

## List of abbreviations

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
CT	Class teacher
GE	General education
ICT	Information communication technology
IEP	Individual education plan
IWB	Interactive whiteboard
LS	Learning Support
LST	Learning Support teacher
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCO	Special educational needs coordinator
SMT	Senior management team
TA	Teaching assistant

## Chapter 1. Introduction.

In 1978 The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) was published and hailed as revolutionary; for this document transformed the way in which special educational needs are referred to and viewed today. Blamires (n.d) referred to the report as, “a key historical resource for education.” (cited on [www.sen.ttrb.ac.uk](http://www.sen.ttrb.ac.uk)) The report was produced by the, “first committee of enquiry specifically charged by any government of the United Kingdom to review educational provision for all handicapped children, whatever their handicap.” (The Warnock Report, 1978) For the first time in English education the Warnock Committee “suggested the ten categories used for pupils with disabilities be replaced by a spectrum of special educational needs.” (Gibson and Blandford, 2005) The report was in favour of integrating children with special educational needs into mainstream schools and as a result influenced the 1981 Education Act which promoted the same ideology. But what constitutes special educational needs?

According to the SEN Code of Practice (1994), which provides guidance for educators following the English system, a child has special educational needs, “if he or she has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.” (DfE, 1994). This definition has been open to criticism for its vagueness. The definition does not make explicit the duration of the learning difficulty nor the type of special provision which has to be provided in order to constitute a special need. Lack of detail leaves the whole concept of special educational needs open to interpretation.

Published in 1978, The Warnock Report could be deemed outdated upon first glance but when one probes beneath the surface, not only does it demonstrate forward thinking with its support of integration but in addition, its research regarding children with special educational needs generated ideas and findings which influence education today. “It is imperative that every teacher should appreciate that up to one child in five is likely to require some form of special educational provision at some point during his school career.” (DES, 1978) The report was unique in the fact that it tried to estimate the true extent to which schools may need to cater for children with special educational needs in the

future. Over twenty years later Croll and Moses (2000) agreed with this figure stating that it could be, “up to 20% of the school population.” Children have not drastically changed in the past thirty years but education systems and terminology have. “Could it be that the labels change but the children have always been there?” (Tod et al, 1998) Therefore, the report remains credible and applicable to both schools and this study today.

General consensus on the extent to which children could require special provision may have remained constant over the past three decades. However, exactly what form this provision takes, who provides it, and when and where it takes place are issues which have remained highly controversial throughout this time period and are ardently debated today.

Special schools were once the popular choice for providing special provision. However, they have been strongly criticized for segregating children with special educational needs, “There is nothing that happens in a special school that cannot take place on a mainstream site.” ([www.csie.co.uk](http://www.csie.co.uk), cited in Flavell, 2001) Due to intense opposition, special schools are now out of favour, particularly since the rise of the inclusion movement. “The right of pupils with special needs to receive an education in mainstream schools has become a very significant issue in recent years.” (Birkett, 2003)

The philosophies behind inclusion and integration should not be confused. Inclusionists believe that a child’s special educational needs should be met in the mainstream classroom. Integration, as encouraged by the Warnock Report (1978), differs from inclusion. Integration enables a child with special educational needs to attend a mainstream school and receive the special provision that they need at the same time, regardless of where this special provision is provided. Integration could involve the child attending a special school part time or a special class outside the mainstream classroom. “Integration was just one of a series of examples of the blurring of the rigid boundaries between special and mainstream education.” (Clark et al, 1997)

In a mainstream school special provision can be made for a child by providing extra adult support. “Mainstream schools have long been expected to make provision for those pupils who have some special needs...through the provision of extra support.” (Everard et al, 2004) The amount of extra support allocated to a child varies according to factors such as perceived need and the school’s budget. The way in which this support is delivered is also subject to variation. Support can take the form of either pull in support, whereby an extra member of staff works with the child in their mainstream classroom, or pull out support which can also be referred to as withdrawal. During pull out or withdrawal support the child leaves the mainstream classroom, in order to attend an alternative setting where the support is provided. This pull out support is usually delivered by a special educator, qualified to help meet the child’s needs but the child could also be supported by a Learning Support Assistant. On occasions schools will employ such assistants because they are a cheaper financial alternative to a special educator, yet still provide the required “support” for the child.

