

**An exploratory study of the experiences  
of children with a Statement of Special  
Educational Needs for Moderate Learning  
Difficulties in mainstream primary  
schools:  
A multiple-embedded Case Study**

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**Declaration of own work and word count**

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.



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## Abstract

Children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SSEN) are among the most vulnerable pupils within mainstream schools. However, few studies have attempted to understand the day-to-day educational experiences of such children. Whilst researchers have considered the barriers that parents and schools face in terms of gaining a SSEN; there is little research about the ways in which schools plan and provide for pupils with SSEN and how they rate the support they receive.

A key aim of this study was to explore the experiences that two children with a SSEN for Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) had in two mainstream primary schools. The secondary aim was to ascertain whether the support put in place for the pupils was related to the objectives set out in their SSEN. Finally, the researcher sought to explore the views that the pupils with a SSEN had about the support they received in school.

A Case Study framework was adopted to address these questions. Two pupils with a SSEN for MLD enrolled in year 5 mainstream classroom were invited to take part in the study. Systematic observations were completed over the course of a week and semi-structured interviews were carried out with school staff and the pupils' parents. The pupils' views were obtained via a participatory activity and a semi-structured interview. Interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

The study found that the pupils with SSENs had considerably different learning experiences in comparison to their typically developing peers. The target pupils spent almost half of their time outside the classroom and as suggested by other researchers (Blatchford et al, 2009b) the TAs had a crucial role in providing direct pedagogical support to them. There were notable differences between the comparison group and the target pupils in terms of working in groups and accessing peers, which raised questions about the target pupils' sense of belonging within their school.

The concepts of inclusion and the related challenges were key themes in the interviews. Whilst teachers and TAs accepted that pupils with a SEN should be included within the class, their needs were listed as being too different from those of their peers to be effectively included in class. It therefore, seemed acceptable to intentionally exclude the target pupils from the mainstream class.

Overall, the results obtained from this study highlight the difficulties that schools face over inclusion and provides readers with thoughts on the actual level of inclusion for some pupils with a SEN.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

“a Statement is not enough”

(Office for Standards in Education; Ofsted, 2010: 1).

This chapter gives readers an introduction to the thesis. First the author will outline relevant background information related to the topic studied. A rationale for the current research and the research questions posed will follow. Lastly an outline of the structure of the overall thesis will be provided.

### 1.1 The current study

#### 1.1.1. Background information

In England, children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SSENs) account for almost 3% of the school population, of which 12% are said to have Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD; DfE, 2011a). Whilst a SEN is said to identify pupils with the most complex needs and outlines the support they require, little is known about its use in practice. SSENs are drawn up by Local Authorities (LAs), who subsequently monitor the progress that the pupils make through Annual Reviews. The objectives laid out in a SEN provide schools with guidelines about the areas in which the child requires additional support; however they do not specify how the support should be given or by whom. Therefore schools have some flexibility as to how they support pupils with a SEN.

The 1981 Education Act (cited in Warnock and Norwich, 2010) gave parents of children with a SEN the right to have their child educated in a mainstream school (providing that they do not have a negative impact on their peers). Mainstream primary schools have faced a wide range of challenges in relation to including and meeting the needs of such a diverse range of pupils. Various debates have taken place, not only about the effective inclusion of pupils with a SEN, but also about the pedagogical

approaches that should be used when educating children with complex needs (Norwich and Kelly, 2005; Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

The DfES (2007) suggest that professionals should acknowledge that it is the combination of teachers' skills and knowledge in relation to the curriculum and different models of learning that enable them to support and include a variety of children. Despite such guidelines, teachers, schools and researchers have raised questions about the level of inclusion in mainstream schools and more recently whether the act of having a SSEN actually results in children feeling included within their school (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

Various authors have considered whether children with SEN require some kind of specialist pedagogy (Florian, 2008; Norwich, 1996). Florian (2008) provides an insightful account of the use of inclusive pedagogy for pupils with SEN. In this model, Florian suggests that all pupils should be given a variety of options in the classroom, in relation to the tasks that they attempt. She believes that by organising several learning opportunities children can be taught to choose the task that matches their skill level. By doing this, Florian (2008) implies that children can be included on academic, social and emotional levels.

Norwich (1996) provides an alternative approach to understanding the pedagogic needs of pupils with a SSEN. He proposes that the teaching needs of children with SEN are best understood through the use of a continuum model; in which children's needs may be defined as being similar to the whole class, comparable to a specific group within the class or entirely unique to individual pupils. Whilst Norwich (1996) highlights that children with SEN may require some individualised support, his model suggests that such children should also be included at both a whole class and a small group level. Norwich (1996) and Florian (2009) dispute claims that children with SEN require a specialist SEN pedagogy, instead they suggest that effective pedagogy should be able to meet the needs of all children regardless of whether they have SEN or not.

However, a recent study by Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, Koutsoubou, Martin, Russell and Webster (2009b) highlighted that children with SEN appeared to have different learning opportunities than their typically developing peers in that they received more support from Teaching Assistants (TA) and less from the Class Teacher. As a result the role of the TA has come under scrutiny (Blatchford et al, 2009b; Radford, Blatchford and Webster, 2011). In practice it has been recognised that TAs work mostly directly with the pupils with the highest level of need, despite the fact that they have less training, knowledge and authority than teachers (Blatchford et al, 2009b). Given the constraints of the role, some researchers have questioned whether TAs are best placed to provide direct pedagogical support to pupils with SEN.

### 1.1.2. Rationale

In light of the SEN and Disability Green Paper (DfE, 2011b) it seemed topical to explore the experiences of mainstream primary schools pupils with a SSEN for MLD. With the imminent changes to the SSEN process it is important to consider how SSEN are used and whether the support provided to the children with SSENs reflect the objectives given. Furthermore, whilst reports like the Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009) have highlighted the difficulties professionals and parents experience when applying for a SSEN, few studies have thoroughly considered the pupil's experiences after a SSEN has been granted.

Debates continue to take place about the ability of mainstream schools to fully include children with SSEN (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). Few studies have conducted in-depth analyses of the experiences of children with a SSEN for MLD in mainstream schools, so it is unclear as to whether they are included or simply integrated into the school.

There is a great deal of literature on effective pedagogical approaches and its use with pupils with SEN, however with the exception of Florian and Black-Hawkins's work (2010), there is little evidence of whether such approaches work in practice. Furthermore, whilst Blatchford et al (2009b) and Radford et al (2011) have explored the roles and interactions of TAs,

they place less emphasis on the TA's perception of the support they provide to pupils with a SEN.

This research explored the learning experiences of pupils with a SEN for MLD in mainstream primary schools.

## 1.2. Research Questions and Methodology

The study aimed to address the following questions:

1. How do children with a SEN for MLD experience learning on a day-to-day basis?
  - Where do they do most of their learning?
  - How does this relate to that of their peers?
  - What additional or different support do they receive?
  - What pedagogical approaches are used to support children with SENs?
  
2. How does the support that the pupils with a SEN for MLD relate to the objectives on their SEN?
  
3. How well supported do children with a SEN for MLD feel in school and which areas of the support do they rate most highly?

In order to do this a multiple-embedded Case Study framework was used. Case Study provides a framework for exploring complex social phenomenon, by allowing researchers to use a variety of data sources to answer the questions that they posed (Hartley, 2004). In this study, systematic observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentary evidence were largely used. The qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated in order to gain a richer and more accurate picture of the educational experiences of the two pupils. This approach to data collection and analysis was a strength of the study as it provided readers with a rich description of the experiences of the pupils involved in the study.

### 1.3. Structure of the thesis

The thesis has been structured to provide readers with a detailed account of the processes undertaken in attempting to explore the questions posed above. Chapter 2 provides readers with a critical review of the literature relating to inclusion, effective pedagogy and the role of TAs. It concludes with the rationale for the study and the resulting research questions. Chapter 3 gives readers a detailed account of the methodology, including an outline of the research design, participants, research tools, procedure, as well as the way in which the data was analysed. The quantitative and qualitative results are explored in chapter 4. Within this chapter, the author discussed the findings and how they relate to the theories outlined in chapter 2. Chapter 5 describes the impact that the findings have on professional practice and possible future research ideas.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to explore the research questions posed in Chapter 1, the author has examined the literature base, specifically in relation to the national context of SEN, policies and definitions of inclusion, approaches to effective pedagogy and the role of the Teaching Assistant (TA) in supporting children with SEN.

### 2.1 Inclusive Education

The British education system has undergone considerable changes over the few decades, mostly to comply with Government policies relating to inclusion (Children's Act, 2004; Every Child Matters, 2003b; Special Education Needs and Disability Act, 2001; SEN Code of Practice, 2001, 1994; Education Act, 1988, 1981). It is not within the scope of this study to critically evaluate all the literature relating to SEN and inclusion; however it is important for readers to understand the key pieces of legislation and guidance linked to the education of children with SEN.

The Warnock report (Department of Education and Science; DES, 1978) identified that mainstream education should be considered to be the best provision for most children and ultimately, the recommendations within this report became the basis of the Education Act (1981). Following the Education Act (1981) children with special educational needs (SEN) were given an entitlement to mainstream education providing that it did not negatively affect other children. The Education Act (1981) also gave Local Authorities (LA; then known as Local Education Authorities) a statutory obligation to assess and monitor the needs of children with the most complex difficulties. In 1988 the Government published the National Curriculum (DES, 1988). The purpose of the National Curriculum was to ensure that there was equality (in terms of access to learning) across all children regardless of their sex, ethnicity, school, gender or SEN. One criticism of the National Curriculum (DES, 1988) was that it focused on what should be taught rather than how it should be taught (Colwill and Peacey, 2001). The National Curriculum was revised between in 1998 and 2000 and specific focus was placed on the education of children with



SEN. The revisions outlined that differentiation should be used as a way of supporting children with SEN however little guidance was given in relation to the process of effectively using this strategy (Colwill and Peacey, 2001).

Within a similar time frame the Government released the SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 1994, revised in DfES, 2001). At this time, guidelines were given in relation to the identification and assessment of SEN and how children with SEN should be supported so that they could remain in a mainstream school. Whilst the SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001) focuses on the differing levels of support that children with SEN might require, it provides less information about the teaching methods or approaches that benefit children with SEN. Both documents show that children with SEN might require additional or different provision from children without SEN, if their needs were to be met within mainstream schools.

Throughout the 1990s there was a national commitment to educating most children together (E.g. Excellence for all Children, DfEE, 1997). Many educationalists argued that the act of educating children with SEN in the same environment as their peers did not constitute inclusion, instead it represented something that has become known as integration (Ainscow, 1999; Mittler, 2000). In addition, whilst those working in educational settings claim to be moving away from a medical model (which emphasises children's deficits), the legislation and supporting documents require professionals, such as Educational Psychologists to assess the child's needs rather than the wider barriers to learning (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). In practice, the use and reporting of cognitive assessments (and other psychometric tests) further emphasise the child's difficulties, as opposed to uncovering the pedagogical approaches and methods that they respond to (Newton, 2009). Other methods of assessments or models of service delivery, such as Dynamic Assessments (Feuerstein, 1979) or Consultation (Wagner, 2008) might yield more useful information about a child's ability, particularly in relation to the strategies that support their learning; however such approaches are

used less readily within the Educational Psychology profession, especially when it comes to assessing children's needs as part of a statutory assessment request (Newton, 2009). Given this, it seems as though the legislation and the guidance provided by the Government encourages professionals to use assessment tools that focus on within-child deficits rather than providing school with detailed accounts of the pedagogical approaches which might support the child's learning.

An Ofsted report (2004) found that despite the fact that many schools claimed to embrace the idea of inclusion, the needs of children with SEN were often unmet by teachers in mainstream schools. As a response to these findings the Government produced the Removing Barriers to Achievement document (DfES, 2004). This paper defined inclusion as being "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" (DfES, 2004: 2). Various researchers have identified that many children with SSENs are educated predominantly by TAs (Blatchford et al, 2009a, 2009b; Warnock and Norwich 2010) and so their learning opportunities differ greatly from their peers. Warnock (in Warnock and Norwich, 2010) argues that this method of educating children with SSENs is more closely related to integration rather than inclusion: some teachers might disagree with this statement. Lindsay (2007) highlights that, the definition and interpretation of inclusion continues to be debated by educationalists and researchers.

#### 2.1.1. Inclusion – the concept and definitions

Central to most, if not all of the legislation listed above is the concept of inclusion. The concept of inclusion has been present in education for decades however it remains a highly debated notion which has different meanings for different people (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2010).

Booth et al (2000:20) define inclusion as being "a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from the culture, community and curricula of mainstream schools". This definition highlights that all pupils have a right to be actively included in all aspects of school life. This idea

was further developed in the Government SEN strategy in which inclusion is described as being:

“much more than the type of schools 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 schools” (DfES, 2004: 25)

The Government’s stance states that the quality of experience is key. Moreover it suggests that access to activities or curricular experience, alone, do not necessary represent inclusion. Inclusion within this definition is a combination of access (and the quality of this) and the pupils’ sense of belonging within their class, school and community. The shift from integration, whereby pupils with SEN or disabilities were simply educated under the same roof as their mainstream peers (Warnock and Norwich, 2010), to inclusion is a rather large step as it requires mainstream schools to adapt their practices so that children with varying needs can manage the environment, curriculum and social situations. However, there are continued debates about the concept of inclusion in mainstream schools and some authors believe that children with SEN educated in mainstream schools are more likely to be excluded from the curriculum and their peers (Warnock, 2010).

Due to the controversial nature of the concept of inclusion some researchers have attempted to consider the differences between inclusive teaching approaches and other methods of teaching. Leadbetter et al. highlight that,

“there is nothing essentially different about the teaching and approaches for many pupils with special needs that would not be considered good teaching practice for all children. However, from another perspective, what is different is everything, when consideration of attitudes and values is taken into account, and it is this factor which is crucial in promoting successful inclusion.” (Leadbetter et al, 1999:13)

Therefore as well being a process in which children are supported to participate in an environment that is adapted in a way that better supports them to access equipment, learning and activities; it is also a process which relies on teaching staff adopting a belief system in which all children are seen as valuable members of the classroom with information and ideas to contribute. However as highlighted by Thomas et al (1998), for inclusion to be successful, it is imperative that teachers are supported to deconstruct the idea that only those with specialist training or equipment are qualified to teach children with special educational needs.

### 2.1.2 Inclusion and Statements of Special Educational Needs

In 2010, Warnock and Norwich compiled a number of essays which consider the concept of inclusion and its impact on children with SENs. Warnock (in Warnock and Norwich, 2010) argues that whilst children with a SEN should have the option of being educated in a mainstream school, parents should be made aware that mainstream schools may not be able to adequately meet their child's needs. Importantly, she states that this movement towards a fully inclusive education system means that special schools are inadvertently seen as undesirable places to educate children and parents may have a heightened sense of anxiety when it comes to sending their children to such schools. Warnock (2010) argues that whilst the creation of the SEN gives some children the right to mainstream schooling, it does not determine whether their experiences in such schools will be truly inclusive.

Moreover, Dyson (2001: 13) states "there is a fundamental contradiction in the UK educational system between an intention to treat all learners as essentially the same and an equal and opposite intention to treat them as different". In practice, Dyson (2001) and Warnock (2010) claim that children with SENs are defined in terms of their individual needs, rather than the similarities between themselves and their peers. By heavily focusing on individual differences Warnock (2010) believes that children's social and emotional needs are set aside in favour of addressing their academic needs. She argues that many of the children with a SEN

educated in mainstream schools “suffer all the pains of the permanent outsider” (Warnock and Norwich, 2010: 37). For this reason Warnock has called for a review of the SSEN system and its alignment with inclusion.

Whilst Norwich (in Warnock and Norwich, 2010) shares some similar concerns about the provision provided to children with SSEN in mainstream schools, he argues that radical changes posed by Warnock (2010) are not necessary. Instead he suggests that there should be a move to strengthen teaching in SEN and he believes that further consideration should be given to the needs of all children. Furthermore he argues that the current SEN framework is well-matched to interactionist models of SEN (in which environmental, cultural and child factors are seen to intermingle in ways that might give rise to SEN) and so including children within mainstream settings might go some way towards alleviating some social and environmental disadvantages that this population often encounter. Unlike Warnock, Norwich (in Warnock and Norwich, 2010) argues that with some adaptation the needs of children with a SSEN should be catered for most often in mainstream schools. While he accepts that there may be occasions when children with a SSEN are emotionally and socially excluded from their mainstream peers, he argues that mainstream schools have a responsibility to address this at an individual and whole school level so that children with a SSEN have opportunities to learn in their local schools.

This said, Norwich (Warnock and Norwich, 2010) acknowledges that the evidence relating to the benefits of inclusion is still vague at best. Lindsay’s (2007) review of empirical studies relating to the outcomes of inclusion suggest that there are some positive outcomes in relation to academic achievement and social understanding of children with SEN in inclusive settings but the positive findings were marginal. Because of this, the notion of inclusive education remains contentious (Terzi, 2010).

## 2.2 The Statement of Special Educational Needs

In order to help teachers to include pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, the current SEN system enables schools and parents to apply to

the LA for additional support. If granted the support comes in the form of a SSEN in which children are allocated a number of additional hours of support (often interpreted by schools as being TA hours). There are variations across LAs in terms of the financial benefit of such SSENs. Where LAs fund all or parts of SSEN there is a clear financial benefit to having a SSEN. However some LAs delegate all their funding to schools on a yearly basis and as such SSENs bring little or no financial reward. Moreover, since the 1990s the power of LAs have been reduced and with the introduction of Academies and Free Schools, this trend appears to be continuing. Therefore whilst LAs are able to grant and review SSENs, they are less able to enforce the recommendations on the SSEN itself. This is just one of the many difficulties that children with SEN face.

The future of the SSEN is unclear however it is likely to continue to exist in some form. In 2011 the Government released the SEN and Disability Green Paper (DfE, 2011b; DfE, 2012) which highlighted that professionals working within in the Education Sector should liaise closely with Social Care and Health professionals. The recommendations from the Green Paper (DfE, 2011b) show that the Government has acknowledged that social and environmental factors impact on children's learning as much as medical conditions and as such professionals from a diverse range of disciplines should be involved in planning and implementing the support packages for children with SEN. Furthermore, it is likely that the new version of the SSEN will give more power and choice to the parents of children with SEN. Schools and parents will have the ability to opt for the support that they feel the child needs most. This may lead to a further reduction in the power held by the LA but at present it is difficult to judge how this might affect children with complex needs.

In 2012 the Government released the official response to the SEN and Disability Green Paper (DfE, 2012). Within this Government Ministers outlined that changes will be made in relation to the assessment and identification of pupils with SEN. By 2014, the Government are striving to introduce a single assessment process which will incorporate collaborative advice from the Education, Health and Social Care professions. By

working in this way it is hoped that pupils with SEN and Disabilities will be identified more quickly. Furthermore once identified the Ministers hope that pupils and their families will have access to a wider range of services. In addition to this, the Government are proposing that schools and parents are given more choice over the support they 'buy-in'. In theory this means that support can be tailored to individual pupil's needs, however in practice it is not clear how parents or schools will be supported to decide what or who to buy-in. Again theoretically it could be that the single assessment is used to help parents and schools to design and implement support for pupils with SEN, much like the current SSEN, however unlike the current system different forms of support, such as therapeutic sessions, could possibly be purchased as opposed to TA support. As such it is important to establish how schools and parents currently use SSENs so that this knowledge can be used to shape the new single assessment process.

#### 2.2.1 Special Educational Needs Population

The national figures relating to the number of children with a SSEN have remained relatively stable for a number of years; however the proportion of pupils with a SSEN varies widely across LAs (Daniels and Porter, 2010). This said, Terzi (2010) and Warnock (2010) state that there is an "uneven system of provision" (Terzi, 2010:4) where children with similar needs get different types of support. This alongside some of the other concerns raised shows that the current system has significant flaws (Warnock, 2010).

In 2011, figures produced by the Department for Education stated that almost 18% of the school population had SEN which could be met at either School Action or School Action Plus level. A further 3% of the population (including those in Early Years settings, Secondary Schools and Special School) received a SSEN of which almost half attended mainstream primary schools.

Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) made up 12% of the SSEN population in mainstream primary schools and this figure increased to almost 20% when children moved to secondary school (DfE, 2011a).

Not only does the term MLD account for a large proportion of the pupils with SSENs in mainstream primary schools; children considered to have MLD also make up 25% of the total SEN population (i.e. children with identified SEN which do not require a SSEN).

A wealth of research suggests that pupils with a SSEN, particularly those relating to MLD or Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) are more likely to have experienced social disadvantage (DCSF, 2009; Daniels and Porter, 2010; Warnock and Norwich 2010). In 2008, almost a third of the SEN population received free school meals (an indicator of social disadvantage) in comparison to just 12% of the pupils without SEN (DCSF, 2009). This shows that a higher proportion of pupils with SEN come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Interestingly, the factor of social deprivation is more prominent in children with MLD.

### 2.2.2 Moderate Learning Difficulties

The focus of this research is on the experiences of children with a SSEN for MLD in mainstream schools. Despite the fact that the MLD category accounts for the largest proportion of children with SEN, it incites less research than many other areas, such as Autism, Dyslexia and SEBD (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004) and like the notion of inclusion, the term MLD has been heavily debated.

The phrase MLD was designed to replace the term educationally sub-normal to a moderate degree (ESN(M)) which was introduced in 1945 (Norwich and Kelly, 2005). Whilst the movement towards identifying learning difficulties rather than sub-normal qualities is said to imply some form of inclusion (because most learners have difficulties achieving at some time in the educational careers), Tomlinson (1982) argues that the category includes many of the same children.

Broadly speaking children who are described as having MLD are said to have general difficulties learning, often identified when they become immersed in the school environment (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004). The DfES (1994) describes the presentation of MLD in children as:



“a general level of academic achievement significantly below that of their peers. In most cases they (children described as having MLD) will have difficulties with basic literacy and numeracy skills and many will have significant speech and language difficulties. Some may also have poor social skills and many show signs of emotional and behavioural difficulties” (DfES, 1994: paragraph 3.55).

Unlike children with Severe Learning Difficulties, whose needs are often identified and assessed by professionals within the Health Sector, the needs of children described as having MLD become apparent when they are exposed to structured learning. However as highlighted by Kelly and Norwich (2005) there is very little distinction between some children with MLD and some described as having Severe Learning Difficulties. Furthermore, in their study they found that children described as having MLD often had at least one other area of difficulty. For instance 61 percent of the MLD population examined by Kelly and Norwich (2005) also had difficulties with speech and language and a further 16 percent had problems related to social, emotional and behaviour difficulties. Interestingly only 16 percent of the children with MLD that Kelly and Norwich observed were described as having MLD alone. Given this, it is important to recognise that the category known as MLD comprises of a diverse group of children whose needs differ from their typically developing peers, but also from other children described as having the same or similar difficulties.

The usefulness of the term MLD has been highly debated for a number of years (Norwich and Kelly, 2005; Williams, 1993). As highlighted by Williams (1993) the label MLD may be seen to help distinguish children with MLD from those identified as having Severe learning difficulties, sensory impairments and those social, behavioural or emotional difficulties, however it does little to identify the child's strengths or difficulties. Moreover, the act of having the label MLD does not necessarily support teaching staff to consider whether or not it would be appropriate to deliver specific interventions or pedagogical approaches. Therefore, whilst some might claim that children described as having MLD

are different from those with severe or profound learning difficulties, the act of describing them as having MLD ignores their learning profile and gives those working with them little guidance in terms of the support or interventions that they require (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004).

Given that children with MLD are often said to have general difficulties acquiring knowledge it has been argued that many of their difficulties lie in the areas of cognition, memory, concentration, social skills and language (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004). However as highlighted by Johnson (1998: 181)

“deficiencies in cognition, memory and language, short attention span, inadequate achievement, social skills deficits and emotional problems collectively characterise both students who are diagnosed as having mild/moderate learning difficulties and those who are ‘at risk’ on account of contextual features such as low socio-economic status”.

As highlighted by Tomlinson, by implying that MLD is a formal diagnosis, like Down’s Syndrome or Autistic Spectrum Disorder it implies that a child with MLD has some kind of innate problem (Tomlinson, 1982). Researchers have consistently found that the MLD population has a higher proportion of pupils from Black African-Caribbean backgrounds and from socially deprived backgrounds and therefore as suggested by Johnson (1998) it could be that the MLD label actually describes the effects of social disadvantage rather than within-child deficits (Kelly and Norwich, 2005). Therefore, Tomlinson (1982) argues that it would be inappropriate to use standardised intelligence tests alone as a way of identifying children with MLD. Moreover, she claims that the act of labelling children as having MLD perhaps assists in the process of segregation as it gives some schools the opportunity to remove ‘troublesome’ children from their schools (Tomlinson, 1982). Furthermore, the act of labelling some children as having MLD, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds or ethnic minority groups may give

professionals permission to set lower standards for this group of pupils (Kelly and Norwich, 2005).

#### 2.2.2.1. Teaching children with MLD

A large proportion of children described as having MLD are educated in mainstream schools (Kelly and Norwich, 2005). Kelly and Norwich found that 75 percent of children with MLD attended their local mainstream schools and those that did not often had more than two other areas of difficulty or medical diagnoses and as such attended a Special School. In terms of the location of their education, Tomlinson (1982) argues that some children described as having MLD are placed in Special Schools for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties without first examining their intellectual ability. She suggests that for many of these pupils little consideration is given to the underlying causes of their behaviour (many of which are likely to be linked to the difficulties that they have accessing the learning in mainstream schools) and as such they inappropriately educated, more likely to be unemployed as adults and less likely to engage in higher education (Tomlinson, 1982).

According to Fletcher-Campbell (2004) and Williams (1993) teaching children with MLD is thought to be easier than many of the other SEN groups, despite the fact that the needs of this 'group' of pupils are difficult to define. Fletcher-Campbell (2004) suggests that teachers are more able to understand the needs of pupils with MLD because they perceive that these pupils see the world in the same way as other pupils and simply learn less well or more slowly than typically developing children. As such pupils with MLD are often grouped with other low achievers and as a result given generic group interventions rather than more specific or tailored interventions aimed supporting their unique learning needs (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004; Dyson et al, 1994). By grouping children with MLD with other children who have other special educational needs it could be suggested that the MLD pupils are given a lesser form of support. Again the process of ability grouping may not benefit children defined as having either MLD or as being low achievers as such children have fewer positive

role models to support them. However more importantly, teacher expectations reduce significantly when children are deemed to be slow learners or low achievers and as a result they are not supported in the same way that higher achieving pupils are (Weinstein, 2002). This combined with the fact that some researchers feel that MLD itself is a socially constructed term means that judgements about the child's learning ability are frequently made (Tomlinson, 1982).

Aubrey (1995) argues that pupils with MLD would benefit from:

“more and better teaching...more time and more high quality forms of instruction, which is teacher intensive, more deliberate in planning and tighter in its methods of monitoring and reviewing” (Aubrey, 1995: 25).

Whilst the recommendations made by Aubrey (1995) appear to be relatively straightforward, there is little research to confirm whether these or other strategies are used to support children with MLD. Importantly, Kelly and Norwich (2005) highlight that there has been no serious attempt to develop a curriculum or pedagogy for children described as having MLD, therefore there are various debates about how children with MLD should be taught.

One of the key debates hinges around the teaching of the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum was put in place to ensure that all children are given equal opportunities to education. Whilst this appears to be a fair goal, if Aubrey's (1995) perception of the needs of pupils with MLD is taken seriously it becomes clear that children with MLD are likely to require more time to understand and grasp some important educational concepts. As such, if adequately supported it is likely that their educational goals will need to be somewhat different to that of their peers. The difficulty with this approach is that some schools place a considerable amount of emphasis on following the National Curriculum. In such schools, it is likely that the pace of mainstream lessons will make it difficult for some children with MLD to access what is taught to them regardless of the in-class support they receive. Therefore there is a dilemma between

equality (access to the curriculum) and individuality (reducing or altering what is taught in order to respond to the child's needs). Unfortunately, there is little evidence or research available to support schools to make well-founded decisions about the pedagogical or curricular approaches that best suit children with MLD (Norwich and Kelly, 2005).

#### 2.2.2.2. Summary

As highlighted above the term MLD was not designed to be used as a diagnosis, instead it was introduced to replace derogatory labels, such as educationally sub-normal to a moderate degree, previously used to describe children who seemed to have difficulties learning at the same rate as their peers. The definition itself is contentious as it encompasses difficulties in learning and problems with speech and language and social, emotional and behavioural development. In addition, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain the differences between children with MLD and those with Severe Learning Difficulties (Kelly and Norwich, 2005). There is little evidence to outline the provision and strategies that benefit children described as having MLD and as such research suggests that teachers are making use of generic interventions, commonly used to support children who are achieving less well than their peers (Kelly and Norwich, 2005). This may be inappropriate for children with MLD however there have been few serious attempts to explore the pedagogical needs of children with MLD, making it difficult to ensure that this group of children are appropriately supported in school.

#### 2.2.3 Teacher Expectations

As highlighted in the previous section, teacher expectations have a large role to play in the identification of children with MLD. Therefore this section aims to give readers a short description of the literature relating to teacher expectations and attribution theory (Weiner, 1980). There is a wealth of research on the effects of teacher expectations on children's achievement (McKown and Weinstein, 2008; Weinstein, 2002; Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968) and whilst it is not possible to explore this area in depth, it is important to understand its impact on the education of children

with MLD. McKown and Weinstein's (2008) findings suggest that teachers provide higher quality instructions to children for whom they have higher expectations. They argue that the groups of children teachers have higher expectations, internalise the beliefs held by adults and become intrinsically motivated to do well in school. Interestingly, Kuklinski and Weinstein (2001) found that the more children perceive teachers as having high or low expectations for different groups, the more it affected the achievement levels within those groups. While this may be beneficial for the children seen by the teacher as good learners, it is detrimental for children who are seen as having difficulties learning.

Findings from some studies on teacher expectations have shown that whilst teacher expectations seem to have an effect on children's attainment, correlations do not prove causality and other factors could also explain the findings (Weinstein, 2002). In addition, "when classrooms were differentiated by climate and inhabitant characteristics, it became clear that in some classrooms, the expectation gap is substantially greater, while in others it is much lower" (McKown and Weinstein, 2008: 257). In other words, whilst theories about teacher expectations seem to be relevant and logical, the findings from some studies indicate that caution should be used when considering the impact of teachers' expectations on pupils' achievement.

Theories on attribution (Weiner, 1980) and teacher expectations (McKown and Weinstein, 2008 Weinstein, 2002) could be used to understand the reasons why children with MLD appear to lack motivation when it comes to learning. Timmins (1999: 52) suggests that "pupils who tend to attribute their poor performance to their low ability rather than their effort are unlikely to believe that they can change their performance on a task that they have failed on." Therefore it is important to consider the motivation and engagement levels of pupils with SEN for MLD.

One of the other pertinent aspects of Attribution theory (Weiner, 1980) is that successes or failures can be attributed to either internal or external

factors. For those supporting children with SSEN this is critical. If adults place emphasis on internal factors (within-child deficits) it could be that they feel less able to bring about change because the intrinsic nature of the child's difficulties may lead them to feel as though they have little or no control over the pupils' learning outcomes. As shown in earlier parts of this chapter the SEN system corroborates with this by the fact that assessments often focus on within-child deficits (Newton, 2009). It is likely that this filters through to schools and teachers and subsequently impacts on the expectations that they place on pupils.

To summarise, theories on teacher expectations (Weinstein, 2002) and attribution (Weiner, 1980), may help to understand the responses and attainment levels made by children with MLD, especially if they are combined with theories on inclusion and effective pedagogy.

#### 2.2.4 Education of children with Moderate Learning Difficulties

Children diagnosed with MLD are likely to have a wide range of difficulties. Therefore it would be naive to suggest that there are simple one-size fits all strategies or interventions designed to support all or even most children with SSEN for MLD. Given that TAs provide much of the pedagogical support for children with SSEN (Blatchford et al, 2009b), one might assume that, given their status in school, the qualifications that they hold and their limited access to pupil information, that TAs may have difficulties supporting children with MLD. However, little research has been conducted into the support that children with MLD receive on a day-to-day basis and given that the majority of children with SSENs for MLD are educated within mainstream schools it is important to consider the pedagogical approaches that teachers or TAs use to ensure that such children are included within the classroom.

#### 2.3 Effective Pedagogy

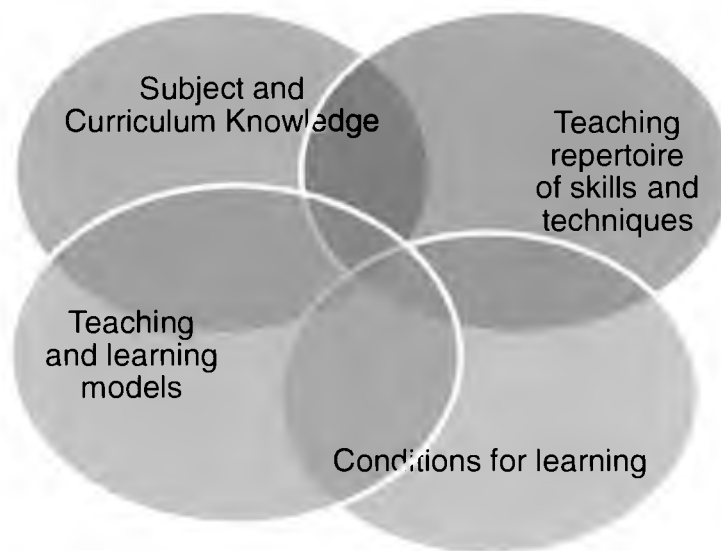
There is a wide range of research relating to effective pedagogy (Yates and Yates, 1990; Cooper and McIntyre, 1996; Gipps and MacGilchrist,

1999; Norwich and Lewis, 2001). The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) state that:

“Pedagogy is the act of teaching, and the rationale that supports the actions that teachers take. It is what a teacher needs to know and the range of skills that a teacher needs to use in order to make effective teaching decisions” (DfES, 2007: 1).

The figure below outlines the factors that the DfES (2007) regard as being critical to effective pedagogy.

Figure 1. Four Domain approach to Pedagogy (DfES, 2007)



Effective pedagogy not only focuses on the teacher's ability to differentiate tasks to groups of pupils with diverse needs; it also relates to the teacher's assessment skills and their ability to reflect on a variety of teaching and learning models; as well as their use of effective questioning and guidance, and their ability to provide facilitation and support within small group work.

In practice, it is unclear as to which of these has a greater impact for children with SEN however it is the combination of the four domains which create an effective pedagogy. Whilst teachers are taught to strive for these, TA may be less familiar with these concepts and their



knowledge, training, qualifications and role may hinder them in following them through (Blatchford et al, 2009b).

While many authors have outlined what they believe effective pedagogy consists of many fail to establish whom the 'effective pedagogy' is 'effective' for (Slee et al, 1998). There appear to be differing views in terms of whether pupils with SEN respond to the same methods of teaching as children without SEN (Florian, 2009; Lewis and Norwich, 2008), therefore the author will explore these in more detail.

### 2.3.1 Inclusive Pedagogy

Florian (2009) argues that the assumption that children with SEN need a specialised pedagogy is likely to be rooted in the 'development versus deficit' debate. Those in support of the deficit position would argue that children with SEN or disabilities have qualitatively different learning needs than typically developing children. Using this framework Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) argue that schools limit children's experiences and collude with social exclusion rather than enhancing learning and promoting an inclusive pedagogy. Furthermore, whilst Florian (2009) highlights the importance of assessment she suggests that the reliance on deficit-heavy language and the identification that children have inherently 'different' needs exacerbates the argument that mainstream class teachers are less able to support pupils with complex needs. Similar to theories on teacher expectation (Weinstein, 2002), Hart, Drummond and McIntyre, (2007) argue that the process of identifying children as having different needs from their peers makes them vulnerable to both the negative effects of differentiation and expectations, thus creating further barriers to academic success.

Florian (2009) suggests that all learning follows sequential patterns; and while pupils have a range of learning strengths and difficulties, the difference comes because some children learn at a much slower rate. She (2009: 39) argues that, "differences are explained in terms of when rather than whether learners pass through stages of development". This notion indicates that all learners are likely to benefit from similar teaching

practices; and it challenges the belief that children with SEN require qualitatively different teaching approaches than other children. As such Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) argue that the future direction of the education of children with SEN should encompass an inclusive pedagogy in which rich learning environments are created in ways which enable all children to participate and interact in classroom life.

Florian's (2009) work highlights the complex nature of inclusion in terms of how it is defined and the ways in which it is used to both in practice and to inform practice. Given that inclusion is the driving force behind many of the Government's policies (Warnock and Norwich, 2010), Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) endeavoured to explore the processes that support teachers to implement inclusive pedagogical approaches.

