1999) terms *'fuzzy generalisations'* (p12) and talk in terms of 'likelihood' not certainty or precision. The research includes vignettes of the individual children involved, and although these will not amount to full case studies, they will offer some elements of the case study approach such as interviews, document reviews and in-depth analysis. Bassey (1999) cites Cohen & Manion (1989) as suggesting that

> *'Unlike the experimenter who manipulates variables ... or the surveyor who asks standardised questions ... the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit ..... to probe deeply and analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena ... with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider populations...'* (p24)

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[4] Cohen and Manion (1986, p.254) define triangulation as an

"attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint".

Many other researchers espouse the use of case studies, among whom Mason (2006) who emphasises that case studies produce dense, native narratives which enable an evolution of the research, and Stake (1995) who suggests that they enable the study of multiple realities, and sometimes contradictory opinions of what is happening. This is something which I am keen to explore, as discussed in the 'Approach/conceptual background' section of this chapter above, albeit in the more succinct form of vignettes.

4.9 Development of Research Instruments

As noted in the literature review chapters, a review of the literature gave rise to three themes (academic, social and personal organisational) around which survey questions arose. These were addressed through semi-structured interviews with a sample of pupils, parents and school staff (see below) from a single English Local Authority. Such a review is described by Popay, Roen, Rodgers, Roberts, Arai, Petticrew and Baldwin (2005) as an approach to synthesising findings from multiple studies, whose defining characteristic is its primary reliance on the use of words and text to summarise and explain the findings of multiple studies.

The first stage of research involved a scan of titles, abstracts and texts using the keywords, 'inclusion, transition, primary, secondary, SEN and Statement', in order to identify recent research in the area. These scans were conducted in academic databases (EBSCO, International ERIC, SwetsWise, Taylor and Francis, Sage publications and Zetoc) and keyword searches were also undertaken in search engines 'Google Scholar' 'Infotopia' and 'Microsoft Academic Research'. This gave rise to 4 broad areas of information: academic articles; books; government publications; and local authority publications. I was also influenced by many sources of 'grey' literature about approaches to facilitating transition, and methods of research. Sources included conferences, including the 'Optimus' conference, *'Effective Transfer and Transition'* in January 2011, in which practitioners from schools and Local Authorities described various methods they had adopted, which helped to shape the interview questions, for example when considering measures taken by secondary schools to ease transition. Presentations at the AERA conference *'Inciting the Social Imagination: Education Research for the Public Good'* in New Orleans in April 2012 included contributions from international researchers about mixed methods research, which enhanced my understanding of this approach but confirmed him in his decision to focus principally on qualitative methods so as to gain a deeper understanding of participants perceptions of the process of transition.

As previously described, a coding system was devised when reviewing the literature and initially produced 128 codes. These were condensed into 28 second level codes and further distilled into three broad themes: academic issues; social issues; and issues of personal organisation. A draft list of questions was produced within a framework of these three overall

themes emerging from the literature (see Appendix 4.4). The draft was discussed at the University's School of Education Research PhD Support Group and fine-tuned. Thus amended, these questions were subsequently piloted at a conference for newly appointed SENCos in the region which was organised by lecturers on the MA SENCO Award Programme at the School of Education, University of Northampton. Although members of this 'opportunity sample' of newly appointed SENCos did not have great depth of experience, their responses were helpful in shaping amendments. Twenty responses were received from the 24 SENCos present on the course (summarised in Appendix 4.6) and improvement suggestions and additions were evaluated and adopted where relevant to the research.

These amendments – for example, suggesting a particular focus on the additional visits which secondary schools arranged for 'vulnerable' year 6 children, together with issues emerging from the literature - enabled the identification of themes and issues to determine the aim of interviews for the main emphasis of the research. Further, the SENCos surveyed reinforced that children were concerned about academic, social and personal organisational issues, and were most looking forward to increased sporting and scientific facilities, so these too were followed up. A second draft of the questions for the semi-structured interviews was produced. (See Appendix 4.6) These questions were again shared and discussed with the Education PhD Support Group, and following feedback obtained they were further revised so as to produce frameworks for semi-structured interviews. The broad areas of questioning (concerning academic, social and personal organisation issues) remained unchanged but there was increased focus on users' views of the effectiveness / impact of systems in place. Additionally, children were asked during their interviews about any situations they felt unable to cope with. The draft version thus amended was used as the basis of four separate interview schedules, one for year six pupils, one for their parents, one for school staff and one very early draft for yr7 pupils. (See Appendices 4.7 to 4.10).

4.10 Research Participants

One of the key starting points in any research is identifying and contacting potential participants. When the research involves children, it is obligatory to include parents in any decision making about their child's participation. Only participants who had given voluntary informed consent and agreed to participate were interviewed, *'without any duress, prior to research getting under way'* (BERA guidelines 2011 p5). All participants confirmed they understood the process in which they were to be engaged, including why their participation was necessary, how it would be used and how and to whom it would be reported. Since the pupils involved had SEN, their parents were asked to confirm that their children understood these matters and were capable of giving informed consent. All parents confirmed this and one mother was so convinced of her daughter's level of understanding that she felt it was inappropriate to sign to confirm it. She felt that to do so would be insulting to her daughter.

This was a striking illustration of the importance of not underestimating children's ability to articulate their views and to give consent. Alderson (1992:123) argued that children's competence to refuse or consent (in that case to medical treatment or surgery) tended to be discussed in terms of the child's ability or maturity when in fact the social context also powerfully influences the child's capacity to consent. He said that when child and parents agree, the parents' estimations of their child's competence works well. However, competence only becomes a crucial issue when they disagree. When child and parents agree, wise maturity might appear to be compliance or dependence. Conversely, the child's dissent might look like immaturity.

Anderson emphasises that professionals can easily misunderstand the level of children's competence to offer informed consent, and overlook the social context, perhaps ignoring external factors. He points out that adults' assessments of a child's competence are inevitably affected by the child's nervousness or friendly response – also potentially by their own prejudices – which can elucidate or conceal the child's real competence.

For the purpose of this research, it was intended that the sample should comprise between one and three pupils with SEN statements in their final year of primary school from each of twelve primary schools, anticipating a total of eighteen to 24 pupils to be followed into secondary schools. This purposive sampling approach was chosen to ensure

'That those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed'

(Bryman 2008 p.415)

This number was chosen on the assumption that there would be sample attrition as a result for example of individual pupils leaving the area through family moves, or because of withdrawing permission for their involvement.

This research involved children transferring from primary to secondary schools, potentially including dozens of schools. There are several possible starting points, for example, contacting all primary schools in the county and asking head teachers to seek permission from all parents of children in year 6 with SEN statements, or contacting all secondary schools and asking them to contact all upcoming year 7 children with statements, then selecting a sample from this total cohort. Either of these approaches would have involved many schools in unnecessary administrative work. It was therefore decided to approach a small number of 'receiving' secondary schools and find out which of their 'feeder' primary schools will be sending children with SEN statements. Initially two secondary schools were chosen following advice from the Senior Lecturer in Special Education responsible for Northampton University's TDA SENCo training course.

In order to sample both rural and urban populations so as to include a wider range of issues – for example about transport difficulties - one secondary school was chosen which served a rural community, the other an urban community. Both had several children with Statements of SEN, met a wide range of special needs, and were the frequent choice of placement by the parents of children with SEN. Also, the SENCOs were described by the Senior Lecturer as always ready to support research which they felt might be of benefit to children with SEN. So this was both a purposive and an opportunistic sample. These two schools were visited and their experienced SENCos kindly agreed to indicate which (respectively, 8 and 7) children with statements of SEN would be coming to them in year 7 in September, and from which Primary Schools. Unfortunately, the urban school found that rather than 8 children with statements who were expected to come, only three took up the offer of a placement, so the original sample would have been reduced to ten (3 + 7). This was considered too few, given the possibility of children withdrawing from the study from choice or relocation, so a third secondary school was approached, again on the advice of the Senior Lecturer, which anticipated receiving ten children with statements in Year 7 next year. This made a pool of 20 potential participants, all at different primary schools. These pupils all took up the place offered. For each of these pupils, I then contacted their primary school Head Teacher in turn by letter at the end of the Spring Term to explain the nature of the research (Appendix 4.11).

Head teachers were asked to contact the parents on my behalf, make a member of staff available for pre-transition interview about the transition process, and if necessary make facilities available for interviews with a member of staff and with pupil and parent if they wished to be interviewed at the school. Enclosed with the letter to Head Teachers was a draft letter for Heads to send to parents. This letter explained the research, asked parents if they and their child would be prepared to be involved in the research and included a contact email address, a reply slip and stamped, addressed envelope. (Appendix 4.12) This purposive sample was intended to ensure that the pupils, and key adults in supportive roles, were a fair representation of schools within the target authority (Robson 2002) in order to enable 'fuzzy generalization' (Bassey 1998) in respect of the findings. Those agreeing to in-depth semi-structured interviews were white children from relatively affluent families attending a limited range of rural schools, but covered a wide range of SEN necessitating various methods of support to ensure effective transition. (For table, see Appendix 4:14) In any event, it is clear that any data generated from such a restricted sample can only represent a partial view, (Pratt and George, 2005).

Following the initial request sent in April 2011 I telephoned all schools at the start of the Summer Term to check on progress, and emailed copies of the original letters when requested. The pivotal role of the Administrator/Bursary/Secretary in schools was again immediately apparent, with each one acting as the 'Central Processing Unit' and facilitating

communication with the relevant member of staff. This led to an increase in parental contact, some via reply slips and some via email. I was mindful that participation in educational research is one of many demands on school's time, and not the highest priority for Primary schools, especially early in the Summer Term when they are involved in Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs). Indeed, one of the schools in the sample also had an OFSTED inspection in the same week. However, school staff were most helpful in following up requests to parents, and with their subsequent prompting the number of replies increased to 6, with 5 ready to take part, 3 requesting more information and 1 not wishing to take part. This was because the child in question had a combination of complex needs and so had had to meet a large number of professionals. Parents felt that another, avoidable meeting would not be fair, and their withdrawal was entirely understandable. Eventually, eight pupils and their parents agreed to be involved, five linked to one secondary school, three to another and none to the third.

It must be borne in mind that the nature of the sample obtained can be affected by 'gatekeepers'. In the current project, the first gatekeeper was the SENCO trainer who guided me toward 'co-operative' schools, which happened to serve favourable catchment areas. Beyond that, the secondary schools chosen enabled me to contact the families of all primary pupils with Statements who were planning to join them, so did not play a 'gatekeeping' role. Ultimately it was the parents who decided whether their child would be involved, so were effectively gatekeepers, and as Kennan, Fives and Canavan (2011:279) point out, gatekeepers can skew the sample. Apart from parents, the SENCo trainer also affected the choice of schools approached, which illustrated the point made by Curtis *et.al,* (2004), that reliance on service providers as gatekeepers may affect access to disadvantaged and/or marginalized clients.

In deciding what approach to take in data gathering, several methods were considered. As Veale (2005:253) points out

> *'Participation is the new orthodoxy in many areas of social research';* also that there has been *'Increased awareness of how children's agency and ways in which children actively contribute to family and community coping strategies. This has led to … a search for methods that can serve as tools or frames for children's views to be articulated in the research process.'*

She describes several creative methods of drawing out responses from children who have been traumatised, including Social Mapping; Story Games (each child adding a line to the story – which led to harrowing tales from Rwandan children); Drawing (gave children drawings of different characters but found this less effective than asking children to draw their own pictures, which enabled them to explain their own sadness) and Drama (invited

children and adults to generate and act out stories of conflict, then re-visit the story with actors exploring different strategies). It was not found necessary in the current study to employ such methods, as the children involved showed no inhibition or hesitation in expressing their opinions.

Another option considered was naturalistic observations, but this was rejected on a number of grounds. Firstly, in my experience both as a teacher being 'observed' and as an observer in different roles, the arrival of an observer in a classroom, even when not demonstrably unsettling, changes the classroom dynamic. In my view, such observations thus have limited value, unless repeated in a wide range of each pupil's timetabled lessons. Given the evident self-consciousness of pupils in the sample evidenced in subsequent chapters, it would have been inappropriate to 'shadow' them in that way. Finally, people behave differently in different settings so observations of pupils would have intrusive. Dunn (2005) (despite her preference for naturalistic observations) points out that making inferences from children's naturally occurring actions about what they understand presents problems because children have and employ their differing understanding with parents, brothers and sisters and friends, for example in their disputes, pretend play.

Thus, my preference was to focus on the participants' stated views and behaviour in semi-structured interviews. See also (Brenner 2006:365):

> *'Similarly, participant observation and collection of naturally occurring conversation can entail collection of verbal data but the researcher must infer the participants' meaning less directly than is possible through in-depth interviewing.'*

For each of the eight volunteer children involved, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the child, the parent and a member of the school staff who had the most direct knowledge or contact with the pupil, normally the SENCo, Assistant SENCo or TA. These interviews, each taking between 40 and 60 minutes, were – with the written agreement of each interviewee – recorded on a voice recorder and later transcribed and coded. This was a hugely time-consuming process, and on reflection the original target of 12 to 18 pupils was hugely over-optimistic, and unrealistic within the time constraints of this project.

As it transpired, the children agreeing to participate represented a wide variety of special educational needs (see pages 110 and 132 for anonymised detail) requiring a variety of support in academic, social and personal organisation areas identified above. Unfortunately the sample did not include pupils in inner-city schools or those in high risk groups. As Kennan et.al (2011) point out, the most important group to involve in research to inform policy and service development are those with the greatest need or exposed to the greatest risk, but these groups are often the most difficult to reach.

4.11 Interviews

Because my intention was to understand informants on their own terms, and to see how they made sense of the transition process, an increasingly qualitative approach was adopted. This meant that the interviews were to some degree open ended – what Brenner (2006) and others refer to as qualitative interviews. Participants were encouraged to use their own words and, to a certain extent, to take control of the interview process. Since interviews are interactive, both participant and interviewer are involved in an evolving process of making meaning. (Kvale, 1996) The interviews were based around three broad themes emerging from the literature, namely the academic, social and personal organisation issues experienced by pupils during transition. Thus, the approach adopted was deductive; questions were devised within these themes and analysed in relation to how participants responded to them during the interview. (This is as opposed to an inductive approach in which the researcher looks for categories emerging from the interviews during the analytical phase.) Since qualitative interviews might take unpredictable directions Kvale (1996) suggested devising an ethical protocol to guide consideration through the different phases of a research project through discussions with experienced researchers and the 'community of the informants'. I have been guided in this way through discussions with supervisors and school staff, reinforced by my own professional experience of interviewing children and adults, and adhering to BERA's and The University of Northampton's ethical guidelines.

4.12 Interview Structure

Given some degree of professional experience interviewing children, I was aware of the need to listen attentively; ask about sensitive issues skilfully; adjust questions to the respondent's situation; ask for clarification; ask open-ended questions not yes/no questions; ask the participants to tell a story and attempt to ask questions which elicited the personal voice. It was also my intention to avoid multiple-choice questions, why questions, imposing concepts & asking leading questions. Clearly, the objective was to create opportunities for open and constructive dialogue, and overcome as far as possible the potentially hierarchical relationship between interviewer and participant. This is what Freire (2002) calls a dialogical encounter in which the hierarchical structures are removed, or at least openly challenged. This involved creating a relationship that was as close as possible while still being professionally appropriate. So much of this relationship-building becomes second nature through professional experience that it is difficult to discern and articulate the process. However, it includes judicious use of non-verbal signals including facial gestures and 'companionable grunts', but also requires (perhaps intuitive) adjustment to the child's preferred degree of closeness. Although as researcher I had a measure of control over the conduct of the interview, including probing questions, it was essential that the interviews

were conducted in ways which allowed participants to take control of what they wanted to say. Further, it required not only that the participants had given consent to their involvement, but also that they felt that I was honest, interested and trustworthy, and that they were very clear about the purpose of my research, both from our initial correspondence and from individual explanation with each participant. Brenner (2006) suggested that for all but the most experienced interviewer, a written sequence of interview questions is advised. However, he suggests that too strictly prescribed a list of questions might not allow the interviewer to follow up on unforeseen topics or individual differences emerging during the interview.

He therefore advocated a semi-structured protocol, such as has been adopted in this thesis. It involved key questions but allowed for subsequent questions to follow up on initial responses. Within the literature are many examples of 'caveats' which will seem obvious to an experienced researcher, for example, Brenner's observation that a new interviewee often seeks cues about what is expected of them during the interview, including not just the content but also length of response, degree of detail, and formality of language.

Similarly the suggestion that as well as explaining the process to the interviewee, the interviewer chooses the first few questions judiciously. Patton (cited by Brenner, 2006) proposed that interviews should start with questions close to the informant's current experience so that opinions could be sought based on the mutually understood content that has been discussed. The intention would be to encourage the informant to relax and expand on their responses in a way that is distinctive from normal conversations.'
Brenner also points out the observation of several authors (e.g., Kvale, 1996; Spradley, 1979) that everyday conversation most often involves balanced turn taking, whereas in most 'interview' situations the informant is encouraged to speak more than the interviewer. However, since the informant might infer from short questions by the interviewer that short responses are expected, Brenner suggest that it might be more productive to ask somewhat longer questions in order to highlight the special nature of the interview situation.

So having set the scene in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer can clarify and extend the participant's response with judicious probing, including open questions and verbal and non-verbal encouragement. This does mean of course that some 'analytical' decisions are being made during the course of the interview. Some potential probes were included in the current interview schedules and adapted as indicated by bracketed and underlined additions in Appendices 4.7 to 4.10. It is also important to give the participant time to respond; this was extensively, but not universally, achieved by me, and occasional shortcomings are discussed in the findings chapter. I was also aware of the need not to praise particular responses and so imply that certain replies were expected. Another consideration was the real and

inevitably influential power imbalance between interviewer and interviewee, especially between adult and child, and again some commentators make the rather obvious suggestion that when attempting to draw from children's own frame of reference, it was advisable to use non-formal terminology when interviewing children and adolescents. (Weber, Miracle, & Skehan, 1994, cited in Brenner, 2006) I would argue that the same attention should be paid, and was paid, to using non-formal, non-technical/esoteric language when interviewing adults for the purposes of this research.

4.13 How the data were collected/recorded/analysed

Interviews were audio recorded to reduce the time needed for contemporaneous note-taking and to allow me to focus on the conversation, while ensuring an accurate recording of the words used. Although video recording would have allowed expressions, actions, and body language to be recorded, it was not used for fear of inhibiting responses. Brief notes were taken to clarify events (e.g. 'cat brings in dead bird'!) and to jot down possible ongoing questions. This also had the advantage of covering what might otherwise have been uncomfortable silences while participants were thinking. Note-taking indicated to the participant that their responses were important and being taken seriously but by keeping this activity brief I intended not to interrupt the flow of dialogue.

4.14 Transcribing

Kvale (1996, p.165) points out that

> *'Transcribing involves translating from an oral language, with its own set of rules, to a written language with another set of rules. Transcripts are not copies or representations of some original reality; they are interpretive constructions that are useful tools for given purposes. Transcripts are de-contextualised conversations… A living, ongoing conversation is frozen into a written text.'*

I attempted to adhere to the suggestions of Bazely (2007), who argues that the goal in transcribing is to be as true to the conversation as possible, yet pragmatic in dealing with the data. He says that one should record all "ums"; not correct incomplete sentences; note events which create interruptions; record non-verbal and emotional elements of the conversation and record non-verbal affirmations. He emphasises the need for both distance and closeness to obtain a rounded outlook on your data, and that after working through a document, the researcher should be 'surprised, excited and informed' by nuances in the text. However, it is also necessary to be able to stand back and see the whole, and where the whole fits in a larger whole.

Audio recordings were then transcribed using speech-to-text software (Dragon Naturally Speaking). This software was unable to interpret a wide range of voices, so I played back the recordings through headphones and repeated them so that words could be interpreted by the software. This had the advantage of reminding me about nuances of the conversations and a further dimension to the analysis, in addition to cross-referencing with the contemporaneous notes kept of events and non-verbal responses. In this way, the aim was to record interactions in more depth than transcriptions simply as the *'de-contextualised conversations'* described by Kvale (1996).

4.15 Analysis of data

These transcripts were then analysed in terms of the three themes – academic, social and personal organisation issues - emerging from the literature; see Appendices 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. These are what Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) would have termed 'predetermined' (as opposed to emergent) themes. Forty two interviews totalling approximately 105,000 words were transcribed. Data were analysed using a template approach (Robson 2002) and I went through the transcripts line by line. All interviews were transcribed on to identical templates and coded to determine the frequency with which each theme appeared. Interviews for each separate group (child, parent, member of staff) were then transferred to a single Excel spreadsheet to allow comparisons of sections of text, for example so that all Yr6 pupil responses appeared on the same spreadsheet and cross-comparisons could be made. This allowed the respondents' answers and the different subsections of the interviews to be grouped together and compared on these constructed matrices. For each of the students, the responses of student, parent and staff member were compared, and this process of 'triangulation' revealed extremely high agreement between the three respondents involved. The percentage frequency of mention of each of the three themes was then calculated and the differences between year 6 and year 7 were highlighted (Appendix 7.1), to allow comparison of students' expectations with their actual experience. Finally all of the transcripts were re-read as a double check to confirm that no comments had been overlooked, and no information mis-coded.

I thus looked for comparisons between the same participant's responses before and after transition, also for comparisons between the views of different participants. These were then compared with the findings of previous researchers with reference back to other studies - such as those by Measor and Woods, 1984 and Pratt and George, 2005 - in literature reviewed earlier. The findings are revealed in different formats – in narrative form, in tables and graphs, with vignettes and with verbatim quotes – in the findings chapter. (cf Miles and Huberman, 1984)

I sought to ensure the trustworthiness of the research by explaining to participants that the research was for my personal research purposes and that I had no influence over their situation. Also that, although I was very interested in their views, there were no right or wrong answers and their replies would always be kept confidential. I thus attempted to bridge the 'power gap' between myself and participants by explaining my total ignorance of their school and situation, and that they were the experts in these matters. Also, when any of their answers were not clear, I sought clarification from the participant and confirmed that their meaning was correctly understood. Brenner (2006) suggests that it is most important to select methods which match the research question, to practice interviewing and to find one's own style. He argues that key to a good interview study are a focused conversational style and feeling comfortable with the informants.

I am aware that in interviews, whether with children, parents, teachers or educational support staff, 'set piece' methods can become stilted and formal, hence the adoption of a semi-structured method, aimed at enabling the participants to experience as far as possible a 'natural' conversation with an interested 'outsider'. As Bassey (1999) points out

> *'Interviews inevitably have a sense of formality. The respondent may be pleased to contribute, or frightened, or irritated because of the time taken. He may not have previously given deep thoughts to the issue and may actually be constructing his position during the interview. His answers are likely to be influenced by his view of the researcher and by his concerns of who will see the report. The social skills of the interviewer in relating sensitively to the respondent and their cognitive skills in discovering what they think are all important.'* (p81)

Another complication, as Lewis (2004) acknowledges, is the lack of evidence about the authenticity and reliability of methods of exploring the views of children with learning difficulties. However, I brought to this project extensive experience of interviewing children, including twenty four years as a psychologist working with children with learning difficulties, and found the children interviewed to be clearly able to describe their experiences and express their views. Additionally, this research involved interviews with the pupils', parents and school staff in order to enable 'triangulation'. In addition to examining the views of children, parents, teachers, SENCos, head teachers and LEA staff, I reviewed school SEN policies and OFSTED reports as they related to SEN, to examine the extent to which transition was addressed. As indicated earlier, research trustworthiness was achieved by triangulation, comparing interviews of participants about each individual pupil, explored within a vignette for each of the seven pupils who completed the project. (Bassey 1999) It was intended that these vignettes would, as Stake, R. (2005) argues with case studies, allow the study of multiple realities, also different and even contradictory views events. Evidence was also drawn from academic literature, also from school policy and Ofsted inspection documents. The outcomes of this research are discussed in Chapter 8.

4.16 Computerised data analysis systems

Consideration was given to using NVivo, which Bazeley (2007) points out is a system for recording, sorting, matching and linking data which can be used to manage and interrogate data, manage and/or graphically model ideas, and report from the data. However, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 166) point out

'No single software package can be made to perform qualitative analysis in and of itself.'

Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1998:47 cited in In Bazeley, 2007: 23) point to the fact that such mechanistic systems can take us away from, *'The theories that we carry in our heads* (and) *inform our research in multiple ways, even if we use them quite unselfconsciously.'* Miles and Huberman (1994: 74) also extol the virtues of working through data personally. As they eloquently explain, this *'often provides sharp, sunlit moments of clarity or insight – little conceptual epiphanies.'* Fort and Stablein (1992) also recommend that the researcher should transcribe and analyse their 'own' data, which they describe as *'like handling your own rat'*. Although no doubt taken from a quantitative frame of reference, this does make the point that it is easy to lose sight of the subtleties of the research if analysis takes one too far away from the topic. Accordingly, I opted for very direct, 'manual' and personal, albeit therefore more time-consuming, systems of data analysis.

4.17 Alternative data collection approaches considered

Consideration was given to the idea of asking each pupil to keep a diary of daily events, to include their reactions each day, lists of positives, problems and improvement suggestions. However, it was felt that it would have placed undue pressure on these children, at a time of already increased demands, especially those whose learning difficulties would have meant that written recording was not easy for them. An alternative would have been to have given each child an audio recording device so that they could record their thoughts each day. However, this too would have created additional demands on the pupils, even if they had deferred recording until they got home. The alternative – of recording events as they happened – would have been distracting to other pupils, and would have drawn attention to the children in my sample, which attention for some would have been unwelcome. Moreover, there are ethical issues surrounding such activity, and it would have been necessary to ask all teachers involved, and the parents of children in the recorded classrooms, whether they objected to such recording. Similar complications would have arisen if the pupils had been asked to take photographs of their daily experiences, as a means of prompting future discussion, so again this idea was not taken forward. Also, bearing in mind the difficulties of personal organisation that most of these pupils experienced, it was considered inappropriate to make additional demands in this area by asking them to operate additional equipment.

4.18 Ethical Issues

As noted earlier, the research was conducted in accordance with an ethical code which is informed by the guidelines of the University of Northampton's Research Ethics Committee and the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011). All participation was voluntary, and based on the informed consent of participants. (Burgess, 1989) All participants were told how and why their personal information was to be stored and used. Anonymity of all schools and participants in the study was guaranteed and maintained. Individual children were not named and in data summaries are referred to instead by codes. Informed consent was obtained via head teachers from all individuals participating in the study, and pupils and parents gave written consent. In 1989, the world's leaders officially recognised the human rights of all children and young people under 18 by signing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and two articles are particularly relevant here:
Article 12: (Respect for the views of the child.) Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.
Article13: (Freedom of expression.) Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive information of any kind as long as it is within the law.
Although drawn up in a medical context, the Helsinki Declaration (2000, Article 5) clearly has much wider implication when it states that for research involving human participants, the well-being of the human subject should take precedence over the interests of science and society.

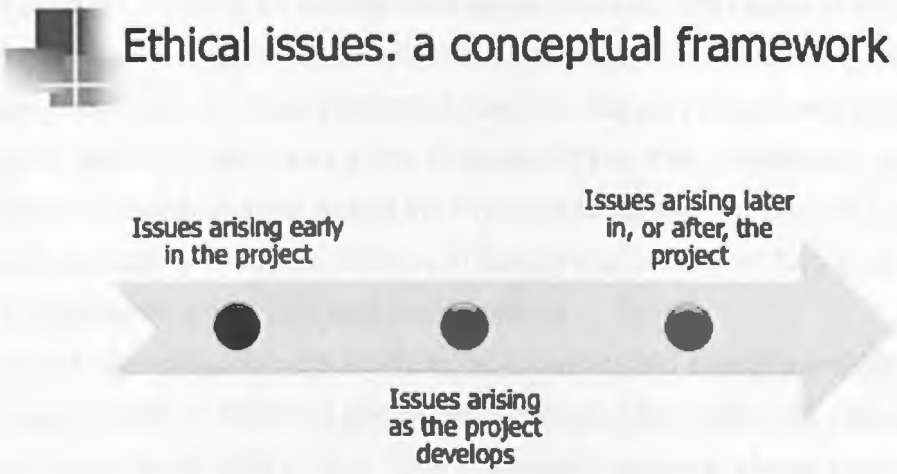
It could be argued that what pupils in this research gave was 'assent', in that they were aware that their parents had already given consent. Macnab, Visser and Daniels (2007:P145) However, in this project all parents firmly stated that their child was more than capable of giving their approval to take part in the research. This was an important part of the negotiation with each family and school, so that children and adults involved were reassured that the interview experience would at best be enjoyable, and at worst not be unpleasant, for those involved, and especially for the pupils. (Walmsley, 2004) points out that the 'terms of engagement' need to be negotiated between everyone involved and protocols need to focus on how rapport is established and boundaries maintained. Clearly, it is important that pupils are capable of expressing their own views and that these are accurately recorded by the researcher - see for example (Harker, 2002) who points out that the increasing recognition that learners are central to any research that directly affects them requires careful consideration of the research methods used. The challenge for researchers is to use techniques and strategies that respect, and accurately reflect, the views and opinions of children and young people.
See also Shevlin and Rose state (2003:293)

> *'The notion of voice has been very problematic in educational discourse. For example, the voice of children has been noticeably absent from the educational decision-making*

process.... It is evident that a discourse of power prevents young people from... influencing vital decisions about schooling.'

As late as 1989, although it required the LA and Courts to treat the child's welfare as paramount in any decisions affecting them, the Children Act 1989 did not include a *statutory* requirement to take children's views into account. The SEN Code of Practice (1994) did *advise* that schools should make every effort to ascertain the views and wishes of the learner about their current and future education. (Department for Education 1994, Para. 2)

The revised SEN Code of Practice (2001) reinforced this expectation, one of five fundamental principles stating that 'the views of the child should be sought and taken into account' (Department for Education and Skills 2001, para 1.5)
Although all interviews were recorded to facilitate in-depth analysis of the information obtained, only my supervisory team and I had access to these data which have been and always will be held in a secure place. Security of the data was paramount. All information collected on paper was stored in a secure place at the University and was shredded once the information was collated and the thesis had been written. Data were only stored electronically once non-personal (numerical) codes had been assigned. All information was stored and transported according to the Data Protection Act. The safety of the child was paramount and any disclosures would have been discussed with the designated teacher, parents and other professionals where appropriate in accordance with the school's child protection policy. However, none of the responses raised any child protection issues.



Miles, M. B. And Huberman, A. M. (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis.* 2nd edn. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage

Figure 4.5 Ethical issues – after Miles and Huberman (1994)

The three secondary schools had slightly different ways of responding to requests for information about the potential sample. Two gave names of the children and one gave initials. For two families, the release of their child's name was a sensitive issue and caused concern, which was relayed to the secondary school staff member involved. Consequently, this member of staff became extremely concerned and was minded to withdraw immediately from the project. Since this would have meant that potentially nine other children would have been excluded, when some had expressed keenness to be involved, there was much discussion about how best to proceed. The first parent complained by telephone to the secondary school concerned, and this was conveyed to me. I contacted the parent by telephone with an apology and an explanation and the parent kindly consented to ongoing involvement. The second parent complained by letter to the Dean of Education, and it was unfortunate that I was at an international conference at this time. However, my director of studies responded by telephone and sent a holding letter to the parent. I wrote to the parent to apologise and offer telephone or direct discussion, but this was not forthcoming, and this parent did not consent to her child's involvement.

A crucial learning point here, for all involved, is that more could have been done to avoid any concern. If I had made it clear that it was sufficient to have the child's initials and the name of their Primary School, contact could have been made with a higher degree of anonymity and without causing any concern. The release of information was limited to the child's name being passed to one individual only (myself), to be deleted if permission was not forthcoming, and there was thus no breach of BERA or University ethical guidelines. However, it is incumbent on any researcher to be ultra-cautious in such matters, and an important lesson has been learned. I was aware of a similar situation, reported at the AERA conference in April 2011 in which an experienced researcher had 300 pages of transcript evidence when the school Principal involved withdrew permission for the school's involvement. Even more important than the inconvenience caused to that researcher, was that many participants had given their time and views in the expectation that their contribution would be utilised. In all future research she has asked the Principal to agree in writing not to withdraw – acknowledging of course that any of the *participants* would be free to withdraw at any time.

4.19 Chapter Summary and Conclusions

Issues emerging from the literature on inclusion and school transition were used to develop a questionnaire to SENCOs about their views on what makes for effective transition from primary to secondary school. Their responses helped to shape structured interview schedules which were re-drafted following consultation at the PhD Support Group. These interviews were then undertaken with children before and after they made this transition. Their parents and school staff were also interviewed. Transcripts from these interviews were collated and analysed to draw out recurring themes mentioned by children, parents and school staff before and after transition, and compared with those from national/international

research. Seven of the eight original families remained involved throughout this longitudinal study, and interviewees were almost all very forthcoming with their responses. Such was the pleasing momentum of these interviews that on the one occasion when a pupil was taciturn the interviewer's technique fell short of best practice, in that the interviewer filled silences with unnecessary 'closed' supplementary questions. Although the pupil involved gave clear responses, the experience illustrates the need for the interviewer to be vigilant at all times. Whilst studies of transition from primary to secondary schools had been undertaken previously, this study provided insights into a specific population of pupils, namely those with SEN Statements with a wide range of needs, studied over a two year period, for whom expectations of transition were widely varied, and therefore constitutes an original piece of research with unique characteristics. The work undertaken afforded opportunities to identify the key features of essential support for these pupils and has a value in being able to inform future school and local authority practices.

Although participants came from a narrow social and ethnic range, it enabled me to investigate the process of transition as experienced by pupils with a wide range of SEN within the County. *'Qualitative analysis can be evocative illuminating masterful and wrong.'* Miles and Huberman (1994: 262) Throughout this project, I have been aware that qualitative interviewing requires ongoing reflection on the research, firstly examining myself as a researcher who brings previous experience, preconceptions and assumptions and considering how these might affect decisions, question wording etc. Secondly, reflecting on my relationship to each participant, and how relationship dynamics affect responses to questions. However, in doing so I do not, as was discussed earlier, believe that there is some fixed and stable truth which will inevitably unfold if I ask the right questions. Rather, the assumption is that meanings are culturally constructed and revealed differently in different interactions and settings, and may vary with age, class, gender, race etc.

It is essential to be aware of the extent to which the interviewer and participant are both involved in knowledge production, also to be aware that findings can emerge at any point, and indeed throughout, the research process. It was in part continual reflection on ongoing responses, including some resulting from imperfect interview technique that led me to take an increasingly qualitative focus, and include vignettes in the findings, which follow in chapters 5 and 6. Groger, Mayberry and Straker. 1999 argue that qualitative researchers sometimes might fail to recognise when they have not tapped the full range of meanings and thus fail to ask themselves, 'What if?' However, in the following chapters the temptation to speculate will be avoided, and the focus will be on the actual findings of this research, starting with vignette of each of the seven pupils involved. The implications of the findings will be discussed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 5 – Vignettes –

Pupils entering Secondary School 1

5.1 Introduction

The current research set out to answer the following questions:

1) Pupils with SEN statements making the transition between mainstream schools at age eleven; how do participants' expectations compare with actual experience?
2) What factors are seen by pupils, parents and school staff as facilitating this transition?