The term Learning Support room is one of many used to refer to the setting where pull out support is provided. Several additional terms for this model of service delivery include: the Resource room, base and Support for Learning (SFL) room. It is upon this system of pull out support, referred to as the Learning Support room that this study will focus. This term has been chosen as it is used on a daily basis in the focus school; therefore it will appear frequently throughout this study in documents, interviews and the questionnaire. However, in much of the research conducted into this area of special provision, the term Resource room is preferred. Therefore, the terms Resource room and Learning Support room are interchangeable and refer to the same type of special provision. In addition, the term pull out will be used as synonymous with withdrawal throughout this study. This clarification is intended to eliminate confusion and provide the reader with greater clarity.

The researcher set out to investigate the effectiveness of pull out support; this type of provision is provided for children with special educational needs at the focus school in Dubai, UAE. The focus school is a single gender school and

comprises of approximately 300 students between the ages of 3 and 11. In the UAE, “all mainstream public education is conducted in single gender classes.” (Gaad, 2001) All children are Emirati and speak English as a second language. One may be questioning what bearing The Warnock Report (1978) and The SEN Code of Practice (1994) have upon this study and indeed the children enrolled at this Emirati primary school. The answer lies in the fact that the focus school delivers the National Curriculum of England and Wales to its pupils through English medium. As one would expect, the school is subject to the UAE Ministry of Education requirements, however it follows guidance laid out in the Code of Practice (1994) and conforms to requirements of the English National Curriculum during both teaching and testing, as opposed to adhering to an Arabic system. The Warnock Report’s (1978) estimate, of how many children could require extra support in Britain, is of increased relevance to a school in the UAE, which follows the English system; not only may this proposed number of children have special educational needs but in the majority of cases they will also have an initial language barrier to contend with. Therefore, it is vital that the school is aware of this estimate in order to be fully prepared to support all pupils’ needs.

The study intended to explore the following research questions; the ultimate aim was to make recommendations which could lead to greater effectiveness in the future. The research questions central to the investigation were:

- (Main question) 1: Is the Learning Support room effective in improving the academic success of children with special educational needs?
- 2: To what extent is the system meeting the objectives set out in the school policy?
- 3: How is the system viewed by teachers and students?
- 4: Based on the research findings, can the effectiveness of the Learning Support room be improved, if so how?

## Rationale

“The debate over the desirability or otherwise of withdrawing children from the classroom for special help continues.” (Croll and Moses, 2003) In the focus school it is policy to withdraw Key Stage 2 children with special educational needs to the Learning Support room. This practice also takes place in Key Stage 1 but is not the regular procedure according to the school policy. As will be discussed, there are many opinions as to whether withdrawal has a positive or negative impact upon the children that it is designed to support.

The Learning Support room has played a pivotal role in the focus school yet this research project has been conducted, deemed necessary, due to the distinct lack of information in this area. The timing of this study has become of increased relevance because the school has recently been forced to restructure staffing due to budget cuts. As a result of these cuts the Learning Support department has been streamlined from 5 teachers and one teaching assistant to just two teachers. “The education of children with special needs is expensive.” (Lewis, 1995) The decision to decrease this support system was not taken lightly, however it became necessary. This situation is not unique to the focus school, “financial constraints drive much in education, including very expensive additional provision.” (Norwich, 2002) Finances have never before been a cause for concern for the focus school. In light of the current change of events, the Learning Support department now faces fresh decisions and for the first time since its establishment, will have to reduce the amount of support it can provide pupils. “Determining priorities ...can help schools decide where to target limited extra adult help.” (Gross, 2002)

The data from the Learning Support department has never before been analysed to determine its’ effectiveness. Therefore, it remains unknown as to whether the support system, which this department has been providing, is effective in supporting children academically; or whether it is merely a drain on the school’s resources, with pupils making little academic progress. Gross and White (2003) claim that, “Many schools have found it difficult to apply the question, ‘How

well are we doing?’ ... to SEN.” Perhaps this explains why effectiveness has never been evaluated, thus the need for this study. A more viable explanation could lie in the fact that the school has never had to prioritise funding from its’ substantial budget before; the Learning Support department has never needed to provide evidence of effectiveness in order to gain resources, unlike the majority of schools. In England schools have to prove that they have tried to meet a child’s needs in various ways before they can obtain funding from the education authority. “Most LEA funding systems require evidence of several years of lack of progress...before substantial funding is put into place.” (Gross and White, 2003)