In order to implement inclusive pedagogy Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010: 6) outline that teachers should shift their beliefs to a "learning for all" stance when educating children with SEN. One way of doing this is by questioning the validity and reliability of deterministic beliefs about ability and intelligence. In addition, Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) urge teachers and educationalists to critically evaluate the normal distribution ideology used to identify children with SEN because they believe that these concepts affect the expectations that teachers hold about children's ability.

Crucially, for inclusive pedagogy to exist, children should be given opportunities to "work with and through other adults [in ways] that respect the dignity of learners as full members of the community of the classroom" (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2010: 6). Theoretically this approach allows all children, regardless of their strengths or difficulties, to be included effectively in their learning environment.

"Individual differences between learners are accommodated through the choice of tasks and activities that are available to all without the stigmatising effects of marking some students as different or pre-determining the learning that is possible. The outcome here is that learners' needs are met but individual students

are not marginalised within the class” (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2010: 10).

In order to make use of an inclusive pedagogy Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) found that teachers’ shifted the way they planned their lessons by emphasising how the learning objective could be met via a range of different activities. According to Florian and Black-Hawkins, by using grouping strategies creatively all children have opportunities to work at different levels and with the support of adults, as opposed to exclusively using adults to help children with SEN. Importantly, this approach encourages teachers to celebrate children’s achievements, as opposed to their difficulties (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2010).

Inclusive pedagogy promotes the full inclusion of pupils with SEN and it encourages all children to have an element of choice in their learning, however some school policies and Ofsted criteria contradict it (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2010). Hart et al (2007) also argue that deterministic beliefs that encompass the education sector make it difficult for teachers to wholly reject ideas about the value of differentiation by *ability* level.

“school inspectors are trained to judge the extent to which teaching is differentiated by ability level despite the large body of research that documents its negative effects on teacher expectations, student self-perception and curriculum development” (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2010: 8)

Given the presidency of Ofsted ratings it is challenging for teachers, especially those who may lack the practical experience of engaging in an inclusive pedagogy, to convince management structures within schools to move away from the ideology that they perceive Ofsted to hold. Whilst there seem to be significant benefits in adopting an inclusive pedagogy the dilemmas faced by teachers act as barriers in relation to following the principles within this model effectively.

This is not to say, that the model of inclusive pedagogy itself is problematic or ineffective: quite the opposite. There could be a number of benefits to inclusive pedagogy for children with SEN. It may increase their

motivation to learn, improve their metacognitive skills and provide them with increased opportunities to interact with their peers. Ultimately it improves their access to teaching and learning and perhaps it goes some way in challenging the expectations that teachers hold of them. While Florian and Black-Hawkins' study (2010) identifies how teachers use inclusive pedagogical models in class, their research fails to fully explore the way different groups of children engage in this teaching method.

## 2.4 Differentiation

The National Curriculum sets out that task differentiation can be used to support children with SEN in mainstream schools. The process of differentiation can include the use of specific teaching strategies, modifications to pupils' learning objectives and/or changes to the environment that pupils learn in (Lewis and Norwich, 2007). Baumann et al. (1997) argue that differentiation provides pupils with different ways of accessing the content taught by enabling them to attempt well considered activities without making them become over-reliance on adult support or subjecting them to overwhelming fears of failure.

### 2.4.1 Task differentiation

Theoretically task differentiated lessons support pupils of varying attainment levels by matching their knowledge and learning base to the task at hand. Unlike the process of instructing TAs to help children with difficulties learning, differentiation aims to give all children opportunities for success and when carefully planned it can enable the teacher to use children's varying interests to support their learning. In addition, task differentiation accounts for the fact that children have different learning profiles and preferred ways of learning. Theoretically, task differentiation links to psychological theories about learning, including Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) and Bruner's scaffolding model (1978).

### 2.4.2 Process Differentiation

In addition to task or content differentiation, Ellis, Gable, Greg and Rock

(2008) outline three other forms of differentiation: process differentiation, product differentiation and environment adaptations. In process differentiation teachers adapt their lessons in a way that enable children to use their preferred methods of learning. For example teachers may perceive some children as being a visual learner and therefore they may increase the level of visual information presented to that particular child in order to support their learning. Much of the basis for process differentiation comes from the idea that children have different and identifiable learning styles.

However, Slack and Norwich (2007) argue that while teachers assume that children have a variety of learning styles, little empirical evidence exists to support claims that identifying relative strengths in particular learning styles leads to better attainment outcomes for children. Therefore whilst the idea of encouraging teachers to incorporate different teaching styles into their lessons may seem useful; the lack of evidence about the long-term effects of adapting teaching methods for particular learning styles does not yet exist. Furthermore, Cassidy (2004) and Slack and Norwich (2007) highlight that current measure developed to assess learning styles lack reliability and validity. Therefore even if learning styles could be used to help teachers plan their lessons, teachers have limited resources to accurately identify preferences that children may have in terms of learning styles.

In terms of supporting children with SSENs, process differentiation is likely to be used as a way of grouping children who are perceived to have similar learning styles together. In doing this, children's needs are thought to be being met because TAs or Teachers design tasks around what are thought to be the child's/children's strengths. This approach requires TAs or Teachers to regularly assess the child's approach to learning and evaluate different models of teaching. In practice, TAs spend considerably more time with pupils with SSENs than Teachers (Blatchford et al, 2009) and therefore it is likely that this model would be dependent on the assessment and evaluation skills of adults who have neither the training or the time to complete such activities. Given this one might question

whether TAs are in fact best placed to undertake this responsibility and if they are not then process differentiation should be undertaken with caution.

#### 2.4.3 Product differentiation

Product differentiation, or performance differentiation, is essentially defined as the pupil's ability to demonstrate that they have mastered the content of lesson, i.e. they can produce something that shows they have understood what they have been taught (Anderson, 2007). Within this model the teacher may give pupils a variety of ways of producing a piece of work. For example, if a pupil is asked to demonstrate that they understand and can debate a topic, the teacher might allow them to use an oral presentation, poster or written format. Again this model requires teachers to plan a variety of tasks and for children to consider and choose the activity that can best demonstrate their skills and knowledge. For pupils with a SEN it is likely that TAs will have some influence on the choice that the pupil makes and the TAs choice may be influenced by their own skills or limitations or the environment made available to them. In practice, it is likely that TAs would take responsibility for the children with which they work in order to allow teachers to rotate across the other groups. Whilst this means that children with a SEN may receive one-to-one support, the support given to them may not be as effective as that given by a Teacher. For instance, Radford et al (2011) and Rubie-Davies et al (2010) found that teachers focus on learning acquisition and understanding, while TA emphasis the need to complete tasks. In terms of questioning, they found that teachers asked questions which extend children's learning whereas TAs emphasised the need for task completion. Therefore in terms of process differentiation it could be argued that TAs are not best placed to support children in tasks which require them to consider ways of learning or reflect on the process of learning.

#### 2.4.4 Environmental adaptations

In addition to adapting tasks and processes teachers sometimes have the

ability to modify the environment in which children learn. For instance individual workstations have been shown to be effective in reducing sensory stimulation for children with Asperger's Syndrome (Dunn, Saitter and Rinner, 2002). Some pupils with MLD have physical needs which require schools to make adaptations to the environment, particularly where children are wheel-chair bound. However due to the limited quantity of research in the area of MLD (Fletcher-Campbell, 2004) it is unclear whether further environmental differentiation is undertaken. Furthermore, while environmental differentiation is identified as one way of making the curriculum more accessible to all children it can be challenging for teachers to adapt the physical environment given to them (Anderson, 2007).

#### 2.4.5 Continuum of teaching approaches

Lewis and Norwich (2001) argue that differentiation alone is not enough when it comes to supporting children with SSENs because differentiation is a complex process which requires teachers to undertake a high level of planning and assessment to ensure that all children receive the right level of teaching. This is made more challenging for children who have difficulties learning. Lewis and Norwich (2001) emphasise that whilst it is widely recognised that there is a continuum on which children with SEN are seen to be on, there is little research into the notion of a continuum of teaching or pedagogic approaches. By considering a teaching continuum, i.e. what strategies and approaches are used more or less in day-to-day practice it may be possible to understand the impact that each of these have on children with (and without) SEN. Lewis and Norwich (2001: 8) state:

“The notion of continua of teaching approaches is useful as it enables us to distinguish between the normal adaptations in class teaching for most pupils and the greater degrees of adaptations required for those with more severe difficulties in learning, those designated as needing a statement of SEN.”

As highlighted above it is unclear whether differentiation alone provides children with SEN enough support to fully master learning objectives. Instead (and by using the continuum model of teaching), Lewis and

Norwich (2001) argue that pupils with SEN may need specific pedagogical adaptations that go beyond the scope of differentiation but within the expertise of good teaching practice. For instance, teaching may adapted to provide children with SEN more examples of concepts, explicit teaching of learning strategies, more frequent assessments, more time to practice and master skills (Lewis and Norwich. 2001). Whilst these approaches may require teachers to plan their sessions differently the skills needed to teach children with SEN are relatively similar to those used to teach their peers.

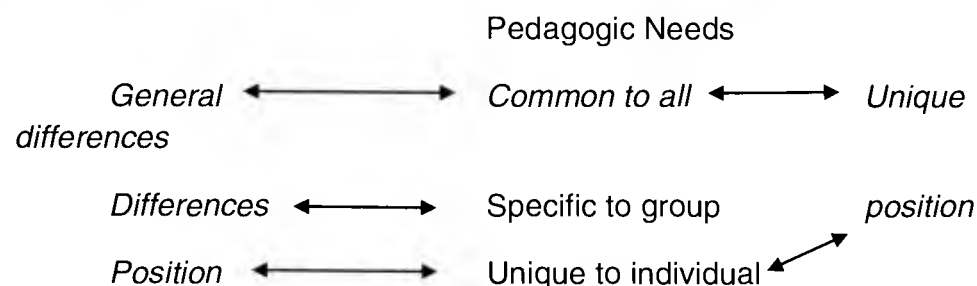
Unlike the traditional view of differentiation, whereby the teaching strategies used for children assessed as having SEN are seen as being different to their peers, the model proposed by Lewis and Norwich (2001) theorises that many of the strategies used to support typically developing children can also be used with children with SEN.

It could be argued that Teachers' skills and their approach to adapting the curriculum affects the quality of the differentiation however if differentiation is used in an "elastic and creative" way it can become a useful strategy for enhancing the learning environment for all pupils (Nind, 2005: 4).

## 2.5 SEN-specific Pedagogy

Lewis and Norwich (2008) argue that at times, children with SEN are likely to benefit from alternative pedagogical approaches as opposed to variations of the general curriculum. Norwich (1996) formulated a conceptual framework which focuses on the 'commonality-differentiation of pedagogy'.

Figure 2: Commonality-differentiation model of pedagogical needs





He outlines three pedagogic needs: those that are common to all learners, those that have relate to certain groups of learners and those that are unique to individuals (Norwich,1996). Norwich and Lewis (2001) intimate that children with SEN are not adequately provided for in general class teaching; however they also reject the idea of the use of a unique pedagogical approach tailored just for pupils with SEN. Instead they propose the notion of considering pedagogical approaches in terms of a continuum.

According to Norwich (1996) some children may benefit from the approaches which are seen to assist all learners whilst others may benefit from strategies which are tailored to meet their individual needs. In practice, this framework provides teachers with the flexibility of using a combination of common teaching approaches, SEN-specific pedagogies and unique teaching strategies developed to address pupils' individual needs. However, unlike the inclusive pedagogy it fails to address the fact that children with SEN are vulnerable to exclusion, especially if they are partaking in various tailored interventions away from their peer group. While it seems appropriate that children with SEN receive individual support or interventions to enable them to access the mainstream curriculum, it is important to consider who delivers the interventions, who determines what support the child needs and how the child's progress is measured (in terms of their performance within the intervention group and their ability to apply this in the classroom).

Few studies have investigated how teachers and TA utilise this model in practice, given that the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2010) suggests that children with SEN require support that is additional to or different from that received by the majority it would seem that this model of working would best fit with Government guidelines. In practice, Blatchford et al. (2009b) found that much of the support received by children with SEN comes via a TA. While it is clear that this support is different from that given to the majority, it is less clear whether they use different pedagogical strategies

to support the children that they work with. In addition, if TAs are used to provide additional support to children with SEN it is important to understand how teachers communicate with them and whether it is possible for TAs to effectively use the teacher's planning materials to implement good quality provision to children with SEN.

## 2.6 The role of the TA

Initially, the role of TA was to support teachers with housekeeping tasks (Wilson, Schlapp and Davidson, 2003) however by the 1980s they were tasked with listening to children read and helping small groups of children (Thomas 1987). Even within this role, researchers questioned the effectiveness of their support (Duthie 1970; Stierer, 1985). Whilst the role of the TA is not new, more recent research indicates that they have been given a larger pedagogical role in relation to helping children learn (Blatchford et al, 2009a, 2009b).

It is likely that the inclusion agenda affected the number of TAs in the classroom (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). Lewis and Norwich (2001) argue that the traditional model of having one teacher leading a whole class of children (with a variety of learning needs) is perhaps out-dated. If, as Florian (2009) suggests, children with SEN learn at a slower rate than their peers, then it could be challenging for teachers to provide them with enough opportunities for over-learning and skill acquisition, while still meeting the needs of the majority as such it appears that TAs are relied upon to provide such support (Blatchford et al, 2009b).

### 2.4.1 TA deployment

In terms of deployment TAs spent over half of their time engaging in direct pedagogical roles, primarily with children with SEN which meant that pupils with the highest level of need were supported most often by the least qualified members of staff (Blatchford et al, 2009b). For pupils with SEN this meant that TAs replaced the teacher and therefore what initially was deemed to be 'additional' support actually became alternative support. It could be argued that the use of a TA allows children with SEN

to receive one-to-one support however this type of support may have implications for inclusion and it may displace the responsibilities that teacher have in terms of creating and developing activities which enable all children to work towards the same learning objectives (Florian, 2009).

The findings from Blatchford et al's (2009b) study and the fact that almost a third of classroom-based staff is made up of TAs (DfE, 2012) suggests that TAs have a direct pedagogical role when it comes to educating children with SEN. As such, there is a growing interest in research which seeks to uncover information about the role and contribution that TAs have in mainstream classrooms (Blatchford et al, 2009b; Cremin, Thomas and Vincett, 2005). Until recently, it has been assumed that additional adult support results in more effective classroom practice and better support for pupils with SEN, however recent studies by Blatchford et al (2009b) dispute these claims.

Blatchford et al, (2009b) found that when TAs had a direct pedagogical role with children with SEN, teachers spent less time supporting them and worryingly the children made less progress than their peers. It could be argued that because TAs are often deployed to work with children with SEN or poor prior attainment then their pupil's expected levels of progress may be lower than children without SEN. However, even when prior attainment, SEN status and socio-economic factors were controlled for children supported by TAs made less progress than their peers (Blatchford et al, 2009b). These findings imply that regardless of upbringing, social factors and inherent ability children working with TAs make less progress than their peers.

#### 2.4.2 Effectiveness of different teaching approaches

Interestingly, researchers from Durham University investigated the cost-effectiveness and valued-added of different approaches to supporting children with SEN (Higgins, Kokotaski and Coe, 2011). They found that:

“learners need to engage in activities which make them think harder, more deeply and more frequently. They need to learn what is expected in different subjects and to develop strategies to help

them when they get stuck. Above all they should believe they should succeed through effort and that they should be able to seek and respond to feedback to improve their learning” (Higgins et al, 2011: 3).

Like Hattie (2009), Higgins et al, (2011) conducted a number of meta-analyses on different ways of supporting children in schools. In doing so they used effect sizes to determine whether one approach was better than another. Interestingly, they summarised that TA support had little or no effect on the attainment levels of low-achieving pupils. This said TAs appeared to have a positive effect on pupils’ perceptions of themselves as learner and their presence reduced the teacher’s workload and stress level. However, when compared with the input that children had from teachers, TA support was consistently seen as being less effective (Higgins et al, 2011).

Whilst one-to-one support might be considered to be the optimum approach, research suggests that TA have neither the training nor the expertise to provide children with SEN the high quality support that they require (Blatchford et al, 2009b). This becomes further complicated with pupils with a SSEN. As previously described, pupils with a SSEN undergo a range of assessments and reviews throughout their school life (more so than children without SSEN) however, it is still unclear whether TAs are instructed or encouraged to review this information or supported to develop strategies that take this information into account. Without access to assessments, external professionals, targets or planning materials it is not clear how TAs would go about implementing support.

#### 2.4.2.1 Planning and Communication

Regardless of the pedagogical approach that teachers take planning and communication is seen as being key to effective classroom practice (Ofsted, 2006; Cremin, Thomas and Vincett, 2005). The SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2001) indicates that TAs should be provided with information about the teacher’s aims for the pupil (usually through a carefully planned learning objective), the themes and topics that are taught within the class and ways in which the pupil can be included with their

peers. However, Wilson et al (2003: 201) found that communication between TAs and Teachers was often “rushed and lacking in depth”. One explanation for this is that teachers are unprepared to manage other adults in the class partially because they receive little or no allocated planning or feedback time with TAs (Blatchford et al, 2009b). This is likely to have grave consequences for the practice of TAs, particularly given that TAs have little training or knowledge about pedagogy and few opportunities to communicate effectively with Teachers. Therefore it could be argued that without joint planning TAs are likely to provide ad hoc forms of task differentiation which may not support children with the highest level of needs (Blatchford et al, 2009b).

Whilst Blatchford et al's study (2009b) provides insight into the deployment of TAs and their levels of expertise; it fails to systematically identify how children with SSENs experience schooling on a day to day basis. By focusing on the TA rather than the pupil, it is more difficult to ascertain how children with SSENs are included in mainstream schools. Furthermore, whilst Blatchford et al (2009b) identify that TAs have a direct pedagogical role in relation to educating children with SEN they do not explore the pedagogical approaches used by TAs.

#### 2.4.2.2 Effective teaching practices

Wilkinson and Silliman (2000: 37) state that “to a great extent the language used by teachers and pupils in the classrooms determines what is learned and how learning takes place”. This quotation highlights the importance of language and instructions in classrooms. Effective teaching strategies have been thoroughly explored and are thought to include, helping children make links to previous learning (Berliner, 2004); checking pupils' understanding of concepts (Connor, Morrison and Petrella, 2004); asking questions which promote and enhance meta-cognitive skills (Higgins et al, 2011; Hattie, 2009; Taylor, Pearson, Clark and Walpole, 2000); giving feedback which encourages motivation and participation (Higgins et al, 2011; Hattie, 2009; Berliner, 2004) ensuring that children are cognitively engaged in tasks (Hattie, 2009; Berliner, 2004) and

scaffolding children's learning to ensure that knowledge is embedded and consolidated (Hattie, 2009;).

Rubie-Davies, Blatchford, Webster, Koutsoubou and Bassett (2010) and Radford et al (2011) compared the interactions that pupils had with teachers to those they had with TAs. The authors observed marked differences between the quality and purpose of instructions given by teachers and TAs. Teachers appeared to focus on learning acquisition and understanding, whilst TA emphasised the need to complete the task (Radford et al, 2011). In terms of questioning, they found that teachers asked questions which extended the child's learning or required them to reflect on the learning process whereas TAs placed more importance on task completion and time-keeping. Interestingly where teachers took the time to explain concepts and vocabulary TAs seemed reluctant to give more detailed explanations of concepts or unfamiliar vocabulary (Rubie-Davies et al, 2010). Similar results were found in terms of the way that teachers and TAs gave feedback (Rubie-Davies et al, 2010).

These findings indicate that teachers and TAs appear to have different goals when they interact with pupils and this is likely to affect the quality of their support and ultimately the progress children make. Higgins et al's (2011) and Hattie (2009) have highlighted that providing effective feedback and helping children to develop better meta-cognitive skills lead to better outcomes for children's learning. Looking at the work by Rubie-Davies et al (2010) and Radford et al (2011) it would seem that only teachers utilise such strategies. So not only are children with SSEN supported most often by the least qualified members of staff, the instructions they receive are less conducive to children's learning. Therefore if schools continue to allow TAs to have a direct pedagogical role with pupils with SEN, it is important that future research uncovers the strategies that TAs utilise and how they relate to theories on effective pedagogical models.

#### 2.4.2.3. Positive impact of TA support

While many researchers (including Blatchford et al, 2009; Hattie, 2009) have questioned the usefulness of untrained support in the classroom, research by Alborz, Pearson, Farrell and Howes (2009) suggests that TAs can have a positive effect on children's development when they are deployed to work in specific ways. Alborz et al (2009) found that when TAs were supported to offer targeted support to pupils with an identified need, such as literacy or numeracy difficulties, the pupils made considerable gains in comparison to pupils who did not receive TA support. This said, whilst Alborz et al (2009) infer that children who were supported by a TA did better than pupils who received no additional support, they highlight that these findings do not necessarily mean that TAs deliver the most effective intervention programmes. However in their systematic review, Alborz et al (2009) found that there were no differences between the progress made by pupils regardless of whether they were supported by qualified members of staff (such as Teachers or Speech and Language Therapists) or TAs. These findings suggest that if specific training were provided to TAs they could effectively facilitate intervention programmes.

In addition to providing targeted support through interventions, Alborz et al (2009) claim that TAs can have a positive effect on pupils' social and emotional well-being if they are used to facilitate small group work and if they are encouraged to work 'sensitively' in classrooms. The findings from this study highlight that TA support is greatly improved if they are used to promote inclusion within the classroom, as opposed to being velcro-ed to individual pupils. This way of working promotes independence and participation, but also ensures that pupils with SEN have access to additional support, rather than alternative support if needed.

Interestingly, in a study that aimed to ascertain pupils' views about the support they received via TAs, Hemmingsson, Borell and Gustavsson (2003) found that TAs sometimes hindered the interactions that pupils with disabilities had with their peers and as such these pupils stated that they

would prefer to be given more independence in the classroom so that they could be more like their peers. Given this it is clear that the role of the TA is both complex and challenging because it requires adults to facilitate children's learning without making them dependent on additional support, whilst recognising that some pupils with SEN want to be seen as being the same or similar to their peers. In addition to facilitating group work, reflecting on pupil's needs, assessing pupil's skills or language proficiency, TAs also often have to learn the content of individual lessons alongside the pupils they work with. Therefore it is not surprising that the role of the TA is challenging. However it is important to acknowledge that not only can TAs effectively support pupils with SEN, but their presence in class is also said to reduce the levels of stress among Class Teachers (Alborz et al, 2009). As such one could argue that the role of the TA is crucial on two fronts and therefore it is important to consider how best to deploy TAs so that their work is most effective for pupils and Class Teachers.

## 2.7 Current research

Whilst theoretical research on effective pedagogies, teaching skills and repertoires and inclusion exist, few studies have investigated how these models are used to support children with SSEN on a day to day basis. While sound theoretical knowledge exists, in terms of the strategies and approaches that are likely to support children with a SSEN, it is unclear whether such techniques are used in practice. In addition, whilst there are clear pathways when it comes to applying for and obtaining a SSEN, methods of reviewing pupil progress are somewhat ambiguous and few researchers have attempted to uncover how the provision defined in the SSEN is implemented in schools.

In practice, it is often assumed that the 'additional' support provided for children with a SSEN should be in the form of TA hours. However, Blatchford et al (2009b) indicate that the 'additional' support provided to children with SSEN is in fact seen as an alternative form of teaching often provided by the TA. In addition, where TAs had a direct pedagogical role with a pupil, the child's interactions with their teacher reduced significantly



(Blatchford et al, 2009b). This said their research fails to identify the types of support children with SEN received (both in and out of the classroom) and the level in which children with a SEN were included in their class. In order to truly understand the experiences of children with a SEN, it is important to consider the wider factors which may impact on their learning, such as their level of inclusion, their sense of belonging and the pedagogical approaches that they are exposed to.

Rubie-Davies et al 2010 and Radford et al (2011) have highlighted that teachers and TAs interact with pupils in a very different way, with the interaction between teacher and pupil being seen to be more effective. Given this it is important to consider whether it is effective to educate children with SENs using TAs, particularly if they are being taught in a different location to the teacher. Researchers have questioned the role and training of TAs (Blatchford et al, 2009b), however few studies have sought to explore whether the support provided by TAs or teachers is related to the objectives set out in their SEN. Given the changing times in relation to the SEN, it is imperative that researchers gain a better understanding of the type of support that children with a SEN receive so that future policy, practice and interventions can become informed by practice.

Finally whilst the Ofsted SEN and Disability review concluded that “a Statement is not enough” (Ofsted, 2010: 1) their investigation failed to thoroughly inspect the experiences of individual children over an extended timeframe. And although inspectors found that practice was “often not of good quality and did not lead to significantly better outcomes for the child or young person” (Ofsted, 2010: 3), they directed much of their criticism toward teaching practice and the effectiveness of resources rather than the notion of inclusion. Given that the current evidence base fails to identify how the objectives on children’s SEN are put in place in practice, it is becomes more difficult to argue whether the support put in place is effective, appropriate or promotes inclusion.

### 2.7.1 Research Questions

In this research the author aims to understand how children with a SSEN for MLD are supported in mainstream primary schools. In order to do this, the following research questions will be investigated:

1. How do children with a SSEN for MLD experience learning on a day-to-day basis?
  - Where do they do most of their learning?
  - How does this relate to that of their peers?
  - What additional or different support do they receive?
  - What pedagogical approaches are used to support children with SSENs?
  
2. How does the support that pupils with a SSEN for MLD relate to the objectives on their SSEN?
  
3. How well supported do children with a SSEN for MLD feel whilst in school and which areas of the support do they rate most highly?

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction to Methodology

The previous chapter outlined the literature relating to different pedagogical approaches and how it could be applied to children with SSEN. It showed that children with SSEN are often supported most intensively by TAs (Blatchford et al, 2009b). Within this chapter the author will describe how the research questions and the sub-questions will be addressed. In addition it will provide a detailed rationale for the methodology used and the analysis undertaken.

To begin, the author will explore the philosophical and epistemological stances underlying this study and how this relates to the methodology chosen. Following this, the reader will be provided with a detailed description of the methodology used to answer the questions outlined above. Finally, the author will outline the methods of data analysis.

### 3.2. Approach

#### 3.2.1. Philosophical positioning

A pragmatic approach was adopted within the present study. This approach gives the researcher the flexibility and freedom to select methodological tools based on their usefulness in answering the research questions posed (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2009). This approach has been described as “an alternative, inclusive philosophical framework within which multiple assumptions and diverse methods can comfortably reside” (Greene, Kreider and Mayer, 2005: 14). Within social and psychological research, this approach allows researchers to unpick complex social phenomena whilst remaining aware of the many different variables affecting knowledge, beliefs and experiences.

In addition this approach allows researchers to be flexible in their understanding of ‘truths’. This ontological position accepts that there is a ‘real world’, but followers of this approach also believe that there are multiple versions of ‘truths’ within ‘real world’ phenomena (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2009). Within this approach, the role of the researcher is to

uncover something interesting about the nature of the truth and how this relates to the phenomena being studied (Yin, 2009). It is common for researchers to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to address research questions.

Within the present study, the use of a pragmatic epistemological stance allowed the researcher to make use of a range of data sources, such as systematic observations, less structured observations, semi-structured interviews and documents developed either for schools or by the schools themselves. In terms of answering the research questions posed earlier in this chapter it is imperative that a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods are used in order to unpick complex social phenomena and ultimately, to understand whether theories can in fact be applied sufficiently to practice.

As indicated above, understanding the provision that children with MLD are given is a complex social phenomenon, in that it is affected by a multitude of factors. Given the vast number of interactions, decisions and belief systems that occur within the school context the author felt that these choices were highly influential in many aspects of school life, including provision and support provided to children with SSENs. Therefore, this research is also underpinned by social constructionist ideas.

Social Constructions take a view that all knowledge can be seen to be constructed by human perception, cultural values, language, power and social norms (Burr, 2003). Burr highlights that social constructionist thinking is underpinned by four main assumptions: taking a critical stance towards 'taken-for-granted knowledge', considering the historical and cultural specificity of knowledge, understanding that knowledge is sustained by social processes and beliefs and acknowledging that power and authority affect the production of knowledge.

These topics are key when considering the role of TAs and ultimately the provision that children with SSEN receive. The role of the TA has transformed in line with Government policies (such as the Special

Educational Needs Code of Practice; DfES, 2001) and the need to ensure that all children's needs are met (Every Child Matters; DfES, 2003). Historically, the role of the TA involved far less direct one to one work with children with the exception of hearing children read (Thomas, 1987). At this time, the TA role was to support the Teacher with administration duties and therefore the Teacher remained fully involved in the education of all children. However as inclusion became more central to education, Head teachers and Governors have been forced to consider how best to utilise adults in the classroom (Goode, 1982).

The Social Constructionist framework allows the researcher to evaluate critically the way that schools and society have re-modelled the TA role in a way that legitimises the use of less well-trained paraprofessionals when it comes to working with children with SEN. Whilst some might argue that TAs may appear to support inclusion policies, others may question whether it is truly inclusive for children with SSEN to be taught separately from their peers by the least qualified member of staff (Blatchford et al, 2009b).

As suggested by Burr (2003) understanding the combination of social values, the process of developing knowledge and beliefs and the function of language and labels is likely to assist in the develop of further insight in such complex social phenomena such as school systems and the provision for children with SSEN.

### 3.3. Case Study

#### 3.3.1. Outlining the key assumptions of Case Study framework

Consistent with the pragmatic approach underlying this research, a Case Study framework was selected to collect, organise and analyse the data collected. Whilst a Case Study is not a method in itself, it provides a framework for exploring complex social phenomena (Hartley, 2004). As indicated above, many factors impact on the support received by children with SSEN. Case Study provides a framework in which these factors can be encapsulated so that the research "retains the holistic and meaningful

characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2009: 4). Simons (2009) argues that Case Study methodology can uncover the varying interpretations of policies and practices. She states that:

“Policies and programmes are devised by people and implemented by people. They are not person-proof in the sense that they can be interpreted the same way in each context. Even if common standard and equal access is the aim, people reinterpret, subvert and adapt policies to their own settings and in relation to their own needs and experience” (Simons, 2009: 69)

For the purpose of this research, it could be argued that various guidelines and policies published by the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) should support schools in making decisions about the support and provision that they provide to children with SEN. Documents such as the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) provides a framework for identifying different levels of SEN; however such policies rely on the skills of Teachers and SENCOs to identify children in need of additional support. Similarly SEN are compiled by the Local Authority to outline the support that children with the most complex needs require. Whilst there are ‘common standards’ and ‘equal aims’, at least within Local Authorities, there is a chance that practice is interpreted differently both within schools and across schools. Given the complex nature of such processes, it seems entirely appropriate to focus on a small sample of cases, in order to understand such a complicated social phenomenon.

Furthermore, the Case Study framework allows the researcher to “understand how behaviour and/or processes are influenced by, and influence context” (Hartley, 2004: 323). It is this process of focusing on the social context, the processes within it and the impact that these factors have on the individual which makes case study a useful research strategy.

Whilst it is widely acknowledged that conclusions ascertained from Case Study research is not generalisable across populations; case studies “have an important function in *generating* hypotheses and *building* theory” (Hartley, 2004: 325). In terms of the current research, the author aims to

generate hypotheses about the pedagogical approaches that schools use to design and provide support for children with MLD. There is a wealth of research that focuses on the impact of inclusion (Florian, 2009) on children's learning; however recent research by Blatchford et al (2009b) highlights that this model may not be being used for children with SEN. Furthermore, research conducted by the Sutton Trust (Higgins, Kokotasaki and Coe, 2011) analysed the effectiveness and costliness of particular interventions used for pupils within mainstream primary schools. Their results suggest that by developing children's meta-cognitive skills and providing them with effective feedback, children will make most progress. Case Study methodology enabled the researcher to explore the practice and strategies utilised by staff working with children with SSEN for MLD and subsequently consider the effectiveness of the support provided.

### 3.3.2. Common concerns relating to Case Study

As with all methods of data collection and analysis; various researchers, including those who engage in the Case Study research have raised concerns about this approach. Hartley (2004) and Yin (2009) highlight a number of commonly cited concerns in relation to the Case Study methodology.

- i. Lack of rigour
- ii. Case Study research is challenging to complete and the skills needed to conduct them are difficult to define
- iii. Little basis for scientific generalisation
- iv. Time consuming to carry out for researchers and Case Study reports can be lengthy and challenging to digest
- v. Case Studies are not 'true' experiments leading to causal explanations

#### 3.3.2.1. Lack of rigor

Yin (2009) suggests that the greatest challenge for researchers conducting Case Study research is designing a study and analysing data rigorously and fairly. Whilst other approaches may lack rigour, Yin (2009)

suggests that the use of multiple methodological approaches associated with Case Study research increases the chances of researcher bias and 'sloppy' procedures. Clearly, these concerns raise questions about the value of Case Study research, however as indicated by Rosenthal (1966) (cited in Yin, 2009), researcher bias can be present in experimental research and during the design stages of survey development. The difference within Case Study research is that researcher bias may be "more frequently encountered and less frequently overcome" (Yin, 2009:14). Whilst Hartley (2004) and Yin (2009) acknowledge that there are a large number of Case Studies that lack methodological rigour, they highlight that there is an ever-growing number of high quality Case Studies.

In order to conduct a robust and rigorous Case Study, Yin (2009) and Hartley (2004) emphasise the need to collect data systematically and ensure that any theories or hypotheses developed from the Case Study draw on two or more sources of evidence. In order to adhere to these recommendations; prior to collecting data the researcher developed a Case Study Protocol (see appendix 1). This outlined the research questions and the sources of information or data collection methods that would be used to answer them. Throughout this study, the researcher approached the data with a high degree of commitment to following systematic procedures and remained aware and sensitive to the possibilities of researcher bias.

#### 3.3.2.2. Researcher's skills and knowledge

In addition to challenges that researchers conducting Case Studies face in relating to rigour, Yin (2009) argues that the research skills necessary to conduct Case Studies have not yet been formalised. This said, as Case Study research continues to grow further guidelines are being drawn up to assist researchers in this. Yin (1994) originally suggests that researchers in this field require a good knowledge of the phenomena that they wish to study. Secondly he suggests that they should have good listening skills and the ability to ask good questions. Finally, he advises that researchers



should have the ability to adapt to the context and remain open to different forms of information sources.

In terms of this research, the author believed that her training in Educational and Child Psychology and within this, the focus on the development of effective consultation skills gave her the necessary personal skills to engage well with this framework. In addition, the author carefully considered how different factors may have influenced the data collection. Finally by drawing on Social Constructionist ideas, the author was able to develop and organise a range of ideas in a way that took into account the factors in play in relation to the provision provided for children with SEN. Therefore the combination of the author's personal skills, the knowledge that was held about the communities and relevant theories acted as a guide within the Case Study framework.

#### 3.3.2.3. Generalisation

There is wide acknowledgement from Yin (2009) and Hartley (2004) that it would be unwise to attempt to generalise the findings from a single case study. Yin (2009) argues that "Case Studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (Yin, 2009:15). Within a Case Study framework, the cases do not represent a sample, as such; they are used to develop theories.

In the case of this research, the Case Study design is used to "get the story behind the result by capturing what happened to bring it about" (Neale, Thapa and Boyce, 2006). Given the subject matter and the multitude of factors that are likely to affect the provision provided for children with MLD it would be unwise even with a larger sample size to attempt to generalise findings to a wider population. Whilst some might argue that without the ability to generalise to a larger population, research is limited, I would argue that this framework allows the researcher to gain a deeper and more meaningful insight into the challenges and processes involved in supporting children with MLD. Without such, it is difficult to understand why certain pedagogical approaches are adopted, how they are implemented and the effect that they have on the pupil's education.

The flexible and holistic assumptions associated with Case Study research gives researchers the opportunities to develop pre-existing theories by using various sources of information from real-life cases.

#### 3.3.2.4. Limitations in time and challenges digesting Case Studies

Given that Case Study researchers have the opportunity to draw from a multitude of sources of information one can see that the process of data collection and analysis could be lengthy. However, as recognised by Yin (2009) it is important that Case Study research is not confused with the methodological approach, such as Ethnography (Fetterman, 1989). Unlike Case Study research, researchers conducting ethnography have a preference for unstructured data and when analysing data they have a specific focus on gaining insight into the meaning of people behaviours (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). This usually means that they spend extended periods in the field immersing themselves into the cultures that they wish to understand. Whilst Case Study research has a similar focus on using a single or small number of cases, it does not solely rely on ethnographic data, nor does it require researchers to immerse themselves in a setting for an extended period of time. On the contrary, those well versed in Case Study research (Yin, 2009; Hartley, 2004) specify that prior to collecting data, researchers should establish a clear set of research questions and consider the sources of information which may be best suited in addressing them. By developing a clear method for data collection, the data becomes manageable.