To this purpose, seven pupils with SEN Statements were interviewed before and after their transition to secondary school. No single outline could satisfactorily encapsulate the varied needs and characteristics of the seven pupils involved in this study, so the following vignettes are provided, one for each pupil. This chapter provides vignettes of the four pupils transferring to secondary school SS1. Each is structured to summarise the key foci of this research – the relevant academic, social and personal organisation issues before and after transition, and details of the transition process. The subsequent chapter provides vignettes for the 3 children transferring to Secondary School 2.

Table 5.1: Summaries – pupils transferring to Secondary School 1

Pupil no & 'name'	Sex	Pupil's SEN headline	Primary School	NOR (School roll)	Primary School Location
1 Alan	M	Early speech difficulties	A	201	Village
2 Beth	F	Medical	B	245	Village
3 Charlie	M	ADHD	C	783	T(Withdrew)
4 David	M	Dyslexia	D	428	Town
5 Ellie	F	ASD	E	204	Village

5.2 Vignette: Alan

5.2.1 Before transition

Alan had speech therapy preschool, attended a specialist nursery for children with SEN and had been issued with a statement of special educational needs (SEN). When interviewed he presented as a sociable, confident and articulate pupil with no obvious learning difficulties. His needs would seem to me to be well below the current threshold beyond which pupils are considered for Statutory Assessment (SA), the formal process undertaken to decide whether a pupil's needs must be set out in a SEN statement. Alan's mother felt he was *'on the cusp of SEN, with possibly a bit of dyslexia'*. Removing the Statement had never been discussed, and mother did not want it removed unless reassured that sufficient help remained available. Alan was very sociable and had friends in and out of school; although described by his mother as a bit shy, this was not obvious. She described him as not very organised, so provided much home support with personal organisation. She admitted, *'I do everything for him.'* His mother and SENCo reported that he was very conscientious about his work, and had no obvious academic problems; mother's main wish was that

> *'In 2yrs time I would hope to see a happy, confident child doing well. We want him to achieve whatever he wants.'*

Alan was looking forward to secondary school and was relieved that he would no longer have TA support in class. He said he tried very hard and teachers endorsed that he did so, but always felt he could do better. He had friends in the primary school, enjoyed sport and had no social difficulties. Parents received class teacher reports and an Annual Review (AR). Individual Education Plans (IEPs) were reviewed twice a year. The Head/SENCO reviewed the statement in advance then worked through it with parents, looking at the level of need, progress towards previous academic and non-academic targets and any necessary revisions. The IEP was seen by parents and staff as a means of keeping the channels of communication open: the views of parent, child and school were recorded. If there was any drop in performance between IEP reviews, additional meetings were arranged to discuss reasons and plan necessary changes, but this was not necessary in Alan's case.

5.2.2 The transition process

The Primary School Head/SENCo provided a booklet 'Moving On' for pupils about secondary school; additionally, parents of pupils with SEN discussed transition directly with the SENCO. Given that the Head Teacher's dual role as SENCO limited flexibility, the class teacher took initial responsibility for SEN issues in her class, also presented a unit linked to Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) on changes in year six (SEAL - Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) - which is described by its authors as

> *"a comprehensive, whole-school approach to promoting the social and emotional skills that underpin effective learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, staff effectiveness and the emotional health and well-being of all who learn and work in schools"* (DCSF, 2007, p.4).

This includes preparation for the personal organisation requirements of secondary school. In my professional experience, the demands on Heads and SENCos are such that attempts to combine the roles is to be discouraged, since it generally reduces time for SENCo duties – which may be one reason why the statement continued in force. The local authority (LA) contacts parents about choices and once the school is allocated the secondary school sends information about the school to parents. Places for children with SEN are allocated in advance of the majority of other pupils. The secondary school provided a detailed pack/booklet about the school and staff. In addition to the secondary SENCO's visit to meet Alan in the primary school, there was a coffee morning for new parents, all prospective pupils visited the secondary school and there was an extra visit for pupils with SEN.

When the Head of Y7 visited the primary school to discuss pupils and review files, the class teacher alerted them to potential issues. The secondary SENCo contacted primary Head/SENCO to gather names and brief details of those attending the SEN transfer day. Alan's needs were not such that he needed ongoing SEN support. The Head/SENCO reported that in this small village school there were frequent informal contacts with parents in the community, including after transition, also regular email contacts with many parents. Clearly, the village school setting provided opportunities for close and ongoing home/school communication. Given that pupils transferred to many different secondary schools, the Head emphasised the importance of information packs and written materials sent from, and specific to, each secondary school.

5.2.3 Alan – after transition

Alan's mother acknowledged that *'The additional induction session for those with SEN was not appropriate in Alan's situation'* since his SENs were relatively low. There were no social / friendship difficulties, but his mother said that he kept his friends in compartments, and wouldn't mix with them, which reflected a certain assertiveness in his character. He received much help at home with personal organisation. His mother described him as *'a bit like an absent-minded professor. He left his coat on the bus a number of times and a wallet. We lost a sock and a tie. His head is full of other things.'* With home support he organised his own bag and enjoyed travelling independently. She described Alan as competitive in that he wanted to win, but accepted defeat; he was *'very fair'*. The family chose this school because of its ethos; admission was dependent on such things as the merits of going to Church. Clearly, this influence on the school's intake will have affected the sample obtained in this

study. Sampling issues are discussed further in Chapter 7. Alan had no apparent academic or social difficulties, and worked hard, but still lacked some confidence:

> *'Oh I don't want them to put me up to the top group, because if I have to go back again, that is worse. I would rather stay where I am.'*

Perhaps his self-esteem had been affected by having the unwelcome close attention of a TA at primary school. Secondary School SENCo reported that Alan had 10 hours support allocated but these were not used. He did not come out of class for literacy and did not need – and certainly would not have welcomed – being seen to need support in class.

5.2.4 Summary

Alan's optimism about transition proved to be well-founded; he settled quickly into secondary school. He was at ease in conversation, outgoing and described by parents and school staff as being very hard-working. At preschool he had had speech/language difficulties and although such early problems sometimes resulted in residual literacy difficulties, these were nowhere evident. He seemed very much at ease and 'centred', prepared to pause for some time after questions and sometimes not answering without further prompting. Some of this prompting I regarded as inappropriate, as will be discussed in chapter 7.

Contributory factors to successful transition were:

1) Alan's personal characteristics (no apparent SEN, positive academic and social attitudes, high effort, sociability, 'personality' and sporting interests)

2) Parental support especially with personal organisation and homework

3) The caring ethos and flexible support at both primary and secondary schools. Work and support were matched to Alan's needs. A high level of resourcing was not appropriate and therefore not provided to Alan at secondary school: staff were conscious of his sensitivity to this and so did not allocate 'one to one' support.

4) Excellent communication/collaboration between schools and between parents and schools.

5.2.5 Issues

Alan's needs were clearly below any Statement threshold[5] but the Statement had been maintained to retain resources. This clearly illustrated one of the shortcomings of the way in which the Statutory Assessment process had been managed for this pupil. The Statement

[5] For students whose needs cannot be met from resources normally available within their mainstream school, a statutory assessment may be requested. This determines the student's needs and whether they reach the threshold beyond which a Statement should be issued. If so, the Statement specifies how the needs must be met and what additional resources are needed in order to meet them.

had not been revised for many years so no longer reflected Alan's needs. His accurate self-perception was that his needs were well below those of other pupils attending the additional day for pupils with Statements. He was therefore pleased to have lost his attached TA, whose presence at Primary school may have affected his self-esteem - an argument for discontinuing Statements when appropriate. This issue will be discussed further in chapter 7.

5.3 Vignette: Beth

5.3.1 Before transition

Beth's needs stemmed from a medical problem related to her faulty mitochondria, the energy producing organelles in every cell, which resulted in muscle weakness. She also had a slight tremor which increased with tiredness, learning difficulties and impaired hearing. Her father explained, *'It's Kearns Sayre syndrome, a mitochondrial condition with unique medical problems.'* Beth was described by all adults questioned as sociable and strong-willed. She engaged easily in discussion with me and could always make herself understood, albeit with sometimes immature/creative phraseology. (For example, when unintentionally jostled by passing children she is sometimes unsteady; she said that such contact sometimes *'falls me on the floor.'*)

She became very ill in Easter 2009, and lost many months of school. She received input from various agencies including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and audiology. She recovered somewhat and attended school full-time, but her weakness remained, the prognosis was uncertain and she had associated learning difficulties. Although generally loquacious and strong-willed, her energy fell when she was hungry so she could become distressed. This perhaps explained the occasional 'ups and downs' she had with friends. However, she was good at managing her condition by taking appropriate rests and snacks, and could explain her difficulties to staff.

Beth listed her favourite subjects as cookery and art, because they involved the least 'academic' / literacy demands. Her parents were hugely supportive, father giving up teaching to provide full time support. He explained that Beth was doing OK until year 2 but problems arose in year 3 and by year 5 she was a long way behind. He explained that academic progress was not a priority for them; parents wanted her to attend school each day, and to enjoy school. More recently they had begun to look at academic work at the annual review. Father's key concern was whether she would have enough energy for the whole secondary school day. Parents were very happy with the primary school and the progress she made. She wore her hearing aids and was sensible about resting and having snacks. Day-to-day contact with school was very good. Father stressed that, *'This is an excellent school; they could have done no more.'*

The primary school SENCo sent letters to year six parents plus action plans and statements each year, also advised about available support, including the Parent Partnership Service (PPS). The SENCo noted that the class teachers gave ongoing advice to SEN pupils about personal organisation and about becoming more independent; however, Beth had additional support from her TA, who the SENCo argued was *'best placed to spot problems because of her familiarity with Beth'*. This was an illustration of the central role which TAs often play in meeting pupils' SENs, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, overall monitoring of children with special needs was undertaken by the SENCo. In addition to IEPs, school had a 'success package' to keep parents updated about progress using a colour-coded scheme to list which targets had been achieved, and to suggest what parents could work on at home. In view of Beth's complex needs, there was always a full multi-disciplinary meeting for her, in addition to ongoing telephone contact between SENCo and parents.

Beth named several friends going to the same school, including two best friends. Her father reported that socially things were generally good, but she needed to know that she couldn't be in charge, and must accept the wishes of the majority. He noted that, *'She will miss some social input because she cannot do PE and cannot play out. The sanctuary will be very useful for her.'* The Primary School SENCO pointed out that Beth liked to help with the very young ones, which showed her caring nature but also allowed her to share experiences which she might have missed through ill-health. This reflected the school's thoughtfulness and creativity in meeting Beth's needs. Prior to transition Beth's key concerns were with the number of stairs and that her older sister might be *'cheeky'*. She did not foresee problems with personal organisation, management of school kit or getting to school, since *"Dad sorts it out and we come by car."* Dad, on the other hand, thought it might be a big concern because, *"She gets hang-ups about irrelevant things. She needs help to sequence things; she needs a list. However, she is good at managing her own condition."* He also acknowledged that she was quite independent and would try her very best to do what was necessary.

5.3.2 The transition process

As mentioned above, the (LA) for all seven pupils in this sample contacts parents about choices and once the school is allocated the secondary school sends information about the school to parents. Places for children with SEN are allocated in advance of the majority of other pupils. Again, secondary staff visited and talked to upcoming students; the SENCo met and worked with Beth, who visited the secondary school and met her new TA. The class teacher could not be released to visit the secondary school but the TA did so. Beth's primary school 'fed' five secondary schools so timing and arrangements varied, but the SENCO reported that, *'Useful professional meetings for Beth organised by the Educational*

Psychologist were arranged well in advance.' There was close liaison between schools in preparation for transition, and pupils received written and oral advice from the secondary school. Beth: *"Miss W (new TA) came to visit me at (SS1) and I really liked her. We had an adduction (sic) day when we went in and we met our teachers and friends."* Beth's father mentioned a transition meeting with school staff and other professionals which had resolved parental concerns; parents were content with the current situation. He was very pleased that school and pupil had both adapted well. Both the SENCo and the TA worked with Beth when she visited the secondary school, and were of the unanimous view that they could meet her needs. They regarded information from the primary school as up to date and relevant, including the Statement. All other staff and parents who gave an opinion about Statements and annual reports held the opposite view, which is discussed in Chapter 7.

5.3.3 Beth: after transition

School reported that Beth settled in superbly; she acclimatised quickly, reporting that the only problem was, as anticipated, with the stairs. She was tired by Fridays, but appropriately was allowed snacks in class times to maintain her energy. SS1 had carefully selected her (full time) TA who was receiving training in youth ministry, a positive indication of her commitment to understanding the needs of, and skills in working with, young people. Secondary staff were complimentary about the extensive information they had received from the primary school. This mutual respect was an important aspect of successful transition. Beth appreciated that help was readily available as needed from her TA, who resolved minor problems, such as losing spare hearing aid batteries. Father considered that the secondary school had prepared very thoroughly to meet Beth's needs. Beth was happy that 'academic' work was currently matched to what she could manage, but anticipated harder work in future. She continued to enjoy subjects with least academic demands, especially cooking. She reported that work was quite hard, e.g. maths, but not too hard because her TA was always available she didn't understand or because of her hearing impairment she needed clarification. *"She will tell me oftenly (sic) if I need help."*

Apart from in-class support, the TA provided two one-to-one lessons each week on spelling, reading, physiotherapy, etc. The TA sometimes needed to deal with other children so Beth very occasionally missed an instruction, but was not fazed by this, and would do as much as she could. Father reported that she was getting better at gauging how much she could do. He felt nothing more could have been done to prepare her for the academic demands of secondary school. School staff noted that she tried very hard, and received much parental support. Father confirmed that the secondary school separated primary classmates to encourage new friendships. Beth agreed with this arrangement; *"It was quite a good idea*

because you got to know new people." She had settled socially and quickly made new friends who understood that she needed extra help and had lunch with her. However she also liked 'bumping into' old classmates. She was pleased to have transferred without major problems, noting that other girls had been upset by the move. Beth reported no problems with bullying; she was small and 'cute' and clearly did not attract aggression. Although she easily fell over if pushed *"It sometimes falls me on the floor"* she acknowledged that such jostling was clumsy but never deliberate. Here too, support was available and Beth was aware how to obtain it.

School staff reported that she could be bossy but was being treated like everyone else. She did have one lunchtime tantrum but staff stood firm and there had been no repeat of this. Beth reported that with TA help, organisation was OK, her planner was easy to understand; it included a diary, commendations, information and the timetable. She quickly got used to finding her way around the building. She continued to need regular food input and liked quiet at meal times, so went to the learning centre at lunchtime and hall at break. She felt safe at school and in the taxi, where there was a helper. Father was pleased that the TA helped her with personal organisation such as the timetable, finding the right room and carrying her bag, which would have been too heavy for her. Her lessons were mostly timetabled downstairs. School staff were very pleased with how she managed, given help from home & school. She was easily distracted at lunch times so they asked her first to spend 15 minutes to finish her sandwiches, otherwise when hungry she could be tired and become grumpy.

Overall, Beth said the best things about the new school were the learning centre and snack cart! She knew and was known by several adults in the school. She showed a touching acknowledgement of her parents' concern and support. She clearly appreciated when she was being teased, for example the Design Technology teacher's comment to her older sister when he heard that Beth was coming to the school, *'Oh no, not another one!'* and Dad's 'fib' that teachers said how naughty she was. She had an excellent relationship with her TA. Father was very pleased that she had settled in so well. He acknowledged that she had to realise there were boundaries, but emphasised that the key problem was her physical weakness. Parents were keen not to cause her unnecessary anxiety by going into detail about her condition. Overall, Father reported that transition had gone *"Far better than we dared hope."* They had no ongoing concerns about school, and Father was hopeful that peer support would continue/increase. Beth sometimes misunderstood/overestimated the homework task, but was getting better at double-checking with the TA. Indications at a meeting at the school early in Y7 were that all was going well. School staff summarised that the transition has been *"Excellent - very successful".* One indication of staff's attention to Beth, and her own bravery and determination, was that the class teacher entered here for a local 'child bravery award', and Beth won it. (See Appendix 5.1)

5.3.4 Summary

Beth's difficulties of physical weakness, hearing impairment and learning difficulties stemmed from her medical condition. Her transition had been better than participants anticipated; there were several contributory factors to this successful outcome:

1) Beth's personal characteristics; she was strong willed, 'cute', sociable, and popular with peers; she dealt with her condition bravely.

2) Primary school staff provided diligently for her needs, which changed markedly throughout her illness. The SEN statement and review systems were detailed and valued by the adults involved. There was extensive liaison between schools before transition, with two-way exchange visits.

3) All interviewed felt that nothing more could have been done to prepare her for the demands of secondary school. Beth was very appreciative of both schools, awarding both a score of 10/10. Parents held both schools in high regard and felt that Beth was responding well to what was provided, which was closely matched to Beth's needs. Both schools acknowledged the extensive support given by parents.

4) There were various examples of the 'caring ethos' in the secondary school, including older pupils moving aside for her as she walked along the corridor and staff nominating her for a bravery award, which she received. (See Appendix 5.1) Secondary staff reported that she had settled well, was happy, working hard, treated normally and had made new friends.

5) She was treated equally – for example in response to a tantrum - but helped when necessary. Father pointed out that priorities changed over time, so there was a need for optimum pressure on her.

5.3.5 Issues

Concerns were expressed about Beth's future health, which was uncertain, and future levels of funding, without which people were not confident that Beth's needs could continue to be met.

Of the seven Statements held on this sample of children, only Beth's was regarded by parents and staff as helpful, as it was regularly reviewed and accurately detailed her attainments and needs. This will be discussed further in chapter7.

5.4 Vignette: David

Uniquely in this project, David attended Middle school, whose pupils normally transfer to upper school at age 13, but parents decided on transfer at age 11. Although he sometimes misunderstood social situations, David was described by Middle School Staff as a popular boy. Academically, staff in both schools said he had literacy difficulties, finding it hard to put his thoughts on paper. In the interview he listened carefully before giving balanced, thoughtful and clear answers. His mother described him as an active child, keen on sports including cricket and football (although not highly skilled), who loved art and history. In terms of personal organisation, he lost kit but this was improving, and was very good at finding his way around and following the timetable. He moved with his twin sister, but was himself reluctant to move. He said he had a good reputation there and was liked by the Head Teacher, and socially was sad to be leaving a lot of friends. He described the decision making process thus:

> *"Mum said you can make your own decision but in the end we didn't get to. She just said you are going there and we said "Oh no!"*

This aspect will be discussed in relation to 'pupil voice' in chapter 7. However, he acknowledged his parents' positive motives.

> *"But my parents thought I would get a better education and I would get used to the system."*

The SENCo too said staff regretted David's departure as he was beginning to settle, and build positive relationships with staff and children. *"After such a wobbly beginning it was a pity to move him. We have all said we are disappointed that he's going because he is such a character and he has grown into a lovely little boy."* However, as mother explained: *"We changed school for a lot of personal reasons; we both work over that way. Also I wanted them to have time to settle into a senior school before the exams, and I liked the Christian ethos."* She had always been clear and very single-minded about what was best for David. *"I pushed for a Statement at primary, also pressed for this school."* She was aware that he was well-liked by staff at his middle school, and that he did not want to change schools at this point. *"The special needs people there liked him, I don't know if he'll forgive me for removing him from that!"* As became clear, David quickly re-adjusted to the new reality of his secondary school setting. In common with all pupils in the sample, David received considerable support before, during and after transition both from home and schools.

5.4.1 David - before transition

Pupils with a SEN statement at David's Middle School had three IEP reviews per year. Each had a file detailing their needs and the strategies used to meet them, to which every teacher had access. The SENCo reported that *"Also at briefing we tell staff about the children's*

special needs." These systems were necessary because, unlike in primary schools, middle school pupils met several subject teachers who needed information about the SENs of pupils in their class. In terms of academic needs, David came out of class for every literacy *programme* because his literacy level was not sufficient for him to benefit from these in class. Additionally, the SENCo reported that *"He receives literacy support in all classes necessary* (not PE, for example) *and has improved. He is quite knowledgeable.'* His mother felt that alternative systems of recording/communicating, such as audio recording, might be helpful, but acknowledged that these would be very difficult to arrange as a 'one off'. However, it is unfortunate that such options were not explored. He had support in class every morning, to make sure that he had everything he needed for the day.

Socially, staff felt that he continued to need help to understand the motives and feelings of others. He would often misinterpret social situations and sometimes saw ribbing as bullying. As the SENCo reported, *"He gets 'the wrong end of the stick'. We try to explain that even though someone wasn't very nice to him that wasn't bullying."* His mother similarly acknowledged the need for further development of his social skills. *"Socially he's pleasant and caring but can forget others' feelings - and must learn to take turns."* Staff worked within social skills sessions to address his anxieties about transferring, as the SENCo explained, *"He said he was worried about moving to secondary so we looked at all the positives about changing schools."*

Staff also worked on his personal organisation, for example using lockers, and the SENCo reported that these skills improved. *"He couldn't cope with the lockers, so we started with a cupboard in somebody's classroom with three book bags, until gradually he got into using one book bag. Now he has a normal locker. This has helped him to manage his own equipment, although there are still losses. When he came here he would lose everything. He is still not brilliant but he's a lot better."* There was thus much evidence of the school's commitment to meeting David's needs and preparing him for transition.

His mother noted that he is used to moving classrooms because of the middle school experience, and confirmed that there was some improvement in his personal organisation. *"It's coming but he still needs help."* David himself is clear about his own strengths and difficulties in this area. *"I'm really good at the timetable, and looking at my homework diary, and getting to the right place at the right time, but I sometimes lose stuff."*

5.4.2 The transition process

There was close liaison between schools in preparation for David's transition, and he and his sister received both written and oral advice beforehand. They both attended the secondary school induction days and David attended the additional day for children with SEN. The secondary school SENCO visited, spoke to David and his twin sister about what was going to happen at their new school and left a booklet about the special needs department.
David explained, *"I had a visit for learning support first, then I had my induction day to get used to the system. I've had a leaflet about what is there, about the teachers, about the area and what it's like."* His mother noted that he was absolutely petrified and quite reluctant to join the SEN visit when he saw some children had quite serious disabilities. *"He was then like, 'I'm in the wrong place'.* (But) *he was reasonably positive when he came out after it."*
Despite the full records which passed to the new school, the TA had not read these, saying, *"I haven't had time to read the Statement"* and when questioned said, *"I think it's better to give the child a fresh start and make your mind up on what you see."* This appeared to be post-event justification, and a wasted opportunity for staff to benefit from extensive earlier assessment of David's needs before making their own assessment.

5.4.3 David - after transition

All participants reported that David had made a successful transition to secondary school, despite his initial reluctance to transfer at that point. His TA reported that he took a couple of weeks to settle, but was then fine. David spoke positively about his academic work, saying that he was getting good grades in a few subjects, although disappointed not to be in a higher maths set. However he was clear about his literacy difficulties and said he put in a lot of effort, finding some of it easy. When work was hard he asked the TAs who, *'simple it down'.* He felt that his main problem was with writing. *"Reading is actually improved and writing has a little bit but it's still a little bit jiggered."* With the help of the lunchtime and after-school homework club he managed to get homework in on time. He said his behaviour was good and he was clearly receiving positive feedback from the staff, who said he was settling in and doing really good work. "*My English teacher said I was an angel to teach."*

He had 20 allocated hours a week on his Statement, which was split into withdrawal support and support in lessons He received TA support for some 75% of the lessons, from the same TA but with a replacement in her absence. She confirmed that academically he was knowledgeable in history, his favourite subject, but couldn't get his thoughts on paper, also had trouble physically copying the work down because of handwriting difficulties. She reported that he liked Design Technology and was practical, so could show others what to do, which increased his self-esteem. He also had some withdrawal lessons in the learning

centre. He was aware and pleased that support was readily available both in and out of the classroom, and had no hesitation in naming his TA as unfailingly helpful, because *"She repeats everything that you say down, and then gets to the problem."*

His mother reported that he had improved enormously, but continued to need much support.

> *"I mean he loves the reading mentor thing. But you know when his TA is not there just by the state of his homework diary."*

Typically for this sample of pupils, David thought the move would be socially *"really scary because I thought nobody would like me but I've got a lot of friends".* However he had friends in his new school, also attended Stagecoach - an acting, dancing and singing club - and joined the boys' choir at school. His mother confirmed that he always had a certain amount of difficulty with social relationships, but felt that the school have dealt with it fairly well. *"They seem fairly good at it to be honest. They seem to know what most of their kids are up to and what they are like."* She felt that it might have been beneficial to have spent more time working on his social skills at home. However, his TA felt that the most positive thing about his transition was that he was well accepted by his form, despite *"Some squabbles at first, as expected, but generally OK."* She pointed out that he had friends, although he had no best friend, but this did not seem to trouble him.

In terms of personal organisation, David's mother thought the staff were not quite prepared for how disorganised he was, especially when stressed. There were daily discussions at home about organisation, and a box with all necessary materials in; he was required to get his timetable out and prepare for the next day. She no longer checked this, and admitted that quite a lot of kit still got lost. However, all reported that things were improving slowly, which mother attributed principally to arrangements made at home which, as with all pupils in this project, was extensive. She pointed out that

> *"We had a system in our heads that the school have more or less gone along with really. I hhhh don't like to blow my own trumpet but then maybe we are more organised as well and we have more understanding."*

David settled quickly into his new school, with help from learning support staff who showed him around the school. David described the settling-in period thus:
"You have one week or two weeks fun, and then you get into business."

He also acknowledged that support from home was instrumental in improving his personal organisation.

> *"I got a brand-new bag and I'm finally listening to my mum and getting it organised the night before. I get to lessons on time."*

His mother emphasised that attending a middle school had helped, requiring different kit for different lessons from early on, thus helping him to organise himself; he had long been good

with the timetable and finding rooms. She also acknowledged the high level of support, and David's willingness to seek it. *"He also seems to make fairly extensive use of student services poor woman!"*

David's TA reported that he still didn't look after his books, equipment, and PE kit, although he was getting better at putting PE kit in lockers rather than keeping everything in his bag. Part of her role was to check his organisation - bag, equipment, and planner – and to write his homework down, paraphrase the work of the day, and email home to expand the explanation if necessary. Here again was evidence of much support and exemplary liaison with home. Overall, participants considered that transition had gone better than expected. David had anticipated that there would be arguments with friends or bullying, saying

> *"I was nowhere near looking forward to it, because I thought I would hardly have any friends, and I'm going to get bullied a lot, but now I'm really happy. My first day, I was still a little bit sad, but the second day I got happier and happier and then the next day and the next day."*

Similarly his mother said that he had done better there in terms of being organised unless he was very stressed. This she attributed to all teaching and support staff knowing him well there, and being properly organised, also to her own readiness to communicate whenever she felt it appropriate. She said he had settled very quickly, got good support and was happier despite his little troubles. She volunteered:

> *"I'm pushy you see-(laughing)-not in a horrible way! I don't have any hesitation about turning up or e-mailing."*

She also applauded the range of available activities for pupils at break and lunch times, saying there were plenty of things to do, if he chooses to access them.

She drew attention to some instances of generally low-level bullying, which she described as, *"A bit of name calling, also having his bag kicked around, his arm twisted and stuff like that."* She wanted this dealt with straight away so had robust discussions, wrote a strong letter to school describing the trauma David had experienced and said if it recurred she would take it outside the school. *"I'm not obsessively pushy but if I want to make a point I'll make it."* However, she acknowledged that school handled the situation well, looking at CCTV recordings, spoke with the boy concerned and his parents, and arranged for David to join a social skills group. The TA confirmed that he'd settled in much better than expected, and that the bullying had been firmly addressed.

> *"After the bullying he came to the social club at the Learning Centre at lunch which the 'bully' also attended! It's a good staffing ratio and was dealt with very quickly."*

She too mentioned that at times he would misinterpret normal banter as bullying. Other recurring themes were that parents were very supportive, despite the amount of lost / damaged kit, and that David was able and willing to ask adults if he needed help. However,

he was doing so less, and now did not come to the learning centre at lunch, preferring to play out, even in the rain. The TA anticipated possible problems with the increased workload in year 8 and it would come as a shock when homework was set in all subjects, but this was beyond the scope of this project.

5.4.4 Summary

David was popular and settled in his Middle School so he was not keen to transfer at age 11. Apart from the family's personal convenience, parents felt that moving to a secondary school then would give him and his twin sister more time to settle into a senior school before public exams. His mother was very clear about what was best for them and had frequent contact with both middle and secondary schools. She felt it unnecessary to contact PPS because she 'knew the system'.

All involved reported that the situation in the new school was better than anticipated, for a number of reasons:

1) David had gained confidence at Middle School where the regime, involving for example following a timetable and moving between lessons, and the diligent support of the SENCo, provided helpful preparation for transition.

2) Both before and after transition David received extensive TA support and made progress in literacy, although still had difficulty in this area, particularly with writing. He was aware of and appreciative of the extensive support network available.

3) Prior to transition he had received much advice from the Middle School SENCo, including a programme to help with personal organisation. He also received written and oral advice from the secondary school.

4) There was close communication between home and school and between schools, and extensive provision at secondary school including TA support and appropriate ongoing help with literacy and personal organisation.

5) Although there had been some low-level bullying at secondary school, it was swiftly dealt with. His mother praised the SENCO, home-school communication, the communication between the schools and the strong anti-bullying policy at the secondary school. David had friends, although no close friend, and was being helped / advised that playful 'ribbing' was not bullying.

6) There was a wide range of activities at lunchtime and break time.

5.4.5 Issues

All other pupils transferred from primary schools, so moved at the same time as their classmates, but after transition David quickly came to terms with his move away from, and out of time with, his middle school classmates. Concern was expressed by parents and school staff about the future availability of funding and resources required in order to meet David's needs at secondary school.

5.5 Vignette: Ellie

5.5.1 Before transition

Ellie had been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome but her mother and school staff described how she could relate to others. In her interview with me she reflected sensitivity to other people's feelings and had much social understanding, so was clearly not at the extreme end of the Asperger's continuum. She demonstrated very clear self-perception about her own condition and the opinion of her peers clearly mattered to her. For example, to explain her absence when attending the additional session for pupils with SEN she told friends she had been to the dentist. She had a very mature way of expressing herself and her mother commented that she had *'a very mature mind'*. She was conscientious and particularly enjoyed history. Her academic attainments were above average for her age apart from some difficulty with maths concepts. Ellie did not recall preparatory materials before the induction day *'when we got to know the school a little bit and some teachers'*. However she recalled information on the day including a map of the school, pictures of the teachers and TAs, and introductory information which she said *'Wasn't terribly difficult to understand.'*

Her mother felt that Ellie had no real academic problems and should be OK with learning, but the key area was social, coping with people and feelings, and interaction. She did however manage these in drama and PSHE, but was happier one to one than in groups, and usually had one close friend - which changed often. The primary SENCO had known Ellie since visiting her at preschool and described her as well loved, not seen as different, and having lovely friends. The SENCo had therefore liaised with all staff over the years including Ellie's TA, and had always maintained her SEN file. She anticipated no problems with personal organisation, as Ellie liked to have a clear schedule and followed it closely, and would be brought to secondary school by car. She felt that the Church connection would be important and would suit Ellie, also that parents had been realistic about her needs and made an appropriate choice of school.

5.5.2 The transition process

At the primary school pupils had schedules; these were adapted in year 6 to be more like a secondary timetable. They used a general program - Big School - with photo-copyable worksheets and for Ellie an additional one recommended by the autism team for children with ASD. The class teacher pointed out that transition was often discussed in class PSHE lessons. Ellie's primary school 'fed' 5 different secondary schools and information was available for parents from all 5 via their introductory letters, prospectuses and websites.

However the SENCO stressed to year five parents at IEP meetings the importance of visiting the secondary schools very early.

At Year 5 Annual Reviews the school provided information about secondary open days to allow a full year in which to plan. Once again, secondary schools provided a detailed pack/booklet about the school and staff. In Year 6, pupils visited their chosen secondary schools when Year 11s were on exam leave, and there was an extra visit for pupils with SEN. with their TA as appropriate. The primary SENCO liaised with the secondary SENCo and SEN team, who checked whether they could meet a child's needs. Once schools were allocated, the SENCO transferred the files and liaised with secondary schools about individual children with SEN. She felt that visits worked very well and secondary schools also made parents very welcome. The SENCO praised the support received from the autism team, had attended their sessions and received their support pack containing for example a leaflet for the child to introduce themself to the teacher, also links to informative websites.

5.5.3 Ellie – After transition

Ellie's mother was pleasantly surprised that transition had gone so well. *'I was almost prepared for a lot more issues to arise but they didn't.'* She had been very thorough in preparing Ellie for transition, and keen to communicate and co-operate with the schools. She and Ellie investigated the school website together, did the virtual tour of the school and noted some of the staff. She considered that IT developments/applications had been fabulous for children with autism, for example websites, spellcheckers, and speech to text software. They travelled to the school to familiarise Ellie with the route. They reviewed all forms and letters together, and mother was clear that Ellie understood it all, emphasising that

> *'She is fully aware of her diagnosis, which because of her maturity she has been able to cope with a lot sooner than others would.'*

In academic areas her favourite subject was history; her least favourite was Maths, where she had difficulty with some concepts, for example in algebra. Ellie liked to plan work into a schedule.

> *'If I plan it then it doesn't seem so stressful and you know when you are doing it and you know when you've got it done.'*

Her mother reported that she expressed very clear opinions about staff, and related to some teachers but not others. She no longer wished to have close attention from the TA, who her mother felt was not the appropriate choice and *'doesn't give Ellie enough space'*. This clearly illustrated how varied are pupils' requirements for, and attitudes to having, TA support, also the importance of interpersonal relationships in such situations. Socially, despite the diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome, Ellie had friends and was at ease in conversation. Mother applauded that the school, *'are almost pushing you to make new friends which I think*

is good'. In terms of personal organisation she was *very* good at organising herself, kept diligently to a schedule and appreciated the tight organisation and predictability of secondary school. She sometimes became anxious if there were problems, but mother dealt with these (e.g. lost locker keys) in a 'matter of fact' way. Mother brought Ellie to school by car but intended to gradually increase independent travel. Academically she found that mind maps worked well for Ellie, for example before exams in the core subjects.

Ellie was not keen on crowds, e.g. in dining hall, so ate her packed lunch in quiet areas. TA support was readily available in school, and Ellie would ask discretely, not being keen to draw attention to herself. She had a good relationship with her form tutor and was able to see the school nurse or visit the chapel when she wanted 'peace and quiet'. Her mother mentioned that at parents' evening, teachers reported academic standards well above her age level. She cared very deeply about her grades except in subjects such as music and PE. Parents were most pleased that Ellie had settled in well and had friends, and the SENCO reported that Ellie's mother was least anxious of all parents of SEN pupils here – perhaps because of many early informal contacts. Parents and staff felt that nothing more could have been done by parents or by either school to ease the transition process, including limiting initial workload and even providing clip-on ties for pupils in their first year! Her mother too gave much time and effort to supporting Ellie, including 'texting' to clarify homework, etc. Mother felt that this was the *'ideal choice of school'.*

Ellie said she was getting on well and thought staff would say so too. She could think of nothing more that could have been done to help the transition, describing it as a nice school with good facilities and nice teachers, and scoring it nine out of ten. She acknowledged some niggles but no bullying.