In Dubai, 2007, decree number 38 was issued this, “established the Dubai Schools Inspection Bureau.” ([www.business.maktoob.com](http://www.business.maktoob.com), 10/11/08) It was decided that the bureau would comprise of a team of inspectors, which would inspect every school in Dubai whether it be in the private or public sector. Dr Hanif Hassan, UAE Minister of Education (2008) emphasized the importance of education for the UAE, “A country will always have an advantage if it prioritises education.” (cited online, [www.archive.gulfnews.com](http://www.archive.gulfnews.com)) The intended aim of these inspections was to evaluate the quality of education being provided in order to strive for future excellence. “Having a view of the standard and quality of education provided throughout Dubai is critical for everyone concerned with education.” ([www.khda.gov.ae](http://www.khda.gov.ae))

This creation has emphasized the importance placed on quality education, which effectively prepares children for their future lives; this includes both children with and without special educational needs. “Schools are being made more accountable for their SEN provision... through inspection arrangements.” (Lewis, 1995) In England, “The inspection focus has shifted attention increasingly onto the performance of vulnerable children.” (Gross and White, 2003) As the UAE education system is influenced by more established ones such as the English system, this focus could become of increased importance during inspections by the new DSIB team. If the DSIB inspectors are comparable with those in England, “they will want to establish how far the school’s allocation of resources and responsibilities is effective in promoting the

achievement of pupils with special educational needs.” (Gross, 2002) This new initiative, coupled with the recent demands for greater accountability of special provision providers, highlight the necessity of this study.

The Learning Support department in the focus school remains extremely well resourced; the only exception being the reduction in Learning Support teachers. Marks (2000) adds further support to why this study was conducted, “It is professional negligence of the most culpable kind to provide substantial resources with no sense of whether they are being used effectively.” It is hoped that the outcomes from this study will demonstrate whether the resources in the Learning Support rooms are being used effectively and raise academic success (research question 1) or whether they might provide greater benefit to pupils’ if they were redeployed elsewhere in the school.

As the UAE is a relatively new country there is a lack of educational research conducted, therefore many areas of education remain untouched and are crying out for investigation, as in the case of the focus school. It is hoped that this study can contribute updated knowledge and findings to the field of special educational needs, not only on the effectiveness of the pull out system but it is hoped that it will also enrich this arid land of research. An additional aspiration is to inspire readers to become researchers themselves and contribute to enlightening the world about education in the UAE.

Gross (2002) encapsulates the researchers underlying motives for this study, “examine what is happening in the school for children with special educational needs, to see if what is happening is good enough and to...make changes where they are needed.” In this case the researcher will make recommendations for change if and where necessary, in the conclusive part of this study.



## Chapter 2. Methodology.

The methodology was designed specifically to gain data which would allow the researcher to answer the research questions (RQ) central to this investigation and ultimately provide recommendations as per research question 4 (see Chapter 1). In addition, the tools used were selected for their ability to provide evidence of effectiveness as determined by criteria (C) 1-4, which will be discussed later.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the Learning Support room it was necessary to build up as comprehensive a picture as possible of current practice. To do this the researcher chose to collect qualitative data to compliment the quantitative data which was available from the department's archives. Sole use of quantitative data would have limited the study to merely analyzing the progress made by children on their SATs tests and analyzing the Learning Support policy. The researcher required richer data than this could provide. "The fields of study are not artificial situations in the laboratory but the practices and interactions of the subjects in everyday context." (Flick, 2002) Therefore, the researcher needed to capture data which would reflect daily practice.

The Learning Support department works with children such as elective mutes. Through attending the Learning Support room, children with this disorder have begun to speak and interact with their peers in this small setting. Could one possibly reflect this progress with a SATs level? Successes such as this were targeted through the use of interview. This explains why the researcher chose to collect both types of data through methods which will be discussed later.