In terms of disseminating the results from a Case Study, Yin (2009) suggests that researchers should refer to the theoretical propositions that resulted in the research questions of the Case Study. In doing so, researchers are able to use theory to guide their analysis. For the present study, the researcher will use theories on pedagogical approaches as a way of understanding how the child with MLD is supported in the mainstream school and why the school chose to use such methods. As with many Case Studies, the researcher will draw on a combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods to interpret the data collection.

In doing so, the researcher will have the opportunity to use both forms of analysis to strengthen the analysis and subsequent findings.

#### 3.3.2.5. Case Studies are not 'true' experiments leading to causal explanations

It is imperative that Case Studies are examined for what they seek to establish not for what they fail to do. Researchers using a Case Study framework are not attempting to establish causal explanations; they are using Case Studies to understand how and why certain processes occur. In doing so, they are not attempting to control for specific variables because one of the assumptions of Case Study research is that there are a number of variables making it difficult to isolate specific variables without adversely affecting the real-life context of the study. Therefore whilst some experimental designs may evaluate the impact of TAs or other pedagogical approaches, and in doing so they may determine factors which may identify factors which affect pupil progress, Case Study design seeks to understand why and how this occurs rather than simply what occurs.

#### 3.3.3. Specific approach to Case Study

This Case Study makes use of an exploratory approach in order to gain insight into the 'how' and 'why' features related to the provision provided to children with a SEN for MLD. More specifically, for this piece of research the case study design is a multiple embedded case study. Each case within this case study is defined as the child with the SEN for MLD within the School. The Case Study is multiple because two cases were explored in order to allow the researcher to draw some comparisons across cases. Yin (2009) suggests that two cases should be sufficient in inferring trends. Using Scholz and Tietje (2002) definition of embedded Case Studies, this study integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods into the one study with the goal of using empirical data to "describe the features, context and process of a phenomena" (Scholz and Tietje, 2002: 7). In relation to the research questions the quantitative data will provide some insight into the day-to-day support and provision given to children with

SSEN in mainstream schools. Whereas the qualitative information will provide more insight into the type of support provided, the processes by which this support is developed and the barriers in which schools come across in terms of meeting the needs of children with SSEN for MLD.

### 3.4. Design

In line with the pragmatic orientation taken within this research a mixed methods design was adopted. This approach incorporates quantitative and qualitative research methodology to investigate a single phenomenon (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). According to Creswell and Plano Clarke, (2007: 5) the act of using a mixed methods approach “provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.” The quantitative data within this study is made up from systematic observation data; whilst the qualitative data predominately comes from semi-structured interviews and the analysis of key documents such as the SSEN.

#### 3.4.1. Sampling

As previously indicated, this research focused on multiple case studies. One of the reasons for this is that single case studies have limited in their generalisability and they can be more susceptible to information-processing biases (Eisenhardt, 1989). Moreover, Benedicte Meyer (2001: 3) highlights that by using multiple cases researchers are able to “augment external validity and help guard against observer bias”.

For the purpose of this research two cases were chosen, and whilst this does not overcome the barrier of generalisability it enabled the researcher to consider similar and contrasting factors within the case studies. Initially the author intended to study three cases; however factors within the School and pupil illness prevented me from undertaking an additional case. The positive side of studying two cases was that it allowed me to carry out a deeper investigation of the cases studied.

### 3.4.2. Sampling cases - School Demographics

Two schools within the researcher's patch of schools were approached to take part in the study. They were selected because they each had a pupil with a SSEN whose primary difficulty was described as MLD. The demographics of the schools were relatively different. The larger of the Primary Schools had 146 children on roll and children were grouped into six classes by their ages. The smaller Primary School had 108 children on roll with children forming four mixed year group classes.

In terms of pupils with SEN, the larger Primary School had 46 children on the SEN register, 7 of these had a SSEN. Whereas in the smaller Primary School, there were 11 pupils on the SEN register and only the target pupil had a SSEN. Both SENCOs at the school had been in their role for more than two years and less than four and therefore they both had experience within this role.

The two schools had a number of similarities. Both schools were located within an area of Cambridgeshire where the Education provision was provided by Cambridgeshire County Council, whereas the Health provision was sourced from another authority. There should therefore be little variation between the schools in terms of the provision available to them. In addition, both schools were located within a rural area of the county.

### 3.4.3. Participants

#### 3.4.3.1 Pupils' characteristics

The pupils involved in this research were enrolled in a Year 5 class. This year group was specifically chosen as it was thought that this would give the staff at school ample time to familiarise themselves with the pupil. In addition, Year 5 children are not expected to take any formal examinations, therefore it was hoped that these children and their Teachers would have fewer stresses than those in Year 6 classrooms. In addition, the two children selected had been in receipt of the support of a SSEN for over four years. This meant that the staff in school would have

had ample time to consider different methods of deploying support to the child.

The pupil within school 1 will be referred to as target pupil 1 within this research. At the time of the observation he was 9 years and 3 months old and had attended the school since Reception class. Due to the size of the school, target pupil 1 was in a mixed Year 4 and Year 5 class (known as Class 4) where roughly 30 percent of the children were Year 5s. It was thought that a high proportion of the children who remained in the Class 4 would benefit from an additional year in this class and as such it is likely that many of the Year 5 pupils would have been deemed as being lower achieving pupils than those in Class 5. Within the classroom target pupil 1 was said to have difficulties processing and retaining information, concentrating and listening in class and considerable difficulties with literacy and numeracy. In addition, he was said to be reluctant to engage with his peers, despite the fact that he had known them for almost five years. As a result his Teacher described him as having become isolated from his peers and reliant on adult support. In order to help him in lessons he was supported by a combination of two TAs, both of whom were said to have had training in methods of managing his medical needs but little in terms of supporting him to learn. For a number of years target pupil 1 made little progress in literacy, numeracy, writing and speaking and listening and as such support was sought from the Educational Psychology Service the previous year.

Target pupil 1 also had multiple medical diagnoses including Diabetes, Epilepsy and Pervasive Developmental Disorder however in terms of SEN he was described as having MLD. His SSEN objectives were to:

- Develop literacy skills
- Develop numeracy skills
- For the school to manage his medical needs
- To increase motivation in school
- For the school to support the pupil to establish positive social skills
- Develop his range of “verbal concepts”

The second pupil, referred to as target pupil 2, had a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy and as a result he has significant difficulties in learning. Despite having different medical diagnoses, the objectives on the two children's SSEN were the same. Target pupil 2 was 9 years 1 month old at the time of the observations. When in the classroom he was taught with a mixture of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. Target pupil 2 had spent an additional year in Class 2 (a Year 1 – 2) classroom and therefore only spent one year in Class 3 (Year 3 – 4) classroom. A decision had been undertaken at the beginning of the school year that target pupil 2 should transition with his peers despite the fact that he had difficulties accessing the Class 3 curriculum. As with target pupil 1, this pupil also had significant difficulties engaging with his peers. This was made more challenging because he was wheelchair-bound for large portions of the school day. His parents explained that they encourage him to become more interested in age appropriate interests such as Doctor Who to enable him to become more involved in some conversations. Despite being less socially and emotionally mature than his peers, target pupil 2 seemed interested in making and sustaining friendships and was described as a popular boy in the class. In addition it was said that he is keen to take part in some practical activities, such as cooking and art. Like target pupil 1 the objectives on his SSEN were to:

- Develop literacy skills
- Develop numeracy skills
- For the school to manage his medical needs
- To increase motivation in school
- For the school to support the pupil to establish positive social skills
- Develop his range of “verbal concepts”

Prior to this research, both pupils had been visited by the Trainee Educational Psychologist (who also conducted this research) on at least two occasions. In addition, the Teachers and SENCO of both children had engaged in consultations with the Trainee Educational Psychologist and as a result the teachers had re-assessed and established the pupils' needs. Due to the timing of this study the Trainee Educational

Psychologist was unable to have a consultation with the pupils' new teachers prior to conducting the observations.

#### 3.4.3.2. Adult Participants

Adults participating in the semi-structured interviews included the Head Teachers, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCO), Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants for both children. In addition one parent agreed to be involved in the semi-structured interviews. An advantage of using multiple informants is that the information can be cross-referenced, thereby potentially increasing the validity of the data (Glick et al, 1999).

#### 3.4.3.3. Head Teacher

The Head Teachers interviewed as part of the study were both deemed to be experienced as they had both been in post for over three years. In terms of their experience with SSEN, the Head Teachers largely relied on the support of their SENCOs.

#### 3.4.3.4. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

The SENCO in School 1 had been in post for five years and had recently completed the SENCO award run by the Local Authority. Unlike the SENCO in School 2, SENCO 1 was not part of the Senior Leadership Team and as such she was seen to have less authority within the school. SENCO 1 received half a day of SENCO release time (despite the fact that 32% of the school population were described as having some form of SEN) and half a day of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time. The SENCO in School 2 had three years of experience. Similarly to SENCO 1 she had completed a substantial portion of the SENCO Award; however unlike SENCO 1, she was part of the Senior Leadership Team. SENCO 2 had the same amount of SENCO release time as SENCO 1 despite the fact that only 10% of the school population were thought to have SEN.



#### 3.4.3.5. Teachers

The teacher in School 1 had eight years of experience as a Key Stage 2 teacher and had worked at two different schools. Within the school she was also the Information Technology Co-ordinator and responsible for school trips. Whilst she had a number of years of teaching experience, until recently she had few experiences of teaching children with high levels of SEN (such as those with SSENs). Like all teachers in the school she received half a day of PPA time, despite the fact that almost a third of the pupils with SEN in the school were in her class. Class Teacher 2 had just two years of experience as a teacher, however prior to teaching she had worked as a TA for four years. During her years as a TA she had worked as a general classroom TA and a TA who supported a child with a SSEN. Within Teacher 2's class there were just three pupils with SEN, only one of which had a SSEN. In order to plan and prepare for her class she was given one day release time a week, which accounted for the fact that she had recently qualified as a Teacher. Whilst she had some practical experiences supporting pupils with a SSEN (within her role as a TA) she had received no additional training related to supporting children with SEN outside of her initial Teacher training.

#### 3.4.3.6. Teaching Assistants

The TAs supporting both pupils had over five years of experience. Teaching Assistant 1 had supported four other pupils with SSENs. According to the Head Teacher, TA 1 was most skilled at supporting pupils with complex emotional and behavioural needs. Whilst TA 1 was not able to complete the Higher Level TA training, the Head Teacher and SENCO implied that TA 1 was one of their most skilled members of staff. Teaching Assistant 2 had only ever supported the target pupil in this study. She had been working with him for seven years which stemmed from helping him when he enrolled at his local Early Years setting. Within School 2, TA 2 was the only TA who worked solely with a named pupil, the role of the rest of the TAs was to provide more general support to whole class or small groups of pupils. In terms of training TA 2 received very little formal

training over the years and as a result she relied largely on her personal experiences of supporting her own child with SEN.

#### 3.4.3.7. Parents

The parents of both children were invited to take part in the semi-structured interview phase of the study. Initially they both agreed, however Parent 2 was unable to attend the interview and due to unexpected personal circumstances later explained that she would be unable to commit to a date for a future interview. Parent 1 (target pupil 1's mother) consented and took part in a semi-structured interview which aimed at exploring her views of the provision provided to her son and the purpose, benefits and uses of the SSEN. The researcher offered to complete the interview in a neutral setting, like the adjoining Children's Centre or the parent's home, however target pupil 1's Mother felt more comfortable using one of the rooms at the school. The interview lasted almost an hour and refreshments were provided.

#### 3.4.4. Time Sampling

Benedichte Meyer (2001) suggests that researchers conducting case studies must decide on the sampling time when considering data collection and analysis. Within this research, a school week was used to collect systematic observations of the pupil. During this time other documents, such as reports relating to the SSEN were collected. Where possible, the semi-structured interviews with Teachers, TAs, SENCOs, Head Teachers, Parents and pupils were conducted towards the end of the observation week. By completing the semi-structured interviews towards the end of the week the researcher felt that there was a greater chance that the school staff would feel more comfortable and trusting of the researcher. As suggested by Benedichte Mayer (2001) establishing trust with interviewees is key when using interviews as the primary method of data collection.

### 3.5. Method

#### 3.5.1. Measures

Two measures were created to assist in data collection: a systematic observation schedule and a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix 1.1 and 1.2).

##### 3.5.1.1. Systematic Observations

Adler and Adler (1994) highlight that the direct observation allows researchers to collect data without directly interacting with participants. By combining direct observations with other methods the researcher is able to claim rigour in the subsequent findings. Furthermore, when attempting to understand complex social phenomena and processes, Pettigrew (1990) argues that “direction observations can illuminate the discrepancies between what people said in the interview and causal conversations and what they actually do (Pettigrew, 1990: 340).

##### 3.5.1.1.1. Development of the Systematic Observation Schedule

A systematic observation schedule was used to collect data about the support received by the child with a SEN. Specifically this measure aimed to capture where the child with the SEN was being educated, how this differed from his peers, which members of staff were interacting with him, how the activities within the curriculum were presented to him and whether this differed from the way it was taught to his peers.

While the pupils with SENs were the main focus of the observations there were in fact two different levels of observations: classroom level and individual pupil level. The following section describes the categories that were used to systematically observe and code the pupils' day-to-day experiences in school. A full outline of the observation schedule guidelines can be found in appendix 1.1

#### 3.5.1.1.2. Classroom level observations

Seven categories were used to make up the classroom level observations. These were:

- Target location: the location of the target pupil
- Number in class: if the pupils is in class, the number of pupils in the class (coded every fifth minute)
- Curriculum focus: the subject being taught to the target pupil
- Target work context: the organisational context the target pupil is in (e.g. part of group)
- Group attainment: the attainment level of the group that pupil is working in (if working in a group)
- Target task: the nature of the task the target pupil is engaged in, relative to the rest of the class
- Adult activity: the organisational context the adults are in (e.g. supporting a group).

The classroom level observation block was completed at the start of each observation period (each minute observed). The time interval for the classroom level observation was 30 seconds, during which the researcher was required to determine the contextual factors on an instantaneous sampling basis. In coding the classroom level data, the researcher only took as long as is necessary to code the categories listed above. Once the lesson was underway, the contextual factors did not change considerably from minute to minute, and because of this there were times when this section was quick and straightforward to code.

#### 3.5.1.1.3. Target location

The first category coded was target location. The pupil being observed was either identified as being in the same physical location as the class or away from the class. If pupils were being educated in a specialist unit they were coded as being away from the class as this provision was seen as being different to what typically developing peers would experience. For the purpose of this research it was seen as important to understand how

much time pupils with a SEN for MLD spent being educated with their peers because this data could be used to consider how well the pupils were included in class/school life.

#### 3.5.1.1.4. Number in class

The number of pupils in class was collected every fifth minute as it remained stable for much of the school day. It was not collected when the pupil was away from the class because it was not possible to accurately state how many children were left in the main teaching environment.

#### 3.5.1.1.5. Curriculum Focus

The curriculum focus was coded to identify how and where the observed pupils received their subject-level teaching. Within this category there were eight sub-categories:

- English/Literacy
- Maths/Numeracy
- Science
- Humanities – History/Geography/RE/PSHE
- Foreign Languages
- ICT/Technology/Art
- PE/Drama/Music
- Non-curriculum focus
- Uncodeable

Curriculum focus was coded by the focus of the learning objective. For instance, if pupils were using ICT equipment to write a story the researcher would code the activity as Literacy/English. Non-curricular activities were used to code assemblies, singing practice and school photographs.

#### 3.5.1.1.6. Target work context

The codes in this category were used to describe the primary and intended organisational context in which the observed pupils found

themselves in regardless of the interactions taking place. The codes within this category included:

- Class context (listening/engaging in whole class teaching)
- Group work (large 11 – 20 pupils)
- Group work (medium 6 – 11 pupils)
- Small group work ( 3 – 5 pupils)
- Working in a pair
- Individual activity (including being supported by a TA to complete the individual activity)

In order to ensure that the data collected within this category was reliable a variety of scenarios were considered prior to coding. For instance, where the observed pupil was engaged in a discussion with another pupil as part of a whole class teaching instruction, the pupil would be coded as working in a pair, not whole class teaching. However, if the observed pupil was whispering to another child, but the intention was that they were listening to whole class input, the child would be coded as class context. The reason for this is that their interactions could be captured in the individual part of the observation schedule.

#### 3.5.1.1.7 Group attainment

Where the observed pupil was coded as working in a group the group's attainment level was coded. The codes included:

- High attainment
- Middle attainment
- Low attainment
- Mixed attainment
- Uncodeable

In order to code this information the researcher gained information relating to attainment groupings and class layout at the beginning of the day. The uncodeable code was used when the researcher was unable to identify the attainment level of the group.

#### 3.5.1.1.8. Target task

The target task category was used to code the activity given to the observed pupil in relation to that of their peers, i.e whether the teacher had used differentiation. The codes included:

- Same/Not differentiated task
- Differentiated classwork
- Different topic
- Intervention
- Uncodeable

All interventions were coded however distinctions were made between the types of interventions, i.e. whether they were for Speech and Language development, literacy development, physiotherapy, etc. For literacy and numeracy, known or clear interventions were coded as interventions, however additional literacy time, such as reading was coded using the different topic code. Where the observed pupil was away from the rest of the class it was sometimes difficult to code the target task and as such the uncodeable code was used.

#### 3.5.1.1.9 Adult activity

In addition to coding the pupil context (i.e. the curriculum focus, the target pupil's context, the number in class and so forth) the researcher also observed and coded the activity of the adults in the room using an instantaneous approach. The researcher observed each adult in turn for as long as it took to reach an informed judgement about the nature of their role during each thirty second timeframe. Only the activities of three adults were observed and coded within a single one minute observation in order to ensure that the data collect was reliable.

When coding the adults' interactions the researcher observed the context in which each adult worked. The codes within this category included:

- Working on a one-to-one basis with a pupil
- Working with a small group

- Working with a large group
- Delivering whole class instructions
- Roving or engaging in multiple interactions
- Passive or Part of the Audience
- Not working with pupils (engaging in administrative duties)
- Uncodeable

By coding using both the adult ID (their role within in the classroom) and the activity the researcher was able to collate information about what each adult did in the classroom and how this compared to a variety of different adults in the classroom. For the purpose of this research, this element was seen as critical as it would enable the researcher to identify how Teachers and TAs worked with the pupils with a SEN for MLD and whether this varied in terms of time spent with the pupil (as suggested by Blatchford et al, 2009a) or whether the context of their interaction varied.

#### 3.5.1.1.10 Pupil interaction observations

The second observation component aimed to gain information about the target pupil's individual experiences, including their moment-by-moment interactions with adults and peers. Unlike the contextual level information (which often remained stable across time), the individual interaction level data was coded more regularly to take into account the rapid changes that can take place within a classroom environment. For instance, a pupil may be passive as part of whole class instruction, then talk to another pupil on an individual basis and then interact with a TA all within a thirty second timeframe. Given this, the researcher felt that it was important to design an observation system which could capture this rich data. As with the contextual level data the researcher had thirty seconds to code information. In order to capture the data effectively the final thirty second block was separated into three ten second sub-blocks in which the researcher would code the target pupil's role in the interaction and their behaviour.



#### 3.5.1.1.11 Pupil role in interactions

The observed pupil was either coded as initiating an interaction with an adult or peer, interacting with an adult or peer where the interaction was initiated by someone other than the observed pupil or not interacting with anyone. Where an interaction occurred the adult code was recorded so that the researcher could analyse the frequency in which different adults interacted with the target pupils. If the pupil was listening and or using non-verbal communication to demonstrate that they were engaged with an adult this was coded as interacting with an adult (where the interaction was initiated by the adult). Interactions with adults superseded interactions with peers, however where possible predominate coding was used. Where more than one adult interacted with the target pupil the adult who had the pupil's primary focus was coded as interacting with the pupil. For example, if the teacher was talking to the whole class (of which the target pupil is part of) and the TA was observed saying something to the target pupil causing the target pupil's attention to shift to the TA; then the TA interaction would be coded.

#### 3.5.1.1.12 Pupil Behaviour in the interaction

The final category that was coded related to the pupil's behaviour, i.e. whether they were perceived as being on-task or off-task and whether the pupil was active or passive in the interaction. The target pupil was perceived to be on-task unless they were actively displaying off-task behaviour, such as fidgeting, talking to a peer, messing around, etc. Whilst this meant that on-task behaviour was coded more frequently it made it possible for the observer to feel confident that the measure would remain reliable.

The researcher also coded whether the pupil was active in interactions. If the researcher saw the child was talking then the child was coded as being active. This enabled the researcher to differentiate between interactions where the child was listening and where they were actively participating in an interaction.

### 3.5.1.1.13 Summary

The systematic observation schedule forms a large part of the study and as such it was important to ensure that the data collected incorporated both contextual and individual components. As highlighted in the research questions, the purpose of the study was to explore the day-to-day experiences of pupils with a SSEN for MLD. In order to understand these experiences it was important to capture information about their learning context as this would enable the researcher to consider how the target pupil experienced learning in relation to their peers and how they were included in different aspects of school life. Furthermore, while previous researchers (including Radford et al, 2011; Blatchford et al 2009a) have identified that pupils with SSENs spend more time with TAs than teachers ultimately affecting the quality of their learning and interactions, no studies have been conducted over an extended timeframe or across different subject areas. As such it was deemed important to collect sufficient levels of information about individual interactions within this study.

### 3.5.2. Piloting the systematic observation schedule

Prior to collecting data the systematic observation schedule was piloted in two schools with two pupils also identified as having a SSEN for MLD. Within the piloting phase the measure was used by two researchers and various codes and scenarios were explored. A number of small amendments were made to the observation schedule following the piloting which included changes to the layout of the form and the inclusion of a comparison group.

In addition the researchers considered the implications of including codes which required some subjective interpretation, such as off-task behaviour. While task behaviour was included within the observation schedules researchers agreed that pupils should be coded as on-task unless actively off-task to ensure that the data was coded reliably. This said, the majority of the codes used within the schedule could be coded using firm, objective observations. This minimised the possibilities of inconsistency.

### 3.5.3. Semi-structured interviews

Robson (2002) highlights that interviews are a commonly used measure within mixed-methods designs that yield predominantly qualitative data. As suggested by Sapsford and Jupp (2006) interviews can be highly structured, semi-structured or less so. Given that the aim of the interviews was to explore the ways in which a pupil with SEN was supported in school, the barriers which impacted on the support given to them and the roles and responsibilities of those supporting the child, it was felt that a semi-structured format would provide the best framework for gathering this data. Questions with this level of complexity are better understood through interviews, as opposed to more quantitative tools (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

A semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to have a lower level of structure; however the schedule was designed to include some pre-determined questions. It was felt that this balance would allow interviewees to include their opinions, beliefs and thoughts about the topics, without being constrained to a structured format. Given the exploratory nature of this study it was felt that a structured interview would be too restricted; whilst a less structured interview would have made it challenging to compare ideas across different interviewees. As highlighted by Robson (2002), semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to modify or omit particular questions or add and expand on certain responses given; this flexibility proved to be a considerable benefit to the process of semi-structured interviewing.

There were a number of disadvantages to carrying out semi-structured interviews. Carrying out interviews is time consuming both to conduct and analyse. In addition, interviewers require a high level of interpersonal and interviewing skills in order to conduct effective interviews. In order to ensure that enough time was given to gather and analyse the data effectively the researcher acknowledged that the data gathered would only represent the opinions of a small number of people involved with children

with SSENs. This said within the case study framework the researcher was able to carefully select those most centrally placed in relation to the child; therefore the limitation of sample size may not be as pertinent in this case. The aim of the case study was to explore the support given to a particular child. It would be inadvisable to attempt to generalise to the population of SSEN; however the findings from the semi-structured interviews would enable the researcher to generalise to theories concerning pedagogy and SEN education. Therefore, semi-structured interviews would allow the researcher to gain invaluable rich and meaningful information that might be overlooked through more quantitative methods.

The semi-structured interview schedules were drawn up to guide the researcher and the participants through the necessary interview so that a wide range of topics could be addressed. King (1994: 15) recommends that schedules developed by researchers should have “a low degree of structure imposed on the interviewer, a preponderance of open questions, a focus on specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee rather than abstractions and general opinions.”

As alluded to above, the interviews had a number of foci. The first aim was to identify the type of support that different adults, central to the child, were thought to be providing. Each interviewee was asked to discuss the role, skills and responsibilities of the TA, the Class Teacher, the SENCO and the Head Teacher in relation to the support provided to the child. In addition, those interviewed were asked about the roles of the child’s peers. The peer group was inquired about to gain a sense of inclusive practice and to explore the child’s social experiences at school. Following this, the interviewees were asked about their own skill level and their level of expertise in relation to meeting the needs of a child with a SSEN. It was hoped that questions within this domain would yield some information about the interviewees feeling of preparedness. The final section of questions focused on the SSEN. More specifically, the researcher hoped to gain information about the usefulness of the SSEN and the potential

barriers or limitation of the SSEN. Whilst it is likely that TAs have less input in relation to the SSEN, it was important to gain information about their understanding of the SSEN and the requirements that are made of schools when children have a SSEN.

All interviews within this research were tape-recorded which ensured that data remained rich and that there was a high level of accuracy. The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher in full. This allowed me to become familiar with the data.

#### 3.5.4. Participatory measures with children

Flash cards were designed by the researcher to aid the discussions between the researcher and the target children. These cards were designed in order to enable the researcher to make use of participatory methodology. For the purpose of this study, the researcher drew on the work of Claire O’Kane (2006). O’Kane made use of decision-making activities to elicit the views about the provision given to children who were looked after by the Local Authority. Given that this approach was deemed to be successful with looked after children the researcher felt that it could be useful in eliciting the views of children with other complex needs.

Within this study twelve cards were made (see appendix 1.3). Each card had a short statement and a picture representing the caption. The designs were printed on coloured card and laminated to keep the interest of the children. The cards included support relating to learning, support relating to the facilitation of interactions, support linked to environmental modifications and support regulating the child’s behaviour. It was felt that any more than twelve cards would be too challenging for children with MLD and therefore a limitation had to be put on the activity.

In addition, two boxes were made and covered in coloured card. These boxes would be used to help children to prioritise and place value on the statements that would be presented to them. The boxes were labelled with a smiley face and a sad face to help the child to remember which box was which. As with the systematic observation schedule, the participatory

activity was piloted with two pupils. Within the piloting the children worked with the researcher on a one-to-one basis. The initial task comprised of twenty cards, however following the piloting phase this was reduced because some of the concepts initially included appeared to be too challenging for the pupils to fully understand.

### 3.6. Procedure

#### 3.6.1. Developing the Systematic Observation Schedule

The schematic observation schedule was designed to capture information about the support the child received, the interactions that they encountered and the ways in which the child was included within the class.

##### 3.6.1.2. Piloting phase

In order to ensure that it was possible to use the systematic observation schedule accurately, the researcher piloted it in two different schools.

The piloting phase brought about a number of changes. Firstly, a decision was made to observe a comparison group to allow the researcher to explore similarities and differences between the target group and their peers. In addition, the piloting phase highlighted the issue of researcher fatigue and as such a decision was made to alter the time sampling period. In doing this, it was believed that the findings would be more accurate.

##### 3.6.1.2.1. Addressing time sampling issues

The biggest changes to the systematic observation schedule were related to the time sampling. Initially it was felt that it would be possible to code pupil and adult interactions every ten seconds. However, in practice, this was not viable. Initially, changes were made to enable the researcher to collect three different points of data within sixty seconds. This version of the observation schedule assumed that all three data points remained constant throughout the observation period. However, on occasions, it was evident that the first point of data did not always relate to the third point of data. In order to overcome this, the researcher altered the

systematic observation schedule so each sixty second observation reflected the interactions more accurately. In doing so, the researcher was given longer to ascertain which code accurately reflected the adult and the child's interaction across the observation period.

#### 3.6.1.2.2. Acknowledging researcher fatigue

Due to the fact that this observation schedule was used over a school week it was acknowledged that the researcher may suffer some elements of fatigue. Therefore, it was felt that a sixty second time sampling period would be more manageable over a longer period of time. Secondly, the longer time sampling period allowed the researcher to have the time to make amendments to codes, record additional information or reflect on the codes recorded. This was seen as being critical given that the researcher was observing for a school week.

The amendments made to the systematic observation schedule increased the reliability and the validity of the measure.

#### 3.6.1.2.3. Inter-rater reliability

During the piloting phase two researchers used the systematic observation schedule to code the same child simultaneously. At the end of each lesson, the researchers took time to compare their coding and discuss any anomalies. By the end of two days of simultaneous coding, the researchers were able to code with a high level of reliability (over 90% similarity between the researchers).

#### 3.6.1.2.4. Reliability within transition periods

The piloting phase highlighted that coding during transitional periods was highly challenging and led to a number of discrepancies between the researchers. In view of this, a decision was made by the researcher to cease coding during transitioning. The researcher made this decision because it was felt that the primary aim of this research was to consider the pedagogical approaches used when supporting children with SEN; therefore transitional periods were seen as being of lesser importance.

#### 3.6.1.2.5. Inclusion of a comparison group

During the pilot phase, it was felt that it would be useful to include a comparison group; this allowed the researcher to explore possible similarities and differences between the target children and typically developing peers. Given that the primary aim of this research was to explore the experiences of the children with a SSEN, a decision was made to include one observation of a comparison child for every four observations of the target pupils. It was not possible to collect this data consistently because the researcher did not always have access to comparison pupils. For instance, during small group interventions or individual interventions, it was not possible to collect comparison data was not collected.

For the purpose of this research comparison pupils were selected at the beginning of each lesson. In most lessons children were seated in attainment groups and as such it was usually possible to select a number of average attaining pupils to observe across different subjects. Where pupils were sat in mixed attainment groups the researcher sought advice from the teacher in order to ascertain which pupils were considered to be working at an average level. In addition, the researcher attempted to select pupils who were working at a different table to the target pupils so that the comparison data was distinctive from the target pupil data.

#### 3.6.1.3. Systematic Observations

The systematic observation data was collected over two school weeks; one week for each target pupil. The researcher focused only on the child's learning, and whilst it could be argued that their participation in social situations such as lunch and break-times impacts on their learning, this was not the focus of this piece of research.

#### 3.6.2. Identifying Cases for Study

When identifying possible target children for this research, a number of factors were taken. Given the nature and design of this research, the researcher felt that it would be most beneficial to select children with



whom she had already established some form of relationship. By doing so, the researcher hoped that the child and the adults working with them would feel less intimidated by the presence of the researcher. In addition the familiarity that the researcher had, with the child and the school, meant that her presence caused less disruption to the class and the pupil.

### 3.6.3. Interview Procedure

#### 3.6.3.1. Developing the interview schedule

In order to structure the interviews, schedules were created for key adults working with the target child (see appendix 1.2). A number of factors were considered when developing the interview schedule and when arranging the interviews themselves.

In terms of the format of the interview schedule, it was felt that interviewees would feel most comfortable answering questions relating to their experiences of supporting children with a SSEN; therefore the interview was tailored in a way that opened with questions relating to this topic. As the interview progressed the interviewees were asked to express their opinions of the child's experiences in the classroom and their relationships with their peers. Following this, the interviewees were asked about the barriers they perceived preventing better practice or support for the child they support. To conclude interviewees were asked specific questions relating to their knowledge and use of the SSEN.

Given that adults with differing pedagogic roles were interviewed, the researcher modified the interview schedules to best reflect the roles of each interviewee; however the same topics were explored.

#### 3.6.3.2. Other factors considered when interviewing adults

Within a Case Study framework, the building of trust between the interviewees and the interviewer is seen as paramount (Benedicte Meyer, 2001), particularly in cases where complex social phenomena are discussed. Given that this case study focuses on the experiences of a child (with a SSEN for MLD), in a classroom, which sits within a

mainstream school system, it is likely that the interviewees may feel anxious that their responses may be communicated to others within the school system. Therefore it was imperative that those being interviewed felt sure about the researcher's intentions in relation to the data collected and how the data was to be reported. Within this research, it was not possible to grant interviewees anonymity because the researcher placed value on the transparency of the research. Therefore the researcher offered to ensure that all the data collected would remain confidential and unidentifiable. To establish trust within the school systems I met with those involved in the research on both an individual and a group level. The aim of meeting the participants prior to collecting data was to answer any questions that they might have and to provide them with some reassurance about my intentions. Indirectly, these meetings allowed me to demonstrate my knowledge in the area of pedagogy and my keenness to support the adults working with children with complex needs. By enabling teachers and TAs to have informal discussions prior to conducting the research, staff were able to highlight their concerns and provide the researcher with a prior understanding of the systems in which the child was operating. As a researcher, I believed that these discussion groups would be paramount in gaining in-depth, open answers within the interview phase of the research.

#### 3.6.4. Interviewing children

There has been an increasing interest in listening to the views of children and viewing children as active participants in research (O'Kane, 2008). However, as O'Kane (2008: 126) suggests:

“consideration needs to be given as to whether existing research methodologies and ethical position, largely designed for adults, are appropriate when the research participant is a child”.

##### 3.6.4.1. Addressing the power imbalance

As highlighted by Hart and Tyrer (2006) one of the biggest challenges for researchers working with children is overcoming the imbalances in power

and status. The disparities between the adults and the child's status within this study is likely to be heightened given the fact that the target children had complex needs, including speech and language difficulties. For these reasons, the researcher felt that traditional interviewing formats were not appropriate for the children within this research.

In order to overcome some of the power imbalances, the researcher took on a less formal role when meeting with the target children. During the one to one meetings, the researcher first asked the child to find a place in the school that they felt most comfortable in. Prior to asking any questions relating to the study the researcher asked the child to show her around their classroom and the areas that surrounded it. This activity was conducted in order to address the power imbalance. It was felt that by encouraging the child to take a lead on the activity, they might feel more at ease and more in control of the activity.

#### 3.6.4.2. Use of pictorial cues

James, Jenks and Prout (1998) suggest that younger children communicate more freely through non-verbal communication tools. A number of methods have been used to elicit the views of children. These include drawings, mapping, flow diagrams, play, drama, story writing and songs to name but a few (O'Kane, 2006). O'Kane posits that through the use of concrete activities, researchers are able to engage children in dialogue about more complex issues; thus enabling them to communicate their needs more clearly.

In line with this, the current research made use of a decision-making activity which involved the child placing a value on particular pictorial cues which represented the types of support or interactions that they might encounter in school.

#### 3.6.4.3. Participatory Activity

During the activity the child was presented with twelve cards. Each card had a picture and a short statement about the support that children typically receive in mainstream primary schools. The cards included

support relating to learning, support relating to the facilitation of interactions and support linked to environmental modifications. Initially the pupils were asked to put the cards in one of two boxes. One box was red and it was labelled 'this does not help me' and the other box was green and labelled 'this helps me and matters to me'. There were no restrictions placed on the child in relation to the number of cards that went into each box. Once the cards were placed in the boxes, the researcher and the child looked at the cards in each box separately. At this stage the child was asked to place the cards that had been put in the 'this is important to me' box in order of importance. The researcher acted as a facilitator to begin with, but encouraged the child to work as independently as possible.

#### 3.4.6.3.1 Piloting the Participatory Activity

In order to enable the researcher to familiarise herself with the participatory activity she made use of two different piloting stages. Firstly, the advice of other Educational Psychologists was sought. During this process the researcher thought about the quantity of cards, the wording on them and the physical and cognitive skills required to complete the activity. Initially the researcher included twenty different cards, however during this phase of piloting the number of cards were reduced to twelve in order to simplify the activity and reduce any abstract or complicated language on the cards. By making these minor amendments it was hoped that children with MLD (including those with Speech and Language difficulties) would be able to access the participatory activity.

In the second phase of piloting the researcher gained parental and pupil consent to carry out the participatory activity with two Year 5 pupils who had a SEN for MLD. Like the target pupils in the study this pupil had a combination of learning needs and speech and language needs and as such the researcher thought that the results from this phase of piloting would provide some indication about the usefulness of this tool in terms of eliciting the views of pupils with SENs for MLD. When piloting it took the pupils almost thirty minutes to complete the task. The pupils attention rarely wavered and their responses seemed to indicate that the task was

appropriately set for their cognitive and physical level. In addition, whilst the TAs were present during the task, they did not intervene or support the pupil, again suggesting that the task was appropriate and achievable. In addition, the researcher asked the pupil for feedback about the activity. From these discussions it was clear that the pictures helped him to understand the task and that the colours made the activity more interesting.

Following the session with the pupil, the researcher met with the TA to discuss the pupils' answers. It was hoped that by doing this the researcher could assess the validity of the tool. Within this discussion the TA explained that many of the answers given by the pupil were reflected in his day-to-day comments and behaviours and as such it was believed that the participatory activity accurately gathered the pupils' views.