> *'Sometimes you do get a bit tired and get into arguments, but apart from that you don't really seem to struggle. The homework can be a bit much at first, but once you get, once you plan it out and everything, it's all right.' Sometimes it can be a bit confusing and hard but you've just gotta ask 'cos if you don't ask you don't get anywhere.'*

She said that help was always available. Ellie wasn't expecting difficulties with transition but said it was even better than hoped.

> *'Everyone says I'm doing OK and I'm still not worried about anything at all.'*

The Assistant SENCO whose specialism is ASD seemed to have considerable influence over the admission of such pupils, declaring the she made the decisions.

> *'I 'phone / write / meet with LA and inform them. If I don't believe we can meet the needs, I write to the LA and say so.'*

She visited Ellie's school, did a 2hr classroom observation and discussed with staff, which information helped her to do some 'engineering / juggling' of students into forms. She had

contact with the LA autism team but felt that she had sufficient expertise not to need their input, and was able to adjust specifically to the needs of the individual.

5.5.4 Summary

Ellie had a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome but this was not extreme, since she could relate to others, reflected sensitivity to other people's feelings and had much social understanding. She was sensitive to her peers' opinion of her, as reflected in her concealing that she had attended SEN visits, by telling her peers that she had been to the dentist.
The transition proceeded even better than people had anticipated, for several reasons:
1) Ellie's personal characteristics, including her academic level, conscientiousness, mature and 'matter-of-fact' approach, personal organisation skills and understanding her own social/communication difficulties.
2) There was considerable and effective support from home, including such things as mind-mapping to help with academic work, advice about appropriate reactions to friends to enhance her social skills, and help with personal organisation, particularly with travelling to school.
3) She was popular at the primary school, where she had been known since preschool. Support at primary school had been effective in addressing her needs. There was close liaison with parents, Ellie's needs were very well addressed and she had friends. Pupils were given schedules, which were adapted in year 6 to be more like a secondary timetable. The SENCo was appreciative of the support from the ASD team.
4) Ellie's mother went to great lengths to request from the LA a place at the most appropriate school for Ellie. She initially emailed the SENCo to ask about the school. Both parents and school were convinced that this was the correct placement, and made diligent preparation for her transition.
5) There was close co-operation between schools, and between parents and schools leading to a very collaborative transition process. As Ellie's mother put it

> *'The key is the support, and everybody communicating. The balance was just right, and I think that has everything to do with the staff at the schools and our input as parents, and Ellie, and everybody working together.'*

6) This close liaison and partnership continued before, during and after transition, with the secondary SENCo playing a key role. Pupil, parent and school were well placed to ensure transition worked well, which it did. The strong relationship between home and school continued after transition, although parents felt that the choice of TA was not the appropriate one. Ellie liked to have a clear schedule so found that aspect of secondary school particularly helpful.

5.6 Summary: those transferring to Secondary School 1

Transitions were successful for several reasons:

1) The primary schools identified and addressed the pupils' individual needs, communicated closely with parents and used a variety of methods to prepare the pupils well for transition.

2) Secondary school SEN staff began liaising with primary schools in Yr5 and once preference was expressed they met the pupils early in Y6. Transition arrangements were carefully co-ordinated between primary and secondary schools.

3) Parents chose this school because of its Christian character, caring ethos and support for SEN. In addition to the Learning Centre, there was a Chapel where pupils could find 'peace and quiet' if needed.

4) For children with SEN the secondary SENCo (with a dyslexia specialism) and Assistant SENCo (with EBD and autism specialism) played key co-ordinating roles and appeared to have much influence – although not the final say - on which children were admitted.

5) Staff had a very clear understanding of the pupils' needs and so had the curriculum, resources and support in place to meet their needs and see that the work was at an appropriate level. Any concerns expressed by parents, for example about minor incidents of bullying, were swiftly dealt with.

6) Because work was matched to the pupils' needs, they achieved success at school and so were confident in lessons. However, staff were concerned that this would become increasingly difficult for them as they move through the school; concerns were also expressed about the availability of future funding.

7) Pupils were able to seek help when necessary, both in the classroom and outside. The pupils in this sample had made new friends in school.

8) SEN staff were confident about their expertise and dedication and were committed to helping children with SEN to transfer successfully and settle in.

9) Staff at both primary and secondary schools were readily available to hear from and communicate with parents.

10) Despite initial concerns, all pupils had settled well into the school by half way through their first year in secondary school.

CHAPTER 6 – Vignettes –

Pupils entering Secondary School 2

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter contained vignettes summarising the situations of the four pupils transferring to Secondary School SS1.This chapter provides vignettes of the three pupils transferring to secondary school SS2, each again structured to summarise the relevant academic, social and personal organisation issues before and after transition, and details of the transition process, as perceived by pupils, parents and school staff. The subsequent chapter (7) contains a discussion of factors drawn from these vignettes.

Table 6.1: Summaries – pupils transferring to Secondary School 2

Pupil pseudonym, summary of pupil SEN + school size and location						
Pupils Transferring to Secondary School 2 (NOR 1393) Rural						
Pupil no & 'name'	Pupil Initial	Sex	Pupil's SEN headline	Primary School	Primary No on roll	Primary School Location
6 Frank	**	M	ASD	F	137	Village
7 Geoff	**	M	Dyslexia / Dyspraxia	G	124	Village
8 Harry	**	M	Hearing / Learning	H	460	Town
ASD = Autistic Spectrum Disorder						

6.2 Vignette: Frank

6.2.1 Before transition

Frank's family moved from a neighbouring county two years ago and at interview Frank continued to express regret at having moved away from his friends. His attainments were low in literacy – especially comprehension – and in maths, but the concern he most often expressed was his difficulty in making friends, relating to his autism spectrum difficulties. Frank explained that his brother attended a nearby private school because *'it was too easy for him here'*. He understood his high needs in relation to his brother and his own need for ongoing help from a TA with 'academic' tasks, which he was pleased to be receiving. Frank's mother acknowledged Frank's learning difficulties and felt his future would be *'on the*

vocational side'. He showed great interest in timetables, for example television programme times, and loved reading them. His mother acknowledged that he had friends at his previous school and came here in year four when friendships were already established, now preferring to play with girls rather than rough-and-tumble with boys. When pressed about social issues before transition, Frank expressed much hurt that he did not have friends, but said that he kept that to himself.

His mother was pleased that most of his class were going to the same secondary school but concerned that he might be bullied there by others. She praised communications with school, including IEP meetings and a TA who was a friend and alerted her to any problems. There were two additional meetings at the primary school to review Frank's statement before transition – although it was not formally revised - and the primary school sent extensive information to the secondary school. Frank's friendship concerns were also mentioned by the primary SENCo; she attended the Parent Partnership Service (PPS) autism session and obtained ideas, including the class teacher arranging support from the TA, and Frank transferring with a classmate with the same TA. She felt that arrangements for transition worked well.

6.2.2 The transition process

The proximity of primary and secondary schools was a major advantage; the school was one of a cluster of schools which had various links, so that pupils could visit the secondary school, for example for sports days, gifted and talented day, science days etc. The primary SENCo had no teaching role so although only in school on one day a week, was available for appointments as required. Here too, the class teacher presented a unit linked to PHSE in year six - Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEALS)

Transition work at the school started after Easter and SATS. Parents received class teacher reports in October and March; in addition the school sent IEPs which parents signed and returned, but parents were not involved in discussing or amending the IEP beforehand, which was an obvious shortcoming since it failed to make use of parental insights into their child's progress and ongoing needs. The secondary school had its first open evening in October, which marked the start of the transition process. The secondary SENCo attended Annual Review meetings at the primary schools in the cluster, also local secondary cluster meetings. She provided a standard form requesting extensive details of pupils with SEN. Decisions for those with Statements were as always made in February before the majority of pupils, and when subsequent placements had been agreed there were various visits and exchanges of staff. Also, secondary staff visited with two ex-pupils from the primary school, gave out information and ran some activities. Frank reported that

'They were just talking about-and they had a competition of colouring in and they talked about secondary school and it being a lovely school.'

The primary SENCO said that this worked well; most transferred to the same secondary, but if they transferred to a different school they were given one-to-one support during transition if necessary. Frank transferred with the majority of his peers. He needed ongoing support in academic, social and personal organisation areas, continuing the input he had from his TA. The primary school held a residential week with a unit on transition, and when specifically asked, the SENCo felt that additional Summer School activities would be a good idea for Frank. She felt that the transition system worked very well because of the proximity of the schools, the excellent standardised paperwork and the close working relations between schools and parents. She said they treated transition in a 'matter of fact' way, and argued that children with SEN don't want to be seen as different so school used a *'softly-softly'* approach and *'did not make a big deal out of it'*.

6.2.3 Post-transition

Frank was finding some of the academic work difficult, especially in Humanities – specifically history and English literature - and Maths. He preferred practical subjects such as science and cookery.

'Maths is just sitting on a chair doing numbers and science is actually learning something, and looking at power points and videos and learning about your body and making things and doing practicals. And cooking I was looking forward to'.

Frank always felt able to ask because TA support was available at his table. He was able to email teachers if necessary, and was pleased now to have in-class support, not withdrawal. He enjoyed sport but was very sensitive to relationships, for example when the golf teacher changed Frank stopped attending, saying, *'It changed the atmosphere altogether'*. Although he said letters about transition were *'not easy'* to read, he felt he learned most from the visiting year 7 pupils and his visits to the secondary school. *'Well we had a transition day, and we did some things around the school including cricket near the end.'*

He took photographs using a primary school camera and used these to make a booklet. He had a high overall opinion of secondary school, scoring it 9/10 even though *'teachers can be strict'* and held the clear understanding that pastoral and not learning centre staff dealt with discipline.

Socially, Frank was very pleased to have met new friends. *'It was a bit scary at first, but after a while it was okay.'* He felt safe at school, had experienced no bullying but got *'lots of work'*. He travelled independently – a simple bus journey – and was becoming increasingly independent, for example he played out at break and lunch times and used the Learning Centre less. His mother reported that initially some homework was far too difficult, such as writing a letter as an imaginary character. She said Frank was never fazed by such academic tasks and would *'just stick a few things down and hand it in'*, whereas she was keen to

ensure that work be appropriate. Within the constraints of this study, it was not possible to explore the extent to which Frank's relaxed attitude was maintained by his mother's extensive support. From his responses at interview it seemed that he rarely faced uncomfortable feedback for unsatisfactory work, because of his mother's input. She said he would not seek clarification but would just do whatever he thought was required, and not care whether it was right or wrong. However, given the availability of staff email addresses she would check if there was obvious confusion.

Socially, Frank's mother reported that he still did not have close friends in his class but had friends in Learning Support, also 2 older friends, which she thought had given him huge confidence. The process had worked well, which she felt might be inconvenient for me, since more could have been learned from 'failure'! My response was that I would not have wanted it otherwise, and there was much to learn from success. The Secondary SENCo reported that Frank was doing very well; he was very quiet and focussed. He was forthcoming in small group work, but quiet in larger groups. Children with greatest need were placed in three classes with permanent TA support, with TAs chosen to ensure teacher / TA / pupil match. Before transition, all pupils were encouraged to come and visit as often as they wished, and guided/escorted by a member of the pastoral staff. To help with personal organisation and moving between lessons, an additional TA was allocated to all classes to help them in the first term, so in three classes there were 2TAs in the lesson.

6.2.4 Summary:

Overall, this was another positive transition experience, which went better than participants had anticipated. Mother was surprised and delighted that Frank had settled in so well, including finding his way around school; she had been concerned about bullying but none was reported. Staff confirmed he had fitted in *'very nicely'* with no problems and was showing increasing independence. There were many contributory factors to this successful transition, including:

1) Frank's individual characteristics - mother suggested that his lack of fear/ imagination may have increased his ability to adjust! He took a close interest in timetables so could follow the school schedule. His confidence was increasing; he travelled to school by bus by himself and was very happy to do so. He was reluctant to ask for help, which his mother found frustrating, but he himself was not fazed by uncertainty and his mother could check requirements by email.

2) He received much support from home; his mother devised a home timetable, also provided help with organising his bag, classwork, sports kit and lunch money.

3) Primary school provision was matched to Frank's needs; his mother felt the school could not have done more to prepare him, given his low attainments. However, there was no evidence of initiatives to help him to make friends, such as Circle Time.
4) The proximity of the two schools meant that the secondary school did not seem 'foreign' to primary pupils, through sports days and other activity days. Frank's mother was pleased with the choice of this local, rural school.
5) Frank had begun to make friends in the school, which helped his confidence.
6) Communication between home and schools, and between schools, had been very effective. The secondary school's website was accessible and informative. Following review meetings the primary school sent extensive information to the secondary school, and there was ongoing communication between the two schools.
7) With one or two obvious exceptions - such as being asked to write a 500 word letter home from the point of view of a soldier serving abroad - Frank had been given appropriate work. The SENCO explained that he was in the bottom set for everything as was expected; he understood that and was quite happy about it, *'as he sees it's the right place for him'.* Although some homework tasks were unclear to Frank when he got home, staff made their email addresses available to overcome such problems. Some expectations of homework were too high, but mother acknowledged that these were adjusted on request, and that school responded swiftly to queries/concerns. He continued to receive appropriate support.
8) Pupils with SEN had Friday consolidation sessions with their key worker intended to ensure that they understood requirements, but mother felt that Frank sometimes said all was clear when it was not, so valued having staff email addresses for direct contact. This perhaps indicates that staff tasked with ensuring that Frank understood did not in fact ask him to repeat back to them what was required rather than give a yes/no response.

6.3 Vignette: Geoff

6.3.1 Before transition

Geoff was diagnosed with dyspraxia requiring Occupational Therapy, and he also had low reading skills associated with dyslexia for which he received support in school. He always tried very hard at school. His mother reported that, because the family lived near a county border, there were cross-border complications about service delivery, with health services in one county reluctant to provide services in another. Eventually OT sessions were provided but his mother did not feel that these were effective. She had high praise for the *'excellent year six teacher who prepared them well',* made her class independent / move for different lessons / pack up & move class / bring PE kit bags etc. Her class preparation included tick lists for personal organisation and mother reported that Geoff got used to using them and became worried without them. Mother was also pleased with the support he received from

the TA and communicated with school staff whenever necessary, by text, telephone and direct meetings, however she was not entirely satisfied with his progress as some of her suggestions were not persisted with. For example she suggested touch typing and bought software, also introduced the 'Speed Up!' programme (Addy, 2004), designed for pupils aged 8 to 13 to improve their handwriting.

The use of this programme dwindled; however this was because Geoff tired quickly; it was not because of school's reluctance that it was abandoned. Mother considered that the scheme did increase the size of his writing but this had again become tiny. One consequence of Geoff's low reading skills was that his mother had to read out health education materials, which embarrassed him greatly. Academically, parents were not concerned about GCSEs but wanted him to be able to read for pleasure and to write clearly. Socially he had three groups of friends; at school, in swimming, and in martial arts. He had two older siblings who knew the school, so mother felt *'it should not be a shock'*. Geoff was worried about bullying at secondary school but said that he was less so having visited the school. He had good spatial awareness; he read the map of the school and pointed out that some new buildings were missing. Geoff received direct support from his TA, with academic subjects and with personal organisation, for example ensuring that he kept his schedule card up to date. His primary school was a small school with a combined year five and year six. All parents received updates about their child's progress in February, May and July (two short and one long report) and a parents' evening. The Primary SENCo reported that from year five children pupils have more deadlines, more independence and are more responsible for themselves. They have circle time-type lessons to discuss upcoming changes and address issues; they also have some room changes, for example in maths & music to get them used to changing classrooms. The SENCO reports that *'We also move to wean them off one-to-one support in year 6.'* She too advised parents to visit possible Secondary Schools early to inform their decision, and subsequently was available for discussion as required.

6.3.2 The transition process

All but one of the pupils at this primary school transferred to the same secondary school, which was helpful in terms of school to school liaison, and parents were encouraged to begin attending secondary open days when their child was in year five. At SENCo meetings the secondary SENCo requested details of year five children with SEN coming to them. The primary SENCo took overall responsibility for IEPs and liaison, but once the IEP was set the TA monitored how far targets were met. This was typical of the responsibility given to TAs in SS2. Although the primary SENCo felt that the system worked well, she was concerned that those with no statement could be overlooked – however she did alert the secondary school to others who she thought might have difficulties. In this small school there was frequent

communication, with weekly staff meetings and a noticeboard, but there was no requirement for staff to indicate that they had read the notices and it was not clear how absent staff would be updated. Any class teacher concerned about a pupil discussed this with parents and the SENCO to plan necessary adaptations. If staff felt any pupil might be 'vulnerable' on transition they suggested the secondary school invite them to the additional sessions for vulnerable pupils, which sadly were cancelled this year owing to staff absence. The primary SENCo expressed understandable disappointment about this and asked the secondary SENCo that these visits be re-instated in subsequent years.

Again, parents of pupils with SEN statements expressed a secondary school preference early and places for those with statements were allocated before the rest. The LA wrote to parents to confirm the secondary school, and then letters from secondary schools were forwarded via the primary schools. This primary school did not produce its own transition materials but included discussion of the packs from the secondary schools, and discussion about transition, in classroom work. For those with Statements, the primary school sent the completed form and a photocopy of the key report pages, supplemented by phone and/or e-mail as necessary, to the secondary school. There were IEP reviews and an annual review to which the LA and therapists were invited but they rarely attended because this school was far from the centre of the LA. The Head Teacher pointed out that being a small village school some distance from the centre and near county borders had its disadvantages. Also, she bemoaned the fact that there was a private school nearby which accepted the more able children from Year 5, affecting the school's Yr6 SATs results and school morale.

Geoff recalled being given a planner, stamps and a map of the school when visited by secondary school staff and pupils. He found this informative and reassuring.

> *'Um yes it was one of the PE teachers, a man, and two of the students who are now in year eight came and had a chat to all the students in year six. Well, they said if you are late for a lesson you won't get into trouble and they told us about stamps and everything.'*

When prompted he recalled the visit to the secondary school, including a race, but had little recall of the other events. He also made an additional visit with his father which he very much valued because it meant they had plenty of time to find out anything they weren't sure about.

6.3.3 Geoff: post-transition

Geoff said that on the first day he was initially confused, but it was a gentle start.

> *'We mainly stayed most of the time in tutors because we didn't know any of the tutor people so we had about two or three lessons.'*

Socially, he was sorry that none of his friends was in his tutor group but overall, although somewhat confused, he enjoyed the first day. He knew people in Year 8 from his primary

school and others from martial arts. Academically, he was disappointed not to be in a higher set, and felt that the maths tests he had taken on entry to secondary school were on topics he had not covered.

> *'When I said that to my dad, he said oh just get out of your head. If you already knew it you would be in a higher set. And I said oh but that wasn't on our test.'*

He found work hardest in humanities where they were studying his favourite (mediaeval) period but in a way which he found *'really boring'*. He was on one of the tables with additional (dyslexic) support, and like all pupils in SS2 used a netbook for submission of homework and feedback. The netbook had lots of free software on the toolbar including a spell checker, which he found helpful. Teachers said that he tried very hard, but had difficulty with the amount and pace of work. He, initially, expressed concern about the amount of homework, until advised to stop after 30 minutes; he regarded this as manageable given home support, but did not like to be pressed about it by parents.

He enjoyed lunchtimes especially playing soccer with friends but his favourite activities were in the practical lessons, especially IT. At the time of his Year 7 interview he had broken his toe playing badminton which prevented him from doing PE and he grumbled about having to do other tasks instead. *'You have to do jobs, even if you are unfit! You have to drag all the footballs and put everything away!'* He also complained about the *'strict teachers'* and older bullies, but when questioned further he said that teachers were OK and in fact bullying was *'not an issue'*. It seemed that Geoff's initial responses indicated his initial concerns before, and soon after entering, secondary school. The views he expressed after some reflection did not indicate any real concerns about his experience at that point. Although he was not comfortable in crowds he happily used the picnic area at lunch time. He would have liked to use the Learning Centre more often but found it *'mostly locked'*, but chose not to return later to try again, reflecting that this was not a priority need for him. He was aware that support was available from teachers, parents, friends and older brother. He also spoke highly of the friendly support available from library staff. When asked what he would tell prospective pupils about his new school, Geoff's honest and noteworthy response was not the objective evaluation sought by the interviewer; he said his response would depend upon who was asking! If they were people he liked, he would say nice things; but if not, he would say it was horrible - an interesting insight into his character.

He reported no problems with personal organisation although his mother pointed out that, in common with many children, this was because he was simply oblivious to losses of equipment, despite considerable support from home, where he was encouraged to prepare his own bag. His mother made a laminated card/tick list for him in year five, with coloured areas, which continued to help a lot in secondary school. He could follow the timetable but became confused with any changes, so was encouraged to ask. He enjoyed the journey to

school. His mother drove him to the bus stop and he met a friend on the bus. He was delighted to be increasingly independent, and got on the right bus every time. (He relished the thought of the bus being 30 minutes late, *'when it's an automatic no school'!)* His orientation skills were fine and he was able to give an impressive and accurate description of the school layout. Geoff's mother was pleased that he had settled in so quickly and received much help from staff, whose attitudes she described as very positive, including email contact with parents and frequent updates, also the fact that Geoff could contact staff by email. However, she drew attention to some areas of concern. One was that his three, one hour sessions for dyspraxia were not arranged in advance, but this was dependent on an OT assessment and was arranged soon after the OT report was received, so delays were explicable. However, the OT had suggested new resources for him to the LA as he has a statement, and their response was awaited. His mother understood that a secondary school could not provide OT exercises as his primary school did, so she did the star jumps and squats before school. She was delighted that everyone was very positive, and that socially he was *'coming out of his shell'.* She reported some bullying involving name-calling and being pushed into a hedge by year eight pupils, and somebody deliberately stamped on his broken toe. He was reluctant to report this for fear of making matters worse but, exemplifying her very protective approach towards her son, and her determination to prevent problems from escalating, his mother spoke to the deputy head and contacted the community policeman, who visited the school. The matter was quickly dealt with; Geoff was offered a 6th form 'Buddy' and the SENCO emphasised that he could come to her however small the problem. She noted that Geoff had settled in very well, and there were no problems beyond minor 'teething' ones. His mother also noted that the school responded appropriately to parents' concerns, such as re-adjusting his maths set on request and making appropriate work demands. She also emphasised problems with organisation and PE. He was still slow to get clothes on and off, so needed extra time, and lost a lot of equipment.

Socially, Geoff was disappointed that his three best friends at primary were not in his class; he was placed with one boy and one girl from his primary school, but now had a wider group of friends. It was his mother's view that social preparation could not have been any better, and that he had found suitable activities, e.g. computer games club. She considered that although at home they encouraged increasing independence, it might be that he would need a scribe for public exams. Overall his mother was very pleased with how well transition had gone and with the choice of school although said *"In hindsight, I think he'd have been fine if I had chosen somewhere else, but the SENCo at this school is excellent."* Mother's optimism was understandable in view of Geoff's successful transfer to SS2, but it is the nature of educational research that it is not possible to be certain about the outcomes of alternative decisions.

6.3.4 Summary

All involved were very pleased that Geoff had settled into the secondary school so quickly, and better than anticipated. There were several reasons for his successful transition.
1) The experienced year six teacher had devised a range of activities to help prepare pupils for transition. Geoff's difficulties with literacy and physical co-ordination were acknowledged and well addressed at primary school.
2) At secondary school he continued to receive SEN support, and once early issues were resolved, he received appropriate academic work. Experienced staff included his key worker who provided ongoing support. Staff continued to respond to parental concerns, including reducing homework demands and dealing swiftly with bullying.
3) Although disappointed to have been separated from his old friends, he had found new friends, including older pupils. He also attended swimming and martial arts clubs out of school.
4) He had excellent orienteering skills, quickly knew the school layout and was pleased to be able to travel to school by bus. Although he could follow the timetable he was confused by changes, but would ask if necessary.
5) Although his physical co-ordination was poor, making him slow to dress after PE and prone to losing kit, he tried hard to speed up and was not troubled by such losses.
6) His mother was diligent in her attempts to support him, including bringing new ideas to the primary school such as touch typing and a handwriting programme. The staff involved consistently tried to implement each suggestion but Geoff was not always amenable to them. Mother pressed for OT support, and personally ensured that Geoff undertook the recommended exercises. Her support extended to devising systems to help with personal organisation and homework, but Geoff had begun to resist being pressed by parents to complete this, suggesting that the optimum degree of 'pressure' had not yet been achieved.

6.4 Vignette: Harry

6.4.1 Before transition

Harry had impaired hearing in one ear so found it difficult to learn when there was background noise, leading to learning difficulties. He sometimes became angry and frustrated, but said that then *'Friends help to calm me down.'* He exhibited a range of behaviours including banging his head and biting himself, also some obsessive behaviour such as insisting that his clothes were washed in a certain fabric softener, which led his mother to suspect autism but this was not diagnosed. It may be that such behaviour was being maintained by the attention it attracted but there was no evidence of systematic intervention to address it, which suggests that it was not a priority for parents or school staff.

Academically he had learning difficulties and a limited written and oral vocabulary; he explained, *'I've got the brain of my Dad!'* He preferred practical subjects such as art and woodwork, and had started to learn to play the guitar. He could answer questions orally but had difficulty with putting his thoughts on paper. Socially he had friends, and was particularly close to his older sister. He had considerable problems with personal organisation, especially with losing equipment, so his mother prepared things the day before, and produced a schedule including what was needed each day.

Mother felt that Harry needed visual prompts so she devised a colour coded system for his books and timetable. He had had some problems with sleeping because of concerns about the upcoming transition. She explained that Harry's Statement focussed on behaviour; parents were frustrated at the lack of a specific diagnosis but school staff advised that there might instead be a 'cluster of problems'. At home she 'headed off' outbursts by acceding to his very specific preferences, and did much to ensure that he had appropriate input. For example, she visited the school each week, *"To see that homework is at the correct level"* and attended the Parent Partnership sessions on 'the anxious child' and on 'dyslexia' presented by the Local Authority Parent Partnership Service. She gave as an example of his anxiety that, when the primary school gave him their transition book for children with special needs, it 'flipped' him because transition was clearly imminent.

Academically, her main concerns were with his understanding of language, basic reading and writing, but also his anxiety. She was also concerned that although school had gradually 'weaned him off' his TA, he would miss her at secondary school. At his new school, parents hoped for improved self-esteem – which they felt was fine when he was with adults – and that he could read independently, thus having access to the curriculum. His mother was closely involved in the development of his IEP and transition plan. She was disappointed to have been advised, entirely inappropriately, by another mainstream secondary SENCo that Harry should be in special school. The Parent Partnership Officer criticised this and pointed out that it was 'not a SENCo's place to say' which placement was appropriate. Socially, mother said Harry preferred the company of adults; although he had friends, his language was *'different'* in that it was somewhat stilted, so she was concerned that there might be problems at secondary school. There was much evidence of his mother's efforts to support his personal organisation, including a coloured timetable with breaks, lunch etc personalised. She described the Statement as 'very woolly', so requested a report on his current functioning from the primary SENCo, which she described as 'fantastic' because of its accuracy and insight. She presumed that school did not wish to re-visit the statement for fear of losing support hours.

Most children transferred to a different secondary school to Harry, so the Year 5 visits there to see Science and IT facilities were not directly relevant to him as he was not transferring to that school; however in Yr6 he visited his chosen school. Once again, when the choice of school was confirmed, children with statements received an additional package from the LA through the post, explaining the formal arrangements as they applied to pupils with statements, in addition to the package via the primary school. The primary school had a comprehensive system for preparing children for transfer. Homework amounts were gradually increased in later years. In addition to the general classroom discussions, the TAs worked with their children with Statements to produce 'transfer books' with a map of school, pictures of the school and the staff, and showed them how to do homework planners and read timetables. They also role played how to ask the teacher or a TA if they were feeling nervous or in trouble, etc. They discussed rules that might be different, explained dining systems, house systems, and tried to dispel the myths. The primary SENCo felt that the system worked well, but she too was disappointed that the 'vulnerable children' day had to be cancelled. However, all 15 children transferring there visited and all went smoothly, with no reports of pupils being upset.

6.4.2 The transition process

The Head of Yr7 visited the primary school to discuss every child. For children with Statements the secondary SENCo usually attends the annual review. Harry's was due in October so was brought forward and the secondary SENCo attended the meeting. If a class teacher or primary SENCO had concerns about a specific child the SENCO accompanied them on a solo visit, discussed with the child beforehand any concerns, and encouraged them to ask questions. The Statements were reviewed in year 5 and, if there were concerns that the level of support would be insufficient to meet the child's academic needs in secondary school, this would be raised with the LA to try to have the statement funding band increased before transfer. This was not felt appropriate for Harry. With social issues the parents sometimes prefer to contact the TA directly, but the primary school encouraged parents to keep in touch with the form teacher and the SENCo, as they were best placed to resolve issues in liaison with the TAs. Parents supported with personal organisation by writing lists, putting post-it notes on the door, having a timetable on the fridge and getting Harry to check what was needed each day.

6.4.3 Harry: post-transition

Harry said that initially the secondary school experience *'got me really bored 'cos we did the same things a lot'* but subsequently he enjoyed it; *'then we ended up having a good time'.* His comments about bullying were ambiguous. *'They told me it would be a good experience*

and don't worry about them bullies because there won't be any there.' (Then confided in a whispered voice – *'But there were!'*) Later he said that parents were glad that he was not bullied at secondary school. Harry's parents responded at great length at interview, had made a strong commitment to his education, demanded high standards from the school and wanted rapid answers – for example how school would carry out Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) recommendations - while acknowledging that staff were very busy. They praised the excellent communication by email, especially with the SEN department, and acknowledged the school's caring ethos and considerable efforts to implement parents' ideas.

Harry's parents attended the transition day and took photos of the school so as to provide him with a virtual tour. Each week they looked at the map of the school and their pictures, and 'walked around' the school. Harry settled well into the school apart from occasional 'wobbles' which the school dealt with appropriately. For example, on one occasion his yoghurt spilt over his bag and his food and he could not eat it. Hi mother reported that, *'the school was fantastic. He had a total - we call it a red zone - absolutely off the chart with a panic, and they got him to phone me.'* Once again, here was an opportunity to look more closely at Harry's behaviour and to see whether adult reaction was serving to maintain it. However, all involved seemed content with the outcome, so the behaviour would seem likely to recur. In addition to such 'contingency' responses, Harry's mother also gave ongoing support with homework, including providing working memory tools. It was not clear that these were effective, since Harry described beginning to find home pressure tiresome.

The Secondary SENCo confirmed that Harry's placement was agreed in February on the basis of information received from Statements, Annual Reviews, discussions between staff and visits in Years 5 and 6. She confirmed they had received full information and had very good contact with the primary school and with parents, who visited on request and came to parents' evenings. She confirmed that he had settled in very well and that academically he was very good orally, answered questions well, but panicked in written tests. Socially he was making new friends, and his personal organisation was strongly supported by help from home. However, a recurring theme was that there were other children with equally high needs who arrived with no paperwork. This issue is discussed further in the Methodology and Discussion chapters. The SENCo reported that bullying was *'not a big problem here – it's nipped in the bud by pastoral staff'*. In terms of academic work, this was kept at an appropriate level and homework was kept to a minimum. She explained that the three pupils with Statements believed they were doing well because staff provided appropriate work and aimed *'to keep them confident'*. This worked well when the TA checked that requirements were clear, otherwise some pupils over estimated what was required, & worried.

She reported that personal organisation was the toughest area in that most struggled with it, although all students had netbooks so all timetable and work information was on hand. On Fridays their TA / Key Worker went through their work with them to help sort out homework, etc. but there was still occasional confusion, suggesting that the TA / key worker did not always ask pupils to repeat back the task requirements. The SENCo reported that pupils understood the timetable and school layout – transition had gone very well despite the inevitable butterflies / teething troubles. She repeated her firm view that *'the process can't be made totally painless, but we do all we can to make the pain as light and as short as possible'.* Pupils could always seek help in lessons and support was also available at lunch and break times. Harry's TA / Key Worker advised that Harry had settled in well, socially was very much part of his tutor group and never brought concerns to the Learning Support Centre. However she acknowledged that his parents were anxious. *'We see him calm here, but his mother sees a different side – perhaps he can let off steam at home?'* She said that academically he was much better orally than in writing, but did not seem to let that worry him! He appeared to be fairly well organised, but she presumed this was because of strong support and double checking from home. He travelled to school by car with his sister.

Harry's parents were knowledgeable, committed and demanding and provided a high level of home support / initiative. They applauded the secondary Head's approach at open evening and explanations of technical terms used. They were delighted with the choice of school, appreciative of staff input and felt that it had been a very successful transition and that staff dealt with 'the whole child'. They were relieved that he had no 'meltdowns' on the first day, and came home very positive. Although they mentioned that school probably had not realised at first the effect that his impaired hearing had had on his learning, his mother said staff were doing really well with him, and commented *'generally I think they settled him well. He went from loathing school to actually wanting to go, for the first time in his school life.'* Although he disliked his humanities teacher his mother saw it as positive that he had an opinion on academic issues. They noted that reading level had improved greatly as school were working on his weaknesses. *'His word bank is increasing exponentially which is fantastic for him.'* Mother reports that he is absolutely exhausted some days and apparently working at absolute maximum, which would explain his apparent reluctance to succumb to further cajoling about homework.

Parents' initial priority had been his 'positivity and self-esteem' and they were very pleased with how these had developed, also that he enjoyed socialising. They had been concerned about how he would fare socially but any concerns they expressed were dealt with. Mother reported that he had a friend with a horse, helped out at stables, and *'absolutely loves it'.* Academically, homework remained their main concern, and they felt they should have prepared him better for future homework demands, because *'We still have to fight him quite*

a lot.' However, it worked best when tasks were clearly specified and manageable – either clarified by the TA or emailed. His father also noted that sometimes the teacher's handwriting was not legible – an elegant illustration of parents' high demands and perhaps reluctance to acknowledge the hurried efforts of a busy teacher needing to move to the next lesson. His mother understandably asked for clear, size-limited tasks, saying *'I have been battling for the past 3 months to get them to realise how limited Harry is in the homework sense'.* However, she acknowledged that matters were improving, detention was never given for homework not done so anxieties were unfounded, and that school staff were *'Always open with the communication side of things via email - especially the SEN department – although it would have been nice to have had the email addresses earlier.'* This was another elegant illustration of parents' very high expectations of school. However, they acknowledged that new teachers might be inexperienced in working with pupils with SEN.

Another illustration of his mother's anxiety was that socially he was making *'a poor choice of friends'*, as revealed by his newly acquired swearing habit which caused her much concern. Rather than seeing this as an adolescent phase to be disapproved of and discouraged in a 'matter of fact' way, she appeared to see it as extremely serious, perhaps because of her general anxiety. She said Harry sometimes misinterpreted social situation so needed advice about what was normal banter, and to be more flexible in his responses. Parents rated the pastoral team very highly and anticipated that his social skills would develop further. They were unaware of any bullying but confident that the school would deal with any that arose. Mother continued to provide extensive support with personal organisation, saying, *'We've got charts for everything and they seem to be helping!'* This included upstairs charts, downstairs charts, morning charts and tasks charts! Help included colour coding his timetable and the map of the school to match with exercise book colour, which worked well.