### 3.7. Ethical Consideration

It was recognised from an early stage that this research aimed to explore a sensitive area of teaching and learning, particularly given the fact that the effectiveness of TAs had been questioned by various researchers (Blatchford et al, 2009b; Hattie, 2009). Therefore, when planning this research careful attention was given to ethical dilemmas. For this reason a full application for ethical consideration was submitted and subsequently accepted by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

#### 3.7.1. Gaining informed consent

The risk of harm to the pupil with MLD was assessed as being low; however it was acknowledged that by observing a pupil for a full school week, the pupil would be likely to be aware that they are the focus of the study. For this reason, consent to observe the pupil was gained from the pupil, their parents and the adults in the classroom. In doing so, the pupil and their parents were informed that the pupil or their parents could limit the observations that the researcher conducted if they felt that it was having any adverse effect on the pupil. On regular intervals throughout the week, the observer checked in with the pupil to see whether they

mindful if the observations continued, particularly during sensitive interventions such as physiotherapy or speech and language therapy. Given that the researcher was already known to both of the target pupils, it was hoped that the children would feel safe and secure during the observations.

### 3.7.2. Minimising anxiety and disruption

In terms of being within close proximity of the child, a balance was struck between the need to collect accurate, objective data and the importance of allowing the child to move freely within the classroom. During classroom observations the researcher was positioned so that she remained away from the child's line of vision. In addition, the researcher made few movements during observations to ensure that her presence did not distract the target pupils or the adults working in the classroom.

Children selected for the study had previously met with the researcher, within her role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist. The researcher had visited both of the children at school and at home. Therefore, it was hoped that the children would feel relaxed and at ease with the researcher. This was seen as being important, not only because it had the capacity to reduce test anxiety, but because it allowed the child to communicate more freely with the researcher. Therefore it increased the likelihood that the child would voice any concerns that they may have had during the observation week.

The researcher thought carefully about the impact that the observations may have on the TAs and the Class Teachers. As with the child, the TAs and the Class Teachers were given the opportunity to withdraw from the observations. The reactions of the child were carefully monitored and observations ceased on two occasions when the child became distressed. When asked, the TAs were shown the observation schedule. This acted as a way of limiting the level of anxiety they experienced within the observations.

### 3.7.3. Confidentiality

Confidentiality was carefully considered throughout all stages of the research. The data collected was anonymised at the earliest possible stage and it was made clear to all of the participants that the names of individual TAs, pupils, Class Teachers and schools would remain unidentifiable. The data collected using the systematic observation schedule was coded so that individual names and occupations were not on show. Once complete, the systematic observation schedules were held solely by the researcher and stored in a locked cabinet.

Data entered onto SPSS was password protected and where the information was stored on a memory stick, the storage device was encrypted and used solely for the research project. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. All recordings and transcripts were password protected and stored on an encrypted memory stick.

## 3.8. Approach to data analysis

### 3.8.1. Analysis of systematic observation data

The quantitative data collected via the systematic observation schedules were entered into SPSS database. Prior to analysing the data, it was cleaned, verified and checked by the researcher. Descriptive analyses relating to the target pupils and the comparison group were carried out using cross-tabulation functions within SPSS.

### 3.8.2. Analysis of interview data

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. In order to analyse the data with a good level of rigour the researcher drew on Braun and Clarke's (2006) process of thematic analysis. Using this process, themes and sub-themes were generated from a number of cycles of coding. As suggested by Richards and Morse (2007:137) the act of coding "leads you from the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to that idea"; therefore coding becomes an essence-capturing element to qualitative research methods (Saldana, 2008). Like

Braun and Clarke (2006), Saldana (2008) argues that coding enables the researcher to organise and group data into categories or 'families', thus allowing the researcher to interpret the ideas within the data and consider possible explanations for its inclusion in the first place.

In-line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of data analysis the following steps were performed:

- i) Firstly the interview was played and then transcribed to produce verbatim transcripts. The act of transcribing the interviews allowed the researcher to become more familiar with the data. Each transcript was read at least twice to ensure that it was recorded accurately.
- ii) Each individual transcript was re-read on a line-by-line basis. In doing so, initial codes were given to sections of the text. As codes began to emerge the transcripts were read again with a specific focus on identifying further examples of the emerging codes. When the initial coding was exhausted the codes were reviewed as a whole. At this time, some codes were discarded and others were re-arranged or amalgamated.
- iii) The emerging codes usually developed across a number of transcripts. However, even where codes were only contained in one or two interviews they were included in order to ensure to capture the breadth of experiences and ideas.
- iv) As the codes were refined they were organised into themes and sub-themes. The themes were linked to the research questions posed. In order to structure the coding system, Lichtman's (2006) guidelines were kept in mind. Lichtman suggests that research within the field of education should generate approximately 80 – 100 codes, 15 – 20 categories (or sub-themes) and 5 - 7 themes. Within this part of analysis different



ways of organising the codes were scrutinised before the final themes and sub-themes were consolidated.

- v) In order to establish internal consistency each theme was reviewed and where necessary re-arranged. Internal consistency is a measure used to ascertain whether the codes represent the same construct. In addition to considering the themes on an individual level, the researcher considered the data set as whole. The aim of doing this was to ensure that there was some level of coherency across the themes. Furthermore, by taking an overview of the data set as a whole, it allowed the researcher to consider whether the themes, sub-themes and codes reflected what was said by those interviewed.
- vi) As the themes became more consolidated they were given appropriate names. The main themes linked directly to the research questions posed. The sub-themes encompassed a smaller cluster of codes within a main theme. Naming the themes and sub-themes warranted extensive consideration as the researcher hoped to capture the essence of what was said by the headings given to all themes and sub-themes.
- vii) In order to gain some sense of confirmability the researcher approached other doctoral level researchers. In doing so, the researcher demonstrated how themes, sub-themes and conclusions were reached. A small number of comments led to minor changes in the arrangements of the codes and sub-themes.
- viii) In writing up and arranging themes and codes, the researcher re-considered the strengths and limitations of thematic analysis. Within this research, thematic analysis allowed the researcher to organise the data in a meaningful way and it allowed the researcher to capture the most salient points made by a variety

of different people, all of whom had different roles in supporting the child. However, given the complex nature of this project the qualitative information was only one aspect of the data collected and therefore the exploration of each theme may not have been undertaken at the same level as purely qualitative studies. This said the act of combining qualitative and quantitative methods when attempting to answer the complex questions posed within this research allowed the researcher to uncover a wealth of information and subsequently, a number of possible explanations to the questions asked (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010).

### 3.9. Summary

This chapter described the research questions, the theoretical and epistemological stance undertaken in this research; as well as the methodologies used to answer the questions posed in chapter 2. The following chapter provides readers with the results of the systematic observations and the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Analytic Interpretation**

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter highlights the key findings of the systematic observations, the semi-structured interviews and the participatory activities. As outlined in the methodology chapter, the author used a concurrent mixed methods design to collect and analyse the data. Plano Clark, Garrett and Leslie-Pelecky (2010: 156) state that:

“The value of integration in concurrent approaches surpasses the mere summation of qualitative and quantitative evidence; it is in the dynamic merging of the two forms of data that they become greater than the sum of their parts.”

Therefore within this chapter the author will integrate the findings of the qualitative and the quantitative results to best answer the research questions posed. Unlike more typical sequential mixed methods approaches, equal value will be placed on both forms of data collection, thus enabling the author to “generate deep structure conclusions that offer enhanced explanatory power above and beyond the sole use of a qualitative or quantitative approach” (Castro, Kellison, Boyd and Kopak, 2010: 345).

#### 4.1.1. Structure of Chapter 4

In order to analyse the findings succinctly the author has integrated the findings with an in-depth analysis and discussion. This approach enabled the author to interrogate the findings and discuss possible explanations for differing sets of results. Through this approach the author was able to consider the complex social, organisational and individual factors that impact on the support given to children with a SEN for MLD from multiple sources of data.

### 4.2. Overview of the data

In this section, an overview of the results from the systematic observations will be reported. The systematic observation data was used to explore the

day-to-day experiences of a child with a SEN for MLD and how the support they received linked to the objectives in his SEN. The findings from the systematic observations sought to uncover information about the focus of the child's learning, the interventions they took part in, their location in the class and their interactions with others. To provide some form of comparison, data relating to typically developing peers was also collected. From the outset a range of data was collected to corroborate the qualitative and quantitative findings and develop a deeper and more meaningful explanation of the support that a child with a SEN receives in school (Bryman, 2006).

#### 4.2.1. Systematic observations

Systematic observations have not been used in many Case Studies and for that reason this research is somewhat unique. The systematic observation data is central to the findings and interpretation of them however by using them with other methods the researcher was able to uncover the complex messages that perhaps gave context to the observations. By triangulating the qualitative and quantitative findings, the author hoped to provide richer explanations for the results.

Across two different schools, the researcher coded 1873 one minute observations. Of these, 745 observations related to target pupil 1, 900 related to target pupil 2 and 228 observations related to the comparison group. In terms of percentages, 88% of the observations related to target pupils (40% target pupil 1; 48% target pupil 2; 12% comparison). Whilst there were differences between the number of observations collected (particularly when comparing the target pupils and the comparison pupils) there were enough observations to use statistical analysis within and across groups.

For each observation, a total of 21 variables were coded. These variables related to the pupils' interactions, behaviour, learning and environmental context and the positioning and role of the adults around them. It was expected that the findings from the systematic observations would help the researcher to explore aspects of research questions 1 and 2.

In order to analyse the quantitative data the researcher made use of the cross-tabulation function in SPSS. As highlighted by Robert Michael

*A cross-tabulation is a joint frequency distribution of cases based on two or more categorical variables. Displaying a distribution of cases by their values on two or more variables is known as contingency table analysis and is one of the more commonly used analytic methods in the social sciences (1996: 1).*

Therefore the process of using cross-tabulation provides readers with descriptive information about data. The aim of cross-tabulation is not to identify statistical significant or make causal claims about data and as such fits well with the overall design of this study.

#### 4.2.2. Semi-structured interviews

The eleven interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Saldana, 2008). Ninety-two codes emerged forming 18 sub-themes and 5 themes. The themes that emerged from the interviews were named: Practice, Support, Preparedness, Roles and Responsibilities and Barriers. Examples of quotations from each theme and an annotated transcript are listed in appendix 2.1 and 2.2.

The table below provides readers with an example of make-up of the Practice theme, in terms of codes, secondary codes and sub-themes. In addition it highlights the frequency in which each code was identified in the interview data.

Table 1: Codes, Secondary Codes and Sub-themes identified in the Practice Theme

<b>THEME 1: PRACTICE</b>			
<b>CODES</b>	<b>~Freq</b>	<b>SECOND CYCLE CODES</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
One-to-one	13	One-to-one support (24)	Individual support (24)
Safety	3		
Personalised learning	8		
Commitment	2	Commitment (9)	Required Skills (18)
Effort	2		
Enthusiasm	2		
Diligence	1		
Willingness to learn	1		
Genuineness	1		
Understanding	3		
Patience	1		
Caring	3		
Firm	2		
Encouragement	10	Strategies to increase engagement (31)	Pedagogical strategies (108)
Rewards	5		
Physical Aids	16	Ways of encouraging access to learning (61)	
Modified Curriculum	37		
Over-learning	24		
Interventions	12		
ICT	4	Interventions (16)	
Increase social skills	2	Access to peers (19)	Inclusion (19)
Group work	14		
Environmental changes	3		
<b>TOTAL: 23</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>

A full description of the codes, secondary codes, sub-themes and themes can be found within appendix 2.

As shown above, the theme labelled as Practice comprised of four sub-themes: individual support, required skills, pedagogical strategies and inclusion. These sub-themes related to the ways in which adults supported the child with the SEN and the codes ranged from the individualised nature of the support to the ways in which other children were used to support the child.

The second theme was named Support. Interestingly, this was the theme that was least discussed. This theme consisted of four sub-themes: benefits of having a SEN, external support, aims of support and in-school support. As suggested by the sub-themes, the focus of this theme was related to the support available to adults.

Preparedness was the third theme that emerged from the data. It consisted of three sub-themes: experience, planning and training. The codes within this theme related to the preparedness of those supporting the child with a SEN for MLD from an individual and an organisation level. The statements made within this theme highlighted the complex nature of managing the needs of a child with a SEN from a number of different positions, ranging from a whole school level to an individual child level.

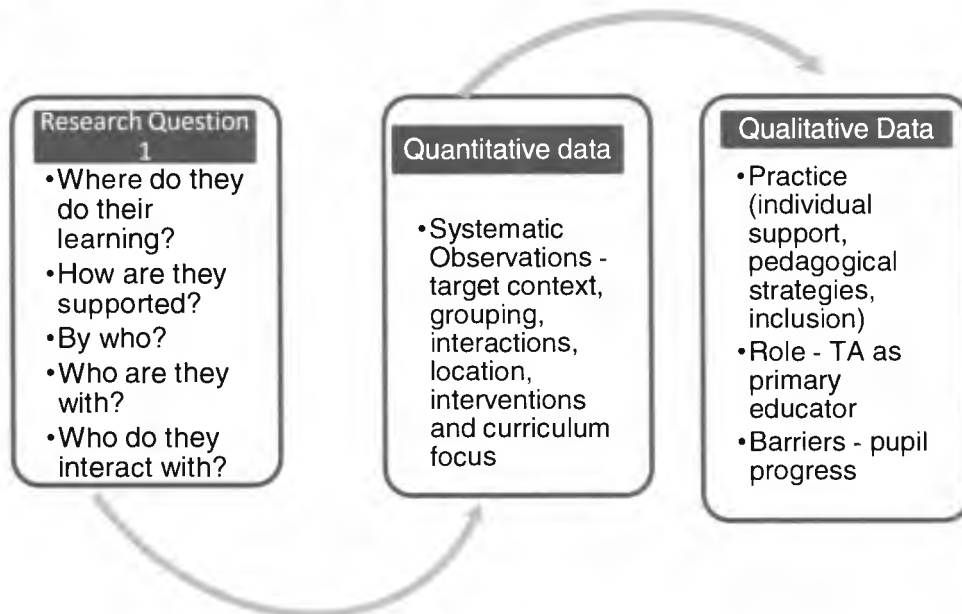
The fourth theme to emerge was named Roles and Responsibilities. This theme was split into three sub-themes relating to the roles of the adults. However, it is worth highlighting that the TA role was referred to much more frequently than the SENCO or the Class Teacher role. Within the sub-theme relating to the TA role it was notable that the TA appeared to be seen as the primary educator by a range of adults.

The most frequently referred to theme was named Barriers. Given that this research primarily sought to unpick the support available to children with a SEN, it was interesting that those interviewed seemed more able or more interested in expressing barriers and downfalls. The theme, barriers, comprised of five sub-themes: barriers to pupil progress, time constraints, adult frustration, barriers implementing the SEN and quality of support. Interestingly, there was a wide range of barriers, from pupil factors to issues with inclusion to difficulties implementing the objectives on the SEN. This highlighted the range of problems that schools come across on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, the codes within the barriers theme revealed that there are multiple layers of difficulties in relation to supporting children with SENs and whilst focusing on the support given within school might uncover certain findings, other systemic issues that may have a less direct impact on the child's provision may have a wider impact on the child's learning.

### 4.3. Exploring the Research Questions

Figure 3 shows how the author explored research question 1.

Figure 3: Data used to explore the research question 1



### 4.4. Exploring the target pupils' experiences

Systematic observations were used to explore the pupil's learning context (location, position in class and their academic focus), their levels engagement (on and off-task behaviour) and their interactions. Whereas, the thematic analysis was used to gather information about the pedagogical approaches utilised, and the roles that different adults had in relation to supporting a pupil with a SEN.

In answering the first research question the author focuses on two main areas: the target pupils' in-class learning opportunities and their experiences outside of the classroom. An important aspect of children's learning is whether or not they are in the class, and when in class the level in which they were included in the activities presented to the class (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). Moreover, when considering the target pupils' experiences the author considered the pedagogical approaches used by the schools and how this affected their learning, interactions and inclusion.



#### 4.4.1. Target pupils' 'learning' opportunities when they were with their peers

This section focuses on the target pupils' in-class learning opportunities. Systematic observations were used to identify the proportion of time the target pupils spent in class and the lessons in which this corresponded to. The analysis provides information about the activities the target pupils completed in class (in relation to their peers), their interactions and the opportunities that target pupils had to work with peers. In order to understand the pupils' experiences more fully the author also referred to aspects from the thematic analysis. The results from the systematic observations displayed in table 2 (below) showed that target children 1 and 2 spent 59% and 46% of their time working in the same environment as their peers. Table 2 also highlights the time that the target and comparison pupils spent 'working' in the same place when non-curricular activities (such as assemblies and transitional periods) were controlled for.

Table 2: The time spent learning in the same environment as their peers

<b>Pupil</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of Observations</b>	<b>Proportion of time spent in that location</b>
Target pupil 1	Same place as peers	438	59%
	Working away from peers	307	41%
	Completing <b>class</b> work in the same place as his peers*	267	36%
Target pupil 2	Same place as peers	407	45%
	Working away from peers	493	55%
	Completing <b>class</b> work in the same place as his peers*	312	35%
Comparison Pupils	Same place as peers	228	100%
	Working away from peers	0	0
	Completing <b>class</b> work in the same place as his peers*	162	71%

\*working in the same place as peers on class work only (excluding all non-curricular activities)

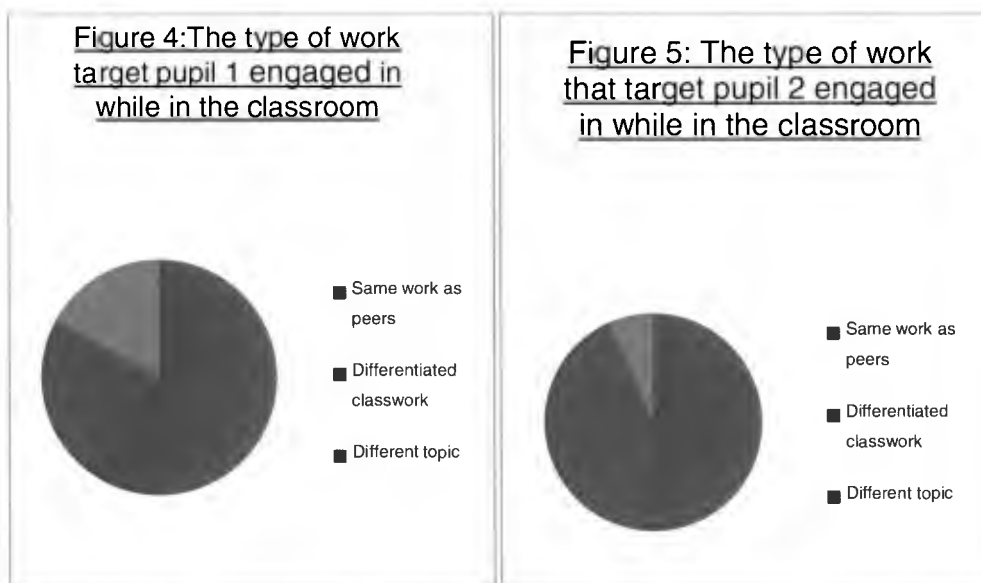
As highlighted by table 2, when non-curricular activities were controlled for the target pupils spent just 36% and 35% of their time engaged in the same environment as their peers. The comparison group on the other hand spent 71% of their time engaged in academic learning tasks in the same environment as their peers. Target pupil 1 was involved in non-curricular activities for 39% of the time that he spent working in the same environment as his peers. Similarly a quarter of the time that target pupil 2 spent working in the same place as his peers was accounted for by non-curricular activities. It could be that non-curricular activities were judged to be more accessible to the target pupils and therefore fewer attempts to differentiate such tasks were made.

These findings suggest that the target pupils spent almost two-thirds of their time working away from their peers or involved in non-curricular activities and as such one might question the level at which they are included in mainstream lessons. Warnock (Warnock and Norwich, 2010) argues that children with SENs are less effectively included in mainstream schools and these findings somewhat support her claims. As well as being academically isolated from their peers, their lack of presence in the classroom increase the chance of the target pupils being cut off from the class on a social and emotional level (as argued by Warnock, 2010).

In terms of enhancing their learning, it could be perceived that the target pupils' within-child deficits act as barriers to full inclusion (and therefore educating them away from their peers may be seen as being more appropriate). However as Florian (2009) argues, by carefully planning a range of learning activities all children should be educated with their peer group. The findings above suggest that neither school made much use of inclusive pedagogical approaches as described by Florian (2008, 2009). In addition, these early findings highlight that the schools in this study had difficulties including the target pupils. More specifically, the findings indicate that much of the target pupils' time working in the same environment as their peers was accounted for by non-curricular activities, which given its limitation opportunities to engage with other children, may have served a purpose for the staff rather than the children.

#### 4.4.2. In-class experiences

To consider how the target pupils were included in class the cross tabulation function in SPSS was used. Firstly, an analysis of the type of work that the target pupils completed in class was explored (i.e. whether it was differentiated, different or the same as the rest of the class). Figures 4 and 5 show that whilst in-class, the target pupils spent most of their time engaged in the same work as their peers and least time working on different topics.



This was particularly interesting because the results show that the target pupils spent over 50% of their time engaged in the same activities as their peers. This could suggest that the teacher feels that the target pupils could, for the most part, access the same teaching as their peers; or it could be that they are 'included' in parts of whole class teaching despite the fact that they have difficulties accessing the information. This highlights that whilst differentiation is seen as one way of supporting pupils with a SSEN it was not used for more than fifty percent of the time that the pupils with a SSEN for MLD were in the classroom. One explanation for this could be that pupils with a SSEN for MLD were seen as receiving additional one-to-one support from the TA and as such differentiation may have been seen as being less important. From the informal observations made by the researcher TAs often supported and guided the pupils to the

correct answers by offering to complete tasks with the pupil. Ultimately this made the pupils dependent on TA support to complete activities that were not matched to their attainment levels and subsequently the work produced by the pupil was a product of the combined efforts of the TA and the pupil. Furthermore, given that the target pupils spent comparably little time working in the same lessons as their peers, one might question whether the teachers truly believed that the children could access whole class teaching effectively. Instead it could be that the target pupils' attendance in class served a different purpose; such as providing the TA with an opportunity to hear the lesson objective and ultimately differentiate the work for the pupil.

This approach is more in-line with Norwich's (1996) commonality-differentiation model. Using this model, the target pupils' needs may have been seen to be similar to the majority during the whole class teaching input, but different to the most of their peers when it came to completing the learning objective. Following the input the target pupils may have needed additional or different support in order to complete the task. The findings above highlight that one of the ways used to support them was through the use of differentiation, however the systematic observations were unable to identify who differentiated the work.

This said, the findings that emerged from the thematic analysis (theme 1 – Practice) implied that the target pupils largely received individualised support via a TA.

“It's mainly one-to-one really; and it's a case of either one-to-one in the class, if he can take part and it can be put down, or at his station outside really” (CT2, 16 – 18; Theme 1 - Practice)

“he has had his work station in the classroom last year, the reason that that's gone outside is because firstly, there's nowhere to put him in the classroom; but secondly, on reflection, it is a lot better for him to be outside. ” (CT2, 412 – 416; Theme 1 - Practice)

The strength of using a mixed method approach is evident in this case. The figures alone suggested that the teachers could have been using the

Norwich's (1996) commonality-differentiation model of learning to meet the needs of the target pupils, however the qualitative findings highlighted that the target pupils learning needs were mostly catered for through individualised instructions via a TA. This approach to providing for pupils with a SEN may be related to the funding of SENs. In this study, the LA funded the entire SEN and as such the schools were able to employ a full-time TA to support the pupils. However, as Warnock argues by doing this, teachers are able to exclude pupils with complex needs from whole class teaching and group work leaving them vulnerable to social and emotional isolation (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

Furthermore, despite the fact that the National Curriculum guides teachers to use differentiation as a model of supporting all children's learning, this study highlights that there are a number of problems relating to differentiation. It may be useful for future studies to identify which forms of differentiation are used for pupils with SENs for MLD and which member of staff takes responsibility for ensuring that the correct level of differentiation is in place. Importantly this study has highlighted that teachers often rely on TAs to 'differentiate' work for pupils, however it is clear from these observations that TAs are not using the traditional models of differentiation to support the pupils they work with: instead they help them to complete activities and manage the school day. Adapting the curriculum in this way does not support pupils to understand concepts nor does it encourage them to consider different ways of learning and as such it could be argued that few attempts were made to use process differentiation. Again it would be useful for future research to be conducted in this area because recent research by Hattie (2009) suggests that the children make more progress in learning when they are supported to develop their metacognitive skills. Given this is possible to argue that process differentiation would be key in supporting this. However, as previously acknowledged by Radford et al (2011), Teachers focus more heavily on children's development of learning, whereas TAs place more emphasis on task acquisition.

#### 4.4.2.1. In-class academic learning opportunities

In order to understand the target pupils' academic experiences the author examined their in-class learning opportunities by controlling for the non-curricular activities. Interestingly, when non-curricular activities were controlled for the target pupils' learning experiences altered dramatically.

Table 3: The focus of the pupils' task and the time spent engaged in the same activities as their peers

<b>Pupil</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Number of observations</b>	<b>Proportion of time the child spent engaged in the task</b>
Target child 1	Academic focus	108	14%
	Non-curricular focus	156	21%
	Total	264	35%
Target child 2	Academic focus	119	13%
	Non-curricular focus	92	10%
	Total	211	23%
Comparison pupils	Academic focus	159	70%
	Non-curricular focus	66	29%
	Total	225	99%

Table 3 shows that, of the activities that target pupil 1 engaged in the same work as his peers, 156 of them were within a non-curricular activity such as assembly. This equated for almost 60% of the time that he was engaged in the same activities as his peers. Overall, when non-curricular activities were controlled for, target pupil 1 spent 14% of his time engaged in the same activities as his peers. A similar pattern was found with target pupil 2. When non-curricular activities were controlled for, target pupil 2 spent just 13% of his time engaged in the same tasks as his peers.

Overall, these findings show that the target pupils spent very little time working on the same academic tasks as their peers which implies that they were not included sufficiently in learning activities. One possible explanation for this is could be linked to the complex process involved in providing effective differentiation. It could be that Teachers have neither the time (either to plan for pupils with SSEN or the time to regularly assess

their attainment level), or the skill level to differentiate work for all of the pupils in their class. As a result it could be that some teachers perceive that pupils whose needs are largely catered for by other adults in the classroom can be supported without the need for careful differentiation. Alternatively, given that the teachers of pupils with SSEN for MLD in this study had less involvement with the pupils, they may have felt unable to differentiate the work effectively. It could be suggested that the teachers would have had less opportunities to understand the pupil's likes and interests and as a result this could have become a barrier to task differentiation.

However the data above does highlight that the pupils with a SSEN for MLD had different in-class experiences than their peers. Given this one might question their sense of belonging to the class and their perception of themselves as a good learner. According to Maslow (1947) having a sense of belonging is crucial to reaching self-actualisation and without it, learning and development is likely to be stifled.

As identified by figures 4 and 5, the target pupils spent between 13% and 41% of their time working on differentiated class work they were in-class. However, overall, they spent 12% and 19% engaged in differentiated work when in and out-of-class experiences were factored in (which was significantly higher than that of the comparison group).

Nind (2005) suggests that differentiating class work gives some children a greater chance of accessing activities as long as it does not rely on ability grouping. However, Florian (2009) and Lewis and Norwich (2001) argue that differentiation alone may not be enough to support children with SEN and the evidence relating to impact of ability grouping is poor at best (Hattie, 2009). Oakes' in-depth study showed that children with SEN (or those seen to be lower achievers) "spent a lot of time filling in blanks in workbooks or sheets. And [she argued that] because we expect almost nothing of them they learn very little" (Oakes, 2005: 24). This highlights some of the many concerns with difficulties associated with differentiation and ability grouping. Interestingly, while the teachers in both schools used

differentiation they too highlighted difficulties with it. Ultimately they argued that the problems associated with differentiation meant that they were left with no choice but to design personalised programmes for the target pupils.

“it’s not a case of being able to differentiate; because what we’re doing, there’s not a lower level that he can access with the class. So it’s got to be a personalised programme” (CT2, 82 – 85; Theme 1 - Practice).

Despite making claims that the target pupils required a personalised programme almost a fifth of their time in school was spent completing differentiated class work. The findings that emerged from the thematic analysis showed that TAs had the most direct role in differentiating and planning the target pupils’ work.

“At the beginning of term she’ll [the Class Teacher] give you a list of what the topics are and what they’re running through. But the actual day-to-day work, we don’t know that till we get there” (TA1, 104 – 106; Theme 3 - Preparedness).

“Well I know what they’re basically going to do: and a lot of it is what I interpret...so it’s only through me knowing what he can’t do and doing it” (TA2, 35 – 37; Theme 3 - Preparedness).

“we just do it as we go along...sometimes I just do different things actually than in the lessons. I don’t actually write it down” (TA1, 61 – 70; Theme 3 - Preparedness).

“I never stop; I never stop from the time I get here at half past eight until I leave at half past three – it’s just go, go, go. And of course the pace in there is so quick; it’s so quick. You don’t have time to think in there” (TA2, 207 – 209; Theme 3 - Preparedness).

These quotations highlight that the TAs appeared to be taking ownership of the task of differentiation and planning despite the fact that they had little time to organise it and limited knowledge about the curriculum. As suggested by Oakes (2005) the quality of the differentiation is not always adequate for the pupils receiving it. Furthermore, in terms of effective pedagogy as defined by the DfES (2007) it is the combination of having knowledge of the curriculum, a repertoire of teaching skills, information



about teaching and learning models and insight into condition for learning that lead to good practice. TAs have neither the training nor the knowledge of the curriculum to be completing such tasks (Blatchford et al, 2009) which is highlighted in the quotation below.

“Like I said, none of us are trained in this. I just learned through coming up the school...I wouldn't have a clue about doing number lines and how to add numbers up. But I've just learned through going up the school how they do it.” (TA2, 177 – 181; Theme 3 - Preparedness)

#### 4.4.2.2. Summary

When non-curricular activities were controlled for, the target pupils spent between just 13% and 14% of their time in school engaging in the same work as their peers (table 3, p.102). Given this, one might question their sense of being part of the class, particularly since the teachers emphasised that they required a personalised learning programme. Interestingly, while adults referred to the concept of an individualised programme their answers seemed to indicate that target pupils required this because they were not able to access the curriculum, not because they believed that it would enable them to succeed in learning. As such, Warnock's critical position of inclusion and its effect on pupils with a SSEN appear to be relevant in this study (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

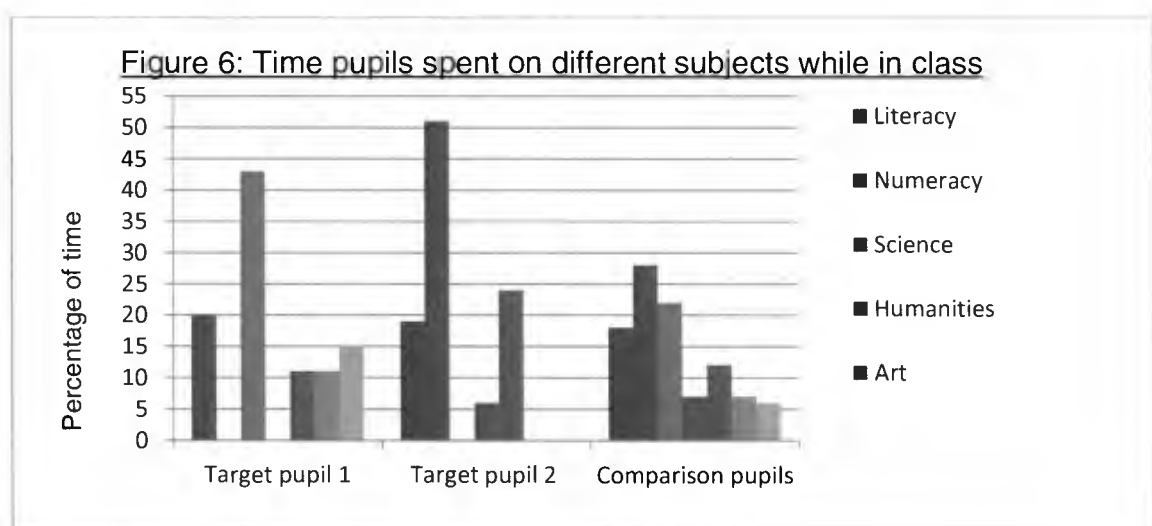
The systematic observation data showed that the target pupils were given differentiated class work for about a fifth of the time they spent in school; and when combined with the time that they spent engaged in the same work as their peers, they appeared to have been working on the same or similar activities as their peers for 25% and 33% of their time in school. These figures imply that the target pupils were at least somewhat included for a quarter and a third of their time in school. Although when the findings of the qualitative and the quantitative were combined, it appeared that the target pupils spent little time actively involved in the same tasks as their peers because of the associated difficulties with differentiation. Furthermore, the 'differentiation' that was supplied to pupils with a SSEN was driven by TAs who did not use the traditional models of differentiation

and subsequently it could be argued that pupils were less likely acquire new learning strategies.

Finally, this section of analysis highlighted that the TAs in this study had a direct role in planning and differentiating work, despite the fact that they had little time, training or knowledge in this area. Moreover, the emphasis on the target pupils' difficulties accessing the curriculum led teachers and TAs to conclude that the children required individualised support. Interestingly, there was little evidence in their interviews to suggest that they thought that the children required a SEN-specific pedagogy; however they clearly stated that it was not possible to include them in normal teaching. Ultimately, this raises questions about the inclusion of these pupils and the use of effective teaching practices when they are being taught by their TA.

#### 4.4.3. Curricular Focus

The next section of the analysis focuses on the time that the target pupils spent engaged in different areas of the curriculum whilst in the classroom and how this compared to the experiences of the typically attaining pupils. Figure 6 shows how often the pupils (target and comparison) were involved in the same work as their peers across different subjects. The observations have been converted into percentages to allow for comparisons across groups.



There were notable differences between the target pupil's experiences of learning and the comparison group's learning opportunities. The graph above shows that whilst in class the comparison children had opportunities to engage in a variety of topics, whereas the target pupils' spent a disproportionate amount of time in numeracy and science lessons.

Importantly target pupil 1 received no numeracy or humanities teaching in class. Instead he spent a high proportion of his time in class focused on science and literacy lessons. In contrast, target pupil 2 spent over 50% of his time in class working in numeracy lessons. This suggests that he may have been seen to be more able in numeracy and as such he was included. However, statistics relating to his off-task behaviour show that he was disengaged from learning for at least a quarter of the time he was in numeracy lessons.

These statistics provide readers with some idea of the day-to-day experiences of the target children; however they fail to give a richer description of the target pupils' in-class learning opportunities. Therefore the thematic analysis was used to explore how the target pupils managed whole class input and activities. The example below illustrates target pupil 1's ability to access a science lesson:

"[the teacher] has given me her plan this morning. Monday morning it says 'Today we're doing about astronauts,' but I didn't know that till this morning. Luckily the work that they did, the pupil could do. Although he doesn't quite comprehend any of it, he was capable of putting something down" (TA1, 145 – 148; Theme 3 - Preparedness).

This statement highlights that on this occasion, the target pupil was 'included' in a whole class teaching session despite the fact that he could not access it. The TA's quotation suggests that there is an element of chance in relation to whether or not the pupil can access whole class activities. This raises questions about the teacher's ability to effectively

plan for **all** the pupils in her class. In addition it re-emphasises the problem of relying on TA to differentiate work for pupils. In this example the TA acknowledges that the target pupil was unable to understand the activity however she seemed pleased that he was able to 'complete' some aspect of the task. This finding is consistent with those of Radford et al's (2011) whereby TAs were seen to focus more closely on task completion rather than learning acquisition.

From a learning perspective, one might question whether the child learnt anything from the exercise that he 'completed'. Bereiter (2002: 381) argues that "if the only justification for an activity is that it is supposed to encourage or improve thinking, drop it and replace it with an activity that advances students' understanding". If this stance is accepted as effective pedagogy then the findings from this study provide further confirmation that TAs are not sufficiently trained to consistently provide the high quality support that children with additional needs require.

The thematic analysis highlighted another problem when TAs were relied upon to differentiate work. This was linked to their knowledge of learning objectives. In one example, the class were asked to debate a specific topic – should dogs be allowed in public parks. During my observation, the teacher signalled to the TA that the target pupil would not be able to access this and therefore the TA 'differentiated' the work. Instead of debating a topic the TA asked the pupil to design a poster demonstrating his knowledge of the rules of a dog park. She later explained:

"I've got no time to plan. It's like we're doing this thing on dogs; I've got to think now, where am I going to take this further with the pupil? Because they're doing this for another four weeks – what have I got left?...The class teacher has no idea at the end of the day. She doesn't deal with all of it." (TA2, 61 – 68; Theme 3 - Preparedness)

This re-establishes that the TAs in this study took a lead role in differentiating and planning the work for pupils with a SEN. Importantly it highlights that TAs may not be given enough guidance in relation to

differentiating work. As a result the above example shows that instead of differentiating the activity, the TA altered the entire learning objective. Because of this, the target pupil required much less time to complete his activity while his peers needed considerably longer to finish theirs leaving the TA with excess time to fill.