> *'He is also better at getting himself ready for clubs. If we have a nice routine, then he will be able to sort things out.'*

He occasionally was late for lessons because disoriented but staff accepted this with new pupils.

6.4.4 Summary

Harry had impaired hearing in one ear so found it difficult to learn when there was background noise, leading to learning difficulties. He sometimes displayed anger and frustration, which behaviour appeared to be maintaining by the response of parents and peers. The transition proceeded even better than people had anticipated, for several reasons:

1) Harry's learning difficulties, including a limited written and oral vocabulary, were addressed well by the primary school. They also had a comprehensive system for preparing

children for transfer, including TAs working with their children with Statements to produce 'transfer books', also showing them how to do homework planners and read timetables.in both primary and secondary schools.
2) Parents made a strong commitment to Harry's education, encouraging him to complete homework and providing much help with personal organisation, including various colour-coded schemes. They demanded high standards from the school and support services and wanted rapid answers.
3) Parents and schools were convinced that this was the correct placement, and made diligent preparation for Harry's transition.
4) There was close co-operation between schools, and between parents and schools, leading to a very collaborative transition process.
5) The secondary school had well-planned arrangements in place, including a key worker for each pupil with a Statement
6) Secondary school staff implied that mother's anxieties were perhaps not entirely warranted, so were more relaxed about his behaviour, which they felt would reduce Harry's anxieties.

6.5 Overall Summary of secondary school 2 vignettes: Frank, Geoff, Harry

Transition for these pupils has been successful for several reasons:
1) The primary schools addressed the pupils' individual needs, communicated closely with parents and used a variety of methods to prepare the pupils well for transition.
2) Secondary school SEN staff began liaising with primary schools in Yr5 and once preference was expressed they met the pupils early in Y6. Transition arrangements were carefully co-ordinated between primary and secondary schools.
3) Parents chose this school because of its 'nurturing' reputation and support for SEN. No bullying was evident.
4) The Head of Yr7 visited the primary school to discuss every child. For children with SEN the secondary SENCo played a key co-ordinating role, and usually attended the final AR at the primary school for pupils with statements. Any concerns expressed by parents were swiftly dealt with.
5) The Secondary school had a specialist TA, based in the Learning Support Centre not in classrooms, who provided the literacy input for 23, year 7 pupils and 3, year 8 pupils. She was also a key worker for some pupils.
6) Children with Statements had a TA/Key Worker, who was the key point of contact for parents by 'phone, email and face to face, also the custodian of the pupil's file. They met the children when they first visited the secondary school. They collated all scores, set weekly targets and checked with teachers that targets were met. They were closely involved in transition, visiting primary schools and hearing of any concerns.

7) Pupils with Statements were allocated to one of 3 specific tutor groups and matched to specific teachers and TAs. These TAs/Key Workers developed a very clear understanding of pupils' needs and parents' views.
8) For the first 6 weeks of Year 7 there was a 'nurturing session' every afternoon for the children with statements about what to do in the various situations they might meet. Also they could always eat with a TA at lunchtime and find a TA at break if they need information or reassurance.
9) Staff had a very clear understanding of the pupils' needs and so had the curriculum and resources in place to meet their needs and see that the work was at an appropriate level.
10) Because work was matched to the pupils' needs, they achieved success at school and so were confident in lessons. However, staff were concerned that this will become increasingly difficult for them as they move through the school.
11) Pupils were able to seek help when necessary, both in the classroom and outside. However the pupils with Statements had made friends in school and were relying less on the Learning Centre at break and lunch times.
12) SEN staff showed obvious pride in their expertise and dedication and were committed to helping children with SEN to transfer successfully and settle in, which included being readily available to hear from and communicate with parents. The SEN department met weekly and had a case study afternoon to discuss 2 children.
13) The SEN department ran workshops on literacy and dyslexia but these were not well attended. Staff attributed this to the fact that parents were already well-briefed about these topics because of good ongoing contact! This was not based on any survey of parental views by the school, and for fear of over-stretching the toleration of participants I did not pursue it further. However, the effect of such factors as the timing and content of sessions, and the pressure of parents' other commitments, would be worthwhile areas for further investigation by the school.
14) The SENCO reported that, despite initial concerns about their attainment levels *"They have settled in well and made friends. They are all using the library and their netbook, playing outside, etc."*

6.6 Concerns:

1) Secondary school staff complained that there was good information for pupils with statements but there were other pupils, with greater needs because of their combination of learning and behaviour problems, who came with very little paperwork.
2) There was ongoing concerns about future funding and uncertainty about support services. The secondary SENCo was concerned about future years, with falling funding / different systems / re-structured of the SEN department and the loss of some LA services, for example the Autism service faces an uncertain future.

6.7 Improvement suggestions made by participants in the research:

One primary SENCO suggested firstly, that some information for pupils could be provided by year 7 pupils. Secondly, in addition to the yr6 residential school, she felt that parents be advised to give their children more independence training, for example travelling by bus.

Frank's mother suggested firstly, that schools could ask parents to help by suggesting additional work to do at home. This would of course carry the risk of overloading or even alienating pupils. Secondly, she suggested that paperwork sent to homes about transition was very adult focussed; she felt something aimed at pupils, for example including pictures, would have been helpful.

Similarly, Geoff's mother felt that the documentation from the LA was aimed at adults, and would have been more helpful in 'easy read' format. Balanced against this was that some pupils (including some in this project) would have found such simplicity patronising, making it difficult to find an appropriate 'middle way'. The range of pupils' SENs is such that it would be difficult to strike the right balance between being clear to the least literate without seeming infantile to other pupils. For some pupils with SEN, there will always be a role for parents and staff in ensuring that their young people understand the materials produced for them.

The secondary SENCO noted that sometimes parents were disappointed at how 'their' child's individual TA sessions were used at secondary school, and suggested parents be told well in advance that resources at secondary would be allocated differently.

CHAPTER 7

Findings from the Research

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the research, based upon the empirical data collected during fieldwork. The methods by which these data were collected are discussed in Chapter 4. The chapter presented here relates closely to Chapters 5 and 6 in which pupil vignettes are used as illustrative examples of the experiences of the children within the study and their parents and school staff. As such, this chapter needs to be read in the context of these vignettes. The chapter follows the sequence of addressing each of the research questions presented on page 79 of this thesis.

7.2 Overview of Key Findings

Evidence is presented to illustrate that although the emphasis of pupils' comments shifted from social issues in year six, to academic issues in year 7, none expressed unhappiness in their new setting when interviewed half way through their year 7, nor did any express ongoing concerns.

All participants reported that transition proceeded successfully. The overall experience turned out to be less stressful than participants had anticipated. For the two pupils where there was general optimism, this was vindicated. Those who expressed anxieties felt that these had been unfounded; it may have been that their negative expectations biased their judgements of what actually happened, making these over-positive?

In the reported views of pupils, parents and school staff, there was close agreement about the pupils' needs and how to meet them, although occasionally this required discussion and readjustment. It was reported by all interviewed that the seven pupils involved throughout the project had made a successful transition to secondary school.

7.3 Research Question 1: how do participants' expectations compare with actual experience?

7.3.1 Pupil views:

For six pupils, parents and pupils agreed with the choice of school. However, there was a difference of opinion between David and his parents about the timing of transition from his middle school. Although his mother told him that it was his choice, in reality the decision was made by the parents, for a combination of practical and educational reasons, despite his stated preference. However, he re-adjusted to reality and the transition was successful. Respondents said that for five students it had gone better than anticipated.

There was much similarity between the reactions of pupils before and after transfer to the two secondary schools. Most looked forward to better facilities for sport, science and hot meals! They were initially nervous, especially about being separated from their primary friends, although for one pupil it was pleasing to be separated from a friend who kept "flicking" him. All settled in well, and when asked gave very high marks to their new school. They described feeling safe, having no problems, and knowing who to turn to if problems arose. The issue of bullying, which had been a concern before transition, was only a minor problem for one pupil in each school, and was quickly dealt with. The seven pupils were pleased with how well transition had proceeded. Six of them felt that parents were fairly relaxed about transition while Harry, the most anxious pupil, did not.

Despite different preferences – for example about the proximity of support from a TA – pupils were all very upbeat about their transition experiences and described very positive relationships with staff.

Pupils' prior concerns related mainly to social issues. Many commented that it wasn't as bad as they had anticipated:

David, Yr7: *"I thought it would be really scary because I thought nobody would like me but I've got a lot of friends."*

A common concern was that there might be bullying at secondary school, but in the event bullying was only reported as an actual problem by two of these seven pupils.

Frank Yr6: *"I'm not bullied at primary school, but could be at secondary."*

Frank Yr7: *"It was scary at first, but I met some old and new friends and then it was fine."*

This was Pupils clearly found much reassurance in making friends and beginning to develop a sense of belonging to their new school, as noted by Sancho and Cline (2012).

Some were reassured following the preparatory visit:

Geoff: *"I was worried that I might be bullied but not after we went there to visit."*

Where bullying happened it was quickly addressed by the school:

Geoff: *"There is some bullying but not much and they stop it."*

Also, pupils acknowledged the need to re-adjust to the new realities:

Ellie: *"If you stay away from the year 11s you tend to be fine. They do niggle you a bit but they don't really do anything. You might get shoved occasionally but they don't mean to. It's just because they are playing around."*

Similarly with the adults involved, the situation in year 7 turned out as well as, or better than, they had expected.

7.3.2 Parental views:

Parents were pleased with how transition had proceeded, saying that primary teachers had been available for individual discussion on request, and that contact with both schools had been excellent. They praised preparation, communication and the readiness of both primary

and secondary schools to adapt to their child's needs. Most parents were pleased with the idea of a sanctuary / learning centre, although some felt their child would not use it, and these parents' expectations were accurate. The Parent Partnership Service was not widely used by these participants. Five had never used it and two used it for information. One had used it for help with form filling and attended sessions for 'the anxious child' and 'dyslexia'; one made contact but had addressed the matter before the Parent Partnership Officer (PPO) replied.

There was relief at how things turned out, e.g. Beth, whose physical weakness was a concern: Beth's father:

"We were most concerned that it would be physically too much for her. (But) *she's settled in far better than we dared hope for."* Unsurprisingly given the extent of their daughter's needs, Beth's parents had been very concerned that she would not be able to cope at secondary school. They were delighted at what the school had done to accommodate her needs, as advocated by Stephen and Cope (2003).

7.3.3 School factors:

None of the schools reported any lasting difficulties with the transition of these seven pupils. All schools held annual review meetings, two or three IEP reviews each year and further reviews as necessary – although for only one pupil did the adults involved regard the Statement and Annual Review as useful. In all of the primary schools, input included general lessons introducing change and transition, and additional advice and support to pupils with SEN. Secondary school SEN staff liaised early with primary schools about potential pupils, and maintained close links with feeder schools and parents before, during and after transition. All schools adhered to their published SEN policies,

Bullying had also been anticipated but was only reported by two pupils, and was swiftly dealt with.

David Yr7: *"They have a little bit of bullying but it gets sort out straight away."*

David's mother Yr7: *'Name calling, but also having his bag kicked; they twisted his arm behind his back. A 'Social Group' was set up by school. School offered a change of class to escape bullying.'*

David's TA Yr7: *"Bullying was dealt with, including getting him into the social club. Both bully and victim were in the group, which has a good staffing ratio."*

David's transition was exceptional in this sample because he moved from a middle school, but nonetheless illustrates the effectiveness of earlier experience in preparing for transition. It was also exceptional in that there was disagreement about the timing of transfer and choice of school. His mother favoured transition at age 11, David and his teachers would have preferred that he transferred with his middle school peers at age 13. In the event, he transferred successfully despite these initial reservations.

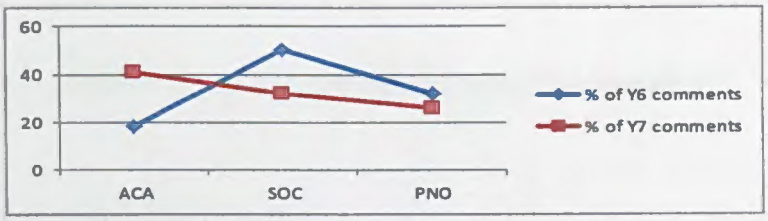
7.3.4 Changes in emphasis of comments

There were clear patterns in the frequency with which each of the emerging themes – academic, social and personal organisation issues – were mentioned by pupils before and after transition. In year 6, most mention was made of social issues, and these reduced in year 7 apart from one girl with Asperger's syndrome who mentioned social issues more often in year 7. However, in year 7 the greatest emphasis was on academic factors, apart from two boys who had the lowest academic difficulties in the sample. Personal organisation was of least concern in both years, with concerns decreasing further in year 7. This changing emphasis is illustrated in the following charts (page 146). (See Appendix 7.1 for the tabular format).

The following graphs illustrate, for each of the seven pupils involved, how the frequency with which they discussed academic, social and personal organisation issues changed between year six and year seven. For most pupils, academic concerns increased in year seven, and social concerns diminished. With personal organisation, the picture was almost exactly balanced, with as many pupils raising this more often as raised it less often. Overall, for those pupils concerned about transition, the situation in year seven was better than anticipated, and for those who did not anticipate concerns, this anticipation was endorsed by their year seven experience.

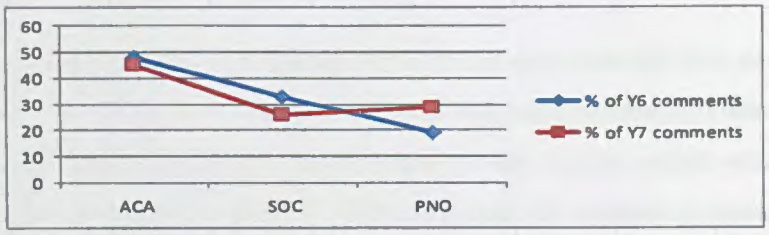
Pupil CH

	% of Y6 co	% of Y7 comments
ACA	18	41
SOC	50	32
PNO	32	26



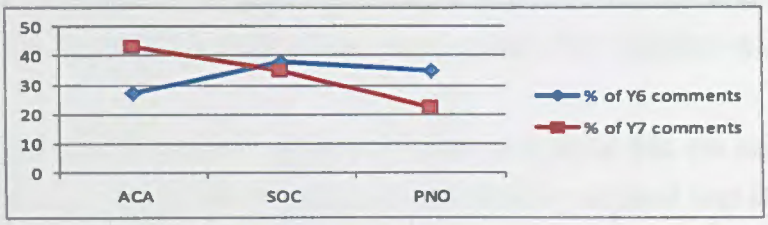
Pupil GH

	% of Y6 co	% of Y7 comments
ACA	48	45
SOC	33	26
PNO	19	29



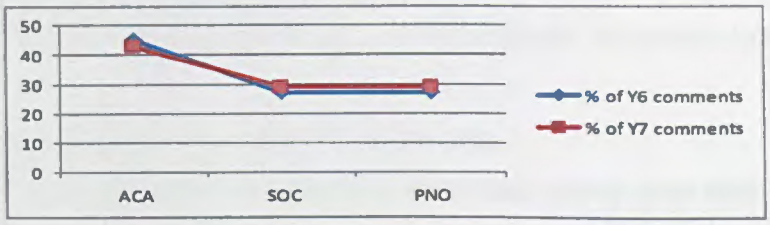
Pupil JT

	% of Y6 co	% of Y7 comments
ACA	27	43
SOC	38	35
PNO	35	22



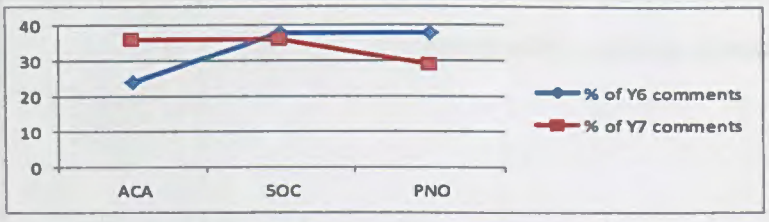
Pupil SM

	% of Y6 co	% of Y7 comments
ACA	45	43
SOC	27	29
PNO	27	29



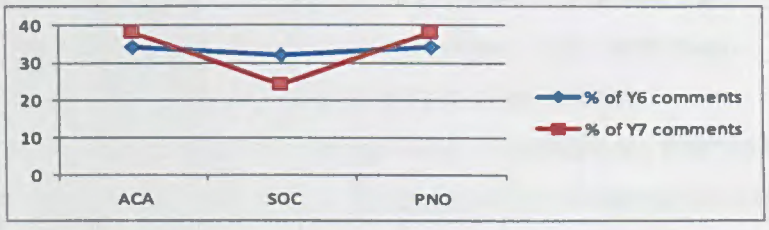
Pupil BM

	% of Y6 co	% of Y7 comments
ACA	24	36
SOC	38	36
PNO	38	29



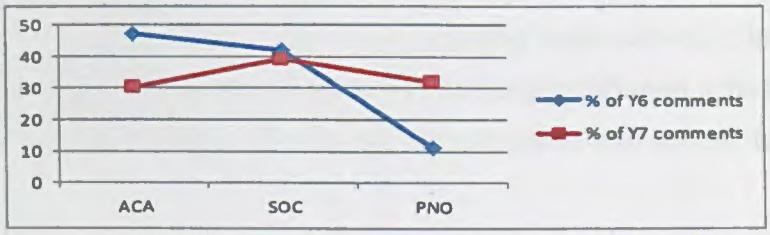
Pupil JF

	% of Y6 co	% of Y7 comments
ACA	34	38
SOC	32	24
PNO	34	38



Pupil OF

	% of Y6 co	% of Y7 comments
ACA	47	30
SOC	42	39
PNO	11	32



7.4 Research Question 2

What factors are seen by pupils, parents and school staff as facilitating this transition?

7.4.1 Provision adapted to meet individual needs

The pupils involved had widely varying academic needs, from those who needed little or no support to those who needed continual TA presence. Except on one rare occasion when a one to one TA was absent, pupils received support appropriate to their needs, which was clearly an important factor in their successful transition. Before transition, academic issues were not the greatest concern; pupils had been given appropriate work and support and so were relatively confident in this respect. The situation was more varied after transition as the 'pace' of work picked up.

David Yr7: *'Well English is, um, medium because some of it's hard and some bits are easy. Once with history I didn't actually get -understand it- because my learning support was ill.'*

David's mother: *"Writing is appalling as well as his spelling"*

David's TA Yr7: *'He carries a lot in his head but can't get it down on paper. He needs lots of TA support, and gets it.'*

Ellie's mother Yr6: *"No real academic problems; she should be okay."*

Ellie mother Y7: *"At parents' evening, teachers reported standards well above what was expected for her age."*

Transition proceeded successfully for the seven children, with these widely varying needs and characters, who remained in the sample.

7.4.2 Common features

A number of factors were common to all seven transitions. Six students described their parents as being fairly relaxed about transition. For all seven children, there was much support from home in preparation for transition, including personal organisation arrangements and liaison with primary and secondary school staff. The students themselves were all very positive about their year six experiences, including positive relationships with staff, although some different individual preferences (for example the need for close support from their teaching assistant – TA) were evident. There were recurring themes in the primary setting relating to successful transition, including frequent communication between school & parents and between schools, also the tailoring of provision, by both home and school, to the needs of the individual pupil.

7.4.3 Liaison and communication with primary schools

All parents were pleased with the primary school's contribution to transition, said that primary teachers were available for individual discussion on request, and that contact with the primary school was excellent. For children with Statements, every primary school held an annual review and two or three individual education plan (IEP) meetings per year, with further communication as necessary. Communication between schools and parents were thus very good. Primary school class teachers all did whole class work on transition, and SENCos gave additional information and advice to children with SEN statements, also advising parents about available support services. Parents and pupils expressed much satisfaction with the schools' approach to and provision for children with SEN, including adapting to changing needs and ensuring ongoing communication. For example, primary school staff provided diligently for Beth's needs, which because of her failing health changed markedly throughout her illness. They were similarly pleased with the support given to them by parents and professionals during the process of transition.

7.4.4 School initiatives

There were many examples of good practice, with Y6 class teachers giving time to the preparation of children for transfer. One notable example was that after SATS, Geoff's experienced year 6 teacher made pupils move room between lessons/ pack up to move class/ bring PE kit bags etc, in preparation for transition. Parents were also very appreciative of the input of TAs; Geoff's mother was typical in commenting very positively about this. Overall, the parents were equally pleased with what had been provided by the secondary school before, during and after transition, including early visits and the idea of a sanctuary/ learning centre in the secondary school, even those who felt that their child would rarely use it. In both secondary schools there was a quiet area staffed by specialist teachers and TAs where some support lessons took place and where students could go, outside of lesson times.

7.4.5 Parental Partnership Service

All local authorities (LAs) in England are required to have a Parent Partnership Service, available to give advice and support on a wide range of issues. These include choosing a school, obtaining support for children with SEN, also the various appeal processes including SEN Tribunals and school exclusions. Reactions to this service were mixed. Five families had never needed to use it, in one case because the mother had detailed knowledge of educational processes through her work as a fostering advisor, in others because no difficulties had arisen. Two families had used it for information and help with form-filling and attended advice sessions, for example about anxious children or dyslexia, which they had found helpful. The fact that most parents saw no need to seek outside help in their

negotiations with the LA or with secondary schools when agreeing school placements is another indication of successful liaison during this process. The evident mutual respect between parents and schools was an important aspect of successful transition.

7.4.6 Documentation

In terms of statutory arrangements for those with SEN, for all but one child, school staff and parents felt that annual reviews (ARs) and Statements were of little value except insofar as the Statements secured resources. Only Beth's Statement was regarded by parents and staff as helpful, as it had been regularly reviewed and therefore accurately detailed her attainments and needs. However, parents and secondary schools applauded the quality of information sent from the primary schools detailing the pupils' needs.

7.4.7 Social factors; students' interpersonal skills and characteristics

All seven pupils were described by staff and parents as being moderately or highly sociable – important when joining new groups and situations. At interview with me they were all remarkably at ease in conversation and sociable towards me, an unfamiliar adult who had come to interview them. Although Alan's academic needs were relatively low, he showed a positive attitude to school, he made much effort, had an outgoing and sociable personality and many sporting interests. Ellie had a mature manner; her academic level was above average in most subjects, she had relatively low needs relating to some social difficulties and she liked everything to be tightly organised. Despite the diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome she managed her social/ communication difficulties, related well to others and had a small number of friends. She was very clear about her own situation, owing to her mum's openness about it. Frank had what his mother described as lack of fear/ imagination which she felt increased his ability to adjust. She noted that some homework was far beyond him, but he did not worry and would just *'Stick a few things down and hand it in; easy for him but not for the rest of us!'* This illustrates Frank's relaxed attitude to academic demands, but also that some demands were unrealistic. Subsequently, work demands were modified so that school expectations were realistic. For others, including Geoff and Harry, their willingness to work hard was seen by staff as an important factor in their successful transition. Geoff's teachers also drew attention to his sociable nature. Some pupils had established friendships outside school. Alan had friends relating to various sporting activities; Frank had two older friends at the secondary school, and new friendships developed following liaison with / information from primary school.

Friendships were clearly important, but not always existing ones. Ellie: *One of my primary friends is in my form, and I do talk to them, but I tend to talk to friends that I've made here. You don't really stop to talk to old friends much. You just tend to hang around with your new friends.*

Ellie's mother: *She doesn't do groups and usually has one close friend (which changes often).*

Ellie's SENCo*: She moved with some 1y classmates but her emphasis was on new friendships.*

Overall, parents were especially pleased with the way in which their child had settled socially, despite initial reservations about 'shuffling' friends into different forms. In both schools there had been one child who had experienced low-level bullying and it had been dealt with swiftly and effectively. This shuffling had been effective for all but one child, who, although he had made new friends, according to his mother, *'didn't have close friends at primary school and still doesn't'*.

7.4.8 Academic Issues

Of the seven pupils post-transition, only one mentioned difficulties with the academic work, specifically homework, but this too was reduced to a manageable limit for him. For this specific group, work had been set at a level sufficient to challenge the pupils, but not to dishearten them. Extensive TA support was available and ongoing where required, including available support outside of lesson time. Science and IT were mentioned as the most popular academic subjects, with the only improvement suggestion being that long projects in humanities should be avoided initially. Non-academic subjects such as arts and cookery were even more popular. The school canteens and snack cart also gained honourable mentions! Prior to transition, the great majority of mentions related to social issues, which was clearly the priority for pupils in the sample. For two pupils, transition had preceded as they had expected, four pronounced it better and one much better than anticipated. Two SS1 parents were initially concerned about the amount of homework, but were reassured when advised to limit each to 30 minutes.

7.4.9 Personal Organisation

Pupils received support appropriate to their needs, as indicated in the vignettes in Chapters 5 and 6, which was helpful in their successful transition and settling in to secondary school. For those moving from the primary school, parents and school staff devised a range of systems for enhancing personal organisation. The most striking example was at Geoff's school, where the class teacher established a quasi-secondary regime in the final term of year 6. Similarly, David moved from a middle school so he too had early experience of the secondary-type timetable. All the parents involved also gave emphasis to helping with personal organisation, including devising checklists and colour-coded timetables.

7.4.10 Student views

Even when the child's view is stated accurately and unequivocally, this does not guarantee that their opinion will be heeded. For example with David, who moved with his twin sister from a middle school at age 11, rather than move to an upper school two years later. He described the decision making process thus:

> *'Mum said you can make your own decision but in the end we didn't get to. She just said you are going there and we said "Oh no!" '*

However, David acknowledged his parents' positive motives. They felt that such a move would give him and his twin sister more time to settle into senior school before public exams. His mother was clear about what was best for them and had frequent contact with both schools. He acknowledged some of the motives involved:

> *'My parents thought I'd get a better education and I'd get used to the system.'*

David's preference for a continuation of the middle school experience was understandable. He was enjoying good relationships with staff and pupils, and would have had an opportunity to gain maturity, and even a senior position there, before transferring to the more 'adult' regime possible in upper school.

Pupils' reactions to their TA varied according to their individual level of need. For the girl in the sample with the highest need, the early allocation of a TA was welcomed by parents and pupil. For others, the increased freedom from the TA's close attention was a relief.

7.4.11 Parental support, collaboration and satisfaction

All pupils in this sample appreciated the extensive support from their parents, for example,
Alan had much parental support with personal organisation and homework;
Beth's father, Yr7: *'Obviously we do make great allowances for her.'*
Ellie's mother prepared her well, and was pleased with the way the transition process went. There was extensive targeted, appropriate and incremental home support (sharing correspondence, early visits to the school site, looking at the website with Ellie, mnemonic strategies, mind-mapping etc.)
Frank's mother devised a timetable at home, also provided help with kit / materials.

> *'I just wrote down (a sort of timetable) and I've got to do one every day now - he loved it! I even factored in maths homework and it just happened! He's a bit obsessed with the timetable on the telly and he writes it down.'*

She communicated very frequently with primary school, but accepted the need to re-adjust to a new and less 'family-oriented' relationship with secondary school. For example, the SENCo at SS2 sent the IEP to Frank's parents for them to sign and return, indicating an unfortunate reduction in parental involvement in ongoing planning, which was surprising given parental willingness to be involved.

Both before and after transition Geoff received extensive support from home, as did Harry, including frequent liaison with both schools, mnemonic strategies including colour coded charts and lists. Harry's mother, Yr7:

> *'He finds organisation hard so we prepare the day before. Have a little schedule including what's needed each day.'*

Parental views of the secondary schools were equally positive; six concluded that their child had settled very well and very quickly, although one child's parents mentioned a delay in recognising the level of their child's dyspraxia. Parents of pupils attending Secondary School 1 were unanimous in their lack of any ongoing concerns and pleased about current ongoing support.

When asked their overall opinion of the situation, all parents described it as excellent. They held the schools in high regard, also the partnership between home and schools. Frank's mother's comments were typical:

> *'I think between the schools, they tried to deal with the majority of his issues and I think that's why he is so settled now.'*

All seven families who remained in the project felt that they had made the right choice of school. An eighth student changed to another school, and although it would have been informative to have investigated the reasons for this, parental withdrawal of permission meant that it was not possible to do so. All parents interviewed were closely involved with their child's education and with the transition process, but with different approaches to the relationship with schools. Some felt *'it helps to be pushy'*, whereas others emphasised the need for partnership. This would suggest that a strongly assertive approach by parents was not necessary in the schools studied, since in all cases, there was close liaison, determination by schools to understand the pupils' needs, and evident respect between those involved.

All parents said their children were quickly able to find their way around the school, although some needed ongoing help with the timetable and having the correct equipment. There was much evidence of home support with these aspects, and one parent of a pupil attending Secondary School 2 thought that their own colour-coded scheme could have been produced by the school. Both secondary schools had a variety of provision in place out of lesson time, including eating areas and a Learning Support Centre. Secondary School 1 also had a chapel which one pupil found helpful in offering 'peace and quiet'.

7.5 Secondary School 1

Secondary School 1 was a Church of England school with an associated distinctly Christian ethos and tradition. It drew pupils from a wide area of the County, so that intending pupils did

not begin familiarisation with the school until year five at the earliest, with the first substantial visit on the induction days, which were very well received by the pupils involved. This lack of local connection did not appear to disadvantage pupils attending Secondary School 1 and no adult or child raised it as an issue. The 2008 OFSTED report described Secondary School 1 as a Church of England Voluntary Aided Secondary School following a tradition of CofE schools in the area since 1535. It became an Academy[6] in August 2011.

With reference to transition arrangements, the report went on to highlight very good induction procedures in place to ensure that all students in Year 7 settle in quickly. It also judged that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made outstanding progress because of the support they received.

There was a chapel which pupils could use at any time. In March 2013 the 'Section 48' (National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools) Report commented that

> *"The distinctiveness and effectiveness of SS1 as a Church of England school are outstanding. The deeply embedded Christian Values of Faith, Justice, Responsibility, Truth and Compassion fundamentally shape every aspect of life and learning at SS1."*

Because the specific Church of England focus meant that SS1 drew from a wide surrounding area, it admitted those willing and able to travel to obtain a broadly Christian education. Therefore, for most prospective students, their first contact with the school was in year 6, although many parents began enquiries when their child was in Y5. Arrangements for those with SEN were co-ordinated by the SENCo who was the Assistant Head (Inclusion) with overall responsibility for those with learning difficulties including dyslexia. There was also an assistant SENCo whose principal focus was on social/ emotional/behavioural matters and autism. The school placed great emphasis on matching TAs to pupils, to best meet the pupils' individual needs.

7.6 Secondary School 2

In Secondary School 2, the pupils with Statements were allocated to one of three tutor groups which had permanent TA support. SS2 SENCo: *'Children with the greatest need are placed in three classes with greatest TA support to ensure teacher/TA/pupil match.'* Also, in the first term, *'we allocate a TA to all classes to help them to organise themselves and to move between lessons, so sometimes there are 2TAs in the lesson.'*

The key workers played a central role. SS2 TA:

> *'We have the overview, are the custodian of the pupil's file and are very much involved in transition. We link with child, parent, teacher and learning support. We*

[6] Academies are self-governing schools funded directly by the government via the Department for Education, and independent of direct control by local government.

collate all scores, set weekly targets and check with their teachers that targets are met. We offer support to parents by 'phone, email and face to face. We try our utmost to make it positive for all students.'

TAs accompanied the SENCo on visits to primary schools also met the children when they visited secondary school. Staff were keen for pupils and parents to visit the school.

'I (SS2 SENCo) *visited all children with statements at primary school. The Head of Y7 and Deputy HoY7 also visited. Also parents visit us on request, and come to parents' evenings. They are encouraged to come and visit as often as they like, and are given someone from the pastoral staff to 'escort' them and show them around.'*

One of the TAs proudly reported that

'We talk to the primary school, asking them to highlight concerns – for example, I went to Frank's school and spoke to primary staff. We meet the children on their visits here. The parents choose us because they know we are nurturing and make great efforts.'

This school too put on workshops, for example on dyslexia, but again turnout was disappointing, *as mentioned by one TA at Secondary School 2:*

'Very few come - perhaps because they already know about it, because of good ongoing contact.'

The school had not undertaken any direct research into the reasons for this, nor did I feel that I could prevail further upon participants. However, this is an area that the schools involved could usefully explore. As to internal communication, the SEN department meets weekly, also has a case study afternoon to discuss two children.

7.7 Common features of the Secondary Schools

Parents and staff placed great emphasis on the ethos of the chosen secondary school, which was evident throughout and reflected in views of parents and staff, e.g. SS1 SENCo:

'Children with social difficulties can be the most difficult to help (but) *our children are nice and try very hard to include children with (that sort of) SEN.'*

Both secondary schools were large, popular schools with good OFSTED evaluations. Both provided an appropriate level of TA input to these pupils, varying from making close support permanently available, to withdrawing support entirely from pupils who had felt self-conscious at the close attention of a TA at primary school. Both these schools espoused and revealed a very 'caring' ethos, as reported in their OFSTED reports, observed by me and commented on by parents. SS1 was specifically Christian / Church of England; SS2 had a very similar calm, nurturing atmosphere. Both secondary schools placed much emphasis on easing the transition process, with additional input for children with SEN and a dedicated space where pupils could find 'sanctuary'.

There was clear evidence of schools' clear appreciation of pupils' individual needs and characteristics, and adapting flexibly to them – for example Beth's teachers responding

flexibly to her varying physical strength and need for regular snacks, but firmly to a tantrum, and taking much care to choose an appropriate TA. Also with Alan, the acknowledgement that he worked hard: Alan's SENCo Yr7: *'He is conscientious and gets 4s & 5s for effort'*, also the distancing of the TA, showing sensitivity to his self-perception, *'He does not need – and certainly would not welcome – being seen to need support in class.'* There were various other examples of a 'caring' ethos in evidence, for example when older pupils moved aside for Beth as she walked along the corridor, clearly aware of her fragility. Further, the form tutor recommended her for a County bravery award, which she received. (See Appendix 5.1)

School staff were positive about the transition of these seven students, saying that all had settled very well, were accepted by their form, and had made friends. Staff placed much emphasis in this area, including reacting swiftly and effectively to rare incidents of perceived bullying. Apart from the neediest student in the sample, those who relied heavily on their TA in primary school had become less dependent on adults and were using the available facilities such as library and learning support centre appropriately. Apart from one TA who was allocated in the July prior to transition, all staff knew in good time about the pupil in question and had had enquiries from parents as early as year 5. Overall, staff felt it would be difficult to improve the transition process as it operated, although the assistant SENCo in SS2 to suggested that primary school staff could usefully visit secondary schools, because

> *"Some are unaware of what we provide & are unnecessarily worried."*

7.8 Choice of School

For all of these pupils, parents received their first choice of school for their child, following correspondence between LA and secondary school. Parents had enquired at length about school ethos, and school expertise/attitude towards SEN. For example, (SS2 TA)
"Harry's parents chose us because they know we are nurturing and make great efforts."
(For a more detailed comparison of the two secondary schools, see Appendix 7.4)

7.9 Recurring themes:

7.9.1 Direct oral communication was highly valued

All adults involved commented on the importance of, and effectiveness of arrangements for, direct communications between parents and school staff, including staff visits to the primary school by SENCo and/or TA. For two pupils heading for SS2, secondary staff worked with them in the primary school where it was felt necessary to establish an early relationship. These arrangements meant that all secondary staff felt that they had sufficient information about the pupils needs to be confident of meeting their needs. In SS1, the SENCo provided Power Point presentations at a staff meeting to outline the needs of the new intake of

students with SEN. In SS2, there were weekly meetings to discuss individual needs of pupils in rotation.