It is important to consider the process of learning in both of these examples. Hattie states:

“The process of learning is a journey from ideas to understanding to construction and onwards. It is a journey of learning, unlearning and overlearning. When students can move from idea to idea and then relate and elaborate on them then we have learning – and when they can regulate or monitor this journey then they are teachers of their own learning” (Hattie, 2009: 29).

The support given by the TAs was focused on developing the pupil's surface level of knowledge (Hattie, 2009). In the activities listed above neither pupil were supported in a way that enabled them to continue on their learning journey (as described by Hattie). Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) claim that by using inclusive pedagogical approaches teachers are forced to plan a range of activities that help all children to develop a deeper level of understanding. This means that teachers regain the responsibility of planning and overseeing the education of all children, as indicated in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001). Ultimately this could improve not only the planning but the support received by pupils with a SSEN.

#### 4.4.4. Non-curricular activities

The target pupils' involvement in non-curricular activities have been controlled for in some of the previous analyses, however given that they spent such a large portion of their time involved in them it seemed important to explore them further. Table 4 shows the time that the pupils spent involved in different subject when non-curricular activities were not controlled for.

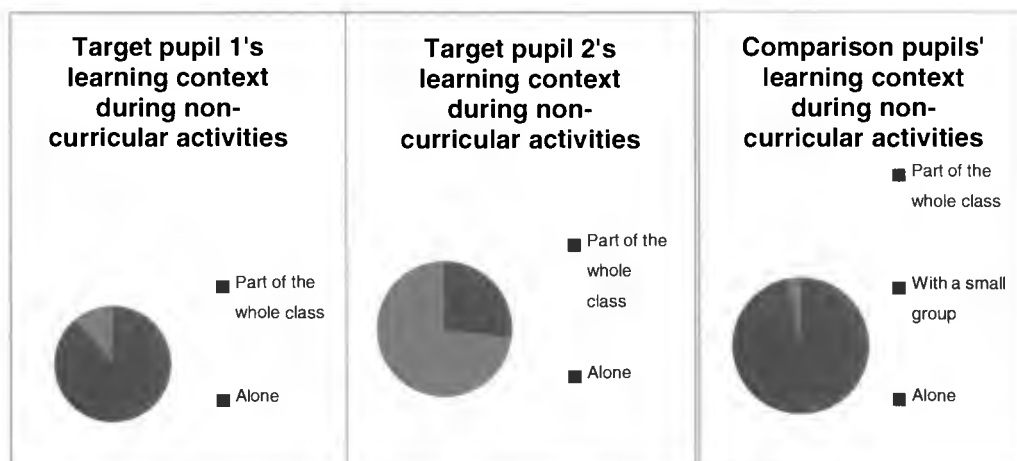
Table 4: Time spent focusing on different subjects

Pupil	Subject	Number of observations	% of time spent focused on topic
Target pupil 1	Literacy	71	25
	Numeracy	156	21
	Art	43	6
	Science	116	16
	Humanities	29	4
	<b>Non-curriculum</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>23</b>
Target pupil 2	Literacy	283	32
	Numeracy	199	22
	Art	100	11
	Science	0	0
	Humanities	18	2
	<b>Non-curriculum</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>34</b>
Comparison pupils	Literacy	30	14
	Numeracy	45	21
	Art	19	9
	Science	35	16
	Humanities	23	10
	<b>Non-curriculum</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>30</b>

Table 4 shows that target pupils 1 and 2, spent 23% and 34% of their time focusing on non-curricular activities. For target pupil 2, non-curricular activities accounted for the highest proportion of his time in school, and for target pupil 1 only time spent in literacy sessions accounted for more of his time. Given that the target pupils spent a high proportion of their time involved in non-curricular activities, and because it accounted for much of the time that they were with their peers, further analysis was conducted.

Figure 7 (overleaf) shows that the pupils had relatively different experiences in terms of the way they were included in non-curricular activities.

Figure 7: Learning context during non-curricular activities



Target pupil 1 and the comparison pupils spent most of their time sitting alongside their peers; whereas target child 2 spent over 70% of his time sitting alone during non-curricular activities. From an inclusion point of view, the figures relating to target pupil 2 were concerning particularly because 43% of the time he spent engaged in the same activity as his peers was during non-curricular activities. These findings support the claim made by Warnock that, pupils with a SEN are often socially excluded in mainstream schools (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

Whilst there were differences between the target pupils in terms of their learning contexts (during non-curricular activities), it was unclear as to whether this affected their ability to engage in the learning. Table 5 provides information about the target pupils' behaviour during non-curricular activities.

Table 5: Behaviour during non-curricular activities

Pupil	Observed Behaviour			
	On-task	%	Off-task	%
Target pupil 1	100	58	71	42
Target pupil 2	179	64	101	36
Comparison pupils	64	97	2	3

Table 5 shows that the target pupils spent considerably more time off-task during non-curricular activities than the comparison pupils. Interestingly, target pupil 1 was off-task more than target pupil 2, despite the fact that he spent more time sitting with his peers. These findings suggest that neither of the target pupils were effectively included or engaged in non-curricular activities, even though non-curricular activities accounted for the largest portion of time that they spent with their peers.

Many researchers have argued that inclusion is not simply about integrating children with SEN into mainstream schools or in these cases particular teaching sessions (Ainscow, 1999; Mittler, 2000; Warnock and Norwich, 2010). However the systematic observations suggest that the schools in this study attempted to use assemblies as a way of including the target pupils. Pugh and Macrae (1995) suggest that effective inclusion relies on some element of participation if it is to work. Therefore it could be argued that, assemblies (or other non-curricular activities which involve a high proportion of listening) may not be the best environments to develop a child's sense of inclusion or belonging in school. As such it could be argued that 'including' the target pupils in assemblies may have served a purpose for the teaching staff, rather than the pupils. For instance, by including the pupil with a SSEN in a whole school assembly, staff may consider that something has been put in place to enable the child to feel as though they belong to the class/school (despite the fact that they may be seated away from their peers).

#### 4.4.3.2. Summary

There were notable differences between the target pupils and the comparison group in terms of their learning opportunities and their experience of curricular and non-curricular activities. Whilst in class, a large proportion of the target pupil's time was accounted for by just one or two subjects. In contrast the comparison group received a more varied curriculum. This shows that the target pupils' access to the curriculum was limited which challenges one of the key concepts of inclusion.



Another barrier to inclusion was linked to the target pupils' experiences in non-curricular activities. Whilst the target pupils experiences differed from one another and from the comparison group it was clear that both pupils spent a considerable amount of time disengaged from the non-curricular activities. Because of this, one should question whether the target pupils' experiences during non-curricular activities led them to have increased feelings of belonging or inclusion.

#### 4.4.5. Pupils' learning context, interactions and behaviour

The first set of results focuses on the target pupils' learning, in terms of their access to the curriculum and to whole class input. The analysis that follows this explores the target pupils' learning context (i.e. the amount of time they worked alone, or were engaged in group or whole class work) whilst in the classroom. Finally, the author explores the target pupils' interactions and how these differed from those of their peers.

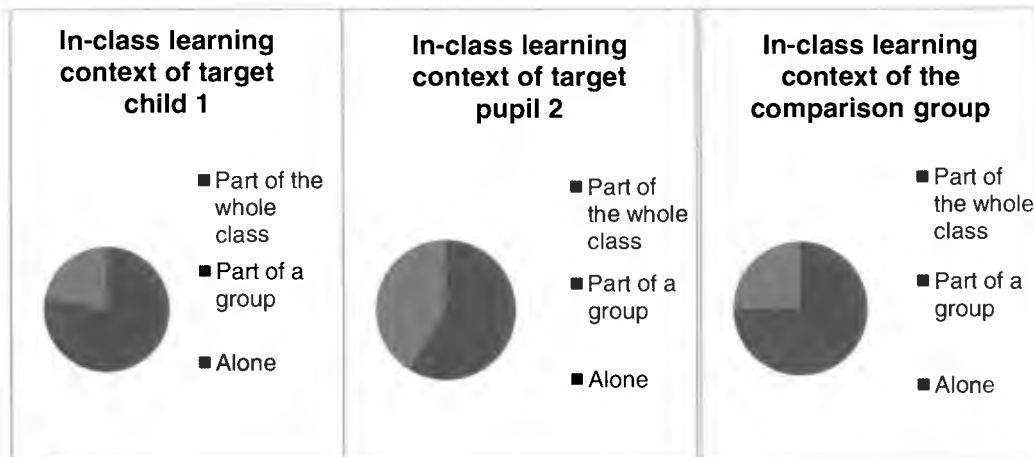
##### 4.4.5.1. Learning context

The findings preceding this section have shown that the schools in this study placed more emphasis on ensuring that the target pupils had individualised learning opportunities rather than supporting them in ways that allowed them to be including in group work.

As highlighted by Norwich and Lewis (2001), on one hand children with a SEN have the right to participate in mainstream school; however in doing so teachers or schools sometimes make the decision that the children have to engage in individually relevant learning and where this occurs they have fewer opportunities to take an active role in common learning activities. The author decided to use the systematic observations to explore this further.

Figure 8 provides readers with information about the target pupils' learning context and how this related to their peers.

Figure 8: In-class learning context (excluding non-curricular activities)



As demonstrated by figure 8, the comparison pupils had noticeably more opportunities to work within a group and their learning context appeared to be more balanced. In contrast, the target pupils spent the majority of their time either alone or within whole class teaching. Because of this, it is likely that a high proportion of their learning came via adult direction rather than through problem solving, group work or peer mentoring.

This is relevant because Higgins et al, (2011) found that individualised instruction and the use of TAs were considerably less effective in supporting children's learning than peer-assisted learning. They suggest that during individualised instructions adults take on a managerial role which focuses on monitoring and organising, as opposed to providing effective feedback and ensuring that the pupil reflects on their learning experiences. Therefore it could be argued that the focus of many of the individualised instructions would be on monitoring and task completion as per Radford et al (2011).

Another interesting finding was that the target pupils spent almost two-thirds of their time engaged in whole class teaching. As previously discussed this either suggests that it was possible for the target pupils to be included in the mainstream curriculum; or that they were included in whole class teaching regardless of whether they could access it.

Comments made by class teachers indicated that they felt that the needs of the children with SSENs could not easily be met through whole class teaching or through the National Curriculum:

“he has completely different learning objectives, because he can't access the Year 5/6 curriculum...he is not going to be able to get any of what we're doing. So he'll probably be doing personalised stuff next week.” (CT2, 43 – 54; Theme 1 – Practice)

“I get it that the National Curriculum is an entitlement for everybody, but does the National Curriculum actually meet these children's needs? I don't think it does. These kids need life skills...need to be more aware of other people's needs to help him interact with people” (CT1, 600 – 604; Theme 3 - Preparedness)

Given this it is unclear as to what teachers expect to gain from 'including' the target children in such a high proportion of whole class teaching. The first statement implies that the child with the SSEN had completely different learning objectives; therefore one would question whether whole class teaching would actually support his learning. Moreover, it implies that, where the child's needs cannot be met, the only option available to him is a personalised learning package delivered by the TA of which the evidence-base is much poorer than many other strategies.

The second comment highlights that the teacher perceives the child's needs as being inherently different from the rest of the class and therefore she has different expectations of him. Whilst the teacher acknowledges that the national curriculum can be challenging for the target pupil, she also highlights that children with MLD require additional support to develop life skills and social skills. Theoretically, this may be a fair and appropriate statement; however in practice, the target pupil received little support with life skills and very few opportunities to access their peers. In other words even when alternative strategies were thought to be better suited for the target pupil, little is done to ensure that they are carried out. Given this one could question the teacher's level of commitment in terms of planning and overseeing appropriately set work for the target pupil.

#### 4.4.5.2. Access to peers

As highlighted by Morris (1999), “learning is fundamentally a social process” (in Leadbetter et al, 1999: 25). Opportunities to engage with peers should be seen as a valuable tool for learning, however the findings in figure 8 highlighted that the target pupils had few opportunities to become involved in the social side of learning. The table below shows the frequency in which the target pupils engaged in group work.

Table 6: Learning context in and out of the classroom

Pupil	Learning Context	Observations in different Locations			
		In class	% time in class	Out of class	% time out of class
Target pupil 1	Alone	197	45	230	75
	Small group	11	3	77	25
	Whole Class	230	53	0	0
	<i>OVERALL</i>	<i>438</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>307</i>	<i>41</i>
Target pupil 2	Alone	233	57	480	97
	Small group	33	8	14	3
	Whole Class	140	34	0	0
	<i>OVERALL</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>494</i>	<i>55</i>
Comparison group	Alone	43	18	0	0
	Small group	65	29	0	0
	Whole Class	120	53	0	0
	<i>OVERALL</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

Table 6 shows that whilst in the classroom, target pupil 1 and 2 spent over 90% of their time either alone or engaged in whole class learning. In contrast, the comparison children spent 71% of their time engaged in whole class teaching or independent work, enabling them to spend almost a third of their time working in groups. These findings demonstrate that the target pupils had far fewer opportunities to engage in group work. Given this one would assume that they interacted less often with their peers and as such they are likely to have been more socially isolated than their peers (as suggested by Warnock (2010)).

Access to peers was referred to frequently during the semi-structured interviews and as a result it formed a code within theme 5, Barriers.

“He doesn’t work in groups because we haven’t got anybody that have the same needs as him in class; so it’s not possible for him to work in groups...He does sometimes work with groups in the classroom for discussion, but rarely takes part. He doesn’t want to join in so he’s mainly just sat there, which is an ineffective use of time. ” (CT2, 8 – 12; Theme 5 – Barriers)

“As he’s got older and the mindset gap is like that now, we can’t use the children in the class to support him; because they need to be supported at their level.” (HT2, 279 – 282; Theme 5 – Barriers)

These statements highlight the difficulties that one school faced in relation to ‘using’ other pupils to support the target pupil’s learning. The first quotation highlights that the teacher perceived group work to be an “ineffective use of time” for the target child, despite the fact that the evidence base suggests it would be useful (Higgins et al, 2011; Hattie, 2009). This said the decision to reduce the time that the target pupil was involved in group activities may have been linked to the needs of the majority.

“when he is in group situation, it feels like we’re bringing the whole group down to his level, which then is not good for the rest of the class. So it’s mainly one-to-one really; and it’s a case of either one-to-one in the class, if he can take part and it can be put down, or at his station outside” (CT2, 14 – 18; Theme 5 – Barriers)

In this case, the teacher felt as though the needs of the class should not be negatively impacted by the needs of the target pupil. Moreover, the teacher appeared to be suggesting that the only options available to the target pupil were being in-class with one-to-one support or being out of the class with one-to-one support; either way the target pupil was seen to require individualised support.

As previously alluded to individualised instruction does little to improve attainment, increase children’s self esteem, critical thinking or attitude towards learning (Hattie, 2009). Despite these findings and others related

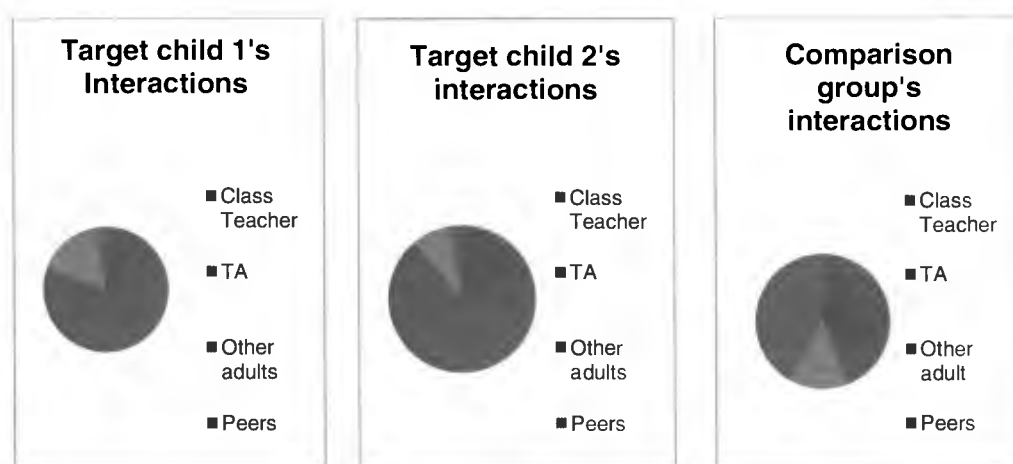
to effective inclusive practice (Florian, 2009) the target pupils in this study had few opportunities to work in groups and where they did, one questions the impact that such work had on their learning, emotional well-being or social inclusion.

#### 4.4.5.3. Target pupils' interactions

In order to ascertain whether the target children's learning was as individualised as the previous results imply, the author explored the target pupils' interactions and how they differed from those of the comparison group.

Figure 9 highlights the differences between the interactions of the target children and those of the comparison children.

Figure 9: Pupils' Interactions with adults and peers in the classroom



The target pupils interacted most frequently with TAs and least frequently with their peers. These findings were in-line with previous research (Blatchford et al, 2009b). In contrast, the comparison children interacted most frequently with either the class teacher or their peers.

Target pupil 1 interacted with the TA 344 times, of which 80% were on a one-to-one basis. This implies that the TA was actively involved in his learning. Moreover, it was indicative of the fact that target pupil 1 took part in individualised learning or heavily differentiated work for a large proportion of the time that we spent with the TA. There were similar findings in terms of the interactions that target pupil 2 had with adults and

peers. Out of 553 interactions, the named TA spoke with target pupil 2, 374 times, of which 94% of the interactions were within a one-to-one context. Table 7 highlights the pupils' interactions with adults and peers throughout the week of observations.

Table 7: Pupils' interactions in different learning contexts

Pupil	Interaction initiated by:	Interaction with:	Learning Context			Total number of interactions
			Whole class	Group	1:1	
Target pupil 1	Target Pupil	Class Teacher	6	0	0	6
		Named TA	13	5	67	85
		Other Adult	0	1	6	7
		Peers	0	0	1	1
	By someone other than the pupil	Class Teacher	69	3	6	78
		Named TA	25	25	209	259
		Other adult	45	21	12	58
		Peers	7	8	0	15
Target pupil 2	Target pupil	Class Teacher	0	0	0	0
		Named TA	2	2	130	134
		Other Adult	0	15	0	15
		Peers	8	5	0	13
	By someone other than the target pupil	Class Teacher	77	19	9	105
		Named TA	8	9	223	240
		Other adult	28	0	17	45
		Peers	1	0	0	1
Comparison Pupils	Comparison Pupils	Class Teacher	3	3	2	8
		TA	0	1	1	2
		Other Adult	1	0	0	1
		Peers	2	18	0	20
	Someone other than the comparison pupil	Class Teacher	72	9	3	84
		TA	6	2	0	8
		Other adult	32	0	0	32
		Peers	5	30	41	76

Table 7 shows that target pupil 1 interacted with the teacher most frequently when he was in a whole class teaching context. In this context, the teacher would have been addressing the whole class and the target child would have been one of many pupils. Unlike the TA, the teacher only interacted with target pupil 1 on a one-to-one basis six times. Again,

similar findings were shown for target pupil 2. In his case, his teacher interacted with him on 96 occasions; of which only 2 came in the form of a one-to-one interaction. Interestingly, target pupil 2 did not initiate any interactions with his teacher. This may be indicative of his relationship with the teacher or the fact that his needs are almost solely met by the named TA.

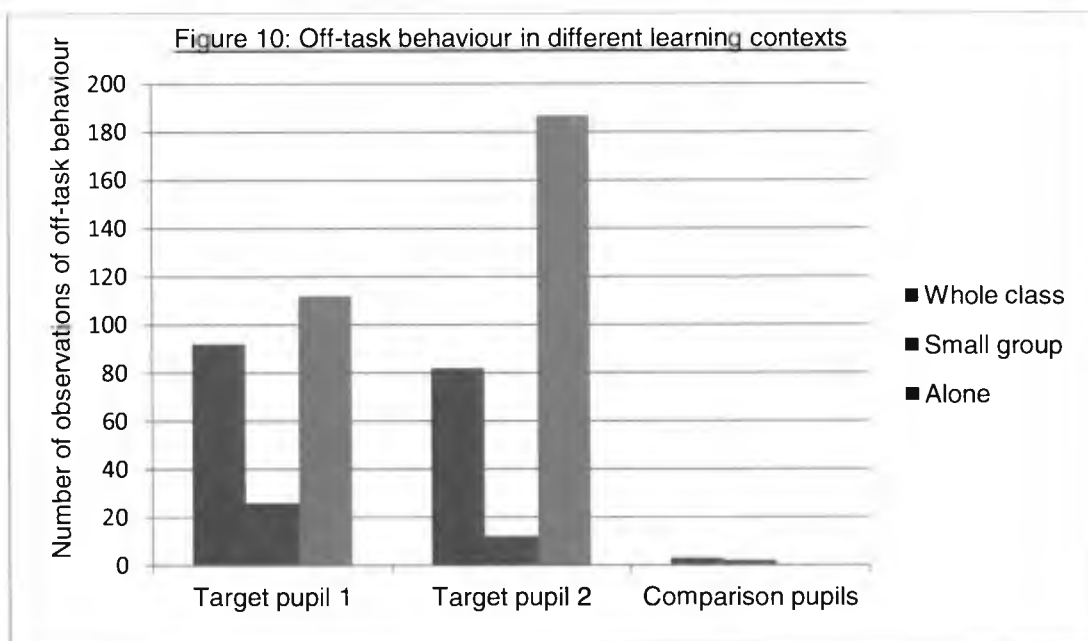
The findings from table 7 and figure 9 highlight the disparity between the target and comparison children, in terms of their access to their peers and their access to their teacher. This method of supporting pupils with SSEN has become commonly known as using a 'Velcro-TA' (Gerschel, 2005; Peacey, 2005). The drawback of this type of support is that it increases the chance that a pupil will become emotionally and physically dependent on a TA and it reduces opportunities for inclusion. In addition it increases the pressure on the TA because they become seen as the most knowledgeable person in relation to the specific child (Richards and Armstrong, 2005).

In this study, it would appear that the target pupils were largely dependent on their named TAs. This compounded with the fact that they had few opportunities to work with their peers is likely to have affected their sense of belonging to the class and ultimately their engagement in school life (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

#### 4.4.5.4. Learning context and pupil behaviour

Figure 10 (overleaf) highlights that, the target pupils spent considerably more time off-task than their peers regardless of the learning context they were in.





When off-task the target children were most often working alone, and least often working in a small group. However, the findings in table 8 show that the target pupils spent a disproportionate time off-task when they were in a whole class context. As a percentage the target pupils spent 40% and 58% of their time off-task during whole class learning contexts and a further 29% and 26% off-task in small group work. This raises further questions about the schools' ability to adequately include the target pupils in lessons.

**Table 8: Pupils' behaviour in different learning contexts**

Pupil	Learning context	Behaviour		Total number of observations
		On-task	Off-task	
Target pupil 1	Whole class	138	92	230
	Small group work	63	26	89
	Alone	314	112	426
	Overall	515	230	745
Target pupil 2	Whole class	59	82	141
	Small group work	34	12	46
	Working alone	526	187	713
	Overall	619	281	900
Comparison group	Whole class	119	3	122
	Small group work	63	2	65
	Alone	41	0	41
	Overall	223	5	228

#### 4.4.5.5. Summary

This section focused on the pupils' learning context, their interactions and their behaviour in class. The systematic observations showed that the target pupils had considerably fewer opportunities to engage in group work. These findings were re-confirmed by elements of the thematic analysis where teachers and TAs spoke of the difficulties associated with inclusion of the target pupils.

Given that Blatchford et al, (2009b) found that TAs had a direct pedagogical role in the education of children with SEN it was no surprise that the target pupils in this study interacted most frequently with their named TAs. The results from this study highlighted that TAs have a direct teaching role in relation to the pupils that they support and because of this teachers seemed to place more emphasis on their interactions with other pupils. This poses a number of questions about the input that pupils with SEN receive. The DfES (2007) clearly highlights that knowledge of the curriculum and a repertoire of teaching skills and techniques are needed if children are to achieve their potential. It is unlikely that all TAs possess this knowledge or skill set and therefore one could argue that the most complex children are being 'educated' by the least skilled members of staff. In-line with Blatchford et al, (2009b) these findings show that the support given by TAs is seen by the teachers as being an alternative form of educating pupils, rather than something that is additional to the input that the teachers provide.

#### 4.4.6. 'Additional' support

This section will explore the 'additional' support that the target pupils received outside of the classroom. The author will explore the individualised support (including the formal interventions) that the target pupils received and the pedagogical strategies that TAs used to deliver personalised programmes.

#### 4.4.6.1. Out of class support

As highlighted in table 6 (p. 116) target pupil 1 spent 41% of his time out of class and target pupil 2 spent 55% his time out of class. Of this time, target pupil 1 spent 75% of his time working alone or with a TA on a one-to-one basis and target pupil 2 spent 97% of his time working independently or with a TA. These findings and the quotations below show that the TAs in this study had a key role in providing support to the target children.

“He has his one-to-one TA all the time – it’s full-time hours” (CT2, 10; Theme 4 – Roles and Responsibilities)

“sometimes I just feel like a spare part. I just come to school, I look after the pupil. I go home – that’s it. I know the Class teacher appreciates what I do because it helps her out.” (TA2, 326 – 328; Theme 4 – Roles and Responsibilities)

Given the time that the target pupils spent being supported by a TA it seemed appropriate to explore it further.

#### 4.4.6.2. Individualised support

The information from theme 1 provided the most useful data in relation to the individualised support that the target pupils received. At the most basic level, those interviewed explained that the target children mainly received one-to-one support from TA.

“It’s mainly one-to-one really; and it’s a case of either one-to-one in the class, if he can take part and it can be put down, or at his station outside really” (CT2, 16 – 18; Theme 1 - Practice).

“a high level of TA support. Probably not a lot of direct teaching” (SENCO2, 4 – 5; Theme 1 - Practice).

“He receives all of his hours in terms of TA support. He has the TA there for what he needs and that” (CT2, 269 – 270; Theme 1 - Practice).

The statements above emphasise the responsibility that the TAs had when it came to supporting the target pupils; however they fail to identify the strategies or pedagogical approaches that the TAs used when supporting the target pupils.

#### 4.4.6.2. Pedagogical strategies and TA role

Previous findings within this study (and those reported in Blatchford et al's study, 2009) show that TA support was frequently used as an alternative to whole class input or group work. The ideas that were generated from the semi-structured interviews were used in order to understand the pedagogical approach utilised by TAs.

“She has to be with him all the time – explain things more with him, simpler...she needs to explain it much more literally and everything” (Parent 1, 50 – 55; Theme 1 - Practice).

“constant input, constant going over the same thing” (TA1, 297; Theme 1 - Practice).

“It's just a case of jollyng him along a bit and doing really simple sums or whatever” (TA1, 177 – 179; Theme 1 - Practice).

“its slowing it down, I think and again through experience, knowing that not all children learn at the same level, the same pace” (TA2, 224 – 225; Theme 1 - Practice).

These statements suggest that the TAs made use of repetition, over-learning, simplification and encouragement when supporting the target pupils. They also explained that they had a distinctive role in differentiating work for the target pupils.

“[The Class Teacher] is far too ahead for [the pupil]; so we work on the same – if she's doing division then we do division; but we are far set back from where the others are. So we sort of set it for ourselves as we along depending on what we're doing at the time.” (TA1, 37 – 40; Theme 1 - Practice)

“The TA is doing the fine tuning of the differentiation.” (SENCO1, 84; Theme 4 – Role and Responsibilities)

These quotations imply that, as well as supporting the pupils to learn, the TAs had an important role in planning and differentiating their work. Unsurprisingly, they saw themselves as being the primary educators of the target pupils.

“my role; it’s to educate him...our role is to progress him. My role as a TA has always been, whoever I’m with, is to progress them to where they should be for their age group.” (TA1, 215 – 223; Theme 4 – Role and Responsibilities)

This statement shows that the TA felt that it was her role to help the target pupils to progress. Interestingly, her aim was to help him progress to a point where he was working at the same level as his peers. Given the pupil’s medical and learning difficulties, this goal seemed somewhat inappropriate. One would wonder whether this goal is shared by the Teacher and if not, it shows the challenges that schools face in effectively planning and communicating learning objectives within classrooms.

#### 4.4.6.3. Planning and implementing support

Whilst the previous comments indicated that the TAs take a lead role in educating the target pupils there was little evidence of a planned or structured learning timetable. The comments below give an indication about the level of structure and planning that TAs are given to guide them in providing support to pupils with a SEN.

“we kind of muddle through to be honest” (TA1, 130; Theme 3 - Preparedness)

“we [the TAs] sort of set it for ourselves as we go along depending on what we’re doing at the time” (TA1, 39 – 40; Theme 3 - Preparedness)

“as teachers I think they struggle. And really I don’t think they know what to do a lot of the time.” (TA2, 28 – 29; Theme 2 - Support)

These comments infer that the one-to-one support is not so much a planned programme but a time in which TAs take the child out of the class and adapt the work to the level of the pupil. As highlighted by Lewis and Norwich (2001) and Nind (2005) differentiation alone is not likely to be enough on its own to help children with SEN and given some of the findings in this study and those found in Blatchford et al's 2009a work it should be acknowledged that it is the teacher's responsibility to adequately plan and effectively support all pupils in their class. As Blatchford et al (2009b) found, TAs have neither the training or skill set, nor the time or responsibility to perform such duties. Therefore it is imperative that educationalist re-think the deployment and role of TAs particularly for children with SSENs.

#### 4.4.6.4. Focus of TA support

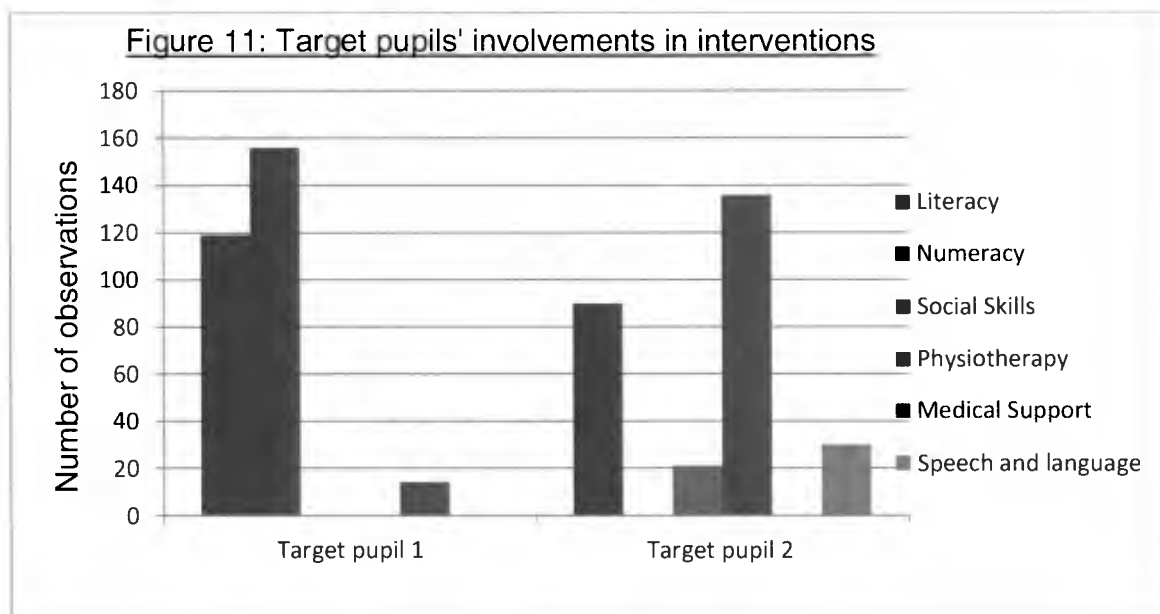
Table 9 shows the focus of the TA support when the target pupils were outside the class. Interestingly, when outside of the classroom the target pupils spent at least 94% of their time working on different subjects from their peers or in formal interventions.

Table 9: Learning context when the target pupils were educated outside of the classroom

<b>Pupil</b>	<b>Target's learning context</b>	<b>Number of observations</b>	<b>Percentage accounted for</b>
Target pupil 1	Same as peers	2	<1
	Differentiated class work	16	5
	Different topic	0	0
	Intervention	289	94
Target pupil 2	Same as peers	0	0
	Differentiated class work	17	4
	Different topic	199	40
	Intervention	277	56

However, despite the fact that the target children spent such a large proportion of their time in interventions, not one interviewee spoke about the interventions accessed by the target pupils during the interviews.

Figure 11 highlights the focus of the target pupil's learning in intervention.



The target pupils' experiences in relation to their involvement in interventions varied considerably. This was unsurprising for a number of reasons. Firstly, target pupil 1 spent no time focusing on numeracy whilst in-class, so one would have expected him to have opportunities to focus on mathematics in another setting. Similarly, target pupil 2 was away from his peers during PE lessons and therefore it could be assumed that the school felt that his physiotherapy sessions replaced the need for PE.

Interestingly, despite the fact that both boys had the same objectives on their SSEN, neither child received very much structured support in relation to their speech and language needs. Target pupil 2 had some speech and language support, however it occurred for just a short period once a week and when the researcher asked the TA about the support she explained:

“We’ve been doing this same thing for three years. I don’t know what else to do and we don’t have a speech and language person anymore. I think he knows it all but I get told to do his speech so I just do it.” (TA2, informal conversation following the intervention)

Whilst the intervention was carried out, it may not have been effective. These early findings highlight that the qualitative findings should be used in corroboration with the systematic observations when it comes to

considering the impact and effectiveness of the interventions that the pupils took part in.

Further analysis on the context of the interventions indicated that the target pupils spent a high proportion of their time working on a one-to-one basis (74% for target pupil 1 and 95% for target pupil 2). This highlights that they had few opportunities to work with their peers. In fact, target pupil 2 was only involved in a group intervention for the social skills which occurred just once a week. Target pupil 1, on the other hand, worked in small groups for literacy and numeracy, but the group work equated to just 32% and 24% of the time that he was involved in literacy and numeracy interventions. Again, we see that the target children spent little time working with, or even alongside their peers.

#### 4.4.6.5. Summary

These findings demonstrates that whilst away from their peers, the target pupils spent a high proportion of their time involved in interventions, all of which were on a one-to-one basis. This re-confirms that the target pupils had fewer opportunities to engage with their peers and as such it calls into question their level of inclusion in the class. Furthermore, the findings from the thematic analysis highlight that TAs were not only responsible for implementing the interventions, but they also took a lead role in planning them. As with previous sections, this calls into question the quality of such interventions and support, particularly given that TAs stated that they were neither trained nor given the time to effectively complete this. It could be argued that the support provided by TAs is less effective at helping children to achieve a deeper understanding of topics because TAs are thought to focus more on task completion rather than learning acquisition (Radford et al., 2011). Moreover the teacher's role and responsibility in educating children with SSENs becomes more difficult to understand when TAs take a lead role in their learning.



#### 4.5. Overview

The primary aim of this study was to understand the experiences of children with a SSEN for MLD in mainstream school. At this stage, the findings have shown that:

- The target pupils received about half of the learning inside the classroom; however when non-curricular activities were controlled for this reduced to just over a third.
- When the target pupils were working on the same activity as their peers, they were most often involved in non-curricular activities.
- Whilst in-class, the target pupils spent more time engaged in whole class teaching than the comparison pupils; and they had considerably less opportunities to work in groups than their typically developing peers.
- The target pupils interacted most often with their named TAs. In addition, the target pupils had few opportunities to work with the class teacher on a one-to-one basis.
- When educated away from their peers, the target pupils were mostly involved in interventions. Whilst the interventions themselves differed between the target pupils, both children spent a high proportion of their time working on a one-to-one basis with a TA whilst in the interventions.

The thematic analysis highlighted that:

- It can be difficult for teachers to include children with complex needs in whole class teaching because their needs were such that differentiation alone was insufficient.
- Using peers to support the target pupils was not seen as an option as the attainment gap between the target pupils and the rest of the class was said to be too wide. Whilst it was acknowledged that group work might support the child, there was a belief that including the target pupils would have had a negative effect on the rest of the group.