7.9.2 Input was matched to student need

In Secondary School 1, teaching assistant time was allocated by the SENCo according to pupils' individual needs. One student had full-time TA, one had 75% TA, the other two had no directly allocated support but a TA in the class for other pupils, who was available to them as needed. In school SS2, those with statements were allocated to one of three forms with a permanent TA, and in term one of year seven all forms had an additional TA to help with "settling in". Also in school SS2, every child with a statement had a key worker who knew them best, maintained their file, was available for support, and liaised with parents. Secondary staff felt that pupils had been well prepared at primary school for the upcoming academic demands of year 7, and were confident of being able to meet their needs. This was indeed evident in the response of pupils and parents to questions about academic demands being made, also in staff comments, (SS2 SENCo):

'Students feel they are coping well because we make sure they have work they can manage'

The support provided was also a factor. The assistant SENCo at SS1 said students were

"OK given a high level of support – including withdrawal".

One SS1 TA suggested,

'It would be good if they could meet subject teachers earlier, e.g. on the induction day.'

However, this was not a widely-held view, might have become confusing to students and been impractical, given ongoing teaching demands on academic staff.

In both schools the amount of work was adjusted to be manageable, although staff reported occasional problems with homework completion.

SS1 SENCo: *"Beth is limited by tiredness but is helped a lot by home.*

SS2 SENCo: Work is adjusted considerably for Frank, who

"Wants to do the same as others but cannot."

Secondary School 2 made adjustments to meet Geoff's needs, e.g. explicitly limiting homework demands, also responding to "bullying". Harry's parents praised SS2 staff readiness to take on board suggestions from home and adjust to meet his needs.

The personal organisation skills of these students were varied, although all managed to follow their timetable and find the right room very soon after school transition. Those who needed additional support with personal organisation received it from parents and TAs; in SS2 the TA support involved regular Friday meetings to clarify work and homework demands.

School staff reported no problems at break or lunch times, given the range of activities available. Beth was easily distracted at lunchtimes so was encouraged to focus on eating for 15 minutes to reduce the problem of weakness in the afternoon.

Staff were very satisfied overall with the transition arrangements for these students, with very good feedback from parents. Small problems were dealt with as they arose. As one TA at SS2 remarked:

> *"Children will always have butterflies / teething troubles / problems finding your way around the building. The process can't be made totally painless, but we do all we can to make the pain as light and as short as possible."*

At SS1 Beth is treated equally – for example in response to a tantrum - but helped when necessary. Beth's SENCo Yr7:

"We allow her to stay at the Learning Centre at lunchtime. She has friends who all understand that she needs extra help. I (TA) eat with her – we share food. She has friends, who take turns to come to the Learning Centre with her and play games.

The above examples illustrate that these were very much in evidence in the schools visited during this research. There was much additional evidence of staff preparation, and efforts to respond appropriately to the individual pupil including reacting to parental feedback:

Harry, Year 7: *"They simple it down."*

SS2 SENCo, *'These three think they are doing OK as we aim to keep them confident. They are tested and setted, and of course we adjust the work to their level so that they can manage.'*

David received extensive support and advice from his middle school SENCo and from the secondary school prior to transition, also extensive TA support. He made progress in literacy and in personal organisation, although he had ongoing difficulties in these areas. He was aware of and appreciative of the extensive provision and support network available at his new school, and received much positive feedback from staff. The assistant SENCo acknowledged that despite Ellie's 'Asperger's' diagnosis she could relate to others, and went on to explain that the school does some 'juggling' of students into forms. This indicates that the SENCo's expectations and understanding of the nature and extent of a pupil's disability can impact on her practice. Clearly she was aware that pupils with the same 'diagnosis' can have very varied needs, and that the Asperger's syndrome spectrum is wide. Female psychologists known to this student have commented that all men are on the Asperger's spectrum, but just at different points!

Frank's learning needs were well met. He was placed in the lowest set and had a key worker and TA in all classes, as well as home support; his mother said he was getting on very well, had fitted in very nicely with no problems. She felt both schools did their best to prepare him, given his low attainments. Although her main focus had been on social acceptance, this reflected her concern that academic demands too might have been too great for him. His

parents appreciated school's readiness to respond to queries/concerns. Some expectations of homework were too high but were adjusted on request. His mother felt that the process had worked well and

> *'Well-I don't think the schools could have done any more. His academic levels are pretty low. I think they did what they could to make the work appropriate.'*

David's TA, Yr7: *"He needs lots of TA support. He carries a lot in his head but can't get it down on paper."*

David Yr7: *"Once with history I didn't actually get-understand it-because my learning support person was ill."*

Harry, Yr7: *"Yes, and in science there's 2 TA's in one lesson."*

SS2 SENCo: *"We allocated a TA to all classes to help them to organise themselves in the first term, so sometimes there were 2TAs in the lesson. So the neediest children had a TA in all lessons at first, to help them organise themselves and to move between lessons."*

Conversely, both Alan and Ellie were very clear in their preference that they did not want a TA in close attendance.

Geoff's mother, Yr7: *"Some bullying (from someone in) year eight; (was) quickly dealt with. School offered a 6th form 'Buddy'. Mrs P emphasised that he can come to her however small the problem."*

7.9.3 Much non-academic provision was available

A wide range of sporting activities was provided, which suited some pupils such as Alan and Frank.

7.9.4 There was good communication / exchange of information

There was widespread agreement that communication between home and school had been extensive and helpful, with similar extensive liaison between schools before transition including two-way exchange visits. Parents and school staff highlighted the importance of all involved 'working together'.

Beth's father: "*They (SS1) were keen to talk to us and respond to anything we said."*

There was frequent and open communication about David's needs between home and school and between schools. David's mother praised the home-school communication, communications between schools and the strong anti-bullying policy at the secondary school. There was extensive preparation by and liaison between both schools and Ellie's parents. Ellie's local primary school provided a caring environment, liaised closely with home and sought support from the service for children with ASD. Secondary staff visited the primary school, established that they could meet Ellie's needs, arranged additional visits for her and communicated freely with parents. They provided a gentle introduction to the curriculum and made support available from the SENCo, form tutor, chapel and school nurse. There was frequent and open communication between Harry's home and school, and between schools. This was also true for Geoff. Where parents and pupils were anxious and needed frequent contact this was available, including e-mail addresses of staff. Secondary school staff made contact when appropriate, and offered support and reassurance in the event of concerns.

There was close agreement between the responses of pupil, parent and school staff about the extent of the pupils' academic, social and personal organisational needs, and how they should be met, for example:

Ellie's SENCo, Yr7: *"The key area is coping with people and feelings, and interaction."*

Ellie: "I did tend to just stay on my own so that I could figure things out on my own."

Ellie's SENCo, Yr7: *She has Asperger's syndrome but can relate to others. "The placement is working really well."*

The secondary schools also responded and communicated rapidly with home when necessary, for example:

Harry's Mother, Yr7: *"Once his yoghurt spilt all over his bag...he had what we call it a red zone - they got him to phone me... I got his levels down and the school staff ... (dealt with it so that) he was able to continue on for the rest of the day."* However, as mentioned in chapter 6, the question of whether such responses were appropriate, or were maintaining behaviour which might otherwise have been extinguished, was not explored.

Such information and opportunities were clearly made available by the school staff encountered during this research. However, in terms of formal documentation, although Beth's SEN statement and reviews were detailed and valued by the adults involved, for everyone else these were not regarded as useful.

Although the full records which passed to the new school were not read by David's TA:

'I haven't had time to read the Statement" going on to explain, "It's better to give the child a fresh start and make your mind up on what you see,'

this was not a typical reaction, and not a view that I shared. All other staff – for example Beth's TA at secondary school - felt that detailed knowledge of a child's strengths, difficulties and needs was important preparation for the pupils' arrival, and she had gained this through visiting the primary school and by reviewing the available 'paperwork'

7.9.5 There was close co-operation and mutual respect: between parent and school and between schools

For example, Beth's parents held both schools in high regard and felt that Beth was responding well to what was provided. Both schools acknowledged the extensive support given by parents. Beth's SENCo Yr7 (when commenting about Beth's primary school): *"They were very nurturing and had met her needs well, including during her periods of ill-health."*

Ellie's mother's view was also typical*: "The key is the support, and everybody communicating. I would have said that the balance was just right, which has everything to do with the staff at the schools and our input as parents, and Ellie - everybody working together. I think she's in the best possible place."*

The preparation experienced by these year 6 pupils was broadly similar, but two specific areas are worthy of mention. Firstly, David attended a middle school (as proposed in the Plowden Report of 1964 and 'deemed secondary' for OFSTED purposes), which operated a

secondary-type curriculum. Clearly, this meant that David had far greater familiarity with the demands of classroom and timetable changes than other students in this sample.
Secondly, Harry's experienced Yr6 class teacher prepared children for transfer by setting up a 'virtual' secondary school system. His mother commented,
"He had an excellent year six teacher who prepared them well"
Both of these situations offered pupils an early experience of a 'secondary school type' regime.

7.10 Transition was rarely mentioned in school or OFSTED documentation

even though it is raised in national documentation – both historical and impending.
There is much similarity between historical and proposed national documentation concerning school transition, including appropriate preparation, and taking account of the views of parents and pupils. For example, the 2001 Code of Practice stated:

> *(Paragraph 2:1)*
> *Partnership with parents plays a key role in promoting a culture of co-operation between parents, schools, LEAs and others. This is important in enabling children and young people with SEN to achieve their potential.* (The question of whether any person *ever* reaches their potential is surely worthy of further research!)
> *(Paragraph 3:1)*
> *All children and young people have rights. Most references to rights are about what is due to children from others, particularly from their parents and the state and its agencies. This chapter is about the right of children with special educational needs to be involved in making decisions and exercising choices.*

As will be clear from the evidence cited throughout this thesis, the schools concerned maintained a high standard of practice in meeting the needs of the pupils with SEN studied, including practices associated with their transition between schools.
The above arrangements were clearly in place in the schools encountered for purposes of this research; they were clearly following the SEN Code of Practice in these respects.

Within the current study there was very little evidence of transition being mentioned in school documentation, either for all pupils or for those with SEN, nor is it mentioned in OFSTED inspection schedules. All schools adhered to their own SEN policies but only two of these mentioned transition. However, transition procedures were in place and worked well for these seven pupils. Hopefully the enhanced requirements in proposed national changes will lead to improvements in this respect.

7.11 Concerns about future levels/systems of funding:

Expressed by an Education Officer

Despite this LA's commitment to keeping up with impending changes (see Appendix 7.3) – for example, it is a Pathfinder authority, with a group looking into Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) – an Education Officer interviewed expressed concern about how future arrangements would work. Plans to move to a 'Next Steps' scheme over an 8 year period, with money no longer attached to statements, starting with Reception were accelerated and brought in immediately. Funding for statements was devolved to schools by formula (based

on the number on a school's roll (NOR) and the number of pupils receiving free school meals (FSM) and not according to Statements, School Action etc. Funding will in future be assigned to schools according to bands. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this change. The LA is cutting back on support services – for example those supporting pupils with autism, with impaired hearing or with impaired vision – with services merged and reduced to cut costs, moving to a commissioning model often involving non-teachers. For example, the autism service outreach team now has 12 TAs and 'very few' teachers. Officers were concerned about how schools could ensure quality control, for example for HI input, once funding was devolved. Another pressure was that some private special schools offer 'free' assessment places, parents are impressed by the school and ask the LA to continue the funding. Parents may then reject perfectly adequate local provision for their child, and opt instead for transition to a more distant school.

Expressed by school staff and parents

Staff and parents too expressed concern about future funding/support services such as services for students with autism. There is a clear need for ongoing research into the effect of such changes. Without such support, parents and staff were not confident that Beth's needs, for example, could continue to be met. David's mother similarly expressed concern about future funding and resources. Despite the obvious optimism about Ellie's future at Secondary School 1, staff and parents were concerned that resources might not be available to meet changing needs.

Secondary School 2 SENCo:

'It will be different next year. There is much concern about falling funding / different systems. The department is to be re-structured. Also we will be losing some LA services, e.g. 'Back In' also the Autism service faces an uncertain future.'

SEN statements and annual reviews were not highly valued

The SEN Statement for Beth was regarded by those involved as up-to-date, detailed, accurate and useful; multi-professional reviews were regularly held. For the other six pupils, Statements were seen as helpful in securing resources, but as carrying little or no useful information and the associated paperwork played little part in the transition process. Furthermore, there were other pupils with higher needs, relating to their combination of learning and behavioural problems, who transferred with no notification or additional resources. The SS2 SENCo felt that the system worked fine for those with a Statement: *"However, there are other children with equally high needs who come to us with no paperwork."*

The fact that some of those with Statements did not have the greatest needs was reflected in the reluctance of some to attend 'vulnerable pupils' day' with pupils whose needs appeared much greater since they felt they were *"not as 'bad' as those."* Despite their relatively low

needs, their SEN Statements had not been discontinued. There are indications in my current research, also from my 24 years as an educational psychologist that some schools seek to reduce bureaucracy by retaining Statements on those who no longer warrant them, but use the available resources pragmatically and so avoid the need to undertake Statutory Assessment for other pupils. At least two of the seven pupils stood out as having very low needs, and another two would not have had statements in almost all secondary schools of my acquaintance. This principle - of using available resources to avoid the need for further Statutory Assessment - was described to me by two local SENCos and, in my experience, is well-established (pragmatic and understandable) practice. It illustrates that, whatever the merits and intended precision of the original and proposed legislation and regulations, schools can be expected to negotiate the system creatively in order to meet the complex SENs of their pupils. Further investigation of the literature failed to reveal academic research into this area, which is ripe for further investigation.

It has been demonstrated that the successful transition experienced and acknowledged by the participants was excellent for the pupils.

Transition was only mentioned in three of the nine OFSTED reports studied by me, as it is not a requirement of OFSTED school inspections.

in this project the low-level bullying experienced was quickly dealt with - see Geoff, above. Overall, there was much evidence that the adults involved were clear about the needs of these students and adapted provision in order to meet these, rather than expecting pupils to make do with whatever was generally available.

7.12 Problems specific to one primary school

Problems with school being near the county border: Head Teacher;

> *"We invite the local authority and therapists but it is hard for them to come because we are too far away."*

This referred to the input of specialists into review meetings for pupils with SEN, rather than to a shortfall in specialist assessments or necessary ongoing input. There were also some complications with GPs etc *"It would help if GP asked parents to go via the school."*

The issue here was that school staff were in the best position to understand the relative needs of the pupil in relation to their peers, also to know which agency was the appropriate one to deliver any necessary provision. It was clear that this concern had not been addressed, for example by correspondence/advice from the school to local GPs, so an opportunity may have been missed.

2) The local availability of private education and its effect on a school's year six SATs. The Head Teacher pointed out that pupils accepted by private schools tended to be the more able members of the class, which 'diluted' the overall scores. She concluded that such changes affected the school's position in 'league tables' relative to other schools, and thus unjustly affected parental views about the academic standards of the school, and the

subsequent intake of pupils. Although I did not investigate the accuracy of this view, it was clearly a concern strongly felt by the Head Teacher.

3) Two children missed some of the 'vulnerable day' last year because their parents with English as an additional language (EAL) didn't understand so the children missed the bus. The Head Teacher felt that this was felt more acutely in schools where so few parents had English as their first language, so were not in receipt of advice about how to manage such situations.

7.13 Improvement suggestions:

Increased opportunities for familiarisation:

Beth's primary SENCo: Secondary TAs could 'shadow' their pupils in class to get to know them when visiting the primary school. Similarly, secondary staff felt that it would be useful for primary staff to spend time in secondary schools to get a fuller picture of what was offered.

SS1 TA: *"It would be good if TAs could meet parents in the run-up to July – e.g. half an hour on the induction day. The parents would be reassured and the TAs would get more information."* Anderson (2011) similarly suggest that,

> *"All teachers should spend some time visiting or teaching in other key stages, as both have much to offer towards the professional development of their counterparts." (p15)*

Once again, this helpful idea would seem to be feasible, with appropriate timetabling of TAs.

Increased 'readability' of written material:

Frank's Mother felt that the letters about transition were mainly for adults and something aimed more at children, possibly including pictures, would have been helpful.

Geoff's Mother: *"Provide copies of all documents and library notices in 'easy-read' format so that children can read them. If there had been something similar to what I've produced, produced by the primary or secondary school, that would have been helpful."*

This development would not only help many pupils, it would also help parents with literacy difficulties. Clearly, the reading level would have to be set low enough to enable the great majority of pupils to read it, but sufficient to make the process intelligible.

Additional measures for those with SEN:

> Harry's Father: *"Have a transition meeting for SEN only, because there are questions you are not comfortable to ask at the generalised meeting because you don't want to bring notice to your child."* Also, *"Have booster input for those with SEN instead of or after SATS".*

Harry's primary SENCo suggested an interactive tour on DVD, including input from Year 7 pupils, also more independence training from parents, e.g. travelling by bus.

This chapter has presented the findings from the research and as such enables the reader to see the evidence upon which the conclusions drawn in the following chapters are made. The direct quotations from participants illustrated the experiences of stakeholders and providers

at this critical period of children's lives. By examining these findings and the detail provided within the pupil vignettes, it is possible to gain an understanding of those critical factors that have influenced successful transition between primary and secondary schools for pupils with a range of SEN.

CHAPTER 8

Discussion of findings

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the findings presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7 and discusses these in relation to previously published research. Subsequently, the findings are summarised in order that issues and implications can be further discussed in the final chapter. Recurring themes are highlighted, and the merits and shortcomings of observed systems are discussed. As in the previous chapter, this section of the thesis is presented directly in relation to the two research questions:

1) Pupils with SEN statements making the transition between mainstream schools at age 11; how do participants' expectations compare with actual experience?

2) What factors are seen by pupils, parents and school staff as facilitating this transition?

The subsequent chapter (nine) provides summary and conclusions, and offers suggestions for further research.

8.2 Overview

One common theme was the students' very affirmative opinions of their year six experiences, including positive relationships with staff, notwithstanding the students' different preferences, for example about contact with TAs. Maras and Aveling (2006) found a similar pattern in their six case studies. An example of very close support was at Beth's school, where staff provided diligently for her needs, which because of her failing health changed markedly throughout her illness. This was enhanced by the support provided by parents and professionals during the process of transition. These findings are in keeping with the fact that SEN provision in these primary schools had all been assessed as satisfactory or good in recent OFSTED inspections, as shown in the tables accompanying each vignette and from my own observations. However, transition was only mentioned in three of these reports examined, as it is not a requirement of OFSTED school inspections. This is a surprising omission, to which attention is later drawn.

Also at secondary school level, both schools made adult support readily available, for example by providing a quiet area staffed by specialist teachers and TAs, where some support lessons took place and where students could go, outside of lesson times. The value of this is highlighted in research by Maras and Aveling (2006), who found that parents saw the most helpful factors as the continuation of support, and the provision of 'a dedicated space' such as a special needs unit.

In common with the findings of previous research, all of the pupils settled in well socially, with occasional contact with former friends but mostly making new ones. Some expressed concerns about friendships - as Measor and Woods (1984) and West, Sweeting and Young (2010) found - but these were short-lived, as was also evident in the work of Galton, Gray and Rudduck (1999 and 2003). Despite anxieties before transition, and the shift in emphasis of pupils' comments from social issues in year six, to academic issues in year 7, no students expressed unhappiness or ongoing concerns after six months in their new school. This mirrors the findings of Evangelou *et al* (2008) who found that for most, anxiety is relatively short-lived. In their study, only 3% expressed ongoing anxiety at the end of the first term, which echoed findings by Galton, Gray, and Ruddock, (2003). Topping (2011) on the other hand found that many children adjusted after the first term, although 40 per cent still struggled after a year. There may be a temporal factor to explain these apparent anomalies. Lohaus *et al* (2004) suggest that the impact of transition may vary according to the time when the data were collected.

For five of the students in this study, transition had proceeded better than anticipated, and for the other two the experience was as agreeable as they had anticipated. Again this reflects findings of earlier studies, for example quantitative studies which indicated that transition did not lead to diminished well-being (Measor and Woods 1984; Pratt and George 2005).

Throughout this research, several factors were clearly associated with successful transition, key among which was that the adults involved took pains to understand the individual needs of the pupils before, during and after transition, and put in place systems to meet them. Also, immediate concerns were quickly dealt with, so were short-lived.

The calm approach of the parents was very evident. Six of the students felt that their parents were fairly relaxed about transition and only Harry, the most anxious pupil, did not. Zeedyk *et.al* (2003) found similarity between parents' and students' views prior to transfer and suggest it is reasonable to assume

> *'that a causal relation may exist between the two; if a parent becomes aware of a child's concerns they may well come to share them, and vice versa'.*

The extent to which the children agreed because they believed in what they said, or because they have been acculturated in believing so, is discussed below in relation to the work of Arnot and Reay (2007) about pupil voice.

Students were all very positive about their transition experience, and especially about relationships with staff, although they expressed different preferences, for example about the

need for close attention from a TA. This difference in preference was also found by Maras and Aveling (2006) who examined primary/secondary transition through six case studies, and noted that the expectations and needs of children with similar needs varied, for example, their need for close support from staff who were then known as Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) – a term which has largely been replaced by 'Teaching Assistants' (TAs).

On the evidence gathered from interviews, it was apparent that all schools adhered to their published SEN policies, as reviewed by me and by OFSTED. Although only 3 policies mentioned transition at age 11 – and this was only mentioned in one OFSTED report - the transition practice of all schools was effective with respect to the pupils in this research.

8.3 Research question 1 - Have expectations been met?

For the five pupils about whose transition concern had been expressed – and which were similar to those in West *et.al's* (2010) study – the experience was less stressful than had been anticipated. Bullying had been a common concern, and Dupper (2013) argues that bullying impacts the learning environment of schools in profound ways. He says that victims of chronic bullying have poorer grades; more frequent truancy; increased rates of dropping out; loss of self-esteem; feelings of isolation and depression, and in extreme cases even attempt suicide. However, bullying was only reported as having been experienced by two of these seven pupils, and then not a huge one, since it was dealt with promptly. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that some pupils may not disclose bullying, so it can be difficult to estimate its frequency in schools, especially based on pupil views. For example, Olweus (2013) argues against relying on peer nominations when estimating prevalence of bullying across groups and time. He points to two large-scale projects which demonstrated the exaggerated nature of some claims in the media and by some researchers about the prevalence of cyber bullying. However he acknowledges that where bullying exists, it can have consequences way beyond school, and lead to serious difficulties for adjustment and public health outcomes. Nevertheless in the current research bullying was rarely evident - as apparent in OFSTED reports, the schools' ethos and atmosphere and the views of staff, parents and pupils; even when bullying was reported it was at a very low level and dealt with quickly.

Thus, those who had expressed concerns before transition said that these had been unfounded; possibly their negative anticipation influenced their judgements of what actually happened, making these over-positive? Their responses are very much in keeping with findings from other research in this area, in that reality turns out to be far less painful than expected. For example Chedzoy and Burden (2005) surveyed 207 Year 6 students and found that pupils had been worried by *'rites-of-passage myths'* about difficulties anticipated during the transition period, but that these were unfounded. They also demonstrate what the

authors called the *'disconfirmation'* of those myths for most students after a relatively short period of time, especially with regard to psycho-social relationships.

8.4.1 Academic Issues

Although much research focuses on whether there is a dip in academic performance following transition, this was not addressed in this thesis, which looks instead at participants' perspectives on the process. Whitby *et.al* (2006) investigated this phenomenon in 14 countries/states by looking at policy documents, research reports and responses to a questionnaire. The 14 countries/states responding to the questionnaire included eight European countries, Japan, three Australian states, one USA state, and one Canadian state. Nine said that there was a dip, and only one stated categorically that dips did not occur. However, none of the 14 was able to produce clear supportive evidence of a dip in performance in their country/state. Four countries acknowledged this lack of evidence and that they were not sure whether or not a dip had occurred there. Evidence from both policy and research documentation indicated that a dip was observed in many but not all of the countries studied. One consistent finding, though, was that least progress is made by students during their middle years (age 11-14), the period when most pupils transfer from primary to secondary education. The authors conclude that

> *'The risk of a dip following transfer to secondary school may be due to young people's experience of change, including teaching and learning styles, curriculum experiences, school organisation, friendship and social circumstances. A period of adjustment to these changes might be required* (p2).'

For the students in this research, 'academic' work at secondary school was set at an appropriate level, so as to challenge but not dishearten the students involved. Only one had had problems with the work, specifically homework, but this too was swiftly modified to an appropriate level. Suitable TA support was made available, including outside of lesson time. Most popular subjects were Science and IT, with only long humanities projects being mentioned as problematic, the suggestion being that these should be avoided at first. The issue of a 'dip' in performance was not raised by any of the participants, but since this issue was not the focus of this research it was not investigated, and no conclusions can be drawn in this area.

8.4.2 Social issues

The issue of a potential mismatch between pupils' expectations and actual experience is one of the key research questions being addressed in this thesis. Following the various initiatives made by the receiving schools, all students settled in well socially; there was infrequent

contact with former friends but they swiftly made new ones. Some voiced worries about friendships - as Measor and Woods (1984) and West, Sweeting and Young (2010) found - but these were short-lived, as also evident in the work of Galton, Gray and Rudduck (1999 and 2003). In his review of 88 studies, Topping (2011) noted that teachers' perspectives and children's perspectives were very different, the former principally concerned with attainment and the latter with socio-emotional issues. This was not precisely reflected in the current study, which of course relates solely to students with SEN; SENCos responded with great care to the students' social needs, as did the parents interviewed. Further, the main focus of the students concerns shifted from social to academic issues during year 7.

8.4.3 Personal organisation issues

In this area too, pupils received support from both home and school matched to their needs, as illustrated in the preceding vignettes, which contributed to their successful transition and settling in to secondary school. Thompson *et.al* (2003) suggested that the primary school should help the pupil to practise self-organisation. This was certainly evident in this research for all pupils, and was complemented by the induction arrangements at secondary school and by various parental initiatives.

8.5 Facilitating Factors: Specific factors:

8.5.1 Pupil factors

In examining those factors which account for differences in transition experiences, West, Sweeting and Young (2010) found that secondary school factors appeared to play no part, primary school factors to play some part, and *pupils' personal characteristics were most important.* In the current project there were many examples of pupils' personal characteristics which contributed to smooth transition. Although Measor and Woods (1984) found that those with established friendship groups were at an advantage, all seven pupils in the current project settled well socially, even those with limited or no friendships before transfer. This was a testament to the atmosphere in their secondary schools, and the efforts made by the schools to ease the transition process.

8.5.1.1 The Pupil Voice

Clearly, there has been increasing emphasis on seeking 'the pupil voice' when investigating issues which concern the pupil. In 1989, the world's leaders officially recognised the human rights of all children and young people under 18 by signing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Those articles which refer directly to seeking the views of the child are:
Article 12: (Respect for the views of the child.) Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

Article13: (Freedom of expression.) Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive information of any kind as long as it is within the law. This of course places much responsibility on the researcher. Walmsley (2004) argues that the terms of engagement need to be negotiated between everyone involved and protocols need to focus on how rapport is established and boundaries maintained.

However, having established effective rapport does not guarantee that the child is not inhibited from reporting their views accurately. For all sorts of reasons, the child may feel the need to underplay concerns and not admit to difficulties, for example:
Plowden Report (1967) Page 159: 427.

> *"Children, like adults, enjoy and are stimulated by novelty and change..... So strong is the myth that 'going up' must mean going to something better that some children, who are hopelessly bewildered by secondary school work, persist in saying that all is well."*

Arising from this research is evidence that even when the student has clear and strongly articulated views, these may not be taken into account. The strongest example was with David, who although he acknowledged his parents' motives, did not wish to move from a middle school at age 11. There are few middles schools in the country, and discussions are ongoing about closing those in the county where this research was based. Thus, one of the potential advantages of the three-tier system of lower, middle and upper school advocated in Plowden – that the middle school regime closely resembles that of the senior school so students are accustomed to a secondary-type environment – is rarely available. In such a setting, David enjoyed good relationships with staff and pupils and was gaining in maturity. He would have preferred to move to an upper school two years later, but this was denied. However, he readjusted to the reality of his new situation and settled well into secondary school.

It is often pointed out that the pupil voice carries little weight, including far beyond these and similar local issues. As Arnot and Reay (2007) further suggest, analysis of the relationship between education and the economy, and the role of national regulation and authority, suggests that pupil voice can never carry the full weight of societal reform. Further,
'Caution is needed in assuming that power relations can be changed through the elicitation of student talk.' Arnot and Reay (2007:311)

Since the three-tier structure of schooling has now been overwhelmingly rejected in the UK, it will not be discussed further in this thesis. However, this section illustrates the point about the power balance between pupil and adult. As Arnot and Reay emphasised, researchers should be aware how difficult it is to ascertain genuine or socially distinguishable voices, given the tense and often conflicting interactions between dominant and dominated voices, of the sort illustrated during the course of David's transition.

It is clearly important for the researcher to try not to influence the pupil's views, although this can be a difficult task. In their own research into pupils' perspectives on classroom interactions, Arnot & Reay (2006b) explored *'code talk'*, asking pupils about the framing rules and the pedagogic democratic rights that shape learning in classrooms. They found that children could recognise power relations and their own position in them but could not speak the expected legitimate text or *'produce the legitimate communication'* (2006:17). They argued that these children have acquired the legitimate pedagogic code, but they will have experienced their place in the classificatory system. They conclude that the process of student consultation does not differ significantly from other educational encounters. It is about having an appropriate relationship with the teacher (interviewer/researcher) which will best facilitate effective communication.

8.5.2 Parental factors

Parental support was very much in evidence for all pupils in this sample, with many examples of carefully considered support for personal organisation, and regular communication with their child's school. Re-adjustment is not just required of students; parents too have to come to terms with a different relationship between home and school, involving not only less frequent communication, but also adapting to the less family-oriented link. An illustration of this was that SS2 sent IEPs to parents for them to approve, rather than invite them in to discuss progress and future plans, despite parental willingness to be involved. This shortcoming is not picked up in the OFSTED report; this again is an unsatisfactory omission which could easily be remedied.

The different parents adopted different styles of communication with schools, with some feeling the need to be forceful, whereas others emphasised the need for partnership. In the schools studied, there was clearly no need to be strongly assertive, since whatever the parental approach, there was close liaison between home and school, much effort on the part of school to ascertain and meet student needs, and obvious respect between participants. This is a more favourable picture than that arising out of the study by Tobin et. al (2012), where parents reported too little support for them regarding options and transition planning, and a lack of understanding among secondary school staff. This difference is perhaps explained by the nature of the sample participating in my research, which latter point is discussed in chapter 9.

8.5.3 School factors:

8.5.3.1 Factors specific to Secondary School 1

This Church of England school attracted pupils from across the County, with the potential disadvantage that future students would have limited opportunities for familiarisation with the school until the induction days. However, this was not mentioned by any of the participants

as a disadvantage. Responsibility for students with SEN rested with the SENCO/Deputy Head (literacy) and with the Assistant SENCO (behaviour/ASD) who both stressed that each had developed a high level of expertise in their specialism; TAs working directly to the programmes and approached advocated by these teachers.

8.5.3.2 Factors specific to Secondary School 2

This rural school served pupils from nearby primary schools, whose pupils could enjoy the school's sports facilities and thus become well acquainted with the school in the years preceding transition. TAs were given considerable responsibility for 'their' students with Statements, being the student's fist point of contact, custodian of their file and the person who liaised with parents. A further example of the trust placed in TAs was that one had a specialist role providing literacy input to 23 year 7 pupils. Despite these differences between the two schools in catchment areas and staffing arrangements, there was evidently no negative impact on the transition of the students interviewed.

8.5.3.3 Factors common to both secondary schools

Local Authority arrangements for transition were common to both schools, and indeed across the whole county, and included early decision-making arrangements for students with SEN Statements. (See Appendix 7.2) This facilitated early communication between parents, schools and LA about needs, available resources and choice of school, and was an important element in securing appropriate placement and resourcing. Communication between schools was systematic and comprehensive, with both secondary schools sending staff to the feeder primaries, including SEN staff to meet with students with Statements and to collect additional information. Both schools were also very welcoming to prospective parents; parents and staff emphasised the importance of the ethos of the chosen secondary school. Both schools espoused a very 'caring' character, as reported in their OFSTED reports, observed by me and commented on by parents. A notable example is that older pupils moved aside as the somewhat fragile Beth moved towards them. Both schools normally held additional induction days for those with SEN or who were considered 'vulnerable'. Student reaction to this additional day was varied, with two of the four students transferring SS1 keen for their attendance there not to be widely known; clearly, it is important for all involved to be sensitive to the student's self-perception. Some clearly did not want to be seen as having SEN. This was not a factor at SS2 where the additional session was cancelled, and although parents and staff regretted this, the proximity of feeder primary schools meant that pupils with SEN and their parents were able to make additional visits as desired.

Both schools were very sensitive to, and flexible about, the level of TA support provided to students with Statements, according to the size and nature of pupil's individual needs and preferences. Some students had become less dependent on adults and were using the available facilities such as library and learning support centre appropriately. Both schools

had a nurturing atmosphere of quiet calm. Both paid much attention to facilitating the transition process, with extensive liaison with parents and primaries, additional SEN support and a form of 'sanctuary'. When Maras and Aveling (2006) examined primary/secondary transition for children with SEN through six case studies, parents saw the most helpful factors as the continuation of support, and the provision of 'a dedicated space' such as a special needs unit. These were both evident in my research. Maras and Aveling (2006) highlight the work of Cumine, Leach and Stevenson (1998), which although aimed at pupils with Asperger's syndrome, showed that strategies such as the above were helpful in easing transition. The success of the transitions researched was reflected in the positive comments of all participants, for example secondary school staff said that all pupils had settled well and made friends – an area which they emphasised. This was at odds with the findings of Topping (2011), and again it must be acknowledged that this may be a result of the specific features of this sample.

8.5.3.4 Choice of School

Following their extensive enquiries about school ethos and approach to SEN, all parents were allocated their first choice of school, having had the advantage that the process for allocating places for those with SEN was initiated well before arrangements were made for the majority. Clearly, this allowed more time for the parents of students with SEN to meet with staff, seek specific information and explore possibilities – a very positive benefit to the student of having an SEN Statement.

8.6 Common recurring themes:

8.6.1 Direct communication was highly valued

The issue most frequently praised by parents was that communications with schools and between schools had been open and effective. This included the willingness of primary school staff to meet with parents, and secondary school staff visits to the primary school, either by teaching staff or teaching assistants. Following transition, secondary school staff were available for liaison with parents to a remarkable and impressive degree, whether by email, telephone or direct contact.

8.6.2 Input was matched to student need

All but one of the secondary school staff interviewed said that they valued the amount and detail of information received from the primary schools, and made use of it in preparing to meet individual students' needs. Thus the amount and nature of demands made on students was very largely appropriate to their current performance but sufficient to provide challenge – commensurate with Vgotsky's (1938) 'zone of proximal development'. This is reflected in the fact that students reported being able to manage the work given appropriate TA support and

re-adjustment as necessary. Despite occasional repetition of primary school topics, none complained that the work was too simple, or boring. This careful matching was also evident with personal organisation, where those who needed additional support were given it, both from home and from school. The sensitivity of staff and parents to the understandable 'butterflies' experienced during transition, and their willingness to be flexible and to try to minimise anxieties, contributed much to the transition process and to the rapid 'settling in' of the students studied.

Thompson *et al* (2003) highlight a number of features of secondary schools which would be beneficial, as they would to all students, including a caring ethos, good pastoral support and experience of meeting the needs of such children. They suggest that pupils should be prepared for travelling to school, for orientation in school and for the academic curriculum. They suggest that the primary school should help the pupil to practise self-organisation, and pass accurate information to the SENCo at the receiving school. As will be clear from the previous chapters, these were indeed present in the schools visited, including staff preparation, and appropriate responses to the individual pupils' academic, social and personal organisation needs as reflected in their records, their performance and in feedback from parents.

8.6.3 Level of TA support was matched to pupil need

When Maras and Aveling (2006) examined primary/secondary transition through six case studies, they noted that the expectations and needs of children with similar needs varied, for example, their need for close support from their Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). Staff sensitivity to this was evident in the current research, and TA support was adjusted accordingly, with some students requiring extensive help, for example with literacy, but some needing only to consult very occasionally, if at all, with support staff. This flexibility was an eloquent illustration of the attitude and experience of school staff, and made an essential contribution to the successful transition of these pupils.

8.6.4 Concerns were dealt with immediately so were short-lived

The few examples of concern, or example about excessive homework demands or low level bullying, were quickly addressed and so did not escalate into major concerns. This of course also reflects the effectiveness of communication between all involved.

8.6.5 Much non-academic provision was available

The wide variety of extra-curricular provision made available in both schools meant that pupils could enjoy new and stimulating activities outside the classroom and thus rapidly feel a close association with their new school.

8.6.6 There was good communication / exchange of information

As discussed earlier, a frequently highlighted positive aspect was the high level of liaison and communication between home and school, and between primary and secondary schools, and the benefits of everyone working together. This is clearly an important issue, as illustrated by the Greenhough *et.al*, (2007) report on a project aimed at helping teachers, pupils and parents find new ways of exchanging knowledge between home, primary school and secondary school. They found that sharing knowledge can address the dip in attainment which, they considered, often accompanies transfer, and help children adjust more easily to their new school. In this research, such sharing was clearly evident in the openness of staff to being contacted, by a variety of means.

8.6.7 Similarity of participants' views

For each student, the views of all relevant participants were compared, and this 'triangulation' revealed close agreement between student, parents and school staff about the academic, social and personal organisational needs of the student and how to address them. One of the key recommendations of the Lamb Enquiry - Special educational needs and parental confidence - (DCFS, 2009) was that, since parents are crucial partners in the process and have much expertise in meeting their child's needs, they should be given clear information and opportunities for face to face meetings with staff who understood the need for such partnerships and are skilled in establishing them. Although information and meetings were provided by the school staff involved, this high standard did not extend to formal documentation associated with the student's SEN statement, including the annual reviews. This is an issue which may be addressed by upcoming legislation, as discussed in chapter 9.

8.6.8 There was close co-operation and mutual respect: between parent and school and between schools

There were many examples of close liaison between home and school, and the effect of that on student transition and progress. For example, although Moxon and Gates (2001) found that children with autism appear to find transition very difficult, the experience of this pupil demonstrate that for some pupils with Asperger's syndrome, it is possible for the process to run smoothly, given support from home and school. Darmody (2012) advocates whole-school transition approaches, maximum support to students and close home-school and inter-school links. Again, these were clearly present for the students in this sample.

8.7 Unique issues

Although there was considerable similarity between the transition experienced by all students involved, for two of them their preparation differed from the rest, in providing a 'quasi-secondary' experience. One child moved from a middle school, which already adopted a secondary-type timetable and structure, to secondary school at age 11. This of course cannot be widely replicated, since most middle school students transfer to upper school at age 13. Another child had the benefit of an experienced year 6 teacher who provided a 'virtual' secondary school system. This of course could be replicated in many primary schools, given the availability of sufficient space to allow student movement, and of staff able to make such arrangements.

The above broad range of issues is very much in keeping with what Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) found, i.e. that many other factors besides pupil characteristics had an effect on transition outcomes. They interviewed nine children anticipated to have difficulties during primary to secondary transition. Three were finding it difficult to deal with transition even at the follow-up. They noted that a child's internal attributes, family, peers, school systems, professionals and community all had great influence on the outcome of their transition to secondary school. All of these were raised by various participants in my research as being influential, to various degrees, in facilitating smooth transition.

8.8 Current and potential shortcomings:

8.8.1 Transition was rarely mentioned in school or OFSTED documentation

Despite the mention of transition in both historical and upcoming national documentation, it is not something that is routinely addressed in school or OFSTED paperwork, and is not part of any OFSTED school inspection schedule. The mention of transition in upcoming documentation has much in common with historical material, which advocated appropriate preparation, and gathering and responding to the views of parents and pupils.

For example, the 2001 Code of Practice stated:

> *(Paragraph 2:1)*
> *Partnership with parents plays a key role in promoting a culture of co-operation between parents, schools, LEAs and others. This is important in enabling children and young people with SEN to achieve their potential.* (The question of whether any person *ever* reaches their potential is surely worthy of further research!)
> *(Paragraph 3:1)*
> *All children and young people have rights. Most references to rights are about what is due to children from others, particularly from their parents and the state and its agencies. This chapter is about the right of children with special educational needs to be involved in making decisions and exercising choices.*

So in this Code of Practice, 'parents, the state and its agencies' were thus encouraged to involve children in decisions which affected them, but it was not stated that they *must* do so.

(Paragraph 5:66) When children move schools ... primary schools are required to transfer school records for all pupils within 15 school days of the child ceasing to be registered at the school ... It is good practice for information to be provided in time for appropriate planning by the receiving school... including any statements of special educational needs.
Once again, good practice was highlighted but not stated as a statutory requirement.

(Paragraph 5:69)
All concerned with the child should give careful thought to transfer between phases ... The move should initially be considered at the review meeting prior to the last year in the current school. ... Transfer from primary to secondary education would need initial consideration at the review in year 5.

(Paragraph 5:72)
Thus for all children transferring between phases... a provisional recommendation should be made in the year previous to transfer so that parents can consider options at the same time as other parents. The child's statement must then be amended by 15 February of the year of transfer in the light of the recommendations of the annual review, the parents' views and preferences and the response to consultation by the LEA with the school or schools concerned.

(Paragraph 6:8)
... It is good practice for secondary schools to liaise closely with their feeder primary schools and to arrange induction days for transferring pupils in the summer term. ... Where possible secondary SENCOs should attend year 6 annual reviews of pupils with statements to ensure a smooth transition and appropriate planning of the pupil's curriculum and first IEP in year 7.

There is evidence throughout this thesis that the schools concerned maintained a high standard of practice in such areas, including practices associated with their transition between schools.

These same principles and practices are included in the new Draft Consultation Regulations (October 2013) concerning the New Code of Practice (and referring to the proposed Education Health and Care Plan which will replace SEN Statements). The Draft Code states that:

(Paragraph18).—(1) Where a child or young person is within 12 months of a transfer between phases of his or her education, the local authority must review and amend, where necessary, the child or young person's EHC plan before 15 February in the calendar year of the child or young person's transfer and amend the EHC plan so that it names the school, post-16 or other institution which the child or young person will attend following that transfer. ... A transfer between phases of education means a transfer from...
(d) primary school to secondary school;
(e) middle school to secondary school;

Clearly, the schools visited for purposes of this research were all following the SEN Code of Practice in these respects.

(Paragraph 19).When undertaking a review of an EHC plan, a local authority must ...) consult the child and the child's parent or the young person, and take account of their views, wishes and feelings. Thus, not only parental views, but the 'pupil's voice' *must* be ascertained and taken into account.

However, one change relevant to this thesis is the requirement noted in Schedule, Regulation 3 which requires that,

> (Paragraph 4) *A school must publish its report containing SEN information available on its website, also (Paragraph 12) the school's arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs in transferring between phases of education (or in preparing for adulthood and independent living).* (Emphasis added)

Very scant mention was made of transition in the school documentation reviewed, whether for all pupils, for those with SEN, or in OFSTED inspection schedules. Although transition was only mentioned in the documentation of two schools, transition procedures were in place and worked effectively. Hopefully the enhanced requirements in proposed national changes will lead to improvements in this respect.

8.8.2 Concerns about future levels/systems of funding:

Expressed by an Education Officer

This research was undertaken in an LA intent on being up to date with upcoming changes. For example, it is a 'Pathfinder' LA and has a team investigating the implications of the move to the use of Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP.) However, the Education Officer interviewed had reservations about how effective such arrangements would be. The plan to devolve more funding to schools in bands decided by formula, taking account of numbers on roll and a social deprivation measure, and no longer having money attached to statements, had been accelerated. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this change, but clearly those responsible for its operation, including school staff involved with whom I discussed the matter, have concerns about how it will work in practice and the effect it might have on the ongoing provision of specialist services. As evidence of this, and in view of the reduced central funding available, the LA had had to reduce support services for those with SEN, with services merged and the adoption of a commissioning model often involving non-teachers. Clearly, the full effects of these changes are yet to be felt.

An additional factor emerging when decisions about school placements for students with SEN are made is that some private special schools offer 'free' assessment places. Sometimes parents accept these and later request ongoing LA funding as they do not want their child moved, even though suitable local provision is available. This can make the continuing inclusion of those with SEN into mainstream more difficult, although it was not a factor in the placement of any of the students in the current project.

8.8.3 SEN statements and annual reviews were not highly valued

It was clear that with the exception of one student's file, the Statements and Annual Review records held by schools were not felt to contain current information helpful in planning to

meet students' needs, nor in preparation for their transition to secondary school. Their key purpose seemed to be to secure resources, notionally on behalf of the student concerned. Indeed, had the Statements been subject to rigorous annual review, in view of my professional experience, I feel that for at least two students (those who were self-conscious about attending the 'vulnerable' day) the Statement would have been discontinued. There are of course pragmatic reasons for not discontinuing a Statement, for example if the resources can be diverted to meet the needs of other students who would otherwise have needed a statement. This avoids the bureaucracy involved in the Statutory Assessment process, and releases staff time, including that of specialist teachers, medical staff and EP, for direct involvement with more students. This is the reality of professional pragmatism, and illustrates the need to review the current system of Statutory Assessment and the provision of Education, Health and Care Plans. (EHCPs)

8.8.4 Merits and limitations of the research

My adoption of a social constructivist stance has led to a qualitative approach to this research. As a result, it is argued that the views expressed by participants permit direct insights into the process of transition as experienced by children with SEN, their parents and school staff. The use of semi-structured interviews permitted interviewees to expand on areas that they felt to be important, thus providing a vehicle for detailed accounts of their experiences, which are further explored below. It is certainly possible that the successful outcomes result from the nature of the sample obtained, and that those 13 of 20 families approached who declined to be involved included pupils whose transition did not proceed smoothly. However, it would not have been ethical to pursue those families further, beyond the repeated attempts already made. Thus, this *opportunity / purposive* sample comprised children from relatively privileged backgrounds, with supportive parents, transferring between schools which serve relatively affluent areas and with strong SEN focus.

It was gratifying to witness the successful transition experienced by these students and acknowledged by parents and school staff. However, such success brings with it the 'disadvantage' that it has not been possible to learn from unsuccessful examples. Although it is tempting in educational research to seek out and account for problems, it is nonetheless pleasing to witness successful outcomes for individuals. It may be that one important factor was that none of my sample came from an 'at risk' group – non-white (Graham and Hill 2003); those with English as an additional language (Galton *et. al* 2008); or low socio-economic home circumstances. (West *et. al* 2008) and Lucey & Reay, (2000) found that socio-economic factors played an important part in the outcome of transition. Throughout the literature are examples of apparently conflicting results – for example, about what teachers regard as having the greatest impact on transition – is it academic issues, or social ones? Lohaus *et al* (2004) suggest that the impact of transition may vary according to the time

when the data were collected, and this is certainly an area worthy of further research. It is noteworthy that the subject of transition for children with SEN is rarely given prominence in UK national guidance documents (e.g. UK Code of Practice) nor in Ireland, where the Department of Education and Skills (2007:5) guidelines and advice *"to support the development of inclusive school environments for pupils with special educational needs at post-primary level"* make no mention of induction arrangements for pupils entering the school. Likewise, only passing reference was made when the National Council for Special Education (2011) (Ireland) produced its wide-ranging: "Inclusive Education Framework - *a guide for schools on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs."*

Given the pressures under which schools work, it is not surprising that issues which are not part of an inspection schedule can be overlooked by hard pressed school staff. Minor changes to the inspection schedule could enable key specific transition requirements to be included. These could include interventions which Maras and Aveling (2006) noted in the literature to have been helpful, for example new students shadowing older students; mentoring; school visits and orientation days; support for parents including booklets and student-produced media presentations; also student handbooks and pen-pal letters. These authors also highlight the work of Cumine, Leach and Stevenson (1998) which suggests an early visit to the school to learn the school layout, providing a network of pupils to act as guides, staggering arrival and departure times to reduce the need to move in heavy 'traffic', and having pictures of the next class, to help prepare the pupil for lesson change. From their own research, Maras and Aveling (2006) note that what most helped transition were: lengthy and frequent visits with LSAs (=TAs) or teacher / parent / carer; a dedicated room / personal space; positive reactions from other students; LSA (if the relationship is good) available to aid continuity and transition; the receiving school able to be flexible and adaptable: and if, as noted by Weller, the child moves with friends.

The limited attention paid to transition in the OFSTED reports reflects the fact that this is not a requirement of OFSTED inspections. Given the potential negative effects of transition - Graham and Hill (2003), West *et.al* (2010) - this is a surprising omission which should be addressed. It would be a simple matter to include in OFSTED inspections a review of the extent to which schools were adopting such practices as those above. Despite this lack of formal focus on transition, the overall finding of this research is that, for the 7 pupils involved, transition proceeded successfully in the opinion of pupils, their parents and school staff. This generally very positive picture is reflected in research from the Department of Children, Schools and Families, 'What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School? (EPPSE) (2008) It was found that transition was no less successful for children with SENs or from other vulnerable groups than for other children. It found that those with SEN were more likely to have problems with bullying, however in the course of my research the

small amount of low-level bullying was quickly dealt with. The adults understood the needs of the students and adapted provision so as to meet these, rather than expecting pupils to manage with whatever was usually offered. As Stephen and Cope (2003) argue,

> *'Consideration of how the school might accommodate to the needs of all young children, rather than how the children can either be shaped to fit the institution or risk exclusion, seems imperative if educational opportunities are to become inclusive.'* (p275)

There can be a tendency to look upon times of transition as inevitably unsettling. However, Lucey and Reay (2000) also note that although transition can be an anxious time, he found, as I did, *'a very real sense of excited anticipation with which the children's talk in our study is infused'* (p191). This chapter has offered answers to the two initial research questions. The key findings of the research were summarised and discussed, based on the evidence in the vignettes in chapters five and six and relating to other research in this field. Recurring themes were highlighted, and the merits and shortcomings of observed systems discussed. The following chapter (9) offers summary and conclusions, and suggestions for further research.

8.8.5 Improvement suggestions:

Several issues were raised about how the transition process could be improved, for example:
* Parents could be invited to meet with TAs, perhaps on the induction day, to reassure them and to allow further exchange of information. This helpful idea would seem to be feasible, with appropriate availability and timetabling of TAs. Anderson (2011) similarly suggest that,

> *"All teachers should spend some time visiting or teaching in other key stages, as both have much to offer towards the professional development of their counterparts." (p15)*

*Written material could be produced with a lower reading level. This development would not only help many pupils, it would also help parents with literacy difficulties. Clearly, the reading level would have to be set low enough to enable the great majority of pupils to read it, but sufficient to make the process intelligible. Although all staff interviewed were described by staff as very approachable, it would not be surprising if some felt unable to ask staff to interpret text for them, so the idea of more readable information is a sound one.
*A transition meeting solely for parents whose child has SEN, so that parents are not self-conscious about asking questions in the wider group. This too would seem sensible and feasible, and could be enhanced by the presence of TAs, although this would of course depend upon their availability for evening meetings.

*One parent suggested having booster sessions for those with SEN instead of or after SATS. Having these instead of SATS would not be generally possible, as the disapplication of SATS

is generally reserved for those with the most complex needs, beyond those experienced by pupils in this project. Primary schools provide a range of experiences after SATS; examples include school 'trips' and the quasi-secondary curriculum available in one school. Having booster sessions after SATS would thus be feasible, running in parallel with tailored activities for all students.

*Another parent's suggestion of having a DVD about the secondary school produced by the year 11 pupils in media studies, has already been adopted by one secondary school in the county, so is clearly workable and could be of great benefit to the year 11s as well as to the intending students.

*It was also mooted that many students would be helped by greater independence training from parents. This is of course dependent upon the complexity of the journeys involved and parents' availability during appropriate times, but where evident in this research it was clearly effective.

The subsequent chapter will discuss the implications of these findings for those involved in transition, and for future research.

CHAPTER 9

Issues and implications

9.1 Introduction:

This final chapter of the research highlights the issues that are seen as significant in relation to the findings, and the implications of these for stakeholders and providers. It also highlights the strengths and limitations of the research reported in this thesis, and how this particular study might be further developed. Finally, the chapter examines the importance of disseminating the findings to a range of academic and professional audiences. A qualitative approach has been adopted in this project, as the most appropriate method for eliciting meaning, and revealing the complexity of the transition process for pupils with SEN statements making the transition between mainstream schools at age 11. An attempt has been made to draw attention to influential factors and to specific recurring themes. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) argued that the openness of qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to tackle the intrinsic complexity of social interaction and to do justice to it. Questions emerge which are hard to answer, and/or context-bound, as do unexpected patterns and 'new understandings through the evolutionary nature of qualitative inquiry'.

This chapter will provide answers to the research questions as revealed by participants' responses and with reference back to the literature critically reviewed in earlier chapters. It will include a brief reflection on how sample selection and choice of data collection methods may have impacted on these findings. It will also discuss the implications of these findings for those involved in transition, and conclude with suggestions for future research and proposals for disseminating these findings.

The questions asked were:

1) Pupils with SEN statements making the transition between mainstream schools at age 11; how do participants' expectations compare with actual experience?
2) What factors are seen by pupils, parents and school staff as facilitating this transition?

9.2 Was the experience of transition what participants had expected?

Despite their widely varying needs and characters, and variation in friendship patterns, all seven pupils who remained in the sample made a successful transition to secondary school. The five families who expressed concern about transition found the experience to be less stressful than they had feared. It is possible that these negative expectations biased participants' views of eventual outcomes to be over-positive; however, any definitive

investigation into this would require extensive quantitative analysis beyond the scope of this project. The two families who looked forward to transition with optimism were proved correct. This strongly suggests that a key aim of all transition policies and procedures must be to reassure pupils and parents that the process is nothing to be feared. Lucey and Reay (2000:202) conclude that

> *'The value of measures which ease this process lies in bringing the largely imagined world of the secondary school into the 'known' experience of the year 6 child.'*

9.3 What factors contributed to successful transition?

Although Measor and Woods (1984) found that those with established friendship groups were at an advantage, there was no observable difference in transition outcomes among this sample of pupils between primary friendships and transition outcome. Jindal-Snape and Foggie (2008) noted that several factors influenced the outcome of a child's transition to secondary school, including internal attributes, family, peers, school systems, professionals and community. Such factors did in fact emerge during this research as having potential implications for pupils, parents and school staff involved in similar school transition, as follows:

9.3.1 Pupil characteristics and views: West, Sweeting and Young (2010) identified those characteristics that were most important in accounting for differences in pupils' transition experiences. All pupils involved were described in different ways by school staff as likeable, with no major behaviour problems. Pupils were all very pleased about Y6 and Y7 experiences and described very positive relationships with staff. Although the different pupils had widely varying needs, educational attainments and levels of effort, they all expressed a positive attitude and commitment to their new school and were enjoying the experience. Most pupils felt that parents were fairly relaxed about transition. Zeedyk *et.al* (2003) found similarity between parents' and students' views prior to transfer and suggest it is reasonable to assume *'that a causal relation may exist between the two; if a parent becomes aware of a child's concerns they may well come to share them, and vice versa'.* However for one pupil there was disagreement about the choice of new school, and in that situation the opinion of the mother prevailed, an indication perhaps that this 'pupil voice' was not influential at age 11. Pupils also indicated that they made friends and were quickly 'at home' in their new setting. Sancho and Cline (2012) investigated how a sense of belonging might contribute to children's experience of starting a new school and found, *'Central to establishing a sense of belonging was the development of friendships, relations with the form as a whole and peer acceptance in general.' (p71)* However, none had highly challenging behaviour, so one important area of further research would be on school transition for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and associated needs.

9.3.2 Parental support: All pupils in this sample experienced extensive support from home before, during and after transition. This varied according to the pupils' need for support in academic, social or personal organisation areas, but was particularly evident with the latter. Six pupils valued this support very highly; one was showing signs of resisting the intensive support provided by his mother in particular. This illustrates the need for parents to strike an appropriate balance between encouragement and 'pressure' when supporting their children.

9.3.3 School 'ethos' and experience in meeting SEN: All schools visited as part of this research were described by staff and parents in positive terms such as friendly, welcoming and supportive of pupils with SEN. This responsive ethos was also reflected in school policies, websites and OFSTED reports, also in this student's personal observations. School staff involved were committed to meeting SENs and so had developed appropriate knowledge and experience. This was true despite the different regimes, e.g. primary and middle, also the different secondary school structures, in that SS1 provision was centred around two 'expert' staff, a Deputy Principal/SENCo and Assistant SENCo with supporting TAs, whereas the structure in SS2 involved one SENCo who managed a team of 'Key Worker' TAs who had far greater individual responsibility for pupil progress and parental liaison.

9.3.4 Policies and practice: The practice observed by this student and commented on by OFSTED suggested that all schools adhered to their published SEN policies, although only two mentioned transition at age 11. A shortcoming in OFSTED practice was that transition policies and arrangements were not routinely covered in OFSTED reports; however the transition practices of all schools were effective with respect to the pupils in this research. All schools had systems in place to ease the transition process.

9.3.5 Provision matched to the needs of the individual pupil. The pupils interviewed were enjoying their new schools because of the time, attention and expertise afforded to preparing and providing for their special needs. Key factors were that schools struck an appropriate balance between desired academic and social outcomes. Staff interviewed were clear how important it was to respond appropriately to the social needs of these pupils, including responding quickly to pupil/parent concerns. Also, schools made appropriate demands of work and homework. On the rare occasions when homework was inappropriate, it was adjusted in response to parental feedback.

9.3.6 Communications – between parents and school All parents commented that school staff were available for individual discussion on request, and that contact with the schools was excellent, albeit acknowledging that relationships between parents and staff were of necessity different at secondary school. Parents were complimentary about the primary schools' input, in particular valuing the open communication with them. There was close collaboration between home and schools; parents expressed much satisfaction with the support and information given to them before, during and after the process of transition. This

is very much in keeping with a recommendation of the Lamb Inquiry (2009) that parents should be given clear information and opportunities for face to face meetings. In the same vein, Greenhough *et.al*, (2007) found that sharing knowledge can address the dip in attainment which they argued often accompanies transfer, and help children adjust more easily to their new school. However in the current project, parental involvement in the development and amendment of IEPs was apparent only with the neediest pupil in the sample. This reflected the general lack of value placed by parents and school on formal SEN paperwork, which is discussed below.

9.3.7 Communications – between schools Primary and Secondary Schools liaised closely when arranging the transition of students with SEN. All involved stressed the importance of staff working together, and there were extensive interpersonal contacts which extended beyond formal meetings. Secondary staff and parents complimented the quality of information received from the primary school, but not the SEN statements or the associated documents. For all but one of these pupils, SEN Statements were valued only insofar as they secured resources. Some were maintained on pupils with relatively low needs, while staff noted that other pupils with higher needs had no Statements. The apparently random way in which the statutory system was operated will perhaps be addressed in upcoming legislation. This is intended to replace SEN statements with Education, Health and Care plans, to be produced on far fewer pupils. The Government commissioned a report into SEN by Ofsted, and their wide-ranging report, 'Special educational needs and disability review – a statement is not enough' was published in 2010. It found that parental perceptions of widespread inconsistency in identification and assessment of their child's SEN were well founded. Given that those charged with addressing pupils' SENs respond pragmatically in attempts to successfully meet them, it remains to be seen whether the replacement system will be any more effective. Also, given the concerns expressed by school and LA staff about the diminishing teams of support services, it is difficult to see how future monitoring will be any more satisfactory. Hopefully though, those with the greatest needs will receive the greatest support, and will be subject to formal systems which guarantee this.

9.3.8 Communications – within each school

Almost all staff read the SEN information provided, in preparation for the pupils' transfer, although David's TA argued that it was better to give the pupil a fresh start, which in my view represents a waste of much valued and carefully prepared information. This was not typical, and pastoral staff and SEN staff at the secondary schools liaised closely with primary schools and disseminated information about the pupils to appropriate secondary school subject staff.

9.3.9 The role of the Teaching Assistant

Teaching Assistants were very widely used in both schools to support pupils variously with academic, social and personal organisation issues, and most were observed by this student to be highly valued by pupils, parents and teachers. This is not a universally popular situation. Webster and Blatchford (2013) bemoan the fact that day-to-day support for pupils with special education needs (SEN) in mainstream schools is often provided by teaching assistants (TAs) rather than teachers, with two full-time equivalent TAs for every three teachers. They report on the Making a Statement (MaSt) project which explored the teaching, support and interactions experienced by pupils with statements of SEN for moderate learning difficulties or behaviour. They used observations and case studies involving 48 pupils and 151 average attaining 'control' pupils involving interviews with nearly 200 teachers, TAs, SENCos and parents/carers. They acknowledged, as is reflected in this thesis, that schools were working hard to meet the needs of pupils with Statements during a period of intense flux and uncertainty in schools and local authorities. However, their researchers went on to suggest five overarching concerns, which are not shared by me, either on the basis of this research or of previous professional experience. Their concerns are that:

1) Pupils with statements were largely separated from other pupils. This was certainly not the case in this thesis, perhaps associated with the characteristics of the pupils and/or the schools in the current research.

2) TAs had more responsibility for pupils with statements than did teachers. This was certainly the case in SS2, but had led to no obvious disadvantage to the pupils concerned, in that transition in both schools had proceeded without major difficulty and all participants were pleased with the extent to which the pupils' needs were being met.

3) The inappropriateness and poor quality of pedagogy for pupils with statements was unlikely to close the attainment gap. This is an interesting concept which suggests that children with SEN would be able to 'catch up' with their peers if only offered high quality pedagogy. Although always optimistic that appropriate input can raise the attainments of pupils with SEN, I remain convinced that there will always be gaps between the attainments of different pupils, so would prefer instead the phrase, 'narrowing the gap'.

4) There were gaps in teachers' and TA's knowledge about meeting SENs. Since the range of needs met in mainstream schools continues to widen, and new teachers continue to enter the profession, ongoing professional development will always be required, and support services should continue to play a key role in this.

5) Schools did not appropriately prioritise meeting the needs of pupils with SEN. This was clearly not the case in the current project.

I have no problem with the employment of TAs in schools, given appropriate training and ongoing support, and that they are clear about what is required of them. Concerns 3, 4 and 5 cannot be laid at the feet of TAs, but need to be addressed by schools, so that TA input can be effective. For example, a TA can be taught to deliver a speech and language programme very precisely, but it is more likely to be effective if expertly set. In my view and in my professional experience, when an appropriate educational programme is set and the teacher knows how to train, deploy and manage support staff, the TA is a very valuable resource.

The authors argue that the findings from the MaSt study have clear implications for two core elements of the proposed changes in the Coalition Government's Children and Families Bill: the replacement of Statements with Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs); and the introduction of personal budgets, which give parents and carers more control over their child's SEN funding. Since the authors are concerned both that TAs are unlikely to close the attainment gap, and that current practice separates pupils from their teacher and peers, they suggest that the new EHCPs avoid expressing support for pupils in terms of hours, and instead specify the pedagogical processes and strategies that will help produce carefully defined outcomes. I contend that these are not mutually exclusive. The authors also recommend that setting personal budgets be dependent on the outcome specified in the EHCP in order to avoid schools making decisions about support based predominantly on the resources available. However, the authors do not make clear whether the budgets would be reduced if the pupil did, or did not, make progress!

The many secondary school features raised by Thompson *et.al* (2003) as appropriate to meeting the needs of students with ADHD during school transition clearly apply to all students, including a caring ethos, good pastoral support and experience of meeting the needs of such children. Equally appropriate suggestions were that pupils should be prepared for travelling to school, for orientation in school, for the academic curriculum and for self-organisation. As will be apparent from the nine factors listed above, all of the features suggested by Thompson were evident overall in the current project.

9.4 Strengths and limitations of the research

9.4.1 Strengths

The qualitative approach adopted in this research has elicited meaning directly from those most closely involved, and has thus revealed some of the complexity of the transition process for pupils with SEN statements making the transition between mainstream schools at age 11. The research questions have been answered in the light of participants' responses at each of the levels within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, also with reference back to the literature critically reviewed in earlier chapters. Several influential factors and recurring themes have thus been identified, leading to a number of practices

which contribute to successful transition. The longitudinal approach to this research has demonstrated that concerns about the change of school at age 11 for those with SEN Statements were, for these participants, unjustified. Despite my experience in this area, data were initially collected from what Carspecken (1996) referred to as an etic or outsider perspective, then reviewed to expose underlying assumptions so that I could engage further with the participants to gain an insider's, or emic, perspective. At all levels, I have attempted to demonstrate that despite my own philosophical orientation and professional background, my investigation and reporting has remained unbiased, for as Carspecken (1996) points out,

> *'This orientation does not define the facts, because good critical research should be unbiased. Research value orientations should not determine research findings.'* (p6.)

9.4.2 Limitations

The focus on a qualitative approach to such research is open to the charge that results do not provide 'proof', in the way that randomised control trials might. However, it would be unethical for half of a sample of pupils to be given restricted provision over the period of transition. Also, as has been argued throughout this thesis, it would not reveal the complexity of factors involved. It is of course incumbent on the researcher to faithfully record, transcribe, summarise and analyse participants' responses, and these anonymised records will for a limited period remain available for ongoing research and/or ratification of interpretation on request.

It is acknowledged that none of my sample was from an 'at risk' group – black and ethnic minority (Graham and Hill 2003); low socio-economic background (West *et.al* 2008); Lucey and Reay, (2000), or with English as an additional language (EAL) (Galton *et.al* 2008). However, the factors which proved effective in facilitating transition for these pupils have been found by the above researchers also to have been effective for pupils in these at-risk groups. None of the pupils involved exhibited major Social, Emotional or Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), and outcomes might have been different in those circumstances. This is an area suggested for further research. Thus, although it cannot be claimed that these factors are unequivocally generalisable, they clearly highlight features which are present in a group of pupils whose transition was successful.

Despite generally free-flowing and relaxed interviews, I was also aware of two occasions when my prompting with 'closed' prompts was inappropriate and might have prevented further contributions from pupils. Researchers need to be constantly vigilant, and to tolerate long silences, which may be followed by further comment.

Finally, I approached this research with much experience in the SEN field so clearly have a personal perspective on SEN issues and on transition. However, the emphasis throughout has been on the openly-reported views of participants and from related literature in this field.

9.5 Issues / implications of the research

Those involved in transition would be well advised to take account of the factors identified by participants in this research. Clearly, issues such as parental support, school ethos, policies and practices; educational provision - including TA support - matched to pupil needs; also effective communication between schools, and between parents and schools, are highly influential. Also evident was that none of these pupils exhibited challenging behaviour, and that their personal characteristics were regarded positively by the school staff involved. The extent to which this affected the admission of these pupils to the secondary schools, and the willingness of participants to agree to be included in this research, can only be speculated upon. This is a potential area for further research.

Many authors have put forward suggestions to facilitate transition, among which:

- Anderson (2011), who suggests that all teachers should spend some time visiting or teaching in other key stages, as both have much to offer towards the professional development of their counterparts.
- Darmody (2012), who advocates that school admissions policies should use more inclusive selection criteria to address structural inequalities.She further advocates whole-school transition approaches, maximum support to students and closer home-school and inter-school links.

I contend that the successful inclusion of pupils with SEN depends upon many factors, but ultimately on the willingness of schools to 'wrap around' the pupil and adapt to their needs. This is reflected in the aforementioned view of Stephen and Cope (2003) that

'consideration of how the school might accommodate to the needs of all young children, rather than how the children can either be shaped to fit the institution or risk exclusion, seems imperative if educational opportunities are to become inclusive.'(p275)

9.6 Potential focus for Further Research

The current project focussed on pupils with SEN statements transferring between mainstream schools in a single English local authority. There is much scope for replicating this study with different populations, for example to include pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems, or within other local authorities in England and Wales.

Groger, Mayberry and Straker (1999) argue that, because criticism of non-generalisability of qualitative research is so easily dismissed, qualitative researchers sometimes might fail to recognise when they have not tapped the full range of meanings and thus fail to ask themselves, 'What if?' However, research credibility does not arise from such speculation, but from systematic investigation of questions and ongoing research, for example:

1) Does the timing of the research affect observed outcomes?

Lohaus *et.al* (2004) suggest that the impact of transition may vary according to the time when the data were collected, and this is certainly an area worthy of further research, for example, into participants' views in year 8.

2) How far does preparation and reassurance affect participant's concerns? Lucey and Reay (2000:202) conclude that, (the value of measures which ease this process)

> *'lies in bringing the largely imagined world of the secondary school into the 'known' experience of the year 6 chid'*

and leads to a more positive anticipation on the part of pupils.

3) Is transition more effective in countries whose policies give emphasis to this area, and in which the process is monitored? Given the pressures under which schools work, it is not surprising that issues which are not part of an inspection schedule can be overlooked by hard pressed school staff. Minor changes to the inspection schedule could enable key specific transition requirements to be included. These could include interventions which Maras and Aveling (2006) noted in the literature to have been helpful, for example new students shadowing older students; mentoring; school visits and orientation days; support for parents including booklets and student-produced media presentations; also student handbooks and pen-pal letters.

4) What will be the effect of upcoming legislation on the relationship between a pupil's needs and the presence of an EHCP? There is evidence in this project that, whatever the merits and intended precision of the original legislation and regulations, schools have negotiated the system in order to meet the complex SENs of their pupils. However, in terms of formal documentation, although Beth's SEN statement and reviews were detailed and valued by the adults involved, for everyone else these were not regarded as useful. Furthermore, there were other pupils with higher needs, relating to their combination of learning and behavioural problems, who transferred with no notification or additional resources.