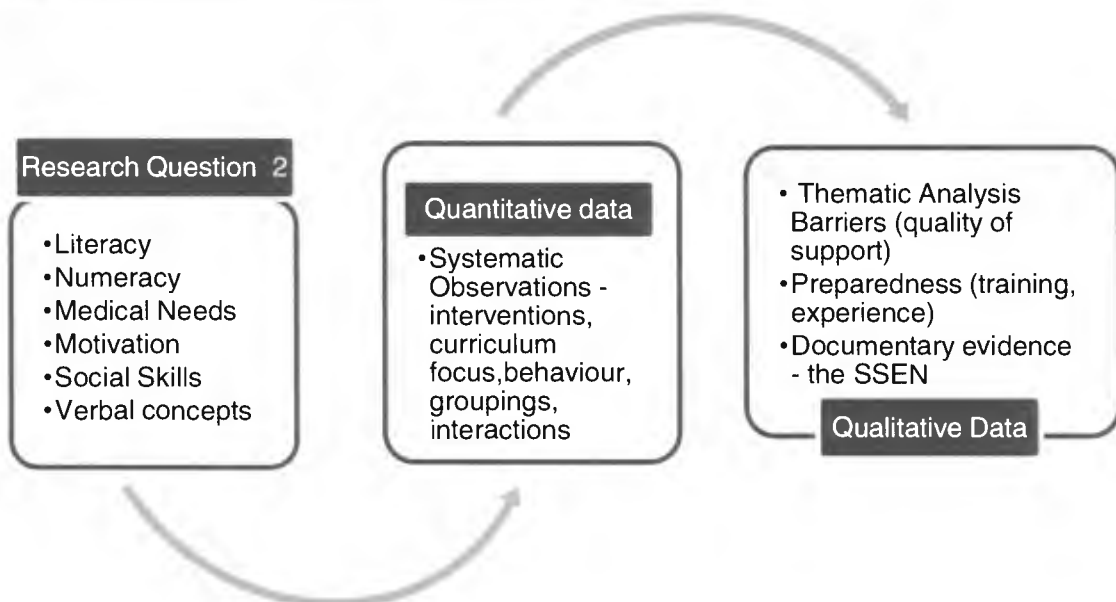
- The target pupils required one-to-one support throughout the day in order to have their needs met. This support was via a TA, so the TA played a key role in making decisions about the learning needs of the target pupils.
- The target children's learning difficulties were seen as a barrier to inclusion
- TAs were required to make key decisions related to the target children's learning, including when to remove them from the classroom and how and when to alter the teacher's lesson plans.

The findings and how they relate to inclusion, effective pedagogy, the role of the TA and teachers' expectations are explored in more depth in section 4.7. (p.118)

#### 4.6. Research question 2

Figure 12 provides readers an outline of the data sources used to explore research question 2.

Figure 12: Data used to explore research question 2



##### 4.6.1. The Objectives

The target pupils' objectives as listed on their SSEN were as follows:

- Develop literacy skills
- Develop numeracy skills
- For the school to manage their medical needs
- Increase motivation in school
- Support the pupil to establish positive social skills
- Develop their range of “verbal concepts”

The following sections will explore the support given to the target pupils in each of these areas in turn.

#### 4.6.2. Literacy support

Table 10 outlines the focus of the interventions that the target pupils took part in throughout the week. All of the interventions observed by the researcher were planned and implemented by TAs.

Table 10: Focus of interventions

<b>Pupil</b>	<b>Intervention focus</b>	<b>Number of Observations</b>	<b>Percentage of time involved in the intervention</b>
Target pupil 1	Literacy	119	41
	Numeracy	156	54
	Social Skills	0	0
	Physiotherapy	0	0
	Medical	14	5
	Speech and Language	0	0
Target pupil 2	Literacy	90	32
	Numeracy	0	0
	Social Skills	21	8
	Physiotherapy	136	49
	Medical	0	0
	Speech and language	30	11

As illustrated by table 10, whilst outside of the classroom, target pupil 1 spent 41% of his time in involved literacy interventions and target pupil 2 spent 10% of his time involved in literacy interventions. It is clear that additional literacy support was offered to both target pupils. In addition to the literacy interventions, target pupil 1 spent a third of his time in school

focused on literacy (when non-curricular activities were controlled for). Target pupil 2 spent 46% of his time involved in literacy activities (when non-curricular activities were controlled for). The target pupils spent noticeably more time engaged in literacy activities than the comparison group (who spent just 19% of their time engaged in literacy lessons).

Table 11 explores the target pupils' experiences in the literacy further.

Table 11: Target pupils' experiences in literacy

<b>Pupil</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Number of observations</b>	<b>Percentage of time spent</b>
Target pupil 1	In class	Whole class	4	2
		Group work	0	0
		Alone	49	26
		TOTAL	53	28
	Out of class	Whole class	0	0
		Group work	40	21
		Alone	97	51
		TOTAL	137	72
Target pupil 2	In class	Whole class	12	4
		Group work	4	2
		Alone	43	15
		TOTAL	59	21
	Out of class	Whole class	0	0
		Group work	0	0
		Alone	224	79
		TOTAL	224	79

Table 11 shows that target pupil 1 received the majority of his literacy education when he worked outside of the classroom with a TA. Interestingly, target pupil 1 spent over three-quarters of his literacy time, alone or with a TA. The experiences of target pupil 2 for literacy were relatively similar. Target pupil 2 spent 79% of his time in literacy outside the classroom. Like, target pupil 1, he spent a high proportion of time

either working alone or with a TA (94%). Given that whole class work accounted for such a small proportion of the target pupils' experiences in literacy, no further analysis was conducted on this. However, it seemed appropriate to consider the level that the pupils engaged in literacy when they worked either alone or with their TA.

As discussed in section 4.4.6.3, the support delivered by TAs was often not well planned and little guidance was given to them by trained members of staff. So, whilst the quantitative findings imply that the school put in place additional support which may have been aimed at meeting the literacy objective on the pupil's SEN, one should question the effectiveness of such support. Given that effective pedagogy is made up of a knowledge of the curriculum and a repertoire of teaching skills (DfES, 2007) TAs may not be best placed to provide isolated one-to-one support, particularly when it equates to all or most of the pupil's learning opportunities.

The findings above also raise questions about the level in which the target pupils were included with their mainstream peers. Therefore, not only are there issues with the content of the work supplied by TAs and the planning that brings this about, but also with the level at which the target pupils were included in mainstream teaching groups. As a result it is difficult to ascertain whether the school put in place enough effective support to state whether or not the objective on either of the target pupils' SEN was truly met.

#### 4.6.3. Numeracy support

Table 12 shows the experiences of the target pupils in numeracy were noticeably different. Target pupil 1 received all his numeracy support outside of the classroom, most of which was on a one-to-one basis. However target pupil 2 received 81% of his numeracy support in class.

Table 12: Target pupils' experiences in numeracy

Pupil	Location	Context	Number of observations	Percentage of time spent
Target pupil 1	In class	Whole class	0	0
		Group work	0	0
		Alone	0	0
		TOTAL	0	0
	Out of class	Whole class	0	0
		Group work	37	24
		Alone	119	76
		TOTAL	156	100
Target pupil 2	In class	Whole class	30	15
		Group work	25	13
		Alone	105	53
		TOTAL	160	81
	Out of class	Whole class	0	0
		Group work	0	0
		Alone	38	19
		TOTAL	38	19

Interestingly, when non-curricular activities were controlled for, the target pupils spent 27% and 32% of their time across a school week engaged in numeracy activities. This was very similar to the 28% of the time that the comparison group spent engaged in numeracy lessons. These findings indicate that there were few differences between the target pupils and the comparison children in terms of the time spent involved in numeracy lessons.

However the context was different for both pupils. Target pupil 1 spent 76% of his time working outside the classroom on his own. During his time away from his peers, he was involved in Numicon, a multi-sensory approach developed in which physical representations of number are used to support children to learn basic mathematical concepts. According to the National Numeracy Strategy (Ofsted, 2005), Numicon was initially

developed to be a general teaching approach and later schools used as an intervention programme (Ewan and Mair, 2002). Ewan and Mair (2002) suggest that the materials used are secondary to the way the concepts are taught and therefore, to use Numicon effectively adults need to have a good knowledge of the curriculum and the pedagogical approaches that would support the learning of mathematical concepts. Interestingly, neither the teacher nor the adults using Numicon had any official training in it. When the researcher asked the TA about Numicon she placed most emphasis on the function of the Numicon blocks rather than the teaching of numeracy. This sits in opposition to the guidelines given by Ewan and Mair (2002). Given that the TA in this study was responsible for the planning and delivery of Numicon intervention it could be argued using Numicon alone was possibly not best practice, particularly since the pupil received Numicon as an alternative to numeracy teaching rather than something that was additional to whole class teaching. Furthermore, one should question whether the class teacher could adequately support or advise the TAs when so much of the pupil's teaching was away from the classroom. Therefore, whilst it could be claimed by the school that they are putting in place additional numeracy support for target pupil 1, it would be difficult to provide evidence that shows the effectiveness of such support.

Target pupil 2 largely received differentiated numeracy work, most of which he completed in class. This suggests that on some level the target pupil's needs could largely be met inside the classroom, if the activities were carefully differentiated by the Class Teacher. Interestingly, whilst target pupil 2 spent more time in class, he rarely had opportunities to work with his peers. However the act of differentiation and the fact that the teacher could monitor his progress meant that the target pupil could access some numeracy lessons with a small element of independence. It seems appropriate to conclude that the school appeared to be putting in place enough support to suggest that they were working towards the second objective on his SEN.

#### 4.6.4 Medical support

The medical needs for the target pupils were different. Target pupil 1 had a diagnosis of Diabetes and Epilepsy; whereas target pupil 2's medical needs were linked to his diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy. Therefore the interventions and support differed greatly.

Table 9 (p. 104) illustrates that target child 1 received medical attention on 14 occasions. Much of this time was spent testing his blood sugar levels which took the TAs just a few seconds. Whilst this only equated to 2% of the time he spent involved in interventions, it was enough to ensure that he remained well in school. The results from the systematic observations highlight that target pupil 1 appeared to receive enough support for his medical needs to suggest that those needs were met in school.

The focus of the medical support for target pupil 2 was physiotherapy. According to the school, the Physiotherapist suggested that the pupil should receive physiotherapy on a daily basis. As inferred by table 10 this support was put in place by the school. The TA was tasked with completing the physiotherapy and the information from her interview highlighted that she had regular contact with the Physiotherapist.

“I always see..like the Physio. I always see the OT and the hearing person – they always come to me. But they say da de da de da – and that's it then – then they go again with the same thing next time.” (TA2, 393 – 396; Theme 2 – Support)

Whilst this ensures that she receives information about the activities that she should work on with the pupil, one ought to question whether the TA should be taking a lead role in multi-agency work.

Furthermore, as with other interventions there were few examples of gaining the pupil's views in terms of the interventions that they find useful. In an interview with Michael Giangreco (1995), Norman Kunc states that often the pupils' views are overlooked in relation to physiotherapy. Kunc (2003: 37) argues that “professionals mistakenly equate functioning level with quality of life” and therefore place more emphasis on helping disabled



people to function better. Instead, he believes that quality of life for all people (including those with physical disabilities) should be seen to be related to personal experiences, interpersonal relationships and being able to make a contribution to other people's lives. In his interview he compares the act of receiving physiotherapy to sexual assault; claiming that both involve power, domination and pain. This account highlights the importance of gaining the view of the pupil, particularly in relation to their position on what might make their lives better.

The purpose of this analysis was to explore how the objectives on the SSEN were being met and in the case of target child 2 the findings imply that the pupil received a good level of support and more importantly, that the support was monitored and evaluated by a specialist. However, as highlighted by Kunc (in Nind, Rix, Sheehy and Simmons, 2003) this support may not lead to changes in the quality of life for the pupil receiving the intervention.

#### 4.6.5. Increasing Motivation

The systematic observation data did not directly capture information relating to the child's motivation levels in school; however the schedule did enable the researcher to capture information relating to the child behaviour in class (in the form of whether the child was on-task or off-task). Children were coded as being on-task if they were not actively exhibiting off-task behaviour, such as swinging on chairs, not complying with tasks or activities or engaging in conversations that did not relate the task. Readers should be aware that children were presumed to be on-task unless actively engaging in off-task behaviour.

Table 13 (overleaf) captures information relating to the pupils' behaviour and how this changed when he was in different learning environments.

Table 13: Pupils' behaviour in different learning environments

Pupil	Learning context	Number of observations	Behaviour	
			On-task	Off-Task
Target pupil 1	Whole class	153	85	68
	Group	0	0	0
	Alone	18	15	3
	OVERALL	171	100 (58%)	71 (42%)
Target pupil 2	Whole class	75	26	49
	Group	0	0	0
	Alone	205	153	52
	OVERALL	280	179 (64%)	101 (36%)
Comparison pupils	Whole class	59	57	2
	Group	5	5	0
	Alone	2	2	0
	OVERALL	66	64 (97%)	2 (3%)

Target pupil 1 was coded as being off-task 42% of the time that he was in school, of which 40% were during whole class teaching. The picture for target pupil 2 was somewhat different. Whilst he spent 36% of his time in school behaving in ways that implied that he was not working on the task that had been given to him, his off-task time was split between working alone or on a one-to-one basis and working in a whole class context. Whilst it is assumed that most children will behave in an off-task manner for some periods during the school week, the comparison children were only coded as being off-task for about 2% of the time whereas the target pupils spent considerably longer off-task than the comparison children.

There could be a plethora of explanations as to why children engage in off-task behaviour; however it could be argued that consistent off-task behaviour could be accounted for by pupil motivation levels. It is difficult to unpick the concept of motivation. The thematic analysis suggests that the target pupils had difficulties remaining motivated.

“I personally think he’s capable of a lot more than he actually does. But I think a lot of that is down to him - he can’t be bothered really.”  
(TA1, 20 – 21; Theme 5 - Barriers)

“I have tried millions of different ways of doing things – but he just..nothing sparks. There is no spark in him and that’s very hard. But he’s capable” (TA1, 286 – 287; Theme 5 - Barriers)

However it is unclear whether the support given to the people actually increased their motivation levels, self-esteem or sense of being a good learner. Therefore in order to ascertain whether the support put in place was effective in meeting the objective on the target pupils’ SSEN, the author explored the data within the thematic analysis. Examples of the pedagogical strategies used by TAs are listed below.

“it’s just a constant input, input, input; go back, go forward, go back, go forward, go back and just add the extra bit on” (TA1, 27 – 28; Theme 1 – Practice)

“You’re like, ‘are you listening? Are you looking? Are you...?’ so that’s the support he needs, is the constant reassurance that he is doing OK when he is.” (TA1, 88 – 90; Theme 1 - Practice)

“I tend to do it at a slower pace than what the teacher does...I slow it down. I tend to sort of always with the pupil go over it again.” (TA2, 214 – 220; Theme 1 – Practice)

It appears that the TAs use a number of pedagogical strategies to encourage the target pupils to become interested in learning. The examples suggest that they make use of over-learning strategies, methods of reassurance, simplification of language and repetition as a way of supporting the target pupils. This suggests that the school is putting in place some support that encourages them to learn.

However, as previously highlighted, the target pupils had few opportunities to learn with and alongside their peers. Furthermore, of the 430 interactions target pupil 1 only initiated 98 (which equates to 23%). A similar pattern emerged in relation to target pupil 2. Target pupil 2 initiated 149 interactions with his TA, which accounted for 28% of the interactions that he was involved in. The fact that the target pupils initiated such few

interactions one might question whether they were truly engaged in their learning.

Radford et al., (2011) found that TAs often closed down conversations about learning because they were said to be more focused on task completion. Given this, it may be that the target pupils became accustomed to this way of working so they ask fewer questions about the learning activities. Therefore some of the motivational difficulties associated with the target pupils may be linked to the practice of the staff at the schools. Moreover, it could be that the lack of inclusion in the class may have led to difficulties in assessing the child's needs and challenges including him in group work. A sense of belonging and access to peers are said to be important factors in motivation and attainment. (Hattie, 2009; Baumeister et al, 2002; Maslow, 1943) The quotations below highlight the barriers that one school had in relation to planning, assessment and inclusion.

“they stopped assessing him...I don't know how she tests him in here. They just ask me what he's doing...I don't know how you work out levels on what I say.” (TA2, 129 – 132; Theme 5 – Barriers)

“I think more group games would help; because again he is always out at reception – always isolated...I don't think there is enough to get him involved with other children” (TA2, 351 – 355; Theme 5 – Barriers)

Whilst the question posed is not whether the support relating to the objectives in the pupils' SEN is effective, this section indicates that a number of factors can have an impact on the effectiveness of the support given to the pupils. Although those interviewed say that the needs of the child prevented effective inclusion, the TA above intimated that the lack of inclusion has left the child isolated and perhaps unmotivated. However, it is difficult to know whether the target pupils appeared to be less motivated because they were not sufficiently included. Perhaps the target pupils' motivational levels remained low, despite the fact that the TAs used a

number of pedagogical strategies to support them in their learning. This said, the issue of inclusion was evident across a number of the interviews and the fact that the target pupil had so few opportunities to interact with their peers makes me think that their levels of inclusion negatively impact on their motivations to learn.

#### 4.6.6. Social skills

Previous results have shown that the target pupils spent little time with their peers (see table 6, p. 92). Furthermore, whilst target pupil 1 spent 10% of his time working in small groups, he spent 21% of this time off-task. Similarly, target pupil 2 spent just 6% working in groups. Given that one of the objectives on the target children's SEN was to develop positive social skills, one might question whether they were included enough to do develop in this area.

The schools were allocated five hours of TA support to enable them to support the pupils to develop positive social skill; however there was little evidence to suggest that this was put in place. The only intervention that may have been seen to be supporting target pupil 2 in this area was the social skills group. However, during this intervention, he engaged in just five interactions with his peers, of which he initiated just one. Given this, I would question the effectiveness of intervention as it failed to ensure that all of the pupils involved took an active role within it. Again, the issue of inclusion and access to peers seemed to prevent the children from making progress in this area. Therefore, it could be argued that the schools in this study failed to put in place enough support (either inside or outside of the classroom) to claim that they were meeting this objective on the children's SEN.

#### 4.6.7. Improving understanding of verbal concepts

According to the target pupils' SEN the Local Authority provided the schools with an allocation of 2 ½ hours per week to ensure that the objective was addressed. The children's SEN suggested that the

objective could be met through careful differentiation and the adaptation of language and vocabulary.

Table 7 (p.119) highlighted that the named TAs interacted with the target pupils three time more often than the teachers did. Moreover, in terms of one-to-one interactions, target pupil 1 interacted with his TA 276 times and with his Class Teacher 6 times. A similar pattern emerged for target pupil 2. These interactions are crucial when considering the quality of support that pupils receive from different members of staff.

As demonstrated by Radford et al., (2011), TAs have been seen to be less skilled at explaining concepts because they place more emphasis on task completion than learning acquisition. In addition, given that it is teachers who possess knowledge of the curriculum (and therefore knowledge about the concepts), pedagogical approaches and information about the assessment of pupils one would assume that they would be best placed to develop the target pupil's understanding of verbal concepts. This is clearly not the approach taken by the two schools in this study because the TAs interacted with the target pupils considerably more than the teachers did.

As stated in section 4.4.6.2., the thematic analysis highlighted that the TAs used a number of pedagogical approaches when supporting the target pupils, but they spoke most frequently about over-learning and repetition and less frequently about simplifying phrases. In addition, neither TA mentioned the importance of pre-teaching vocabulary or concepts. Therefore one could suggest that the schools (or TAs) were less well equipped in meeting the children's needs on this objective.

The second school might argue that their pupil completed a speech and language intervention however the effectiveness of this intervention was questioned because the pupil had been completing the same activity for more than three years and there were no professionals monitoring the implementation or success of the intervention. Therefore it would be difficult to know whether such an intervention was having any impact on the child's ability to understand verbal concepts.

#### 4.6.8. Summary

Using the systematic observations alone, one could have concluded that the schools in this study did well in terms of using the objectives to plan and implement support for the target pupils. However through Case Study and integrated mixed methodology, some of the findings relating to the systematic observations become less clear. For instance, there was evidence that the target pupils received additional support for literacy and numeracy but the findings from the thematic analysis showed that TAs had little time to plan the literacy and numeracy support and therefore one should question the effectiveness of it. In addition, TAs had little training in relation to teaching children and therefore it may not have been best practice to educate the pupils outside of the classroom for such long periods of time.

In terms of helping the target pupils learn she explained that we “just try and bring him along” (TA1, 6; Theme 3 – Preparedness), despite the fact that at times they felt unskilled in supporting them. However, it was not just the TAs who felt unskilled in meeting the needs of the target pupils and perhaps this explains some of the choices that the schools made in terms of inclusion and planning.

“We would do things differently....not just focusing on the physical support, but focusing on the actual learning support, which I don’t think we did.” (HT2, 168 – 174; Theme 3 – Preparedness)

“It’s not just me thinking it...all of us feel, is this the best provision for him? And I think some days we think yes, it’s good today; but a lot of the time, you know you just look at him and you think, you poor little scrap.” (HT1, 297 – 301 ; Theme 3 – Preparedness)

Given that the Head Teachers felt uncertain as to how to support the target pupils it becomes more alarming that TAs were given such a high level of responsibility when it came to educating the target pupils, particularly given their skills level (and training), expertise and knowledge in terms of planning. For these reasons it was difficult to suggest that

either school were meeting the academic needs stated on the target pupils' SEN. In these cases there were major issues relating to the inclusion of the pupils with a SEN in whole school and whole class work, as suggested by Warnock (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

There was a similar story in relation to the other objectives. For instance, whilst it seemed as though the target pupils had difficulties being motivated to learn, their learning environment and inclusion in the class would have had some effect on their learning and motivation. The individualised support appeared to have a negative impact on the target pupils' ability to access their peers and little was done to reduce this. Furthermore, given that the completion of the thematic analysis also uncovered that both schools had difficulties including the target children, it was possible to conclude that the environmental factors and the school ethos on inclusion was likely to have negatively affected the pupils' levels of motivation and their development of positive social skills.

There was more encouraging evidence in relation to the school's ability to meet the pupils' medical needs. One potential explanation for this is that the TAs felt skilled and confident in administering this type of support.

However, overall, the support given to the pupils in this study did not match the objectives on their SEN very well and through case study design, the author was able to unpick the complex layers relating to the support in a way that gives readers a richer understanding of the experiences of pupils with a SEN.

#### 4.7. Research question 3 – The pupils' views

The final aspect of this study was to ascertain the views of the target pupils. In order to gather their views on the support they receive in schools, the researcher used two techniques: participatory activities and semi-structured interviews.



#### 4.7.1. Findings from the participatory activity

Table 14 (in appendix 2.3) summarises their responses from the participatory activity. Both of the target pupils placed most importance on support which led to a reduction in their workload and least on support that might lead to changes in the environment. The main difference between the two pupils was that target pupil 2 placed a higher value on the support that enabled him to interact with his peers.

However, whilst the target pupils were able to complete the activity, it was less clear whether their responses actually reflected their true thoughts and feelings. Both the target pupils had significant speech and language difficulties and despite the researcher's best efforts it was difficult to help the children expand their ideas about the support that they find useful without heavily leading or prompting them. Therefore, caution should be applied to these results.

The responses and behaviour of the target pupils during the participatory activity yielded interesting information in terms of their keenness to complete tasks. Whilst the results themselves should be treated with caution, the children's behaviour in the task implied that not only were they used to working with relative strangers, they were accustomed to working in a way that led to task completion rather than task exploration. This perhaps links to their day-to-day experiences with TAs. As suggested by Radford et al., (2011) the interactions that pupils had with TAs were largely focused on task completion, and the pupils appeared to be working with the researcher with the same goal in mind.

#### 4.7.2. Semi-structured interviews

Similar difficulties were encountered when conducting the semi-structured interviews. The children had significant difficulties articulating their views and often answered questions, saying 'don't know'. In order to retain rigour within this study, the author chose to omit these from it.

### 4.7.3. Summary

The findings from the participatory activities highlighted that the target pupils placed more value on support that helped them to learn, rather than support linked to developing their interaction skills or support related to changes in their environment. However, in completing the participatory activities, the target pupils appeared to value task completion over task exploration and therefore caution should be applied to these findings. In addition, the researcher was unable to use interviews as a way of enabling the pupils to elaborate on their views and therefore she was unable to triangulate the data across the two activities.

## 4.8. Synthesising Theory to Practice

The following section will explore theories on effective pedagogy (and the role of the TA), inclusive practice and teacher's expectations, and how these related to the cases studied.

### 4.8.1. Effective pedagogy and the role of the TA

The Ofsted review (2010) highlighted that the teaching for lower attaining pupils was not always adequate, therefore if the provision for children with less complex needs is less than ideal then the provision for children with the most complex needs may also be inadequate. This was evident in the Case Studies.

Similarly to Blatchford et al's findings (2009a, 2009b) the target pupils received a high proportion of their education from TAs, who had little or no time to plan. As a result it could be argued that the support they received was less effective than that of their peers. Also in-line with previous research the findings in this study highlighted that TAs often placed more emphasis on task completion rather than the process of acquiring and consolidating knowledge (Radford et al., 2011). However unlike Radford et al's findings the results in this study implied that class teachers rarely made use of inclusive teaching strategies for the children with SENs. Instead, the class teachers relied on TAs to make decisions about the

child's ability to understand and engage with the learning set by the class Teacher. For instance;

“what he can't do is engage with the pace. So he could engage with the subject so I think what they're doing is he'll be in for a start off, the TA will see when he's just lost it, out they'll come; carry on sort of talking about whatever it is and working on it – but it's kind of not the same quality with the TA” (HT2, 367 – 270; Theme 1 - Practice).

Given this, one might question whether the class teachers truly attempted to include pupils with a SSEN when they planned the teaching activities for the rest of the class. Warnock (Warnock and Norwich, 2010) argues that it is for this reason that the concept of inclusion should be re-considered when it comes to pupils with a SSEN. As she states children with SSENs are vulnerable to being socially and emotionally isolated from their peers and whilst the findings in this study re-iterate that, it also shows that children with SSENs may also be academically isolated from their peers through the notion of needing individualised support.

The findings in this study showed that by focusing on within-child deficits, teachers and Head teachers can almost intentionally exclude children with a SSEN from whole class teaching. By adopting this approach the child and their difficulties are seen as being the barrier to learning, rather than the teacher and their planning. Ultimately this disempowers the teacher, the child and the TA. The decision to remove the child from class is made easier by the fact that TAs are able to whisk them away from the class when the learning becomes too challenging for them, despite the fact that evidence suggests that this approach is ineffective (Blatchford et al, 2009b; Hattie, 2009; Higgins et al, 2011). Again for this reason Warnock has called for a review of the current SEN system (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

However, as Norwich highlights it may be the schools that need to re-think the ways in which they include and support children with SSEN (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). He argues that inadequate planning and the misuse

of TAs should not mean that it becomes common practice to rely on special schools to educate children with SSEN for MLD or other difficulties. Instead he suggests that training and support should be available to schools and teachers so that they feel more able to include pupils with SSEN in mainstream learning (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). Ultimately, both Warnock and Norwich (2010) would argue that it is inappropriate to have a TA who has “no training, no nothing” (TA2, 38; Theme 3 - Preparedness) to teach a pupil “like a mother would teach a child” (TA2, 237; Theme 1 - Practice) because this practice is neither effective or inclusive.

However the view held by the Head Teacher in one school highlights the challenges with inclusion.

“What you don’t want is for him to be in there and just constantly feel that he’s failing, constantly feeling that he can’t keep up...And keeping him included for his sake, not just because that’s a laudable thing to do. But taking him out – not because we might be able to offer him something better out, but that he’s not failing in.” (HT2, 345 – 351; Theme 5 - Barriers)

The quotation highlights the importance of recognising the negative impact that constant academic failures might have children’s self-esteem and therefore when considering the process of inclusion, it is important to recognise this. Importantly, the statement also shows that the Head teacher is aware that the act of taking the target pupil out of the class may not enable him to access anything better. This illustrates an interesting dichotomy between the act of inclusion and individualised support.

One alternative approach would be to hand the responsibility of educating the children with the most complex needs back to the person educated to the highest level, i.e. the teacher as suggested by Florian (2009). The teacher is educated in effective pedagogical approaches and the curriculum; and is the person who receives time to plan activities and learning objectives. Therefore it would seem that they are best placed to support the target pupil. This approach would be more similar to the

inclusive pedagogical approach suggested by Florian (2009) and Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010). Using this, pupils with a SSEN would have more opportunities to be educated alongside their peers and therefore benefit from the skills of the teacher. As a result it could be argued that this would decrease the academic inequalities that children with a SSEN experience and increase their opportunities for social and emotional inclusion.

#### 4.8.2. Inclusive practice

In practice, the findings from this study suggested that the teachers tried to 'include' the target pupils in whole class teaching even when they felt that the child was unable to access the learning presented to them. This is perhaps indicative of the social and cultural values of inclusion within the UK education system. There has been a major drive to include children with SEN in mainstream schools for a number of decades and whilst the idea of inclusion evolved from the concept of integration, the observations and the comments made above suggest that these schools were attempting to integrate the children with SSEN into classrooms rather than fully include them.

Using Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan and Shaw's (2000) definition of inclusion, it appears that the schools in this study attempted to increase participation by virtue of placing the child in some whole class teaching groups. However, in practice this approach did not appear to enable them to be included in group discussions, nor did it encourage them to interact with their peers. It could be argued that the combination of spending a large portion of their time away from the classroom, the low expectations held of the target children by the teachers and the idea that being out of class prevented further perceptions of failures made it more challenging for the target children to be included in their classes.

Interestingly, instead of acknowledging that the school or Teachers needed to do more to include the children with SSEN, those interviewed gave the researcher a number of explanations as to why they chose to educate the pupil with the SSEN away from their peers.

“the divide now is just phenomenal really. He can’t...we tried...the children are fantastic with him in my class and they will interact with him and get him to do things. But they’re having to come down to his level; and as a Class Teacher my priority goes to everyone’s targets and I can’t bring them down. It’s not possible for him to work in a group.” (CT2, 326 – 332; Theme 5 - Barriers)

“Sometimes I feel a bit out of it because I’m not having all that time with the SEN pupil...I worry that they’re spending so much time out of the classroom...But equally there’s 20-odd other children - I have to meet their needs too so if it means...I don’t know if farming is the right word but...” (CT1, 77 – 83; Theme 5 - Barriers)

The onus in these statements is on the deficits of the child and the fact that their difficulties act as a barriers to inclusion. The teacher states that her primary duty is to the class and therefore she feels unable to compromise their needs to cater for one individual. It could also be that by emphasising the “phenomenal” divide she feels validated when she excludes him from group work and perhaps it is simpler to rely on a TA to differentiate a task for him rather than planning something that includes all children in the learning activity.

Another interesting point that comes from this statement is the fact that the teacher emphasised that the other children in the class were “fantastic” with the pupil with the SEN. This implies that, in order to interact with the target pupil, other pupils exhibit extra special traits. Interestingly, whilst the teacher held the perception that the other children interacted regularly with the target child, the findings from the systematic observations contradict this idea.

The teachers’ use of language in these statements indirectly illustrated their views of inclusion. Whilst teacher 1 expressed some concern about the proportion of time that the target child spent outside of the classroom. Her comment indicates that at times it is better to remove or farm off the child with a SEN so that the majority of the class can be taught.

As suggested by Florian (2009) these statements indicate that, in practice, some teachers are colluding with social exclusion and ultimately reducing the learning opportunities of children with complex needs. The findings from the semi-structured interviews are in-line with many of Florian's (2009) theories of pedagogy. One of Florian's (2009) arguments is that, the use of negative language and a prescriptive-description of a child's needs has an impact on their levels of inclusion. By describing the child (and their needs) as being fundamentally different to their peers, those working with them appear to feel justified in educating them in a different way or in a different context. The results from the systematic observations highlighted a number of key differences between the experiences of the target children and those of the comparison group, including the location in which the target children received educational input, the interactions that they were involved in, the lessons in which they worked alongside their peers.

#### 4.8.3. Teacher Expectations

There is a wealth of information about the effects of teachers' expectations and attributions on children's attainment levels (Weinstein, 2002; Weiner, 1980). It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss teacher's expectations in detail however the author felt that it was important to acknowledge that it is likely that they would impact on the target children's learning to some extent, particularly because choices were made to 'farm off' pupils to the TA.

In line with Florian (2009) staff in both schools emphasised within-child factors and as a result it could be argued that teachers felt unskilled when supporting the target pupils. In addition the fact that they saw their role as being to educate the whole class, it could be suggested that teachers some children would benefit more from their support. Weinstein (2002) found that teachers spent more time helping higher or middle ability children to expand their learning and as such one hypothesis was that this positively impacted on their attainment levels. Furthermore, where teachers felt less skilled in supporting children they were said to take on a

more managerial (or organisational) role in helping them to learn (Weinstein, 2002). This may have been more evident in their interactions with the target pupils. However in order to effectively explore the impact that teachers' expectations have on children with SSENs' learning it would be necessary to conduct further research in this area.

#### 4.8.4. Conclusion

This chapter has described each research question in turn. The author began by outlining the day-to-day experiences of the target pupils, firstly by analysing their in-class experience and latterly by describing their out-of-class experiences. The second section of analysis focused on the objectives listed on the pupils' SSEN. The aim of this analysis was to consider whether the schools were putting in place support as set out in the objectives section of the pupils' SSEN. Following this the author presented information about the target pupils' perception of the support that they received. To conclude, the author drew on psychological and educational theories in order to further understand the data collected. The final chapter provides readers with a conclusion section. In doing so the author describes the impact that the findings have on professional practice and possible future research ideas.



## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications for Practice**

The following chapter provides readers with a summary of the main findings from the study and how they relate to key psychological and pedagogical theories. In addition, the perceived strengths and weakness of the study are explored. The author also reflects on the findings from this study and the implications that they may have on EP practice. Finally the author will consider possible directions for future research.

### **5.1. Overview of the findings**

The findings and discussions chapter provided readers with a detailed account of the experiences of two pupils with SSENs for MLD. The findings from the case studies, in this piece of research, confirmed that an individualised programme of support was favoured over inclusive practice, group work and social integration. There were disparities between the target pupils and the comparison group in terms of their inclusion in the classroom, their opportunities to learn with and from their peers and the idea that their needs require some form of personalised learning. In addition, the findings related to the second research question highlighted that whilst schools attempt to design personalised learning programmes for pupils with SSEN, this support was not necessarily in-line with the objectives set out in the SSEN. There were a host of reasons for this, including the fact that the SSENs were said to be out-of-date, inaccessible and jargon-ridden. It was clear that the teachers interviewed as part of this study struggled with the concept of inclusion and whilst they recognised that it was perhaps not best practice to educate children with SSENs away from their peers, they felt that including them in mainstream was no longer possible.

### **5.2. Challenges relating to inclusion and the Statement of Special Educational Needs**

The first dilemma that faces those in education is related to inclusion. It could be argued that without the 'support' (in these cases the financial support that paid for a TA) that the SSEN brings the schools may not have

been able to 'include' children with SSEN in their classes. However, the support that the SSENs in these cases brought led to them receiving a largely individualised support away from their peers. This approach sits in opposition to the concept of inclusion and as such their experiences differed greatly to those of their peers. As highlighted by Mittler (2000)

“When statements were first introduced...they were welcomed as a way of meeting the individual needs of children, giving rights to parents and at the same time providing a funded guarantee to specific forms of provision” (Mittler, 2000, p.183)

Now, over thirty years later, the SSEN itself may have become one of the biggest barriers to inclusion. Mittler (2000, p.183) argues that statements are “divisive” because they act as a barrier between those who receive funding through the Local Authority and other children who have SEN. Furthermore, the act of “tying money to a child” (Mittler, 2000, p.184) has had a negative effect on inclusive classrooms, because some parents, teachers and Head Teachers believe that the support obtained via a SSEN should be used for the specified child only therefore alienating the pupil with a SSEN even further. The approach of individualised support links far more with segregation and, as shown in the two case studies, it is opposed to effective inclusive practice.

As stated by Mittler:

“Inclusion is not about the placement of individual children but about creating an environment where all pupils can enjoy access and success in the curriculum and become full and valued members of the school and the local community.” (Mittler, 2000, p. 177)

The observations and interviews within these Case Studies imply that in practice, it is possible to use the funding provided by Local Authorities to 'place' children with complex needs in different environments than their peers in the hope that this will have a positive effect on their learning. The difficulty with this position is that it pre-supposes that individualised education for children with complex needs is more effective than inclusive practice. As early as 1993, Leadbetter and Leadbetter (1993) highlighted

that those working with children with learning difficulties may be tempted to devise individualised support as a way of attempting to meet the child's needs, without give due care and attention to the benefits of group work and achieving a sense of belonging. More recently, Blatchford et al (2009b), Radford et al (2011) and Hattie (2009) have raised concerns about the input provided to children with the most complex needs. Moreover, given the challenges relating to including pupils with SSENs in mainstream schools, Warnock has called for a radical review of the SEN system and the SSEN (Warnock and Norwich, 2010). In his response to Warnock, Norwich shared some concerns about the inclusion of pupils with SSEN in mainstream schools, however he claimed that the system itself could still support children with SSEN if schools were given further training and advice as to how they should deploy TAs and include children with SEN more effectively (Warnock and Norwich, 2010).