5) How far does staff practice in studying information on a pupil's file affect the pupil's experience in their new school? Although the full records which passed to the new school were not read by David's TA who said,

> *'I haven't had time to read the Statement - It's better to give the child a fresh start and make your mind up on what you see.'*

This was not a typical reaction, and not a view shared by this student. Nor is it in keeping with Codes of Practice, for example the SEN Code of Practice 2001 (Paragraph 6:9)

> *If a pupil is known to have special educational needs when they arrive at the (secondary) school, the head teacher, SENCO, literacy and numeracy coordinators, departmental and pastoral colleagues should use information from the pupil's primary school to provide starting points for the development of an appropriate curriculum.*

It would be interesting to compare individual pupil outcomes in light of different TAs' practice.

6) Are TAs more or less effective than teachers in, for example, delivering regular programmes, such as those set by a speech therapist? This would address some of the issues raised by Webster and Blatchford (2013).

7) How important to transition is the sociability/character of the pupil? Was transition successful because these were 'nice' pupils? No pupil in this project had highly challenging behaviour; further research is needed on school transition for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and associated needs.

8) Will the increasing move towards greater 'consumer' involvement, including personal budgets, mean that pupils whose parents 'know the system' are advantaged over other pupils? This is not a new concern. In 1995 Allen pointed out:

> *'As the formality of procedures increases, parents who are most familiar with negotiating with bureaucracies ... are most likely to benefit from the conferral of rights to participate and challenge decisions. By exercising their rights, they indirectly but effectively secure for their children a larger share of the resources... To at least some extent, this occurs at the expense of those children whose parents are not as adept at battling a bureaucracy.... Hence, we see that the effort to provide justice through the conferral of rights may ultimately result in greater inequality.'* (Allen 1995, p.8)

9) What will be the effect of the anticipated reduction in future resources and services?

This final point illustrates one truism within education; that the only constant is change and re-organisation. It seems that this is not new, as illustrated by the oft-mentioned, but difficult to confirm, quote by Petronius Arbiter about the Greek Navy in around 210 BC.

> *'We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be reorganized. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganization; and what a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralization.'*

Given the inevitability of ongoing re-organisation within the education system in England, there will be no shortage of questions about the effectiveness of new systems, so much opportunity for ongoing research. The extent to which research outcomes are heeded by politicians and policymakers is another area worthy of objective investigation.

9.7 Dissemination

The essence of this thesis will be offered as a paper in an academic journal, such as JORSEN, the Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs.

In order to reach practitioners, it will also be offered to the SENCO forum on the Department for Education website, either as a separate article or as a link to the above paper.

It was intended to produce leaflets for parents and children, but I contributed to those produced by, and on the website of, the Foundation for Pupils with Learning Difficulties, and will discuss with that group how this material could be disseminated more widely.

Finally it will be offered as a session at a national conference on transition, such as those organised by Optimus Education, which provides training for schools.

APPENDICES

Appendix 2:1 The History of Special Education Needs Legislation

Year	Legislation	SEN Implication
1870	Forster's Elementary Education Act	Education for all pupils 5 -13
1880	Education Act	All pupils to attend school, except for the 'uneducable'.
1913	Mental Deficiency Act	'Detained' the 'feeble minded' and 'idiots'.....
1921	Education Act	5 categories of 'handicap' devised. Health Authority in charge of placements.
1944	Education Act	11 categories of 'handicap'. Health Authority still responsible for the 'severely subnormal'.
1963	Newson Report	Recognition of inconsistency within secondary provision for SEN.
1970	Education Handicapped Children Act	All children under the LEA.
1970	Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act	Required LEA's to keep a register of disabled people and to provide services for them,
1978	Warnock Report	First time the term SEN mentioned. Replaced the 11 categories of 'handicap'. Five-stage approach for recognition and assessment established. Integration of SEN into mainstream considered.
1981	Education Act	Recommendations from the Warnock Report enacted . Introduction of the statementing procedure. Five stage approach adopted and categories of 'handicap' abolished.
1988	Education Reform Act	Intro of the National Curriculum
1989	Children Act	Includes register of 'Children in Need'. – recognition of children rights.
1993	Education Act	Promoted the education of children with SEN in mainstream. Class teachers responsible for SEN pupils in early stages.
1994	Code of Practice	Role of SENCO made statutory
1994	UNESCO Salamanca Statement	Inclusion for all children & adults
1996	Education Act	Parental Rights in terms of appeal. Time limited placed on assessment for statements (26 weeks)
1997	Green Paper: Excellence for All	Focus on inclusion and developing collaborative practice.
1998	White Paper: Meeting Special Education Needs	The draft / focus for the 'New' Code of Practice (2001)
1998	National Standards for SENCO	SENCO to take an active part in leading and managing staff.
2001	'New' Code of Practice	Management of SENCO role to be shared.3 stages of identification of need.
2001	Special Education Needs and Disability Act: SENDA	Strengthened rights of parents and pupils to access mainstream education - also extending civil rights.

2001	Inclusive Schooling	Includes 'reasonable steps' and provides practical advice for including pupils with SEN into mainstream provision.
2003	Every Child Matters: ECM	Collaborative approaches- team networking towards the 5 outcomes . Working towards a social, as well as educational, inclusion
2004	Removing Barriers to Achievement	A sustained programme of action supporting integrated services and provision for all pupils.
2004	Children Act	Legal framework for the programme of reform – focus on vulnerable child. SENCO skills for implementing framework considered.
2005	White Paper: Higher Standards, Better Schools for All	
2006	Disability Equality Duty Scheme	'reasonable adjustment'
2006	Primary Review	Recommendations for future policy
2006	2020 Vision: The Children Plan	Personalised learning focus
2007	Inclusion Development Programme [IDP]	Improve the skills of teachers by advising them on how to develop teaching strategies for children with special educational needs - 4 year programme.
2008	The Bercow Report	Recommendations to Government about transforming provision for and the experiences of children and young people with SLCN and their families.
2008	Lamb Enquiry	consider a range of ways in which parental confidence in the SEN assessment process might be increased; Final report due 2009
2008	BESD Guidance	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=12604
2008	Back on Track	White Paper on Pupil Referral Units legitimises catastrophic breakdown of the SEN system
2008	SENCO Regulations	QTS & Accreditation
2008	Transition Support Programme	http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00322/
2009	The Steer Group	Learning Behaviour: The Report of The Practitioners' Group onSchoolBehaviour&Disciplinehttp://www.dcsf.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance/about/learning_behaviour.cfm
2009	Progression	Between 1 April 2008 and July 2009 the Department for

	Guidance	Children Schools and Families (DCSF) are working in collaboration with the National Strategies to develop progression guidance for pupils with SEN/LDD including those working below level 1 of the National Curriculum.
2009	The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill	http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsskillschildrenandlearningbill/
2009	Using P Scales	QCA : http://www.nasen.org.uk/uploads/publications/59.ppt
2009	The Rose Report on Dyslexia	http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00659-2009
2009	The Rose Review of the Primary Curriculum	http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/
2009	Achievement for All	
2009	Ofsted Review	Ofsted will report on school special needs standards
2009	Healthy Lives, Brighter Futures	http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_094400
2009	The White Paper	Your child., your schools, our future http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem/ (video)
2009	Deployment and Impact of Support Staff in Schools	http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/pims-data/summaries/hlta-status.cfm
2010	Equality Act	http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001068
2010	Ofsted Review: SEN	http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Documents-by-type/Thematic-reports/The-special-educational-needs-and-disability-review This review was commissioned to evaluate how well the legislative framework and arrangements served children and young people who had special educational needs and/or disabilities. It considered the early years, compulsory education, education from 16 to 19, and the contribution of social care and health services.
2011	The Wolf Report	http://www.shift-learning.co.uk/useful-links/200-wolf-review-summary-.html The Wolf Report, commissioned by Education Secretary Michael Gove and carried out by Professor Alison Wolf, is an independent review of vocational education
2010	SEN Green Paper	New Coalition Government seek the views on SEN [Public

		Consultation 13 weeks] White Paper due Dec 2011

Available at:

http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=0CGwQFjAJ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fcharlottedinglesportfolio.wikispaces.com%2Ffile%2Fview%2FHistory%2Bof%2BSEN%2BLegislation%2B.doc&ei=9BjcUbC7OMaX0QXH4IGQCQ&usg=AFQjCNF5t9xWgQGshbT5KXi90SRIVo0dsA&bvm=bv.48705608,d.d2k

(Accessed July 2013)

Appendix 2:2 – Correspondence with DfE Statistics Department + Statistics held by PLASC + OFSTED

(15th July 2013) Thanks Phil. Unfortunately we don't really have resources for that either so I'm not sure we'll ever produce said history – "nice to haves" are never going to hit the top of the priority list I'm afraid. Things changes with regulations etc so a 30 year time series isn't really what we want to be focussing on. Obviously you only need to go to every fifth year and not each year one at a time, so you could quickly build up a 10 to 20 year time series if you wanted it.

Good luck with the thesis. Regards

Graham Knox

Statistician
Children and Early Years Data Unit
Analysis and Research Division
Children's Services and Departmental Strategy Directorate

From: Ellender Phil [mailto:Phil.Ellender@northampton.ac.uk]
Sent: 12 July 2013 16:10
To: STATISTICS, SEN
Subject: RE: SEN Statements in Mainstream Schools, 1982 to present

Hi Graham,
Many thanks for such a rapid response.
I had in fact found the info for the last five years - I wondered whether there was an excel spread-sheet or similar covering the whole history of statistics on Statements, but it seems not. No doubt I could dig up this info if I went through each year one at a time, but as that's not the central focus of my thesis I can't give time to that. Perhaps someone will do it when the history of 'Statements' is written, after the switch to EHC plans!?
Best wishes,
Phil.

From: SEN.STATISTICS@education.gsi.gov.uk [SEN.STATISTICS@education.gsi.gov.uk]
Sent: 12 July 2013 15:10
To: Ellender Phil
Subject: RE: SEN Statements in Mainstream Schools, 1982 to present

Phil

The latest statistics can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-in-england-january-2012

Table 1A shows SEN statements for all school types for the last 5 years. We don't have a single time series available covering the years you require. All previous publications are available on the national archive:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130423140808/http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/statistics/allstatistics/a00210489/sen-england-jan-2012

PLASC (Pupil Level Annual Schools Census – known as School Census since September 2006): data are kept on type of need, then only since Sept 2004. Historical data on SEN Statements are not available.

OFSTED do not hold historical statistics re SEN Statements. Their statistics cover:

- early years and childcare – including inspections; outcomes; and childcare provider and place numbers
- maintained schools – including inspections; outcomes; and schools causing concern
- independent schools inspections and outcomes
- children and families services – including inspections and outcomes for children's centres, children's social care and local authority children's services; and children's social care provider and place numbers
- adult learning and skills – including learning and skills inspections and outcomes; and initial teacher education inspections and outcomes.

Appendix 2:3 – School Key Stages: After the Education Reform Act 1988

Key Stage (KS)	Ages	School years (Y)	Forms	Final exams
0	3–5	0	Nursery / Reception (Early Years Foundation Stage)	
1	5–7	1–2	1st–2nd form infants	
2	7–11	3–6	1st–4th form juniors	
3	11–14	7–9	1st–3rd form secondary	
4	14–16	10–11	4th–5th form secondary	GCSEs
5	16–18	12–13	Sixth form secondary, also FE college	A-Levels, AS-Levels, NVQs, National Diplomas

Appendix 2:4 Index for Inclusion: Booth and Ainscow, (2002)

The seven principles of an inclusive education service:

Inclusion is a process by which schools, local education authorities and others develop their cultures, policies and practices to include pupils.

With the right training, strategies and support nearly all children with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education.

An inclusive education service offers excellence and choice and incorporates the views of parents and children.

The interests of all pupils must be safeguarded.

Schools, local education authorities and others should actively seek to remove barriers to learning and participation.

All children should have access to an appropriate education that affords them the opportunity to achieve their personal potential.

Mainstream education will not always be right for every child all of the time. Equally just because mainstream education may not be right at a particular stage it does not prevent the child from being included successfully at a later stage.

Appendix 2:5 UNICEF report, The State of the World's Children

Executive Summary - Key Recommendations:

1
Ratify – and implement – the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2
Fight discrimination and enhance the awareness of disability among the general public, decision- makers, and those who provide essential services for children and adolescents in such fields as health, education and protection.

3
Dismantle barriers to inclusion so that all children's environments – schools, health facilities, public transport and so on – facilitate access and encourage the participation of children with disabilities alongside their peers.

4
End the institutionalization of children with disabilities, starting with a moratorium on new admissions. This should be accompanied by the promotion of and increased support for family-based care and community-based rehabilitation.

5
Support families so they can meet the higher costs of living and lost opportunities to earn income associated with caring for children with disabilities.

6
Move beyond minimum standards by involving children and adolescents with disabilities and their families in evaluating supports and services designed to meet their needs.

7
Coordinate services across all sectors so as to address the full range of challenges facing children and adolescents with disabilities and their families.

8
Involve children and adolescents with disabilities in making decisions that affect them – not just as beneficiaries, but as agents of change.

9
Promote a concerted global research agenda on disability to generate the reliable and comparable data needed to guide planning and resource allocation, and to place children with disabilities more clearly on the development agenda. The ultimate proof of all global and national efforts will be local, the test being whether every child with a disability enjoys her or his rights – including access to services, support and opportunities – on a par with other children, even in the most remote settings and the most deprived circumstances.

http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/files/SWCR2013_ENG_Lo_res_24_Apr_2013.pdf
(Accessed 24th July 2013)

Executive Summary – Link to Easy-Read Format:

http://www.unicef.org/sowc2013/files/Easy_Read_5_June_SWCR_2013_Amend_1.pdf
Accessed 24th July 2014

Appendix 2:6 Link to Children and Families Bill 2013 and Draft SEN Regulations

http://www.education.gov.uk/a00221161/

Appendix 2:7 Link to: Alliance for Inclusion: Briefing, July 2010:

http://www.allfie.org.uk/docs/briefings/Allfie%20Briefing%20No.18.doc

Appendix 2:8

Statistical First Release: Department for Education

SFR 14/2011: 30 June 2011: Coverage: England: Theme: Children, Education and Skills
Table 1A

ALL SCHOOLS: PUPILS WITH STATEMENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) (1)					
As at January each year: 2007-2011					
ALL SCHOOLS	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Pupils with statements	232,760	227,315	225,400	223,945	224,210
Pupils on roll	8,167,715	8,121,955	8,092,280	8,098,360	8,123,865
Incidence (%) (2)	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
State-funded primary (4)(5)					
Pupils with statements	61,800	59,695	58,505	57,850	57,855
Pupils on roll	4,110,750	4,090,400	4,077,350	4,096,580	4,137,755
Incidence (%) (2)	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Placement (%) (3)	26.6	26.3	26.0	25.8	25.8
State-funded secondary (4)(6)					
Pupils with statements	71,190	67,875	65,890	64,605	63,720
Pupils on roll	3,325,625	3,294,575	3,278,130	3,278,485	3,262,635
Incidence (%) (2)	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.0
Placement (%) (3)	30.6	29.9	29.2	28.8	28.4
Maintained special (7)					
Pupils with statements	83,645	83,600	84,295	85,445	86,660
Pupils on roll	87,010	87,135	87,615	88,690	89,860
Incidence (%) (2)	96.1	95.9	96.2	96.3	96.4
Placement (%) (3)	35.9	36.8	37.4	38.2	38.7

1) Includes pupils who are sole or dual main registrations.
(2) Incidence of pupils - the number of pupils with statements expressed as a proportion of the number of pupils on roll.
(4) Includes middle schools as deemed.
(5) Includes primary academies.
(6) Includes city technology colleges and secondary academies.
(7) Includes general hospital schools.
(8) Includes pupils with other providers and in further education colleges.
(9) Includes direct grant nursery schools.

Appendix 2:9

ALL SCHOOLS: PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) WITHOUT STATEMENTS					
(1) (2)					
As at January each year: 2007-2011: England	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
ALL SCHOOLS					
SEN provision - School Action (3)					
	860,670	886,875	903,845	919,015	889,540
SEN provision - School Action Plus (3)					
	418,160	447,465	472,810	503,050	500,155
Pupils with SEN without statements (4)					
	1,344,505	1,402,895	1,447,205	1,481,035	1,449,685
Pupils on roll					
	8,167,715	8,121,955	8,092,280	8,098,360	8,123,865
Incidence (%) (5)					
	16.5	17.3	17.9	18.3	17.8

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/167304/sfr14-2011v2.pdf.pdf

(Accessed July 2013)

Appendix 3.1

The seven ages of man, from Shakespeare's As You Like It

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages; At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then, the whining schoolboy with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,

Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,(leopard)
Jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice
In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws, and modern instances,
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide,
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Appendix 3.2

Plowden Report (1967) (Page 165)

"*The solution (to successful transition) lies in close professional contacts, not only between head teachers but also between all who teach children on either side of the frontiers, which should not be barriers that divide school from school.*"

Plowden Report (1967) (Page 164)

"We wish to record our belief that 12 and even 13 year olds need to be taught by teachers whom they really know and who really know them."

Plowden Report (1967) (Page 166)

Recommendations:

"(viii) All children should make at least one visit to their new school in the term before they transfer.

(ix) Authorities should send parents a leaflet explaining the choice of secondary schools available and the courses provided within them.

(x) All secondary schools should make arrangements to meet the parents of new entrants.

(xii) Discussions should be held between primary and secondary teachers to avoid overlap in such matters as text books and to discuss pupils' records."

Appendix 3.3: Examples of resources available for teachers and parents:

Many Local Authorities in the UK make information available to prepare parents and children for transition, among the most comprehensive are: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/transferring-to-secondary-school.pdf and: http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=13181

Among those organisations publishing on-line, http://www.move627.org offers wide-ranging practical advice to parents, schools and health professionals

Some provide advice about how an understanding of mental health and emotional wellbeing can help children, schools and families, for example:

Young Minds *et.al* . The Transition from Primary to Secondary School (Training Resource)

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/assets/0000/1303/Transitionfromprimarytosecondary.pdf

The need for comprehensive exchange of information between home and school **Teaching and Learning Research Briefing No 45, June 2008** - Supporting primary-secondary transfer through home-school knowledge exchange

http://www.tlrp.org/pub/documents/45HughesRBfinal.pdf

Some are produced by voluntary organisations, for example, the **Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities:**

http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/our-work/employment-education/moving-on-to-secondary-school/

Journal and magazine articles abound, for example, former headteacher **Lynn Cousins** article gives advice on smoothing the process of transition:

http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/making-transitions-easier-2994

Examples of materials available from Department of Education:

Online self-evaluation in various areas including transition related to the Primary and Secondary National Strategies, this website enables you to assess your own school and suggests next steps for improvement:
http://www.supportingselfevaluation.org.uk

English and Maths transition units of work, to be done across Y6 and Y7:
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/respub/en_transunit

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/respub/ma_trans_y6y7

Examples of what is considered good practice at transition, from the Secondary National Strategy:

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/downloads/ks3_impks2tran000306.pdf

Professional development materials for transition KS2-3, part of the Behaviour & Attendance strand of the Primary Strategy
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/banda/1212043/

Advice on transitions for young people with an autistic spectrum disorder:

http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/asds/asdgoodpractice/TMPSP/

Case studies such as the „Buddy Club for Y7s in Sefton
http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/sie/si/eips/casestudies/buddy

A booklet and DVD about curriculum continuity: effective transfer between primary and secondary schools

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3/respub/ws_cur_cont

Appendix 4:1 - SEN Tribunal Appeals 2000 – 2010

Year	Appeals Registered	Decisions Issued	Chairman
2000 – 01	2728	1206	Trevor Aldridge
2001 – 02	3045	1178	Trevor Aldridge
2002 – 03	3527	1208	Rosemary, Lady Hughes
2003 – 04	3353	1197	Rosemary, Lady Hughes
2004 – 05	3211	1147	Rosemary, Lady Hughes
2005 – 06	3408	1038	Rosemary, Lady Hughes
2006 - 07	3109	1045	Rosemary, Lady Hughes
2007 – 08	3394	872	Rosemary, Lady Hughes
2008 - 09	3015	794	Rosemary, Lady Hughes
2009 - 10	3280	707	Rosemary, Lady Hughes

Appendix 4:2 – 128 initial codes

Initial codes	
Code	**Areas included**
1Y	Primary
2Y	Secondary
6BT	Year 6 pupils before transfer
7AT	Year 7 pupils who have transferred
1-1	One to one or close support
EX?	Expectation
≈ND	Similar need
≠ND	Different need
≈SPT	Similar support
≠SPT	Different support
ACC	Academic curriculum
ACD	Academic
ACP	Academic performance
ADHD	ADHD
ADJ	Adjustment
ANO	Anonymous
ADP	Adaptation
ANX	Anxiety
ASB	Anti Social Behaviour
ASK	Ask teacher
AUT	Autism / ASD
BEH	Behaviour
BKT	Booklet
BSS	Behaviour Support Service
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CHA	Challenge
CHN	Children Child Student Pupil
CHR	Chronic Illness
CLB	Collaboration
CLR	Counsellor(s)
CLW	Clowning
CMN	Communication communicate
CNF	Confidence

COD	Conduct disorder
COF	Circle of Friends
CON	Consistent
CRM	Classroom
CST	Case Studies
CTM	Circle Time
CTN	Continuation Continuity
CTX	Context
DAT	Data
DCA	Don't care attitude
DET	Detachment
DEV	Development
DFC	Difficulty
DFN	Definition
DIA	Diary
DIF	Differentiated Tailored
DIV	Divert diversion
DPN	Depression
DRM	Dedicated room
DSC	Discrepancy
DSO	Disorder(s)
EBD	EBD/SEBD
ENC	Encouraging / encouragement
ENG	English
ENV	Environment
EXP	Expectations
FAM	Families
FBK	Feedback
FLU	Influence
FLX	Flexible / adaptable
FRN	Friend, friendship
FWK	Family Work
GDs	Guides (people)
GWK	Group work
HBK	Handbook
HMF	Home factors
HMP	Home Problems

HT	Home tuition
HWD	Homework diary
HWK	Homework
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IOS	Information/input from older students – pen-pal letters, presentations, discussions, mentor, guide
IMP	Impulsivity / impulsive
INA	Inattentive
IND	Independence / independent
INF	Information
INT	Interventions
INV	Involve / include the child
INW	Interview
ISN	Individual Special Needs
KNO	Knowledge
LDs	Learning Disabilities
LEA	Local Education Authority
LIA	Liaison
LIT	Literacy
LNG	Learning
LNR	Learner
LSA	Learning support assistant, teacher's assistant, etc.
LYT	School layout / buildings
MED	Medical / medication
MNT	Mentoring / mentor
MS	Mainstream
MTG	Meeting
MTH	Methodology
MVT	Movement around school
MWF	Moving with friends
NHS	Health Service
NSC	New school
NST	New Students
NUM	Numeracy
NVB	Non-verbal
ODY	Orientation day
ORG	Organisation / Organisational complexity / Organisational difficulties /

	Personal Organisation
ORI	Orientation
OST	Older Students
OVR	Overactive
PBX	Post box
PCP	Perception / perspective
P+C	Parents/Carers
PFL	Portfolio
PGD	Guidance to parents
PIC	Pictures of next class
PLE	Pleasure
PNT	Parent
POT	Potential
PPN	Preparation
PRA	Practice
PRC	Practical issues/matters
PRF	Preference(s)
PRS	Peers
PRV	Provision
PRG	Progress
PRM	Prompt / prompting
PRN	Presentation
PRO	Problem
PRS	Peers
PSO	Personal organisation / self-organisation
PSP	Personal space
PSPL	Personal Support Plan
PSY	Psychiatrist
PTH	Psychotherapy
PVW	
R+R	Reading to or with someone else
RDG	Reading
RDR	Reader (+RDR = good reader; -RDR = poor reader)
RES	Research
RGS	Receiving school
RIT	Ritalin
ROS	Reaction of other students

RPL	Role play
RSO	Resources
RTN	Routine
SBD	School based difficulties
SCH	School
SCP	Perception of School
SCR	School regime
SDV	Social development
+/-SEN	Children with / without SEN
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	SENCo
SEL	Selection selecting
SEP	Self-Perception
SES	Self Esteem / self confidence
SHD	Shadowing
SHY	Shy / shyness
SOC	Social
SLN	Solution
SNs	Special Needs
SNU	Special Needs Unit
SPA	A dedicated or private space in the school
SPL	Specialist
SPT	Support
SPV	Supervise / supervision
SRG	Silent reading
STF	Staff
STG	Strategy
SSK	Social skills
SSV	Support services
STR	Stresses
STh	Speech Therapist
SYM	Sympathetic ethos
Ts	Teacher(s)
TGS	Teaching Style
TIM	Time – of starting and finishing
TRN	Transition
TTB	Timetable – 'academic'

TRV	Travelling to/from school
TRY	Trying / effort TRY+ TRY-
VBL	Verbal
VIP	Visual Prompt
VST	Visit to next school
WKL	Workload
WBP	Work before play – 'Grandma's rule'.
XCR	Extracurricular
XPN	Experiences

Appendix 4:3: Initial 128 codes condensed into second level codes

Condensed (Second level) Codes	
Description	**Examples**
Academic	Academic curriculum; what progress; challenge, development, learning, knowledge; literacy; numeracy; progress; reading; silent reading; reading with someone else, reader ("good" or "poor"); workload;
Expectations	Aims, expectations etc; IEP;
Assessment	Assessment; attainments; achievements; feedback, selection;
Building	Buildings; classrooms; dedicated room, school layout; personal space; a dedicated or private space in the school; special needs unit??
Behaviour	ADHD; S EBD; antisocial behaviour, clowning; conduct disorder; don't care attitude; inattention; overactive; behaviour support service? Work before play – "grandma's rule";
Characteristics	Personal characteristics; individual differences; trying/effort;
Communication	Communication; verbal and non-verbal;
Consistency	Consistency; continuity;
Difficulty	Difficulty; problems; school-based difficulties;
Differentiated	Differentiated/tailored curriculum
Environment	Environment; context (not buildings); sympathetic ethos;

Ethical issues	Ethical issues; anonymity;
Home/Family	Home; family; parents/carers; family work?
Individuals	Individuals, e.g. case studies;
Input	Input; interventions; teaching styles; visual prompting; supervision; influence; prompting; role-play; extracurricular; group work?
Liaison	Liaison; communication; meetings; portfolio
Health services	CAMHS; psychiatrist; psychotherapy; speech therapy; chronic illness; medication; family work; Ritalin;
Opinion	Opinion; perspective; perception; preferences; pupils' views; perception of school;
Personal Organisation	Personal organisation; independence; movement around the school; organisational complexity; organisational difficulties; orientation; routine; time of starting and finishing school; academic timetable; travelling to and from school;
Preparation	Preparation; planning for transition; Statement transition plan; homework diary; orientation day; input from older students; pen-pal letters; presentations; discussions; mentoring; acting as guide; shadowing; visit to next school; personal support plan??
Research	Methodology; data; definitions; information; interview;
Resources	Educational resources; staff (e.g. teachers, teaching assistant); SENCo; behaviour support service?? Home tuition; guides (people); booklets, Handbook and equipment; post-box; provision; provision; personal support plan?? Special needs unit??
School	School phase; school type (mainstream or special); receiving school; school regime;
Social development	Social development; social skills; adjustment; adaptation; anxiety; detachment; confidence; depression; impulsivity; pees; reaction of other students; self-perception; self-esteem; self-confidence; shyness; stress;
Support	Supports (e.g. 121); circle of friends; circle time; mentoring; from LEA; support services;

Specific needs	Specific special needs, e.g. autism; specific literacy difficulties (discrepancy); disorders; learning difficulties;
Student	Student; child; pupil; learner; older student;
Strategies	Strategies used by staff and/or pupils; approaches; asked teacher; diary; divert attention; encourage; flexibility; involve the child;

Appendix 4:4 - Codes condensed into possible themes

2nd level codes Condensed – possible THEMES?			
THEME?			
Policy / Provision Experience / Outcome?	**CODE**	**Description**	**Academic / Social / Personal Organisation?**
PROV? OUT	ACA	Academic	ACA
POL? EXP	AIM	Expectations	ACA
OUT	AST	Assessment	ACA
EXP	BDG	Building	POR
EXP?OUT	BEH	Behaviour	SOC
EXP?OUT	CHR	Characteristics	SOC
EXP?OUT	CMN	Communicatio	SOC
PRO	CON	Consistency	SOC
EXP/OUT	DFC	Difficulty	ALL?
PRO	DIF	Differentiated	ACA
EXP	ENV	Environment	SOC
??	ETH	Ethical issues	RESEARCH?
EXP	HOM	Home/Family	SOC
OUT?	IND	Individuals	SOC
PRO	INP	Input	ALL?
PRO?EXP	LIA	Liaison	ALL?
PRO	NHS	Health services	ALL?
EXP	OPI	Opinion	SOC
EXP	PNO	Personal Organisation	POR
PRO	PPN	Preparation	POR
??	RCH	Research	RESEARCH?
PRO	RES	Resources	ALL?

PRO?EXP	SCH	School	POR?ALL
OUT	SOC	Social development	SOC
PRO	SPT	Support	ALL?
EXP	SSN	Specific needs	ALL?
??	STD	Student	ALL?
POL?PROV	STR	Strategies	ALL?

The initial 128 codes with common characteristics were grouped together. This produced 28 codes, which were further clustered into themes. On the left are the themes (Policy, Provision, Experience, Outcomes) from a national project in Ireland - Inclusive Research in Irish Schools - and on the right are the themes which were most often raised in the literature on transition, and were used to shape the focus of research questions.

Appendix 4.5: Initial draft of combined questionnaires to children, parents and school staff

Potential questions to adults involved:

1) Tell me about how the school prepares children for transition to secondary school.

Example probing questions (to clarify methods and their impact):

Say something about any written materials that are available. (Leaflets, workbooks, quizzes etc.)

What sorts of group / individual discussions take place with pupils?

Tell me about the visits made by children to their secondary school. (When, how, what, with whom etc.)

For each of the above:

How is that working?

What are the strengths?

What sorts of issues arise?

2) What happens if you have concerns about particular children?

Example probing questions:

Please say more about any support available re school work / social groups / personal organisation.

Tell me about the arrangements for transfer of information. Who links with whom?

What additional input / visits are there for children with SENs?

What is your view about arranging summer vacation activities for specific children?

For each of the above:

How is that working?

What are the strengths?

What sorts of issues arise?

What should be done for any child who is the only one transferring to a particular school?

3) Tell me about contact with parents about school transfer.

Example probing questions:

What sorts of meetings are held with parents?

Say more about the information available to parents about pupils' academic progress.

Also about how parents are kept informed / involved in discussion about arrangements being made re transfer.

Tell me about any advice that is given to parents about how they can help prepare their child for transition.

What additional discussions are necessary re children with SENs, e.g. re the transition plan?

What can be done to help children with SENs re issues such as increased demands on personal organisation?

For each of the above:

How is that working?

What are the strengths?

What sorts of issues arise?

4) In an ideal world, what else could primary and secondary schools do to prepare children for transfer?

Example probing question areas:

For pupils and parents:

Written materials

Group discussion / advice

Individual discussion / advice

Visits – e.g. to get to know school layout

Arrangements for children with SENs

For pupils:

Summer vacation activities

Preparation / coaching re personal organisation / timetable / school layout

(Key issue: how to judge the impact/effectiveness of each initiative – separating opinion from fact, with reference to the literature, and to the pupils and adults involved.)

Appendix 4.6: Summary of responses to draft questionnaire from SENCos

Senco Questionnaires Feb 2011

1) Your School										
Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Lower Sch
School	A	B	F	G	G2	L	M	W	ANON	E
NOR	220	430	230	216	110	226	170	128	240	33
No Yr 6	30	34+6 dsp	58	28	18	58	20	22	30	0
No Yr6 with Statement	1	6	1	5	0	1	0	1	1	0
No Yr6 undergoing SA	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
No Yr6 SA req but not initiated	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
City / town / village?	Town	Town	Town	Town	Village	Town	Town	Village	Town	Village
No of years a SENCo? (Yrs)	2	1	2	0.5	0.5	1.4	0.83	0.5	0.5	2.2
No of years a SENCo here?	2	1	2	0.5	0.5	1.4	0.83	0.5	0.5	2.2
Time allocated to SENCo role (hrs 8=1day)	8	None' Tasks	None' Inclusi	16 - non Tg [	1.5	4	4	3	3	Blank
Who d/w transition - Head	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y=SENCo
Who d/w transition - SENCo	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y=Head
Who d/w transition - Yr 6 Class T	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Who d/w transition - other	LM; FSW	Phase 5/6 manager		FSW as part of school tea		N	N	N	N	N
2) Preparations for all pupils										
School provides pupil leaflet	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Rest=Blank
School provides pupil workbook	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	
School provides Quiz	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	
School provides other	After SATS - tra	From some a	Visits from 2	Pictorial /colc	N	Visits from a	Vulnerable g	Visits to sch	N	
Transition first discussed?	July/Yr6	After SATs	Term 1 Yr 6	Yr 5 Statem	Sept Yr6 or	October w ith	Summer term	Oct Yr6	April Yr6	
Who discusses? Head	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	
Who discusses? Class Teacher	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Who discusses? SENCo	Y	N	N	Y	Y	(Not yet - SE	N	N	N	
Who discusses? Other	N	Ts from 2y	2y Sch staff	FSW+Lg Mar	N	N	Ts from 2y a	N	N	
Is the discussion w hole class?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	
Is the discussion small group?	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	
Is the discussion one to one?	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	
Who discusses w ith parents - Head?	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	
Who discusses w ith parents - Class T?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Who discusses w ith parents - SENCo?	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	
Who discusses w ith parents - other?	FSW/Lg mentor	Phase manag	N	FSW/Lg man	N	N	N	N	N	
No of visits made by pupils to 2y	1or2 depends on	2	3 (>3 if need	3 (>3 if need		2	2 day visits i	1	3	1
Date of first visit	May of Yr6	Yr5 to one o	Depends	Jan of Trans	Oct Yr6 open	Depends!	July	Oct Yr6	July Yr6	
Who accompanies pupils? Class T	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N/A	
Who accompanies pupils? LSA	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N/A	
Who accompanies pupils? FSW	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N/A	
Who accompanies pupils? Other	N	N	Lg Mentor	Lg Mentor	N	N	N	N	N/A	
Who supervises during visit?	As above	Pupils @ 2y	LSA/ Lg men	All the above	2y Sch staff	No-one	LSA	Class T,TA,2	2y sch Staff	
How many 2y schools do you feed?	5	?	3 to 4	?	3	?	4	2	3	
Which 2y staff visit to discuss transition?	Sch l Transition	Phase/Yr lea	CT?Head (Mi	As above	Yr7 tutor	Wrenn-w hol	HoY; teache	Head of Yr7	Blank	
3) Prepas p/w statements / SA										
Prepns for p/w statements - Head	2nd	3rd	N	1st	1st	3rd	3rd	4th	N	
Prepns for p/w statements - SENCo	1st	2nd	N	Y	N	2nd	1st	3rd	1st	
Prepns for p/w statements - Class T	3rd	1st	N	N	N	1st	2nd	1st	N	
Prepn of p/w statements - LSA	N	N	1st	N	N	N	4th	2nd	N	
Prepns for p/w statements - Other	N	N	N	Lg Mentor 2r	N	N	N	N	N	
Who discusses w ith pupils - Head	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	
Who discusses w ith pupils - Class T	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	
Who discusses w ith pupils - SENCo	Y	Y(those w ith	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	
Who discusses w ith pupils - Other	FSW if appropris	N/A	LSA/Lg ment	LSA/Lg ment	N	None up to n	N	LSA	N	
Usually discussion is - Whole class	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y - involved	Y	
Usually discussion is - Small group	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	(Y- if there i	N	
Usually discussion is - one to one	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	
Number of visits made in prepn	3	2(more if Sta	>3	WRT indiv ne	3	No more than	2	>3	2	
Who accompanies? - Class T	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	
Who accompanies? - SENCo	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	
Who accompanies? - LSA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	
Who accompanies? - Other	FSW if appropris	N	Lg mentor	FSW+Lg mar	N	N	N	N	N	
Who supervises? - Class T	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N	
Who supervises? - SENCo	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	
Who supervises? - LSA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	
Who supervises? - Other	Y - FSW	2y pupil 'guid	Lg mentor / 2	FSW+Lg mar	2y Sch Staff	N	N	N	N/A	
In your experience:										
Chn say they're most +ve about	New subject	Sports facilit	Science and	Science, PE,	Curric areas	Science labs ?		Freedom of l	Lots of subjects	
Chn express concern about	Social difficulties	Social/organ	Autistic	Social diffics	Personal org	Social difficu	Academic ar	ecademic dif	Academic & social difficulties	
Chn express most concern about	New environmer	Homew ork, l	Change of st	Change of te	Bullying	Bullying, han	Larger Scho	getting lost; l	Blank	
Feedback from ow Statements after transfer?	None	None	Verbal or lett	None	None	None	Blank	Often settle '	N/A	
Which chn have most difficulty @ 2y?	SEBD	Those w ith E	Behavioural	CWSEBD	Those not w	I don't hear c	Children w ith	Behaviour di	Blank	
Contact with parents										
School documents re transition?	Y - leaflets	Y - leaflets	Y -from2y sc	Y - SNP, Sci	Y - brochure	N	N	N	Blank	
Meetings w ith Yr6 parents	Y - 1	Y - By secor	Y - By secor	3	Y - 1	N	Y - 2	Y - 1	Blank	
1-1 mtgs - parents of ow States/SA?	Y - as many as	Y - ?	Y - Number (	Y >=1 depen	Y if applicab	Y - ?	Y - 2	Y - initially th	Blank	
Do 2ies meet pnts of ow States/SA?	Y - on parental r	Y - w e pass	Y - DK numb	DK	DK	DK	DK	N	Blank	
One improvement suggestion?	Detailed discuss	Previously M	Speed up SA	Less papern	Good comm.	Extra days v	Meetings w it	Regular visit	Blank	
Further comments	Inclusion Manager and DSP teacher w ork closely w ith next schools (specialw ith units) for their children to support inclusion/transition.									