The findings from this study have shown that the target pupils were academically, socially and emotionally isolated from their peers. Some of the findings suggested that they had few opportunities to engage with their peers and as such it could be argued that they may have also had difficulties developing and sustaining friendships. As such it is important to consider how pupils with SSENs can be included more effectively in mainstream primary schools. As presented in the literature review, Florian (2009) and Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) argue that inclusive pedagogical approaches benefit all children because they enabled pupils to have more control of their learning and the give pupils increased opportunities to engage in small group work with their peers. The pedagogical strategies that Florian (2009) and Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) outline in this approach are among the more highly rated techniques that associated with the work of Higgins et al, (2011) and Hattie (2009).

As highlighted by Norwich (Warnock and Norwich, 2010) it is important for Educational Psychologists (EPs) and others supporting schools to consider how teachers can be helped to develop and sustain this type of practice.

### 5.3. Unique Contribution to the field of study

This study adds insight into the nature of the support received by two pupils with SSENs for MLD. The lengthy and detailed observations allowed the researcher to ascertain information about the support provided to the pupils with a SSEN and the interviews enabled the researcher to examine the decision making behind the support structures put in place for the pupils with a SSEN.

Whilst the findings from this study cannot be generalised to all pupils with SSENs or even to all pupils with a SSEN for MLD, the results show the challenges relating to inclusion and individualised programmes. Moreover, the findings from these case studies reopen the debate on whether children with SSENs are actually included in mainstream schools or integrated within it. These are pertinent and useful debates particularly given the recent release of the Green Paper and the Government's recent response (DfE, 2011; DfE, 2012). The recommendations from the Green Paper (DfE, 2011) are likely to lead to an overhaul of the process of obtaining a SSEN by introducing more parental control into the support delivered to individual children. This new way of working is likely to affect the type of support made available to pupils with SEN and it could be that pupils with similar needs receive different types of support dependent on parental choices, local services and/or the advice given by Educational Psychologists, Social Workers, Teachers or other professionals.

### 5.4. Evaluating the methodology and limitations of the study

The use of Case Study in this research enabled the author to carefully unpick the ideological positions held by those supporting children with a SSEN. Given the wealth of literature on inclusion, pedagogy and methods of educating children with SEN, it is obvious that gaining insight into this area requires an in-depth and careful examination of many layers of systems, policies and ideas which case studies allow (Yin, 2009).

Given the sensitive nature of this research, one would question whether interviews alone would lead to a better understanding of the support given

to pupils with a SEN. By focusing on just two case studies the researcher was able to spend a considerable amount of time observing each pupil child and the context in which they were in. Moreover, by becoming part of a class for a period of a week, the researcher was able to build relationships with members of staff and absorb essential information about the planning and implementation of the support given to the pupils with a SEN for MLD. It is likely that the combination of the week long observations and the effect of building solid relationships with the members of staff interviewed had a positive impact on the information shared during the interviews. Ultimately, it was the act of combining qualitative and quantitative methodology that enabled the researcher to consider the deeper, ideological stances in this study.

Many of the limitations associated with Case Study designs are outlined in the methodology section. For the purpose of this piece of research the potential benefits of using this design were seen to outweigh the limitations. This said, as with other Case Studies, the author acknowledges that it is not possible to generalise the findings from this study to other populations or cases. The concluding comments in this chapter however demonstrate how the findings from this study can be generalised to theories on inclusion, effective pedagogy and how these can subsequently be linked to the practice of EPs. Moreover, the intention of this study was to provide an exploratory account of the experiences of pupils with a SEN for MLD being educated in a mainstream school and despite some limitations the author feels that this has been accomplished.

The flexibility of Case Study and mixed methodology was a strength and a weakness of this research. The act of using multiple case studies enabled the researcher to compare and contrast findings across the cases and across two different schools. This was seen as being beneficial as it enabled the researcher to verify and consolidate the findings. In addition the use of multiple case studies allowed the researcher to gather views from teachers, SENCOs, Head Teachers and TAs working in different schools which ultimately provided readers with a wider range of evidence in relation to this complex subject matter.

Whilst Case Study was determined to be the best method for answering the research questions posed in this thesis there were both strengths and limitations to this design. The Case Study framework adopted in this thesis was somewhat unique in that it drew heavily on systematic observations. One of the strengths of using Case Studies was that it enabled the researcher to use multiple sources to explain complex social phenomena. Interestingly, systematic observations have not typically been used in Case Studies and therefore the design of this study is somewhat unique. The systematic observation data added a quantitative element to the data and ultimately provided readers with a broad overview of the pupil's day-to-day experiences in school, which in itself was interesting. However, given that Case Studies are often used to explore complex social phenomena, where multiple layers of information are needed to understand experiences, beliefs or ideas, one could argue that the quantitative nature of systematic observations may not fully capture the experiences of pupil's with a SSEN for MLD. For instance, whilst the systematic observations allowed the researcher to code interactions, behaviours and information about the context within the classroom, its more formal structure made it difficult to code other interesting or important pieces of information. For example, it was possible to code whether or not a TA was working with an individual pupil or not, but it was not possible to use systematic observations to make judgements about whether this interaction was useful, appropriate or led to any positive development in the pupil's learning.

During the observation period there were times when the TA direction was ineffective or stood in opposition to the teacher's instructions. However the systematic observation schedule did not capture this information. Therefore it could be suggested that valuable information was lost. Whilst it was hoped that some of this could be captured through semi-structured interviews it is likely that informal observations may have better captured this data. As such future research using informal observations might further add to the current evidence base around the experiences of pupils with a SSEN.

In addition, the systematic observation data accounted for a large proportion of the results section and whilst it describes the data set well it is important to acknowledge that, despite significant piloting, at times some personal judgements had to be made in relation to the pupil's on or off-task behaviour. Task behaviour was the most challenging category to code because often it was difficult to ascertain whether or not a pupil was listening or not. In order to have a higher degree of reliability the researcher coded pupil behaviour as being on-task, unless they were actively off-task. This will have affected the number of off-task codes across all pupils. Whilst the decision to code pupil behaviour as on-task unless they were actively off-task enabled the researcher to have a higher rate of reliability, it may led to an under-estimation in relation to the amount of time that pupils with a SSEN for MLD spent off-task. This may have been crucial in terms of the two pupils selected, as each of them had an objective on their SSEN relating to engagement in lesson. One way of overcoming this issue in the future would be through the use of informal observations or other more qualitative forms of data collection, such as ethnographic techniques.

The interval timings within the systematic observations, particularly for interactions and behaviour may have led to some losses in interesting and useful data. For instance, at times it was clear that the TA was attracting the pupil's attention during whole class teaching because the pupil may have been off-task however the thirty second interval time often meant that after a short prompt, the pupil re-engaged with the learning objective. This meant that the pupil would have been coded as being on-task because the predominant activity was coded. However, informally it was clear that the target pupil's attention waivered regularly, sometimes multiple times in a five minute observation, but the coding interval used and the choice to use predominant coding meant that some of this data was lost. In the future researchers could use a different coding system to record off-task behaviour either by reducing the coding interval or by relying more heavily on subjective judgements of skilled researchers. In doing so, future research may provide readers with a better understanding

of pupil engagement (specifically those with a SSEN for MLD or other difficulties) in tasks. Ultimately this may provide professionals with a better understanding about the level in which pupils with a SSEN are included in mainstream Primary Schools.

Possibly the biggest limitation of this study applies to the information gained from the pupils themselves. Throughout the design and planning stages of this study, it was highlighted that pupils with a SSENs were rarely asked to express their views. From the outset, it was clear that eliciting the views of children with complex needs would be difficult and therefore the researcher attempted to use participatory activities as a way of engaging the children with MLD (as suggested by O’Kane, 2006).

In consideration of the above, it is recognised that there are limitations to the scale of this study and in terms of eliciting the views of the target children. The benefits of using a methodological design that enabled the researcher to explore the interacting systems related to the education of children with a SSEN seem to far outweigh the drawbacks. Furthermore, the themes that emerged from the interviews highlighted the complex and conflicting ideologies that are present when it comes to educating children with complex needs. These themes have implications for EP practice and further research in this area.

#### 5.5. Implications for practice

This research highlights the challenges that teachers and TAs face in including children with complex needs in the mainstream classroom. While there is a statutory role for EPs in relation to providing accurate and detailed information about the provision needed to enable a child with a SSEN to manage in a mainstream classroom; more clarity is needed in terms of the EP role at later stages of the SSEN process. As implied by a number of the participants interviewed, once the SSEN is granted professionals retreat, leaving schools to plan, implement and monitor the SSEN with little or sometimes no support. As a result, responsibilities delegated by the Local Authority are then given to the upper layers of the schools, until eventually the child receives some kind of personalised



support, largely differentiated and prepared by a TA. While it is not within the limits of this thesis to discuss the limitations of the TA role or the responsibilities of the teachers or SENCO in relation to this, the findings from these Case Studies have shown a need for EPs and other professionals to remain involved in the education of children with SSEN for longer periods of time.

The findings from this study and many others (including Blatchford et al, 2009) show that TAs work most closely with pupils with SSENs. Given this it may be appropriate to consider whether EPs should have more direct contact when it comes to supporting TAs so that they are able to develop their pedagogical skills. The consultation model proposed by Wagner (2008) suggests that EPs should work with the person who holds the concern about the pupil. By doing this, Wagner (2008) argues that it is more likely that positive change because people working most closely with the pupil are involved in problem-solving conversations. Therefore whilst it may be more typical for EPs to meet with Teachers or SENCOs an argument could be made for the inclusion of TAs. Some practitioners may argue that teachers should remain responsible for the learning of all pupils in their class and therefore also involved in these consultations however given that TAs interact more frequently with pupils with SSENs than teachers (Radford et al, 2010) it could be argued that the presence of the TA is as important. Furthermore, it could be that TAs could contribute as much, if not more than a teacher in consultations with the EP. Moreover, as highlighted by the semi-structured interviews in this study TAs felt as though they were the primary educators of the specific child they support and given this it is imperative that they are given the skills to enable them to effectively support pupils with complex needs.

Finally, the findings within this study highlight that one of the barriers to implementing effective strategies and support is linked to time constraints within schools. Therefore one could argue that it is important to release both Teachers and TAs for consultations with specialist professionals particularly if key actions, thoughts or strategies have to be passed onto TAs anyway. Alternatively, an argument could be made for EPs to offer

TA drop-in sessions so that TAs could have better access to psychology, theories on child development and pedagogical theories.

As highlighted by Florian (2009) and Florian and Black-Hawkins (2010) the approach of labelling children with SEN has an effect on teacher expectations and ultimately the opportunities that these children have to engage with the curriculum. Given this, I believe that EPs are well situated to challenge the 'exclusive' practice that pupils with a SSEN are exposed to by acting as a critical friend to school. In doing so, EPs should be able to refer schools to evidence of effective pedagogical approaches and more inclusive methods of teaching.

Over the last ten years, the field of psychology has seen a rise in literature relating to solution focused therapy (developed by Steve de Shazer). Gradually, EPs have begun to adopt solution focused ideas and these have been applied to schools and education systems (Ajmal, 2001; Berg and Shilts, 2005; Stobie, Boyle and Woolfson, 2005). This approach has been successfully used to help problem holders to consider the child's strengths, successes and goals. In using solution focused ideas, EPs can facilitate conversations about possible solutions, thus empowering teachers and TAs to make a difference in a child's educational pathway. The current evidence base for the use of solution focused ideas in schools is growing and a number of studies are reporting that the concept of working of what works can result in significant changes in classroom behaviour (Brown, Powell and Clark, 2012). Given that teacher perceptions (or misperceptions) about the ability of pupils with a SSEN appear to affect their learning opportunities and therefore their chances to succeed, it could that solution focused ideas could be used by EPs to alter the perceptions of those working with children with complex needs. By working in this way, progressive goals can be set, preventing the need for continual ad hoc planning.

As opposed to cognitive assessments and other ability tests, this approach encourages those working with children with complex needs to celebrate and recognise small successes, instead of focusing simply on the

perceived deficits of the child. By challenging medical and cognitive labelling, EPs would be more able to support teachers to develop alternative pedagogical approaches to teaching children with SEN. In addition, the act of downplaying or silencing the labels given to children, challenges the perception that teachers require some kind of specialised tools to support children with SEN. Instead of focusing on the child's difficulties, teachers can be supported to draw on their knowledge of the curriculum, their knowledge of pedagogical approaches and their skills in planning and adapting the curriculum to meet the needs of all children. By doing this, EPs would be empowering and up-skilling teachers, rather than re-emphasising the deficits of the child.

The introduction of the recommendations from the Green Paper (DfE, 2011) will bring about some changes within the profession of Educational Psychology. Prior to the adoption of these recommendations, it is imperative that EPs and EP Services consider how change can be brought about most effectively. Various researchers (Mittler, 2000; Warnock and Norwich, 2005; Blatchford et al, 2009b) have highlighted the vast number of difficulties relating to the current system and it is not within the limits of this thesis to explore them in any more detail; but regardless of the changes in the policies relating to SEN, EPs will continue to have a crucial role in supporting schools, parents and children. As a profession it is time to consider how we best go about this and it is my hope that the case studies presented within this research highlight the challenges that the most vulnerable pupils face in relation to inclusion and learning.

## 5.6. Future research

The design of this study was such that it merely explored the experiences of pupils with a SSEN for MLD in mainstream schooling. Very few other studies have explored the experiences of statemented children, so there are few opportunities to compare and contrast these findings. It would be useful to increase the research base in this area so that researchers can be more confident that theoretical assumptions about the experiences of statemented children are in fact evident in practice.

This study focused on the experiences of children with MLD in mainstream Primary schools. There would be scope to consider different populations and different age ranges. The findings from this study highlighted the difficulties that two Year 5 teachers had when they tried to include children with SEN for MLD in whole class teaching. It also demonstrated that where it was not seen as possible to include the children, the alternative strategy was to educate them outside of the classroom. While part of this time was used to implement formal interventions, much of this time was less structured and the effectiveness of time spent away from the classroom was dictated by the skills and planning of the TA. Future work could focus more closely on the effectiveness of the out of class support given to pupils with SENs.

Alternatively, while the children in this study spent roughly 50% of their time away from the class, one might hypothesise that pupils in Year 6 may be educated away from their peers for a large portion of time, particularly if the pupils with a SEN are not entered for the statutory assessment tests (SATs). Where this is the case it is imperative that we gain more insight into the usefulness of 'personalised learning programmes' and consider ways in which we can increase their effectiveness.

Finally, and as alluded to in the Implications for Practice section, it would be useful to consider how EPs can use their knowledge of psychological theories to improve the practice of those working with the children with the highest level of need. At this point there is only a handful of published papers relating to the use of solution focused ideas with children with SEN (Brown, Powell and Clark, 2012); and there is scope to develop this further. Theoretically, solution focused ideas could support teachers and TAs to plan and implement learning activities for children with complex needs more effectively by focusing on strengths, achievable goals and small successes.

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## Appendix 1.0: Case Study Protocol

### **An exploratory study of the experiences of children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs for Moderate Learning Difficulties in mainstream primary schools: A multiple-embedded Case Study**

#### 1. Overview

##### A. Pedagogical approaches to educating children with SEN

###### A1. Understanding the needs of children with SSEN for SEBD

###### A2. Principles for Effective Pedagogy

###### A3. Commonality-differentiation model of Pedagogical needs

##### B. Implementing support for pupils with SSEN

###### B1. Role of the TA

###### B2. Evaluation of the impact that TAs have on children's learning

###### B3. Pedagogical role or containment role?

##### C. Fieldwork Procedures and Tools

###### C1. Identifying Pupils

###### C2. Identifying Schools

###### C3. Systematic Observations

###### C4. Semi-structured interviews with Stakeholders and Child

###### C5. Content Analysis of Statement and IEP

##### D. Present Study

###### D1. Rationale

###### D2. Research Questions

###### D3. Route to Design

Parts A and B are explored in the literature review.

### C. Fieldwork Procedures

#### C1. Identifying Pupils

Ideally pupils should already be known to the researcher. This in theory will allow the researcher to build on a pre-existing relationship and therefore it is hoped that pupils will behave as they typically would were the researcher absent from the setting. If previously known to the pupil, the researcher is likely to have a lesser impact on the rest of the class as she will be a familiar face within the school.

#### C2. Identifying Schools

Identify the schools in which the sample population attend. The researcher will be familiar with the Schools, the staff and the communities which they are set within. Head Teachers, Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants will be approached prior to beginning the study as this will allow for questioning and it will create a further sense of familiarity. It is hoped that by doing so, staff members will provide the researcher with more truthful and open answers at a later stage of the process.

#### C3. Systematic Observations

Systematic Observation schedule will be developed as a means of capturing the support received by children with a SSEN. The schedule will enable the researcher to ascertain at what type of support the child receives, from whom and how this support differs from what is offered to their peers. In addition, the information gathered from the systematic observation will allow the researcher to draw parallels between the support offered and the objectives defined in the child's SSEN.

#### C4. Semi-structured interviews with key Stakeholders and the child

Semi-structured interviews will be held with key Stakeholders to gain insight into the strategies/interventions used to support children with SSEN? In addition the interviews will give the key Stakeholders opportunities to discuss the factors that enable and inhibit them from implementing the objectives within the SSEN fully. It is hoped that those providing the support to children with SSEN have some understanding of the child's targets, be this via IEPs or Statement objectives. Semi-structured interviews should enable the researcher to gain a better understanding whether Statement objectives are used to inform IEPs or other target setting proformas.

Children with SSEN will be interviewed using the multi-element pack designed by Educational Psychologists to elicit the views of children with SEN. This involves pictorial representations of different types of support and encourages children to rate the usefulness of the support they receives. In using this approach the researcher aims to identify the ways in which children feel supported and how this impacts on their academic performance, self-esteem and emotional well-being.

## C5. Thematic Analysis of Statement

Thematic analysis will be used to identify similarities and differences between the support provided to children and the objectives stated on their SSEN. In doing so, the researcher will compare the information collected via the systematic observations and the target setting paperwork used by schools this could include IEPs, PEPs, Teacher reports, Minutes from SEN meetings, comments made within the semi-structured interviews or observation notes made by the researcher whilst on-site.

### Sources of Information

- Systematic Observation data
- Semi-structured interviews
  - i. Head Teachers
  - ii. SENCO
  - iii. Class Teacher
  - iv. Teaching Assistant
  - v. Parent
  - vi. Child
- Statement of SEN
- Support materials within the SSEN
- Information collated as part of the last Annual Review
- Individual Education Plans or other target setting proformas
- Onsite observations made by the researcher
- Whole school data relating to SEN, Free School Meals, Exclusions

## D. Present Study

### D1. Rationale

- Previous research has focused on the role of the TA; however it has failed to consider the support received by children with SSEN.
- Whilst SSEN are seen to benefit children with a high level of need, little research has demonstrated how SSEN are implemented by schools and whether in fact they are useful documents? Furthermore, at present little research has empirically uncovered the reasons why SSENs are useful to teachers, SENCOs, Parents, Schools or young people?
- Much time and effort is spent writing SSEN, however it is unclear how this document is being utilised by Schools. Many schools are more versed in using Individual Education Plans; therefore it would be interesting to understand whether SSEN are being used to inform IEP targets.
- SSEN provide schools with a number of objectives relating to the child's SEN. It is expected that Schools implement them; however it is unclear how straightforward this is in practice. Research has yet to uncover the factors which inhibit or enable schools to implement Statement objectives effectively.
- The Green Paper highlights that the pupil voice has been somewhat silenced in the Statementing process. Whilst children's views are sought in the earlier stages of the statutory assessment process, research has failed to ascertain their perspectives after the SSEN has been put in place. Furthermore, it is unclear how the child views the support and whether they feel it has been put in place for specific areas of development

### D2: Research Questions

1. How do children with a SSEN experience learning on a day-to-day basis?




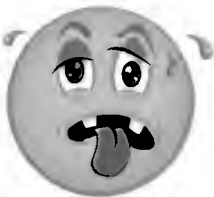

- Where do they do most of their learning?
  - How does this relate to that of their peers?
  - What additional or different support do they receive?
  - What pedagogical approaches are used to support children with SSENs?
2. How does the support that the target pupils received relate to the objectives on their SSEN?
  3. How well supported do children with a SSEN feel and which areas of the support they receive, do they rate most highly?

<b>Case Study Topic</b>	<b>Tool</b>	<b>Research Question</b>
Support received – by who and how	Systematic Obs & interviews	How are children with SSEN supported in Schools?
Statement implementation	Systematic Obs, Interviews, Analysis of Statement	How do Schools set out developing a package of support? How does the support given to children relate to the objectives set out in their Statement of SEN? How are SSENs informing IEP targets?
Child's perceptions of the usefulness of support	Interview with child, participatory activity	How do children with SSEN rate the support that they receive? How does it impact on their feelings of academic achievement, emotional well-being and self-esteem?



## Appendix 1.2: Semi-structured interview schedule (TA version)

- What do you see as your role in supporting [pupil's name] at school?
- How do you go about doing that?
- Is there anyone who helps you when it comes to supporting the child?
- Who else has a role in supporting the pupil?
- Are the pupil's peers used in any way to support his or their learning?
- How do you think the support you and others working with the pupil link to the objectives that are set out in his Statement?
- Can you tell me about the experience and training that you have had that helps you to do your work with him?
- In your view does the pupil receive the support that is laid out on his Statement?
- Are there any particular factors that help the effective delivery of the statement?
- Are there any particular factors that impede the effective delivery of the statement?
- How do you think the pupil has benefitted from the support that has been given to him?

<b>Participatory Cards</b>			
<p>Where/Who you sit with</p> 	<p>Having a break (when? why?)</p> 	<p>Having a key worker</p> 	<p>Having a quiet place to go</p> 
<p>Help with making friends</p> 	<p>Working with different adults</p> 	<p>Remind me of my strengths</p> 	<p>More help in some lessons (which?)</p> 
<p>Not being given too much to do in one go</p> 	<p>Instructions being repeated for you</p> 	<p>Adults making sure I'm ok</p> 	<p>Not so much writing</p> 



Appendix 2: Codes, Second Cycle codes, Sub-themes and Themes

<b>THEME 1: PRACTICE</b>			
<b>CODES</b>	<b>~Freq</b>	<b>SECOND CYCLE CODES</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
One-to-one	13	One-to-one support (24)	Individual support (24)
Safety	3		
Personalised learning	8		
Commitment	2	Commitment (9)	Required Skills (18)
Effort	2		
Enthusiasm	2		
Diligence	1		
Willingness to learn	1		
Genuineness	1		
Understanding	3		
Patience	1	Understanding (9)	
Caring	3		
Firm	2		
Encouragement	10		
Rewards	5	Strategies to increase engagement (31)	Pedagogical strategies (108)
Physical Aids	16		
Modified Curriculum	37	Ways of encouraging access to learning (61)	
Over-learning	24		
Interventions	12		
ICT	4	Interventions (16)	
Increase social skills	2	Access to peers (19)	Inclusion (19)
Group work	14		
Environmental changes	3		
TOTAL: 23	169	7	4
<b>THEME 2: SUPPORT</b>			
<b>CODE</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>SECOND CYCLE CODE</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
Child needs hours	13	Access to adult support (22)	Benefits of having a SEN (43)
Guaranteed hours	2		
Releases the Class Teacher	4		
Financial benefits	3	Clarifies child's needs (16)	
Guide to child's needs	5		
Clarifies child's needs	7		
Shared ownership of support	4		
Accountability	5	Accountability (5)	
Medical support	3	External support (16)	External support (16)
External Education support	13		
Support linked to progress	3	Support brings about progress (6)	Aims of support (14)
Support prevents failure	3		
Focus on areas of needs	4	Goal setting (6)	
Goals enable monitoring	2		
Support enables inclusion	2	Inclusion (2)	
Lack of support	8	Lack of effective support (20)	In-school support for

Lacks of direction	12		adults (24)
Support overseen	4	Reassurance (4)	
TOTAL: 18	97	9	4
<b>THEME 3: PREPAREDNESS</b>			
<b>CODE</b>	<b>~Freq</b>	<b>SECOND CYCLE CODE</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
Feeling unskilled	27	Experience and Skill level (57)	Experience (57)
Experience	24		
Knowledge of the child	6		
Matching pupil to TA	8	Planning (100)	Planning (106)
Planning	24		
Communication	25		
Restrictive/ad hoc planning	21		
Target setting	19		
Involving external support	3		
Monitoring progress	6		
Value of training	4	Training (34)	Training (34)
Value of qualifications	5		
Lack of training	25		
TOTAL: 13	197	4	3
<b>THEME 4: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>			
<b>CODE</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>SECOND CYCLE CODE</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
TA doing direct work	22	TA as primary educator (68)	Expectations of TA role (68)
Class Teacher not working with pupil	8		
TA advising Class Teacher	6		
TA role to progress child	7		
TA adapting plans	11		
High expectations of TA	14		
Class Teacher to support TA	11		
Class Teacher responsible for child's learning	10		
Class Teacher role to manage TA	7		
SENCO to monitor training	1	Expectations of the SENCO (31)	Expectations of the SENCO (31)
SENCO co-ordinates SSEN	30		
TOTAL: 11	127	3	3
<b>THEME 5: BARRIERS</b>			
<b>CODE</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>SECOND CYCLE CODE</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
Pupil motivation	21	Pupil engagement (26)	Barriers to pupil progress (58)
Sense of belonging	5		
Impact of child's condition	30	Within factors-child (32)	
Attendance	2		

Lack of communication	11	Time constraints (30)	Time constraints (30)
Lack of time to plan	15		
Time constraints at home	4		
Battle to support	17	Frustration with child (17)	Adult frustration (39)
Contradictory advice	10	Frustrations with support (22)	
Misunderstanding of child's ability	7		
Reliance on adults	5		
SSEN lacks guidance	6	SSEN inaccessible (19)	Barriers implementing the SSEN (49)
SSEN difficult to digest	4		
SSEN inaccessible	6	SSEN inaccurate (7)	
Targets too broad	3		
SSEN doesn't reflect child's needs	7	Provision (23)	
Lack of resources	7		
Lack of space	9		
Lack of external support	7		
Access to peers	23	Challenges with inclusion (54)	Quality of support (94)
Access to learning	12		
Impact on peers	19		
Effectiveness of TA	9	Effectiveness of adult support (40)	
Skill level of TA	13		
Level of differentiation	3		
Quality of training	7		
Impact of support on progress	8		
TOTAL: 27	270	10	5

~Freq represents the number of times the code was identified across the 9 interviews

## Appendix 2.1: Examples of quotations from each of the themes and sub-themes

### **Theme 1: Practice**

#### ***Sub-theme: Individual Support***

“He has his one-to-one TA all the time – it’s full-time hours” (CT2, 10)

“a high level of TA support. Probably not a lot of direct teaching” (SENCO2, 4 – 5)

“he has support all of the time for his learning and also for his physical needs” (SENCO2, 24 – 25)

“It’s mainly one-to-one really; and it’s a case of either one-to-one in the class, if he can take part and it can be put down, or at his station outside really” (CT2, 16 – 18)

“He receives all of his hours in terms of TA support. He has the TA there for what he needs and that” (CT2, 269 – 270)

“He is really coming close to a completely individual learning programme” (HT2, 359)

#### ***Sub-theme: Required skills***

“The TA speaks very slowly and clearly at him and keeps his attention; so he can access it at his level” (CT2, 401 – 402)

“The SENCO is so much more skilled up now. She’s taking that on and taking it on really well; and then the nitty gritty of what, how where, and with whom. That really goes to the teachers in discussion with the SENCO to formulate” (HT2, 121 – 124)

“she’s [the SENCO] very proactive in talking to Class Teachers..and keeping focus” (HT2, 414 – 415)

“the class teacher offers masses, masses of enthusiasm and a huge willingness to learn” (HT2, 475 – 476)

#### ***Sub-theme: Pedagogical Strategies***

“Basically it is revising; it’s repeating; it’s over-learning pretty much. And then putting in life skills” (CT2, 220 – 221)

“It will be literally a case of making sure he’s got the basics, making sure he’s gone over the basics...he won’t....we haven’t given him any targets. When we did performance management we didn’t give him target academically.” (CT2, 245 – 248)

“So he’s doing a case of the same but simplified for maths; hugely. When we get onto fractions and decimals and things that he won’t be able to access then

it'll be the case of revisiting this then. So we're going over the basics – number bonds to ten" (CT2, 35 – 38)

"life-skills, making sure he can do the basics; dressing himself, eating with a knife and fork, being able to make a sandwich...Money – playing shops and being more socially interactive" (CT2, 249 – 252)

"lots and lots of over-learning" (HT2, 332 – 333)

"going over the basics, into doing it in a much more life skills approach" (HT2, 335 – 337)

"more practically based" (HT2, 338)

"he needs the basics" (SENCO2, 134)

"I tend to do it at a slower pace than what the teacher does" (TA2, 214 – 215)

"it's just slowing it down I think; and again, through experience, knowing that not all children learn on the same level, the same pace" (TA2, 224 – 225)

"I just make sure he knows how to..his sentences make sense; he's got a full stop, his capital letters there. He knows his vowels, his consonants, his adjectives, verbs and all sort of that." (TA2, 319 – 322)

### ***Sub-theme: Inclusion***

"in a class situation you can't take five out to go down to his level" (CT2, 24 – 25)

"the children are fantastic with him in my class and they will interact with him and get him to do things. But they're having to come down to his level; and as a class teacher my priority goes to everyone's targets and I can't bring down..it's not possible for him to be working in a group" (CT2, 327 – 331)

"The children did a separate experiment for him in which he could feel which ball was best – which is fantastic; in terms of social development it's brilliant, because they were fantastic with him, they got into it, and they were fed back his results at the end. But they spent half of their time doing which ball is best and therefore didn't get what they needed to achieve out of the science lesson. I can't have a group doing that every time – they're not going to achieve what they need to achieve in the year. It's just not possible" (CT2, 335 – 341)

"This pupil needs a totally, completely different activity. So finding the time when he can come in the classroom is the hardest part...so not to be isolated on his own" (CT2, 371 – 373)

## **Theme 2: Support**

### ***Sub-theme: Benefits of having a SEN***

“what’s written on it needs to be followed. So if the child needs speech and language, or needs physiotherapy or whatever – if it’s written down and it’s stated ‘This child needs this’ then the child should get it” (SENCO2, 405 – 407)

“That is major for us because the TA...you know that’s probably nearly half our TA hours is the TA with the Statemented pupil. It’s a big chunk that would cost us hugely” (HT2, 224 – 22)

“The finance that’s the bottom line, to be honest” (HT2, 495)

“it’s just a guideline of looking at what he needs to achieve and where to go next, rather than the action; you need to come up with the action yourself” (CT2, 515 – 517)

“it draws a line in the sand of, this is the provision that you/we are to deliver. And I guess that is helpful, useful, and necessary” (HT2, 110 – 111)

“I guess it has brought an accountability on our part for his education. I think it could be easy to be quite complacent and not really think about him and his learning” (HT2, 229 – 231)

“I suppose it takes the child off the hands of the teacher somewhat” (SENCO2, 276 – 277)

“[getting the hours] would be the purpose for a lot of schools rather than actually providing for the child.” (SENCO2, 323 – 324)

### ***Sub-theme: External support***

“the link teachers that we have can be quite useful because they can sit there and perhaps suggests different strategies” (SENCO2, 145 – 146)

“They would work with the Class Teacher...if we take her out of the equation then she’s not actually got a lot to do with the child” (SENCO2, 156 – 159)

“we did rely so much on the outside agencies. But they’re fast disappearing...That discussion about speech and language which is just crucial for this pupil and would be crucial for anybody with similar sort of needs – and you haven’t got that bank of support” (HT2, 175 – 178)

### ***Sub-theme: Aims of support***

“The TA support has helped because there’s no way...he couldn’t access anything without it. And also for many years he did have a very good relationship with his TA” (SENCO2, 368 – 370)

“With the one-to-one – there’s no way he could cope in class – no way; he’d be off every two minutes...I think it has helped him a lot” (Parent1, 22 – 26)

"He needs extra time and effort on subjects – it gives him that extra one-to-one which – if he was just in a classroom every day he would be nowhere near up to where he is not. His reading is amazing" (Parent1, 35 – 39)

***Sub-theme: Effectiveness of In-school support***

"It's like the learning support for the TA seems to stop as well. It's like 'Here you are – you've got this child'" (SENCO2, 331 – 332)

"Teachers don't necessarily know" (HT2, 481)

"just to say and to give me feedback; because I never get any feedback. I've never ever got from someone" (TA2, 370 – 371)

"I've got no one to ask 'am I doing the right thing?' I don't know. So it is hard. I've got no one." (TA2, 111 – 112)

"I don't know if I'm going in the right direction. I don't know if I'm doing a good job because there's no one ever comes and looks and says 'You should be doing this', because there's no one to know who's there to tell me" (TA2, 122 – 125)

"I'd just like to know really am I heading in the right way; do I do things right. I don't know if I do things right. No one ever comes and sit with me" (TA2, 170 – 172)

"Teachers are assessed, aren't they? I am never assessed, TAs are never assessed are they? We have appraisals and say 'Well you're good at this and you're good at that', but we're never assessed to say that we're doing the right [thing]" (TA2, 172 – 175)

"I'd just like to know - am I teaching [the pupil] in the right..is he benefitting from what I'm doing really. Is it the correct way I'm teaching him." (TA2, 235 – 236)

"Like I say I never know whether I'm doing the right thing to get him in that way" (TA2, 141 – 142)

### **Theme 3: Preparedness**

#### ***Sub-theme: Experience***

"I did a three-day session at a Special School within my training as a teacher but in terms of this - none" (CT2, 185 – 186)

"I don't have enough experience really at the sharp end...I don't have enough knowledge" (HT2, 549 – 550)

"As far as knowing the child and kind of in her head, knowing how to support him, I think she would feel she was skilled because she's done it for so long" (SENCO2, 50 – 52)

"Everything is done what I've learned as I've gone along through the school" (TA2, 192 – 193)

"I was only put here because there's no one else with the experience...coming from playgroup with a child with cerebral palsy that I could have done it. So I volunteered..because I was quite happy at playgroup you know. But they were panicking – they were panicking that they had no one." (TA2, 284 – 288)

"It's really just from experience; really just knowing what he can't do." (TA2, 26 – 27)

"I would think she [the TA] probably doesn't feel skilled" (SENCO2, 46 – 47)

"All I do is what I know that I think that he needs; and through experience of my own and having people come in I just sort of..I have to think...it's quick thinking really" (TA2, 98 – 100)

#### ***Sub-theme: Planning***

"the TA comes in in the morning – she's very good and comes in ten minutes before the children do – so we go quickly through the day; and then on Friday we go through the next week – as to what he can access. So she's got an overview of what she needs to be doing next week." (CT2, 77 – 81)

"I don't know where now to take the next step; because I'm just doing the same things over and over and over again. I don't know where the next level is now. – where should I take it – because no one comes to tell me." (TA1, 308 – 311)

"an awful lot of it comes from sitting in the Staffroom and just discussing" (HT2, 69 – 70)

"my planning would sort of dictate what the TA did with the child. I'm not quite sure how it works at the moment; whether she's given a specific kind of general idea" (SENCO2, 64 – 66)

"if at class teacher level, he had specific plans or whatever fed down; and if it was explicit for the Teaching assistant, this is what you're delivering and this is how I



want you to do it...and then feedback, this is how it's gone, kind of thing – then his support could be more effective” (SENCO2, 379 – 383)

“They use books to communicate; the normal classroom TAs would use books to write down how children have got on or whatever, in case they can't verbally pass the information back on how a group has done. Whether those are kept – I don't know” (SENCO2, 179 – 183)

***Sub-theme: Training***

“The TA who works immediately with his has had very little training. She has had the odd course, but of course then that throws up issues if she's not here.” (SENCO2, 199 – 201)

“I'm not trained in any way whatsoever – so I've had no training, no nothing. So I never know whether I'm doing good or whether it's...I don't know. I'm not trained as a teacher” (TA2, 37 – 40)

“I've never been to college. None of the TAs have – none of us have ever been to college. No. It's all like parents just come in as TAs just to help” (TA2, 149 – 151)

“Like I said, I'm not a teacher; I'm just doing it really I suppose like a mother would teach a child.” (TA2, 236 – 237)

“The TA has been on training...It's been...probably looking back...it's been much more practically based” (HT2, 149)

“I think the TAs been on physical courses to do with lifting things in the class, because of moving him around when he was less mobile” (SENCO2, 205 – 207)

“As for academically supporting him with tasks and things, I don't think there has been anything” (SENCO2, 207 – 208)

“it's not kind of helpful to say well let's get somebody trained up in such-and-such because that person might go before actually we had the need to use the expertise” (HT2, 144 – 146)

“I don't know if there is any training on...how does a child like this learn. That's something we've been discussing, isn't it? How do they access what's going on” (HT2, 151 – 154)

## **Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities**

### ***Expectations of the TA***

“the TA gets to the point where they know more than the teacher...because they’re there and they know what strategies the can and can’t use.” (HT1, 125 – 126).