Appendix 4.7: Questions for year 6 students: areas to cover.

Boy/Girl: Ethnic Origin: Primary School attended:

NOR.....No in Yr6.....No going to the same school as you.....Where is your best friend going?.....

Thinking about getting ready for transfer:

When did you know which school you would be going to?

What information have you had so far? (Talk from teacher, workbook, booklet, quiz etc.)

How easy has it been to understand?

Did you go to / do you know if there will be any groups to prepare for your next school?

If you have already been to one, tell me about it. How helpful/enjoyable was it?

What was the best thing you have had so far, to prepare you?

What else would you like to have (had)?

Will you be/ have you visited before starting? (For example an induction day)

If so, what do you think about that? (Positives/problems)

What would/did you most like to see/do?

Will there be/have there been meetings for parents about transferring? Did you go too?

What do your parent(s) feel/say about your change of school?

How safe do you feel at school?

Have you had/ are you having any problems at school?
Are you having any problems with bullying?

If you had any problems, would you know who to turn to for support?
Class Teacher/ Head Teacher / Parent / Other?

When you go to your new school:

Social:

Do you have friends already there?

(If so, what have they said about what it is like?)

Are you looking forward to your first day at secondary school? Say why / why not.

What are you most looking forward to generally about going to your new school?

What are you most concerned about?

Will any of your friends be moving to the same secondary school as you?

Do you know if any of your primary school friends will be in your class?

Who do you expect to meet up with on you first day?

What are you most looking forward to about going to secondary school?

What worries you most about going to secondary school?

Academic:

At your primary school:

Is any of the work too hard?

In what areas? M/E/Sci/PE (etc)

What do you do if you need help with work?

Is any of the work too easy?

In what areas? M/E/Sci/PE (etc)

What do you do if it is too easy?

How well do you understand work given to you in class?

Very well, quite well, not well, not at all. (M/E/Sci/PE (etc))

Does the teacher check that you understand what to do?
Always, usually, sometimes, never. (M/E/Sci/PE (etc))

Can you ask if you don't know what to do?
Always, usually, sometimes, never. (M/E/Sci/PE (etc))

Personal Organisation:

How well are you managing with things like:
Organising your bag / kit / lunch money, etc
Getting to and from school, and on time
Doing the homework
Getting help if you're stuck
Lunch times
Break times

How do you travel to school most days?

What is the best thing about your primary school?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

Appendix 4.8: Questionnaire to parents of year six pupils

1) What has happened at school to prepare x for transition to secondary school?

Example probing questions (to clarify methods and their impact):
Say something about any written materials that are available. (Leaflets, workbooks, quizzes etc.)

Do you know if he/she has had any group / individual discussions about transition?
What have school said to you about the visits made by x to their secondary school. (When, how, what, with whom etc.)

For each of the above:
How is that working?
What are the strengths?
What sorts of issues arise?

2) Do you have any concerns about x's transfer to secondary school?

If so, what are they?

Example probing questions:

Please say more about any concerns re school work / social groups / personal organisation.

Has there been additional input / visits because x has a statement of SEN?

What is your view about arranging summer vacation activities for x?

For each of the above:

How is that working?

What are the strengths?

What sorts of issues arise?

Will x be moving to secondary with friends, or is s/he the only one transferring to that particular school?

3) Tell me about contact with you have had about how x's needs will be met after school transfer.

Example probing questions:

What sorts of meetings are held?

Say more about the information you have had about x's academic progress.

How have you been kept informed / involved in discussion about arrangements being made re transfer.

Tell me about any advice you have had about how you can help prepare x for transition.

Have you had additional discussions because x has a statement of SENs, e.g. re the transition plan?

What can be done to help x with issues such as increased demands on personal organisation?

For each of the above:

How is that working?

What are the strengths?

What sorts of issues arise?

4) Have you been able to attend either of the (yr5/yr6) sessions put on by the Parent Partnership Service about transition?

In an ideal world, what else could schools do to prepare children for transfer?

Example probing question areas:

For Parents:

Written materials about the school and how to prepare x

Group discussion / advice – following on from PPO sessions

Individual discussion / advice with 1y and 2Y SENCo / class teacher

Visits – e.g. to get to know school layout

Arrangements for children with SENs – e.g. sanctuary

For pupils:

Summer vacation activities

Preparation / coaching re personal organisation / timetable / school layout

5) Is there anything else you would like to add?

(Could you please say more about your earlier answer on …)

(Key issue: how to judge the impact/effectiveness of each initiative – separating opinion from fact, with reference to the literature, and to the pupils and adults involved.)

Appendix 4.9: Questionnaire to school staff

Questions re transition from Primary to Secondary School 2011-2012

Primary School:

Head/SMT/	Check school's policy on transition
SENCo:	Any OFSTED evaluation of arrangements?
	Input to Yr 6 class groups?
	Input to individuals / children with SENs?
	Written materials – leaflets, workbooks, quiz, etc?
	Preparation for secondary school visits? Discussion / worksheet?
	Arrangements for visits – who accompanies children?
	What information to / discussion with parents?
	Arrangements for children for whom there are concerns?
	Arrangements for x?
	Arrangements for transfer of information? Who links with whom?
Class T /	What discussions have you had with x about transition to secondary school?
LSA:	What 'school' materials are there for preparing pupils for transition?
	How far was s/he able to benefit from these?
	How well do you think x will settle in to secondary school?

Are any of his/her class going to the same school? Are any of these his/her close friends?

Do you feel s/he will have any problems settling in socially? In what areas?

What more could be done to prepare him/her socially for transfer?

Do you feel s/he will have any problems settling in academically? In what areas?

What do you feel s/he needs to help with the 'academic' demands of secondary school?

What sort of issues do you foresee with personal organisation?

What could be done to prepare him/her for the greater organisational demands of secondary school?

What sort of arrangements could the secondary school make to help with his/her personal organisation?

Appendix 4.10: Draft questionnaire to year seven pupils

Questions for year 7 students: areas to cover.

Boy/Girl: Ethnic Origin: Primary School attended: .

Thinking about how your primary school prepared you for transfer:

When did you know you would be coming here?

What information did you have before coming? (Talk from teacher, workbook, booklet, etc.)

If so, how easy was it to understand?

Did you go to any groups to prepare for coming here?

If so, tell me about it. How helpful/enjoyable was it?

What was the best thing they did to prepare you?

What else could they have done?

Did you visit before starting? (Was there an induction day?)

If so, what was the best thing about it?

What would have made it better?

What would you say to your friends still in primary school to prepare them for coming here?

When you got to this school:

Social:

Were you given someone to help you in your first few weeks?

Did you enjoy your first day at secondary school? Say why / why not.

Are you enjoying it now? Say why / why not.

Did you talk to anyone on you first day?

Did you move to secondary school with friends?

Are any of your primary school friends in your class?

Are any pupils that you know in your class/school?

Do you know any older children in the school?

Have you made new friends?

How safe do you feel at school?

Have you had/ are you having any problems at school?

Are you having any problems with bullying?

If you had any problems, would you know who to turn to for support?

Form Tutor / Year Tutor / Parents?

Academic:

Is any work a repeat of primary school?

In what areas? M/E/Sci/MFL/PE (etc)

Is any of the work too hard?

In what areas? M/E/Sci/MFL/PE (etc)

What do you do if you need help with work?

Is any of the work too easy?

In what areas? M/E/Sci/MFL/PE (etc)

What do you do if it is too easy?

How well do you understand work given to you in lessons?

Very well, quite well, not well, not at all. (M/E/Sci/MFL/PE (etc))

Does the teacher check that you understand what to do?

Always, usually, sometimes, never. (M/E/Sci/MFL/PE (etc))

Can you ask if you don't know what to do?

Always, usually, sometimes, never. (M/E/Sci/MFL/PE (etc))

Personal Organisation:

How well are you managing with things like:

Organising your bag / kit / lunch money, etc

Getting to and from school, and on time

Understanding the timetable

Finding the right room/lab/gym

Doing the homework

Getting help if you're stuck

Lunch times

Break times

How do you travel to school most days?

What is the best thing about your new school?

What was the best thing your new school did to help you settle in?
What else could they have done to help you settle in?
Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

Appendix 4.11: Letter to head teachers seeking permission

Dear Head Teacher,

I am a doctoral student at The University of Northampton, researching into the transition of pupils with Statements from primary to secondary school. I was a teacher for 11 years before becoming an Educational Psychologist, and retired as Principal Educational Psychologist and SEN Manager for Peterborough. I have had an opportunity to discuss my research with many SENCOs in the County, so your SENCO may possibly be aware of it.

I understand that your pupil (Name a, Name A) will be transferring to (School 1) in September 2011, and I would like to follow their progress before, during and after their transition. This would involve conversations with (Name a) and (his/her) parents, and with the school staff involved. I will be meeting the same pupils again in year 7, and the secondary schools involved have agreed to this. I have an up to date CRB check.

I will need to contact and seek the agreement of (Name a's) parents once they have heard from the secondary school. I wonder whether you would kindly agree to let parents know what I have in mind? If so, I would be most grateful if you would write to them to introduce me, and have attached a proposed letter for this purpose. I hope it is not too much trouble for you to send it once the secondary school has contacted (Name a) after Easter. On the assumption that not all parents use email, I have added a 'reply slip' to their letter and enclosed a stamped addressed envelope for their use.

If parents are happy for me to meet with (Name a), would you then be prepared to let me do so at school, and to discuss transition arrangements with appropriate members of staff? If you and/or parents would prefer that I met them at home, I could certainly arrange to do that instead. I must emphasise that I intend to make minimum possible demands on school time, and that my work in primary schools will be concluded by the end of this academic year.
My intention is to find out from local experience and from national and international research, which factors are most closely associated with successful transition for pupils with Statements. It is anticipated that this information will be helpful to those responsible for transition, and to the pupils involved.

If you are willing to agree, would you please confirm this to the email address below? If you have any questions about this research, I would be happy to discuss it further with you.

Many thanks, in anticipation of your help.

Yours sincerely,
Phil Ellender
phil.ellender@northampton.ac.uk

Appendix 4.12: Letter to parents seeking permission

School X

Dear Mr / Mrs M

As you know, A will be transferring to School Y in September. I really hope that this will be a very happy and successful experience for him.

Phil Ellender from The University of Northampton is very interested to see how pupils get on during their move to secondary school, to see whether the process can be improved in any way. Phil would very much like to chat to you, and to A , about preparing for transfer and what happens in the first year at Secondary School.

Phil was a teacher and a psychologist before retiring and is now a 'mature student' at the University. He would be most grateful for your help with this important research into school transition, which he hopes will be helpful to everyone involved with young people transferring to secondary school.

I hope you and A are willing to meet Phil, and think you will find it a very interesting exercise to be involved in.

Please fill in the attached slip and send it to Phil in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed.

If you have any questions, you can contact Phil by post at the address on the envelope, or you can email: phil.ellender@northampton.ac.uk

Very many thanks, in anticipation of your help.

Yours sincerely,

Mr/Mrs Z
Head Teacher.

.....
.....

Please tick one of the following:

A and I are happy for Phil to talk to us about getting ready for his new school. O

I would like Phil to contact me and tell me more about this before we decide. O

I would rather that A and I were not involved in this, thanks. O

Signed:.....Date:.....

Mr/Mrs M_____

Appendix 4.13 – Summary of Primary School Characteristics

Year 6 school for:	No. on roll	School Location	Social Deprivation	School Characteristics (The factors summarised here, illustrating the high similarity in the schools' populations, standards, working relationships and approach to SEN, are discussed further in each individual vignette.)
Alan	201	Village	Low	A one-form entry school described by OFSTED as 'Improving' with support from LA and useful contact with local 'good' school. TAs work well. Pupils with SEN make good progress. Small village school in which there was much mutual respect between teaching and support staff, & good communication with parents.
Beth	245-359!	Village	Low	Opened 2004, a village school which rapidly expanded from one to two-form entry as the village grows. Rated as 'good' in all OFSTED categories. An extremely 'professional' approach from staff in all my dealings with the school. As with all schools in this sample, relations between pupils and staff, and between staff and parents, were strong. Strong equality policy.
David	428	Town	Low	This was the only middle school in the sample, serving students from 9-13 years. It is 'deemed secondary' for inspection purposes and operates a secondary-school type timetable with specialist subject teachers, which was helpful preparation for their next school. The experienced SENCO had worked hard to settle David into school. OFSTED reported that 'those with SEN &/or disabilities were keen to learn and be involved in lessons where teaching encouraged active participation'.
Ellie	204	Village	Low	A long established school with many former pupils still living in the village, so the school is very much part of the community. The Head describes 'happy children, cheerful staff and excellent relationships between the parents and the school'. These features are endorsed in OFSTED inspections which rate the school as good. Most parents and carers state that their children are well taught and inspectors agree. They report that relationships are strong between pupils and staff, and pupils trust and respect their teachers. 'Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported very

				effectively so they can access the curriculum fully and thrive.'
Frank	137	Village	Low	A small village school with a Christian tradition which children are quoted as saying 'Is like a family'. Again rated 'good' in all categories by OFSTED, who report that, 'Teaching assistants are used well to make sure that the work given to disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and others who need extra help, is carefully arranged so that all make good progress towards their learning targets.'
Geoff	124	Village	Low	Another long-established small village school judged as good on all OFSTED categories. Head Teacher reports that its position on a county boundary limits the attendance of professional support staff for input, e.g. at SEN Annual Reviews. 'Pupils with SEN and EAL make good and sometimes outstanding progress because of good available support. Most parents feel that their children are taught well'.
Harry	460	Town	Low	A larger than average primary school which again 'values its place at the centre of the community'. Pupils with SEN/disabilities make good progress because of effective interventions. OFSTED found a very large majority of parents happy with their child's school experience but said some parents had not been kept aware of how their SENs were being addressed. This was not my experience, as reflected in Harry's mother's interview.

Appendix 5.1: Bravery award made to 'Beth'

AWARD CATEGORY ACHIEVED: Young People's Bravery Award

DETAILS OF RECIPIENT:

Beth is a year 7 student who has had to overcome various physical challenges as part of her transition to Secondary school. She is small for her age because of a muscular disorder but copes brilliantly in getting around the school amongst many larger students. Despite her small size, she is a strong minded individual who is confident and loves to tackle experiences independently. Beth is not easily intimidated and is always willing to get involved. She participates fully in lessons and is enthusiastic about sharing her ideas. Despite being prone

to tiredness, she is very determined to get through the day and endeavours to see tasks completed.

Beth also has digestive problems and has to eat regularly and can get tired and dizzy at times. Her balance is hindered further by her hearing difficulties as she is deaf in both ears and wears a hearing aid. However, she strengthens her legs with regular exercises and enjoys hobbies like gardening when she can.

Being deaf in both ears could act as a difficulty but Beth perseveres through this barrier and does not let it get in the way of learning in lessons or enjoying her day. Other students usually forget that Beth has a disability because she does not act 'differently' and prefers not to be treated as special. On this occasion, however, she deserved to be recognised for her bravery; we believe that few children would cope with having so many special needs as well as Beth does.

Appendix 7.1– Percentage Frequency of issues mentioned by pupils

Percentage Frequency of mentions by pupils: Year 6 vs. Year 7							
(Figures are percentages of individual pupils' responses in the year stated.)							
Student	Academic		Social		Personal Organisation		
	Y6	Y7	Y6	Y7	Y6	Y7	
Beth	18	41↑↑	50	32↓↓	32	26↓	
Alan	48	45↓	33	26↓	19	29↑	
David	27	43↑↑	38	35↓	35	22↓	
Ellie	45	43↑	27	29↑	27	29↑	
Frank	24	36↑↑	38	36↓	38	29↓	
Geoff	34	38↑	32	24↓	34	38↑	
Harry	47	30↓↓	42	39↓	11	32↑↑	
Totals	243	276	260	221	196	205	
Means	34.7	39↑	37.1	31↓	28	29↑	
↓=decrease ≥5%		↓↓=decrease≥30%		↑=increase≥5%		↑↑ =increase≥30%	

Social concerns were mentioned far less in year 7. (One exception – child with Asperger's syndrome.)
Academic concerns were mentioned more in year 7. (Exceptions – 2boys with least ACA difficulties.)
Personal organisation was of least concern in both years; concerns decreased further in Year 7.

Appendix 7.2: Transition Arrangements for Pupils with SEN Statements

Issue	**Date**
Amendment notices to SEN Statements and letters about transition sent to parents	October of pupil's final primary year
Parents are asked to name one school preference	Within 15 days
LA consults with schools and agreement is reached for most of the 300 or so pupils with SEN Statements	January
Parents are informed of the name of school	Mid February
If there are transport issues or LA doesn't agree to out-county placement or if there is resistance from the school (approximately 20 such issues each year). Most are dealt with by consultation.	March - June
If there is still no agreement, the Secretary of State is contacted and thus far has always found in the LA's/parents' favour.	ASAP - Varies with issue but always before term start date

Appendix 7:3 – Interview with County Education Officer re: future funding issues

Telephone call record- Date:	Time:	With:
Thursday 4th April	1.50 pm – 2.30 pm	EO, Education Officer

Item:	Information:
1 LA process re transition	Formal process starts in October of Year 6 with amendment notices to statements and letters to parents Parents are asked to name one preference within 15 days The LA then consults with schools and usually agreement is reached. Parents are informed of the name of school (or type of school?) by 15th February. There are approx. 300 statements in each year and very few appeals to SENDIST, if there are transport issues or LA doesn't agree to out-county or if there is resistance from the school (approx. 20) and most are dealt with by consultation. Sec of State is asked if necessary and has always found in the LA's/parents' favour up to now.
2 EP service	Works on a commission basis, the core role being statutory assessment when requested by LA (no cost to schools). All other work is via commissioning so schools are very efficient at using EP time effectively. (Academies are treated the same.)
3 Upcoming national changes	(Local offer / personal budgets). Northants is a PATHFINDER authority, and has a group looking into Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) but the first attempt would appear 'Utopian' and not deliverable.
4 Local changes	Northants planned to move to a 'Next Steps' scheme over an 8 year period, with money no longer attached to statements, starting with Reception. This was accelerated and brought in 'overnight'. Funding for statements is devolved to schools, which get a nominal amount (£10k; £4K from AWPU and £6K from devolved funds. All money is devolved to schools by formula (size, FSM) and not according to Statements, School Action etc. Money is assigned to schools according to bands; Band E is 20 hours TA, Band F is full time. Schools can apply to a 'High Needs Block' if they can show that the needs are above their levels and that they are spending all of the £6K.
5 Local services	The LA is cutting back on these – e.g. Autism, HI and VI – with service merged/decimated for cost cutting rather than strategically. Moving to a commissioning model and often involving non-teachers. For example, the autism service now has an outreach team of about 12 but made up of TAs and few/no teachers. If the statement says '3hrs HI input' the funding is devolved to schools, but how do they ensure quality control? Some schools (e.g. Mary Hare) offer 'free' assessment places then ask the LA to continue the funding.

Appendix 7:4 – Comparison of Secondary Schools

Secondary School Comparison		
Red=>difference; Bold=>note; Underlined=>quote; Green=>one-off		
Pupils' views:		
Issue	SS1 (4)	SS2 (3)
Ethos	Christian school, caring ethos, chapel, counsellor. Draws from a wide area.	Caring rural school with many children from nearby schools
2Y visits to 1Y?	T (SENCO) (TA for Beth)	T + 2Ex pupils
Yr6 visit to 2Y	Gentle introduction and games	Ditto
	"Say sooner which house we're in!"	
Who accompanied you on visit?	3Xpupils only; 1XmynewTA	2Xpupils, 1Xdad
Tell your friends?	Size, facilities, friendly teachers	Facilities, staff, no bullies
First day	Nervous. Encouraged to swop emails.	Scary at first, then OK. Shame about the shuffling of 1y friends.
First day social	Found 1y and older friends	Ditto
Score?	9/10 (despite exhaustion) 10 if no bullying	10, 9, 6(homework, strict Ts, Bullies)
Friendships	Shuffled1y; "Could have done more to help us to meet new friends." Have made new friends.	Shuffled1y. Most to same school so many familiar faces. Have made new friends. Note loss of some peers can be helpful. (The child who flicks!)
Friends in older year groups?	Sibs + v few from outside clubs	Ditto
Feel safe? (Most assumed Q to be about buildings/outside threats/falls.)	Generally safe, especially around teachers/TAs.	Quite safe, but least safe in crowds, e.g. in bus park.

Problems? Get help?	No probs, and would know who to go to.	Ditto
Bullying?	3no-big chaps not intentionally scary. 1yes and it's being dealt with. Know who to ask.	3no-and again clear about available support.
Amount of work / homework?	Not a lot at first.	Yes – too much! (Note 30' limit advice to Geoff.)
Subject preferences?	Varied-generally 'non-academic'-sport, art, DT	Varied, including Science and Maths
Academic - repeated1Y?	Some but at a higher level + more practical.	Ditto
Too hard?	Sometimes – so you must ask!	Humanities-lots of written work.
If help needed?	TA, teacher, Learning Centre, Homework club.	TA, dyslexic table; learning centre; ask Mrs P (TA)
Lunchtime	Activities and facilities available. (Sports field.) Can return to form room. One needing snacks can go to Learning Centre.	Can play out / use picnic area.
Best thing about your new school?	Learning Centre; snack cart; (science) equipment.	Science; IT; I go to the canteen every Friday, because every Friday's chip day.
Best thing they did to help you settle in?	Pre-induction day session highlighted; adult support; limited homework at first.	Early visits; help to get around the school; "Induction day didn't help as I still didn't know my way around when I came back to the school."
Could anything else have been done?	3 no. One, "They might not give you long projects at first."	2 no. One, "Sharing out friends equally between classes."
Better/worse than expected?	1same, 3better.	1same, 1better, 1much better.
Anticipated concerns?	3None; 1better than anticipated - and improving.	1None; 1'OK now I know where bus comes'; 1'OK> bullying didn't happen'
Anticipated positives!	Sport and food – great!	Sport/food/art-great! (But bad toe has been a problem.)
Parents' views?	4 very positive	3 did not / would not

		comment?
Other comments?	1 "knows and is known by many adults here". 1"Teachers Say I'm Doing Good Work."	Suggests TA in every lesson.
Parents' views.		
Issue	SS1	SS2
How's it going?	3 very well. One felt the others were worse than he.	3 very well but 1 ditto BIS
Settled quickly?	4 very	3 very (a few 'hiccups' e.g. because of dyspraxia, slow to dress for PE)
Hindsight – any other discussions with child?	3no, 1possibly re social skills – (he's loud and outgoing).	1no, 1possibly bullying but it's been OK, 1home-work (expect lots)!
Would you have liked > info from Ed staff?	No – it was all there, and we could have emailed if necessary.	No. Proximity of schools helpful. 1Wd have liked 'easy read' info. 1, staff email addresses earlier!
Did 2Y School have enough info?	4 yes of which 1"They did not know how disorganised he was".	1yes including meetings. 1no it took time to get support hours. 1yes but thanks to school report + approach to 'whole child'. Statement not fit for purpose!
Cd child understand the written info from 2y?	Yes, given: 1-1with SENCo; transition meeting; special input on half day; child's reading level.	No. 1 Need for info in 'easy-read' format.(1"We made our own pack")
You knew 2y placement early. Any problems?	(Parents dealt with this in their own way. Kept it secret if necessary, told child if appropriate.	Ditto.
Most positive thing?	Loss of TA! Rapid adaptation of school/child.	>independence. Ace comms.
Favourites?	Sport, Art, DT, History	Lunchtime, Art.
Any concerns?	4no.	Low self-esteem. Pressure/amount of homework & uncertainty about home-work task. Pupils have staff emails & there is a Fri consolidation session.

Biggest concern? What could be done?	None. Nothing needed.	2homework. 1self-esteem. 30'hwk limit; praise in class.
Is help ongoing?	1Yes-'not needed'? 1"We hope for ongoing peer support too".	Yes, but concerns re future funding.
Shuffling of 1y peers?	Good idea – pushes you to meet new friends. (Some retain existing friendships too.)	3"Found it difficult". 1 didn't have close friends and still doesn't. 2 are finding new friends.
Friendship difficulties?	No.	2no, 1yes; 'trust' issues.
Bullying?	3no, 1yes; dealt with. Offered to change groups. Note Mum's threat of further action.	1no, 1no (despite child's perception) 1yes, dealt with. (Mum called CPO, who called at school.)School offered 6th form buddy, + open access to TA.
Timetable?	3fine, 1TA helps.	1OK, 2OK with big home support.
Orienteering?	4fine	3fine (within a week).
Homework?	2fine, 2 can be confused re requirements.	1fine, 2need more info. Good now he knows he can stop after 30'
Getting help if stuck?	2-Muchhome support; 1reluctant to ask;1TApresent	2'reluctant to ask'; 1OKinsome subjects
Lunch/break times? Uses Learning Centre?	1avoids noisy D/Hall. 1uses student services; 1not at all; Beth note parting of the waves!	2fine, >independence. 1OK but easily thrown (yoghurt). Note reaction of school and Mum.
Cd more have been done to prepare child?	4No. Many home and school strategies.	1No. 1No, child's lack of imagination/fear helped! 1"Yes, TT we produced at home could have been produced by school. "
Overall opinion?	4excellent. All hold school in high regard and are pleased with the partnership.	3excellent. All very pleased with efforts of the school. "I think between the schools, they tried to deal with the majority of his issues and I think that's why he is so settled now."-58

Parents' evenings?	1full, 3brief, all OK.	1brief, 1upcoming, 1"missed but communications fine by email".
Right choice of school?	4Yes. Variety of personal, practical, social and academic reasons. ('Tho no lift at the school.)	3Yes of which 1"elsewhere would probably have been OK too".
Anything else?	Church school ethos. 1"Helps to be pushy. Didn't need to use PPO." Transition went well.	1"There's less feedback @2y." 1"I'll send info." 1"He goes horse riding."
School staff views.		
How well settled? Cd more have been done?	4 very well/superbly etc. N/A	3 very well N/A
When did you know	3 very early. (Parent 'phoned/LA contacted etc.) 1(TA) "Weeks -would have liked more notice."	First contacts in year 5.
How was placement decided?	1"Parental choice +LA decision." 1"I decide!!" 1"Because of my training in youth ministry."	Those with greatest need are placed in 1 of 3classes with greatest TA support.
What info did you get?	1Statement/ARs "no good", direct contact best. 1Statement + discussion with Mum.	Statement, ARs, TA + HoY7 visit 1y + pupils visit here.
Did you visit 1y?	3yes, 1no – knew too late.	TAs visit.
Did you work with them when they visited?	2yes, to ensure we could meet their needs. 2no.	No, we had full information and very good contact with the primary schools.
Would you have wanted more info?	2No, 1better statement, 1(TA) earlier notification.	No, we had full info and they can visit us often. Poor info for others with big needs but no statement.
How much time do you spend with the child?	2none (but help available as needed). 1X75%; 1Xfull time.	CW Statements are in 1of3 forms where there's always a TA; + in term 1 a TA is added to all Y7 forms to help them settle
Most positive thing?	Fitted in, settled, has friends,	That they have all settled in

	indistinguishable working hard, treated normally, accepted by his form.	so well made friends and become less dependent on adults. They are all using the library, their netbook, playing outside, etc.
Concerns?	2none, 1bossy, 1literacy a big problem.	None. Every CW a Statement has a key worker. Can sit at a table with a TA at lunch and break, and visit Learning Centre if required. -14
1Yfriends retained?	4 yes of which 2 have kept close friends.	No, they have made new friends.
New friends?	1 yes many; 1yes who know she needs help; 2yes but not close friends.	3yes – 2 out of school too, e.g. War Hammer.
Bullying?	3None; 1yes, bullying is being dealt with (but can misinterpret banter).	None. Larger noisy lads' boisterous but bullying 'not a big problem here'
What more could have been done to prepare them?	More visits by 1y staff? Some are unaware of what we provide & are unnecessarily worried. We do some 'juggling' of students into forms.	Nothing. It has worked out well, not having 'family groups'
Any duplication of 1y?	No. (But Beth has missed some 1y work.)	No. They are tested / setted & work is adjusted. NB - some without statements have higher needs than these.
How is X coping with the work demands?	2very well. 2 OK but need high level of support – including withdrawal.	"They feel they are coping well because we make sure they have work they can manage."
What more preparation would have been needed re academic demands?	3nothing. 1 "It would be good if they could meet subject teachers earlier, e.g. on the induction day. Also a booklet with a photograph of all teachers."	Nothing; the primary schools did a lot to help them, and the SEN department here has expertise and dedication
Coping with personal organisation?	3well, 1"So-So"; Transport-OK; Kit-2fine, 2OK given TA support; Timetable-OK; Orienteering OK;	1Fine, 1OK given much home help, 1very disorganised. On Fridays, (TA/Key Worker) goes through their work with them, helps to sort out homework, etc.

Homework?	2fine, 1OK, 1limited by tiredness but is helped a lot by home.	2OK, 1wants to do the same as others but cannot.
Getting help if stuck?	2fine; 1OK but asks discretely; 1has TA there	3OK
Lunch and break?	2fine-play out a lot; 1fine-lots happening; 1is easily distracted at lunch so we encourage her to eat for 15 minutes to reduce weakness.	OK – no problems
What more could have been done?	2 nothing. 1'a different TA'; 1 Perhaps a folder for each subject, as homework and other sheets get very untidy. Mum has put his Extended Learning Project in a zipped folder which has helped. -54	I don't think anything could have been done. We start in Y5 once preference is expressed, see them in Y6, SENCo goes to review meetings, we visit primary school, they visit us. -31. TA produced a pack including information and a blank timetable.
Your view of the process?	1 It has worked very well, but then his needs are not great and he is perfectly capable of functioning without support at secondary school. -56; 1 It has worked really well this year, not just for S. The feedback from parents has been great. -56; 1Quite good, with some gaps. For most SEN kids, it would be helpful to have (in summer) a leaflet with all teachers in, a timetable so they could become familiarised with it, a map of school, also TAs who knew in July who they would be working with.	It has gone very well. There will always be snags – children will always have butterflies / teething troubles / problems finding your way around the building. The process can't be made totally painless, but we do all we can to make the pain as light and as short as possible.
Input to parents' eves / staff meetings?	Staff meetings – Power Point presentations. -58; SENCo meets with parents; I attend and am available for discussion. I get a lot of 'thank-yous' and no complaints so far! -58	SENCO available.
Any other comments.	Alan gets 10 hours support but these are not used. He does not come out for literacy and does not need – and certainly would not welcome – being seen to need support in class. -60; She's treated equally but helped when necessary. She is settled,	Major concerns over future funding and re-structuring. -32 I think we do a good job! This was a good choice of school for all 3. -35 TA "Harry's parents chose us because they know we are

	working, happy and has friends. Concerns re future budget. Would be good if TAs could meet parents in the run-up to July – e.g. half an hour on the induction day. The parents would be reassured and the TAs would get more information. Parents are very supportive, despite the amount of losses / damage. -60; The placement is working really well. -60	nurturing and make great efforts." -33
	Note resource implications	Note obvious pride of staff

Appendix 7.5: Pupil Codes, Summary of pupil SEN + School size and location

Pupils Transferring to Secondary School 1 (NOR 1450) Rural

Pupil no & 'name'	Pupil Initial	Sex	Pupil SEN	School Letter	NOR 1y	Location of School
1 Alan	**	M	Dyspraxia SLCN	A	201	Village
2 Beth	**	F	Medical	B	245	Village
3 Charlie	**	M	ADHD	C	783	T:Withdrew
4 David	**	M	Dyslexia	D	428	Town
5 Ellie	**	F	ASD	E	204	Village

Pupils Transferring to Secondary School 2 (NOR 1393) Rural

Pupil no & 'name'	Pupil Initial	Sex	Pupil SEN	School Letter	NOR 1y	Location of School
6 Frank	**	M	ASD	F	137	Village

7 Geoff	**	M	Dyslexia / Dyspraxia	G	124	Village
8 Harry	**	M	HI/ Learning	H	460	Town

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