“I want to see him progress – that’s my role it’s to educate him” (TA1, 215)

“The TA is doing the fine tuning of the differentiation.” (SENCO1, 84)

“my role; it’s to educate him...our role is to progress him. My role as a TA has always been, whoever I’m with, is to progress them to where they should be for their age group.” (TA1, 215 – 223)

“Sometimes we [TAs] are out of our depth you know, because the teachers want you to do more than what you’re actually physically capable of” (TA2, 176 – 177)

“the TA would be the one doing the providing most of the time” (SENCO2, 247 – 248)

“Well I know what they’re basically going to do: and a lot of it is what I interpret...so it’s only through me knowing what he can’t do and doing it” (TA2, 35 – 37)

### ***Sub-theme: Expectations of the Class Teacher***

“My role would be to explain exactly what she needs to be achieving; if she doesn’t understand it then to come to me and ask and I’ll go through it with her.” (CT2, 120 – 122)

“The Class Teacher has no idea at the end of the day. She doesn’t deal with all of it. They don’t know; they don’t deal with it every day, do they? Not the lengths of what the pupil’s on really” (TA2, 66 – 68)

“My role is basically his behaviour. The TA is as of this year not doing any behaviour management of him – that’s for me....It’s no disrespect to the TA at all; she’s just been with him for so long on a one-to-one basis that it doesn’t have the same effect – which she has openly admitted and everything. So yes, it is me doing behaviour management and taking control and saying no – which he’s finding very hard; but he is doing very well coming into this class and learning there are different ways of doing things” (CT2, 122 – 129)

“it’s the teacher who would decide how to provide for the child” (SENCO2, 246 – 247)

### ***Sub-theme: Expectations of the SENCO***

“She’s really making sure that teachers have got the resources” (HT2, 81 – 82)

“the SENCO comes in from the side and sort of says ‘and how about? And how about?’ And I think it’s her kind of reminding really of..this is where we are with this...and she supports” (HT2, 403 – 406)

“It would be up to me or the Head teacher to monitor. Me from a special needs point of view..but the Head Teacher to monitor whether the teacher is planning for the TA” (SENCO2, 95 – 97)

“[the] SENCO obviously do a lot of his reviews and things. I know the SENCO with the Head Teacher have been doing his appeal for Secondary School. So they’re been doing that together” (CT2, 162 – 164)

## **Theme 5: Barriers**

### ***Sub-theme: Barriers to pupil progress***

“The whole thing of him being so much on his own for so much of his time. I mean it would have to be a sizeable school to find children with a similar level of need as him” (HT2, 443 – 445)

“his access into school life is really quite as an onlooker” (HT2, 275)

“he just is always restricted; physically he’s restricted by either his frame or his chair” (HT2, 313 – 314)

“He just shuts off all the time...I mean you can understand it, when I’m talking about decimal places and rounding, tenths, hundredths and thousands, it’s just too above his level” (CT2, 363 – 367)

“he doesn’t want to talk to other children because he doesn’t understand what they say. He doesn’t understand me.” (CT2, 362 – 363)

“His main problem is the fact of...not his hearing as such, it’s his concentration; because if he doesn’t understand something small then he will shut off.” (CT2, 402 – 403)

### ***Sub-theme: Time constraints***

“time for discussion is so limited” (HT2, 48 – 49)

“I never stop; I never stop from the time I get here at half past eight until I leave at half past three – it’s just go, go, go. And of course the pace in there is so quick; it’s so quick. You don’t have time to think in there” (TA1, 207 – 209)

“We don’t really have any time; we don’t have any planning time; we don’t have anything.” (TA2, 57 – 58)

### ***Sub-theme: Adult frustration***

“I suppose the frustration with us is that it’s probably more to do with the fact, it’s less to do with the statementing process, but to do with the fact that there actually isn’t the provision anywhere that is right for the pupil” (HT1, 562 – 564)

“I mean the Statement hasn’t been adapted for however many years. They have tried making changes before the parents did, and tried and sent it off and they refused to change it. And so what does that do?” (CT2, 457 – 459)

“the whole statementing process is entirely cumbersome” (HT2, 114 – 115)

“it’s really unfair that it’s how you do it that gets the result rather than the intension behind it” (HT2, 136 – 137)

“In some ways I find the whole process very cynical, if that’s...I’m getting cynical about the process; the process isn’t cynical it’s me.” (HT2, 198 – 199)

“everyone is absolutely nailing – and yet still that hasn’t supported the statement. They didn’t re-write it in the light of what we put in” (HT2, 591 – 593)

“We tried to have it updated and they said no. We’ve done that with the second...that’s our stab at it again now. What the point in that? What’s the point of having a statement that says he needs basically to have his bottom wiped when he doesn’t. It’s just a lie” (HT2, 596 – 599)

### ***Sub-theme: Barriers implementing the SSEN***

“sometimes there’s nobody – you can’t ...it doesn’t get the programme doesn’t get reviewed: so either you’re doing the same things for a very long time, or you have no idea whether it’s actually making a difference” (SENCO2, 350 – 353)

“I don’t know what else is on his Statement because I can’t remember” (SENCO2, 399 – 400)

“It’s just that the last two or three years, that sort of thing I really don’t think we’ve been the best school for him. I really don’t. But we have done our best for him....But I don’t know what would have been the best school for him. I don’t think it exists” (HT2, 432 – 436)

“physically we haven’t got things he could go to; we haven’t got anything within walking wheelchair distance or anything. There’s no, like..not even a park or anywhere he could go where his TA could take him or anything like that” (CT2, 346 – 349)

“So already it’s incorrect. It’s got to be up to date. And trying to make the changes and it’s going to refuse to do them – it’s just pointless and a waste of time” (CT2, 465 – 468)

“Sits in the folder...basically. I can’t keep it in my working document; it’s huge it’s too big. There’s too much to get from it; it’s too ambiguous; it’s not specific; there’s not things that I can put day-to-day in my teaching. Whereas the IEP I’ve got it – so that I write it from those targets so that we can” (CT2, 485 – 488)

“Maybe they have targets that aren’t on the Statement which we feel are generally more applicable to his day-to-day life, knowing him. In which case we’ll put those on” (CT2, 508 – 510)

“it [the SSEN] would also be really off-putting for some people, the way they’re presented I suppose. It’s very very weighty” (SENCO2, 315 – 317)

### ***Sub-theme: Quality of support***

#### *Challenges with inclusion*

“He doesn’t work in groups because we haven’t got anybody that have the same needs as him in this class; so it’s not possible for him to work in groups. He does sometimes work with groups in the classroom for discussion, but rarely takes apart. He doesn’t want to join in so he’s mainly just sat there, which is an ineffective use of time really” (CT2, 8 – 13)

"We do try to include him for social interaction but unfortunately, when he is in group situations, it feels like we're bringing the group down to his level, when then is not good for the rest of the children in the class" (CT2, 13 – 16)

"there has been the odd time when a group activity has taken place, that has involved him as well; but it's not very often" (SENCO2, 188 – 189)

"[groups aren't effective] – not for the pupil, not in any sense" (CT2, 22)

"I feel that if he was in a place with other children of similar needs or of stronger needs that the rest of his class here have got, he would be much more integrated" (HT2, 282 – 284)

"And obviously in a class I can't keep him, so we need to have the TA to do doing that. But obviously in a whole class situation if you've got the TA who's having to keep his attention and constantly keep talking at him, it's obviously a huge distraction to everyone else" (CT2, 402 – 408)

"keeping him included for his sake, not just because that's a laudable thing to do. But taking him out – not just because we might be able to offer him something better out, but that he's not failing in" (HT2, 349 – 351)

"The fact that we've got nobody at his level really: it was a divide last year, but the divide now is just phenomenal really." (CT2, 326 – 327)

### *Effectiveness of support*

"it's not the same kind of quality with the TA...but that's what we've got – that's what we have to work with" (HT2, 370 – 372)

"we have tried to change it and have other people. But it's quite a specific difficulty in terms of interventions – in terms of the pupils' capability with Year 5 or 6 children....so swapping her around is quite tricky." (HT2, 42 – 45)

"Our TAs are not the higher level. We can't afford to have HLTAs...to they are not required to plan. Although they are capable of it, many of them, they're not required to and they're not paid to, so it's a question of trying not to abuse them, but equally trying to skill them up appropriately" (HT2, 59 – 64)

"I think what I've just said about not just focusing on the physical support, but focusing on the actual learning support, which I don't think we did" (HT2, 173 – 174)

"We haven't got the resources in school. There are no resources" (TA2, 317)

"as he's got older and the mindset gap is like that not we can't use the children in the class just to support him; because they need to be supported at their level. And that's why I feel that we're failing him" (HT2, 279 – 282)

"Sometimes we [TAs] are out of our depth you know, because the teachers want you to do more than what you're actually physically capable of" (TA2, 176 – 177)

"I never know what to do with him. Like I said in that PE – what do you do with him?" (TA2, 430)

"When the older ones come and say...I just say 'I haven't got a clue,' because sometimes I don't...I don't want to tell them how to work it out wrong, if you get what I mean. Because my way of working out is probably...because we never did all this number lines;" (TA2, 187 – 190)

"Like I said I wouldn't be able to...I don't want to teach them how to do it wrong. Like with [the Statemented pupil], everything is done what I've learned as I've gone through the school" (TA2, 190 – 193)

"I don't know where now to take the next step; because I'm just doing the same things over and over and over again. I don't know where the next level is now. – where should I take it – because no one comes to tell me." (TA2, 308 – 311)

"1:1 is not necessarily the best it needs to be. Sometimes 1:1 is not helpful; and certainly at the moment the thing we're finding if the 1:1 that he's got isn't necessarily his best provision" (HT2, 17 – 19)

"I would assume their [TA] support is less effective than it could be; either in direct TA support or because the teacher may not know exactly how to accommodate their needs" (SENCO2, 218 – 220)

"If the adult support isn't trained adult support then it's not necessarily effective" (SENCO2, 275 – 276)

"the support provided would be less effective and also the assessment of what they're doing and where they go next. It kind of has that knock-on effect" (SENCO2, 221 – 223)

"Basically it is one to one TA support and it's the same TA; which can be good, but sometimes it isn't" (SENCO2, 17 – 19)

Appendix 2.2: Example of an annotated transcript

Code	Transcript	Theme
	Good afternoon – thanks for agreeing to meet with me. I just want to let you know that everything you say within this interview will remain confidential and if I use any of the information that you give me, then it will be displayed with just the person's role in the school – no names will be used. What I'm really interested in is finding out what type of support children with statements get in schools. So in terms of school, what sorts of support do you think children with statements get?	
Lack of support for pupils	<i>I don't know – I don't think they get that much to be quite honest. I've sort of...obviously...I don't know...</i>	Theme 1: Practice
Lack of in-school support for the TA	<i>Really I think sometimes I do it on my own. I don't think you always get a lot of support. I'd say no, not a lot at all really.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of in-school support	So is it the children don't get very much support, or the TAs? <i>I don't think TAs do.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of available support for pupils	<i>I always think that sometimes...like children I think that need it, I don't think they always get the help. I can see children here that don't...I think should get help and I don't think they do; so...</i>	Theme 2: Support
1:1 support	OK. So what sorts of support do you, as TAs, give to children? <i>I don't know. I suppose just what they want really, you know.</i>	Theme 1: Practice
Experience guides TA support	How do you go about giving your support? <i>How do I go about it?</i> Yes.	
Teachers' lack experience	<i>Well I just, like with my pupil, it's just really from experience; really just knowing what he can't do.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of support from Teachers	<i>I think they struggle here because with him being the only child here with this sort of disability – as teachers I think they struggle. And really I don't think they know what to do a lot of the time. And I think it's got worse as...the last three years he was in there, basically I did it on my own.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness Theme 2: Support
Teacher's lack experience and		



knowledge	<i>And I think the class teacher is struggling; she doesn't know what to do with him.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
TA differentiating	When you say you do it on your own – what do you do?	
TA lacks formal training	<i>Well I know what they're basically going to do; and a lot of it is what I interpret that I know...</i>	Theme 1: Practice
TA uses knowledge of pupil to guide practice	<i>I mean I'm not a teacher; I don't know; I haven't got a clue.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
TA lacks training	<i>You know, so it's only through me knowing what he can't do and doing it.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of support or feedback	<i>I'm not trained in any way whatsoever – so I've had no training, no nothing.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of formal training	<i>So I never know whether I'm doing good or whether it's...I don't know.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of feedback	<i>I'm not trained as a teacher.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Using experience to guide practice	<i>Hopefully what I do do does help him, but then again...</i>	Theme 2: Support
	<i>because I've known him so long, you know; and I know what his needs are...I mean someone who came into the class and didn't know him, they'd probably wouldn't have a clue what to do with him.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of support from Teachers	So what sort of support do the teachers give you?	
TA primary educator	<i>When...it's not right...in there I never had no...must admit, three years I was in there,</i>	Theme 2: Support
Class Teacher provides guidance and feedback	<i>I was doing it on my own.</i>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
	<i>But like I'll go to the class teacher and say to her 'Am I doing this sort of right? Do you agree with me...am I going on the right track?' So she's pretty good this year to lead me down the right track sort of thing. So in that way she's really good. And she'll say to me 'No, I don't think you should be doing this; try and do it this way,' and it might be an easier way to do it and explain better. So in that way it's much better in there this time; much better.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Limited formal planning time	And how do you find the time?	
	<i>We don't really have any time; we don't</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness

Ad-hoc planning	<i>have any planning time; we don't have anything.</i>	
Lack of guidance from teachers	<i>I come in in the mornings; I'm always in there at half past eight to find out what we're doing. And then I suppose ten minutes and then I've got to think what I'm going to be doing for the rest of the day really.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness Theme 2: Support
Teacher lacks experience and knowledge	<i>So again, it's like just thinking in my head all the time.</i>	
TA as primary educator	<i>There's so saying 'Do this' – I've got no time to plan it. It's like we're doing this thing with the dogs; I've got to think now, where am I going to take this further with the pupil? Because they're doing this now for another four weeks – what have I got left? Where am I going to take this now? So I shall have to find some suggestions to figure out what we're going to do.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Limited formal planning time	<i>Because like I said, the class teacher's got no idea at the end of the day.</i>	Theme 4: Role and Responsibilities
Limited formal planning time	<i>She doesn't deal with all of it. They don't know; they don't deal with it every day, do they? Not the lengths of what he's on really.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Reliance on TA goodwill	<i>In terms of planning..</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
TA would value planning time	<i>I don't get any planning time, no; none at all.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Time constraints	<i>So how do you do it?</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
TA role limitations	<i>I don't know. That's what I'm saying – I just have to think – what am I going to do now?</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of training	<i>Is it just as and when...?</i>	Theme 5: Barriers
	<i>A lot of things I go home – because I always say to her at the end of the day 'What are we doing tomorrow?' So I can think, right, what am I going to do now for this?</i>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
	<i>Is that partly out of goodwill?</i>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
	<i>I think so, yes. Like I said, ideally it would be nice to sit down and just have the time...to plan. Even if it was just for two days, so I could have this time; but you're not going to get it here, so...</i>	
	<i>Because there just isn't any spare time really; there is no spare time to do it.</i>	

Experience guides practice	<i>And I don't think the Head Teacher agrees with TA...well not my level TA, because I'm not paid enough and I'm too low a level TA to be doing that sort of planning.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
External support	If you have to do a specific intervention – obviously you do speech and language stuff with him – when do you get the time to plan what you're going to do with things like that?	Theme 3: Preparedness
Ad-hoc planning		Theme 2: Support
TA as primary educator	<i>I don't. This is it. As I say, I'm not trained to do anything.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
	<i>All I do is what I know that I think that he needs; and through experience of my own and</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
	<i>having people come in I just sort of...</i>	
Lack of support for TAs	<i>I have to think...it's quick thinking really. And sometimes a bit like I said, because there's such gaps with him sometimes, because he can't do a lot;</i>	
Lack of external support	<i>I have to think, what am I going to do with him? Because sometimes...like in...they had an hour of PE; well he'd done his 20 minutes – I have to then cover. What do I do with him? So it is hard.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of feedback		Theme 2: Support
External support	<i>And where do you go for support?</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
	<i>Well exactly – there's nobody. There's nobody to talk to because there's no one in that situation to do...</i>	Theme 2: Support
External support and feedback	<i>Because we've got no speech and language comes in any more.</i>	
	<i>So I've got no one to ask am I doing the right thing. I don't know. So it is hard. I've got no one...</i>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of feedback and direction	<i>obviously the physio comes in and does the physio and all that; she comes in on a regular basis. But apart from that there's nobody else.</i>	
	<i>Is that useful?</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
TA acts of primary educator and monitors progress	<i>Oh yes, definitely, yes. Because she'll notice that...like I've got four more exercises to do now to try and build – because we've been doing the same ones. And like practising the walking on knees and that, because he needs to do that; but she'll say 'Oh no, we'll scrap this one; we'll do this one,' so...it's good for her to know that I'm going in the right direction.</i>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities

<p>TA as primary educator – directing pupil's work</p>	<p><i>Like I said, I don't know if I'm going in the right direction. I don't know if I'm doing a good job. Because there's no one ever comes and looks and says 'You should be doing this,' because there's no one to know who's there to tell me.</i></p>	
	<p>How is the pupil's progress monitored?</p>	<p>Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities</p>
<p>Lack of direction for TAs</p>	<p><i>Well he's not tested really anymore, because I think they stopped testing on him. So...he didn't do SATS last year; so I don't know how she tests him in here. They just ask me what he's doing, so it's levels really. I don't know how you work levels out on what I say. Is he doing this, is he doing that? So levels are really just basically done on what I say he's done.</i></p>	<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
<p>TA experience directs practice</p>	<p>As a TA do you know what you're looking for?</p>	<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
<p>Lack of training/ qualifications</p>	<p><i>I sort of know roughly what I know he can do and what I'm trying to get him to go on further what I want him to know what I expect of him. Because I know certain things he could do sometimes. A lot of it is concentration. So I sort of know in a way where. .looking at the other children, where he should sort of be heading.</i></p>	<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
<p>Lack of formal training or qualifications</p>	<p><i>But like I say, I never know whether I'm doing the right thing to get him in that way. Like I said, I'm not trained.</i></p>	<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
	<p>And what training or experiences have you had that helps you?</p>	<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
<p>Different TA roles</p>	<p><i>Well I've got my own daughter with cerebral palsy and I used to go and help at a special school, so a lot of the stuff I base in on what they used to do at Special School and things like that really. Again, just experience and just working up through the school really.</i></p>	<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
<p>Training</p>		<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
	<p><i>I've never been to college. None of the TAs have – none of us have ever been to college. No. It's all like parents just come in as TAs just to help.</i></p>	<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
<p>Need for feedback</p>	<p>And then training wise?</p>	
<p>Challenges managing the pupil</p>	<p><i>Like if I went to another – I'd struggle now to get into another school because a lot of them now what TA Level 4s – it's to do the planning; so when the teachers have their PPA time, the TA can take over the class.</i></p>	<p>Theme 2: Support</p>

Lack of training	<i>Some of them are going on now, because a lot of them are struggling there with phonics; so we've got two of them now are having to go on a phonics course, because none of them have done phonics.</i>	Theme 5: Barriers
Lack of guidance		
Lack of guidance and feedback	<i>They want all these – the government want all these kids to do this, but like I said, none of them are trained. So they're going on phonics courses.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
	<i>And what sort of training do you think you would need in order to meet the needs of someone like the pupil?</i>	Theme 2: Support
	<i>I just think I'd like to know that I'm doing the right job.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of training	<i>Like when he gets all upset and angry and stuff like this...</i>	
Learning through experience	<i>I did an anger management course years and years ago when I left school at 16 sort of thing. But things change, don't they?</i>	
	<i>So I'd just like to know really am I heading in the right way; do I do things right. I don't know if I do things right. No one ever comes and sits with me and says...</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness Theme 3: Preparedness
Learning on the job	<i>I suppose like teachers are assessed, aren't they? I'm never assessed. TAs are never assessed are they? We have appraisals and say 'Well you're good and this and you're good at that,' but we're never assessed to say that we're doing the right... And I think that a lot of TAs do feel like that. Sometimes we are out of our depth you know, because the teachers want you to do more than what you're actually physically capable of doing.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of curriculum knowledge	<i>Like I said, none of us are trained in this.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
In-school experience drives practice	<i>I've just learned through coming up the school. If I came in now and they'd say 'You've got to do maths,' I wouldn't have a clue like doing number lines and how to add the numbers up. But I've just learned through going up the school how they do it.</i>	
	<i>So as you get up to higher ages, when you're listening to lessons, are you almost learning?</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
	<i>You learn as well. I've learned a lot since I've been here. I really have, yes.</i>	
	<i>Sometimes when the older ones come and</i>	

<p>Ad-hoc planning</p> <p>Pace of learning is hard to manage</p>	<p><i>say...I just say 'I haven't got a clue,' because sometimes I don't...I don't want to tell them how to work it out wrong, if you get what I mean. Because my way of working out is probably...because we never did all this number lines; it was all in a column, and you added everything up in a column. So like I said, I wouldn't be able to...I don't want to teach them how to do it wrong.</i></p> <p><i>Like with my pupil, everything is done what I've learned as I've gone along through the school.</i></p>	<p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
<p>Reduce the pace of learning for children with SEN</p>	<p>Is it hard to break it down then?</p> <p><i>Oh yes, yes.</i></p>	<p>Theme 1: Practice</p>
<p>Reduce the pace of learning for children with SEN &amp; repetition</p>	<p>How do you go about doing that? What would help you to be able to break it down further, or differentiate?</p> <p><i>I don't know. I've never really thought about it to be quite honest. I don't really know.</i></p>	<p>Theme 1: Practice</p>
<p>Pupils benefit from repetition</p>	<p>You're busy all the time.</p> <p><i>I am – I never stop; I never stop from the time I get here at half past eight until I leave here at half past three – it's just go, go, go. And of course the pace in there is so quick; it is so quick. You don't have time to think in there, do you?</i></p>	<p>Theme 1: Practice</p>
<p>Reduce pace and repetition</p>	<p><i>And I think that's why the pupil is sometimes...he's shattered by the afternoon, because everything is so quick. And again, I think a lot of them do struggle in there; like that little boy I have. He struggles. He sat with me today and he said 'You explain things so much better,' and again,</i></p>	<p>Theme 1: Practice</p>
<p>Curriculum drives the pace of lessons</p>	<p><i>I think it's because working with the pupil with a SEN that I tend to do it at a slower pace than what the teacher does.</i></p>	<p>Theme 1: Practice</p>
<p>Pace of lessons</p>	<p>So in terms of the sorts of things that you do – you slow things down...what else?</p> <p><i>I slow it down; I tend to sort of always with him go over it again.</i></p>	<p>Theme 5: Barriers</p>
<p>Unsure of practice</p>	<p><i>So whereas the class teacher would probably do it twice and that's it; you've got to know it – I will tell him again. And that's what he said to me today.</i></p>	<p>Theme 5: Barriers</p>
<p>Lack of formal training</p>		

Unsure of practice	<i>He said 'You explain things better; you say it slower, and you give me time to do it,' and he said that to me today. So again, it's just slowing down I think; and again, through experience, knowing that not all children learn on the same level, the same pace.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Reliance on the TA		Theme 3: Preparedness
Role of TA as primary educator	<i>But here I think – the class teacher says that once they get to this stage they're stuck to a curriculum; they've all got to learn this by a certain time. That's why a lot of them get left behind, I think.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Importance of training	<i>Everything is so quick, quick, quick, quick, quick and you don't have the time to learn.</i>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
	<i>Going back to what you said about people not giving you very much feedback and you like the idea of being assessed – what sort of guidance would you want? What would be useful?</i>	
	<i>I'd just like to know am I teaching him in the right...is he benefiting from what I'm doing, really. Is it the correct way I'm teaching him.</i>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
	<i>Like I said, I'm not a teacher; I'm just doing it really I suppose like a mother would teach a child.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Target setting	<i>But am I doing it – or any of the TAs, are we doing it in the right way? Because no one ever comes and says to me...he should be doing this now; he should be doing that now. I don't know.</i>	
Lack of information and planning	<i>And the class teacher basically just says to me 'Has he got it?' and things like that.</i>	
	<i>And then it falls on your judgement...</i>	
	<i>Judgement then to say yes he has or no he hasn't.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of information	<i>But is that...as a parent...would a parent want to know that as a TA it's you who's deciding it and not the teacher who's been to college and trained to do all of it?</i>	
Lack of information	<i>I don't think I'd like...my daughter went to a special school so they were all specially trained teachers...well basically a lot of them went to do teaching but some of them didn't make it so they stayed at the TA Level 4 and didn't go on then to be teacher. So most of them in special needs schools are all trained; you know I don't think you</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness

Lack of information about SSEN	<i>ever get people that aren't trained to go in there. I must admit, my daughter never had any...they all knew what they were doing.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of communication and planning with TA	In terms of his statement, how much do you know about his statement?  <i>Well I always used to do the IEPs with the last class teacher – I must admit, I've not done one with his current teacher; so I always know what his targets are set on his IEP and what they want him to get to.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Experience drives practice	<i>But apart from that they don't tell me nothing. I never really know what's...see I never know what's going on with him...a lot of the stuff...I never know.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Lack of experience	Have you seen his statement?  <i>Only when we've been to those meetings: apart from that...</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Experience seen as important	So do you know what he should be getting?  <i>No. I wouldn't have a clue; wouldn't have a clue.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Personal experience driving practice	That's really tricky.  Yes.	Theme 3: Preparedness
Support leads to progress	So, for you, the statement isn't something that you...  <i>No. No...I know he's a statemented child...but I wouldn't know what...the statement was sort of all about sort of thing. Not for him, no.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
External support helped	Do you think that would help you?  <i>I suppose if I knew what it was all to do with really. Obviously it's because he's got special needs...but as I said, no one ever comes and tells you these things really.</i>  <i>You're just put there – I mean I was only put here because there's no one else with the experience...coming from playgroup with a child with cerebral palsy that I could have done it. So I volunteered...because I was quite happy at playgroup you know.</i>	Theme 1: Practice
Lack of follow-up from external professionals	<i>But they were panicking; they were panicking that they had no one...sort of to do these things, you know.</i>  <i>And with mum being what she was – and</i>	Theme 2: Support



	<i>she was so relieved when I said I'd come and help him.</i>	
Lack of guidance for TA	<i>And the only reason I came was to make sure that he got the right things that I knew that he'd want; because like I said, with having my daughter and that, I sort of knew really that he'd need the help; and to make sure that he got the help that he needed really.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of resources		
TA planning work and learning objectives	And in terms of the support that he gets here, do you think it has helped him to make progress?  <i>Oh I think so, yes. I don't think he would have done it without it to be quite honest; if he was left and never had all the things to help him, I don't think he ever would, I really don't.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Unsure of her practice	What things have helped him most?	Theme 5: Barriers
TA as the main educator for the pupil	<i>I think...like to start...we had the speech to start with – because he never had speech and language to start with; he never had it. And then they got them to come in; and that was a big if, because then we had a gap again, and then we had someone else come. So I do think speech and language is...and he's got a lot better with his reading now...it really has improved.</i>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
Questioning the provision	<i>But as I said, I don't know where now to take the next step; because I'm just doing the same things over and over and over again. I don't know where the next level is now – where should I take it – because no one comes to tell me. She's not back until February; well by that time, is it too late then? You know, is it too late?</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness  Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
Lack of resources	So how do external professionals fit in with this?	
External professionals	<i>Well I just started and I just carry on – just keep doing what I think he needs;</i>  <i>but again – we haven't got the resources in school. There are no resources, so where do these resources come from?</i>	Theme 5: Barriers
Lack of resources	<i>I've tried to go on the internet and find stuff on there, but I don't know, again, if it's the right stuff. I just make sure he knows how to...his sentences make sense; he's got his full stop, his capital letters there. He knows his vowels, his consonants, his adjectives, verbs and all sort of that.</i>	Theme 5: Barriers

Lack of physical access to peers and equipment	<i>But again, am I doing it right? I don't know.</i>	Theme 2: Support
	How does that make you feel?	
Lack of access to peers	<i>Well like I say, sometimes I just feel like a spare part. I just come to school, I look after the pupil, I go home – that's it. I know the class teacher appreciates what I do because it helps her out. It helps the head teacher out because she'd never have known what to do with him. But sometimes I do feel like I'm the spare part really. I come to work, I do him and I go home. So it is hard.</i>	Theme 5: Barriers
Lack of experience including a child with complex needs	It's such a tough job.	Theme 5: Barriers
Difficulties meeting the needs of children with a SEN	<i>Like I said, most children...he wouldn't be here, would he? He'd been in a special needs school with the people there to help him, wouldn't he?</i>	Theme 5: Barriers
Lack of experience	How do you think things could be improved for him here?	Theme 5: Barriers
Lack of training	<i>For here – I think you need better resources for him. Like I said; having that standing, so he could get more involved.</i>	
	<i>Getting someone...I know we have the OT – but all she's ever interested in is his chair; that's all she's ever been.</i>	Theme 5: Barriers
Need for feedback	<i>There's no one ever been...because again...I don't think they've got the money to have these resources. You need better things to sort of help him get more involved</i>	
Need for feedback	<i>– it should have been really from the beginning...more things to get him involved.</i>	Theme 3: Preparedness
Feedback from specialists	Involved with other children?	Theme 3: Preparedness
	<i>With other children...I think if he'd had that from the beginning, being able to stand at the sink and do the water things like he would when he was little. But because he could never get to them things he always struggled.</i>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of specialist feedback	<i>And I think more group games would have helped as well; because again, he was always out at reception – always isolated.</i>	Theme 2: Support
External support	<i>He never sort of...even though they tried to get him, I don't think there was enough to get him involved with the other children. But again, I don't know. I don't think they knew what to do with him.</i>	Theme 2: Support

	<p><i>Like I said – my daughter, she was left in a cupboard when she couldn't cope with other children, because they didn't know what to do with her. Shut her in a room – it was like a little cupboard, because she got too aggressive; and what do we do with her?</i></p>	Theme 2: Support
External support	<p><i>Because they don't know what to do with them, do they?</i></p> <p><i>They're not trained, are they, really? I mean they're probably better now, because the SENCo, so she might have been a bit more knowing but I am not really sure.</i></p>	Theme 2: Support
TA actively involved with external professionals	<p>What do you think you would need in order to better support him?</p> <p><i>Again, I'd like someone to come and tell me...</i></p> <p>It's mostly to do with...?</p> <p><i>Yes, just to say...and to give me feedback; because I never get any feedback. I've never, ever got...from someone.</i></p>	
External support	<p><i>I know when my daughter did start mainstream, someone actually came from the special needs school and they gave her work to do, so it came from – to begin with – she got stuff from the Special School. So they gave her computer programmes; and then someone would always come back to make sure that the teachers were doing...and that everything was OK.</i></p>	Theme 2: Support
Parental beliefs	<p><i>But no one...in a way we've had no one from special needs or outside help like that to come in and give programmes. Like with maths stuff – they used to get special maths equipment.</i></p>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
Differences in opinions	<p><i>So outside help from like a special needs school to come in and say...you know, give him set programmes. Like I said, they used to do with my daughter when she started, she would get – even though she wasn't in special needs, she'd get outside agencies to come in and give her that support.</i></p>	Theme 2: Support
Difficulties liaising with parents	<p>It sounds like you do almost all the hands-on work.</p> <p>Yes.</p>	Theme 2: Support
Class teacher responsible for liaising with parents	<p>When specialist support people come in, do they speak to you?</p>	Theme 5: Barriers
Difficulties liaising with parents		

Responsibilities of TA	<p><i>They always speak to me. I always see – like the physio; I always see the OT; and the hearing person – they always come to me. But they'll say da, de da, de da – and that's it then; then they go again with the same thing next time.</i></p>	Theme 5: Barriers
Lack of guidance	<p>So you are involved in some of the meetings that happen?</p> <p><i>Oh yes. They just come and talk to me; but there apart from the review meeting – that's the only time really that people...sort of get together really.</i></p>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
TA planning and implementing support	<p><i>Sometimes you get stuff from one – and then stuff from them; and then like the instance with the chair – because he's not having his chair outside and all that; and for his safety and that. And she's letting him sit on a bench...there's too much clash sometimes with people like that.</i></p>	Theme 5: Barriers
Lack of access to curriculum	<p><i>Because she wants him to be normal...I see that going out sometimes. It really doesn't because...mum's very...everything she always thinks is against him, all the time. It's like you're always against him all the time.</i></p>	Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities
Child's concentration as a barrier	<p><i>You know, she wanted him to go out there; and then she was moaning that he was isolated out there. I'm stuck in the middle a bit, aren't I?</i></p>	Theme 2: Support
Lack of access to the curriculum	<p>Is that part of the support that you have to give – also with the parents?</p>	Theme 1: Practice
TA planning and implementing support	<p><i>Oh yes, I do with mum, yes. Because she's a bit...she does go up in the air. Then you talk to her – and then she sends dad in to come and sort...because she's...never satisfied with what you... I try not to say...if he's had an incident at school now I try not to say anything.</i></p> <p><i>I just tell the class teacher and if she wants to tell...well she tells the Head.</i></p>	Theme 5: Barriers
TA as primary educator	<p><i>Again, I think they try not to tell them – like when he hit a girl the other week; I think they try and keep it...because mum just goes up in the air all the time. No, I don't like that confrontation with mother.</i></p> <p>It's a lot of responsibility.</p> <p><i>Oh it is; oh it is...I think what you're</i></p>	<p>Theme 5: Barriers</p> <p>Theme 5: Barriers</p>

<p>Training and planning time</p>	<p><i>flagging up; oh yes.</i></p> <p>I think what we're flagging up is it is difficult to manage the needs of children with complex needs; but it is even more difficult for someone who isn't included in everything.</p> <p><i>Yes. I never know what to do with him. Like I said in that PE – what do you do with him?</i></p> <p>What do you do?</p> <p><i>Well I just...like I said, we did the colouring, didn't we; we did the ball and then we did the colouring on Monday. Just something to...but then again, he's not doing...</i></p> <p><i>Because all the curriculum has changed now – there's all this IPC, so they don't do science any more, they don't do geography and stuff like that...but I don't want to overwork him, if you get what I mean; because in the afternoons he's shattered.</i></p> <p>That's interesting. So is it that you think that his tiredness affects the work that he can do?</p> <p>Yes – he has trouble concentrating in the afternoon so usually we don't do much learning stuff after lunch – more physio and colouring and stuff.</p> <p>But it does mean that he misses the lessons that his class do, like music and sometimes art.</p> <p>Who makes the decision about what he does in the afternoon?</p> <p>Well usually it's me because the teacher is teaching. We always do his physio in the afternoon so that's me and then I usually find things for him to do after that, but that's the hardest time to find stuff to do because he doesn't do the same things as the class.</p> <p>Does that seem to work?</p> <p>I don't think so but it's what happens and that's why I don't think the teacher really knows what we do.</p> <p>Is there anything else that you want to add in terms of the support that the child gets?</p> <p>Umm - not really but I think we need to get better training and better planning time if</p>	<p>Theme 1: Practice</p> <p>Theme 4: Roles and Responsibilities</p> <p>Theme 3: Preparedness</p>
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	because it's hard for me to do everything by myself all the time.	
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**Appendix 2.3: Table 14 - The value placed on in-school support by the target pupils**

Picture cue	Rank*		Area of learning
	Pupil 1	Pupil 2	
Not being given too much to do	1	6	Learning
Extra help in some lessons	3	1	Learning
Instructions being repeated for you	10	9	Learning
Not so much writing	2	3	Learning
Having a break	5	8	Learning
Reminding me what I am good at	9	7	Learning
Working with different adults	8	10	Interactions
Having a key adult	6	5	Interactions
Making sure I'm ok	4	2	Interactions
Help me to make friends	12	4	Interactions
Where you sit/Who you sit with	11	12	Environment factors
Having a quiet place to go	7	11	Environmental factors

\*1 was said to be the most important and 12 was the least important