The difficulty in trying to evaluate the effectiveness of SEN provision or in this case a Learning Support room is that the benefits it sets out to provide cannot always be observed or measured. Tod et al (1998) cite Einstein(n.d) who believed that, "What can be counted might not count, what counts might not be countable." The department is not only committed to academic progress, it also places equal importance on social and emotional issues. The school's policy states that it, "seeks to develop confidence... in all our pupils." (Appendix 1)

Academic progress is relatively straight forward to establish, a standardized test which produces quantitative data can be completed and then analysed. However, trying to assess how happy children are receiving pull out support or their confidence levels is much harder. Despite this challenge, the importance of these must not be overlooked in a study on the room's effectiveness and was probed via qualitative tools.

In order to establish effectiveness, Gross and White (2003) recommend obtaining the opinions of those who are affected by the system. "Use a range of...tools which include seeking the views of children and parents." Unfortunately access to parents was not possible for this study, therefore the study concentrated on the children and teachers. This part of the study was designed to obtain data for research question (RQ) 3 (see Chapter 1). The teachers involved were mainstream class teachers and specialist teachers, such as Learning Support teachers or ICT teachers. One could argue that all children in the school are affected by withdrawal at some point, be it the mainstream child who is separated from their best friend when the friend attends the Learning Support room, the mainstream child who is distracted by the comings and goings of children who attend the Learning Support room or the child who has to physically leave the mainstream classroom in order to receive support. However, due to time constraints, priorities were made and the researcher chose to concentrate only on children who actually attend the Learning Support room. This sample comprised of 21 students in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 and was determined by access opportunities and timetabling issues. The researcher considered this sample to be highly suitable for providing a balanced view of the Learning Support room across the school; it contained the top two year groups from Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) and the top two from Key Stage 2 (Years 5 and 6)

"There is no such thing as the correct method, or even the best method for addressing a particular research interest or question." (Brown and Dowling, 1998) In order to obtain as much reliable data as possible, a variety of research methods were selected for use. Triangulation was used throughout this study to ensure that findings were a true representation of what was actually happening in the school and in particular the Learning Support rooms. "A common response to

the inevitable shortcomings of any particular approach is to employ 2 or more approaches to the same problem.” (Brown and Dowling, 1998) This was achieved through the use of: document analysis, observations, interviews and a questionnaire.

Document Analysis (The Learning Support policy)

“A whole school policy is one which all members of the school community are expected to know and implement.” (Sharp and Thompson, in Lindsay and Thompson, 1997) Initially the method of document analysis was used to critically review the Learning Support policy and establish the aims of the department (Appendix 1). This method was a vital first step in the investigation. This analysis ensured that the researcher was familiar with the intended aims and practices of the Learning Support department and in turn the Learning Support room. It equipped the researcher with the knowledge and understanding necessary to probe deeper into the practices of the Learning Support room. More importantly familiarity with the policy ensured that the researcher knew what to look for during observations. How could one possibly begin to investigate effectiveness if one does not know what the system should be doing effectively?

Four success criteria were taken from the policy; these were later used to measure the effectiveness of the Learning Support room in light of the data gathered from the various methods. The intention was to provide answers to research question 2. Gross and White (2003) recommend posing this question, “How well are we doing?” in relation to those policy objectives.” In effect the Learning Support room would be analysed in relation to its own aims and goals (criteria 1-4) to determine its’ effectiveness throughout this study.

These criteria were:

- 1: Is the Learning Support room equipping “pupils with the skills they need to progress in the mainstream”?
- 2: Do staff “continually monitor the progress of the pupils”?
- 3: Do staff “establish a positive partnership with teachers”?
- 4: Is “a multi-sensory, structured approach” used?

These criteria were selected in order to answer research questions (RQ) 1-4, in particular question 2. Criteria 1 and 2 were chosen to probe for questions 1 and 2. Criteria 3 was used to probe questions 2 and 3 and criteria 4 for questions 1 and 2. Findings from data measured against these criteria would be used to answer question 4.

### The Questionnaire

Once these criteria were established, further data collection methods were implemented. In order to establish views on current practice and effectiveness, Gross (2002) suggests, "Gathering information and perceptions on as wide a group as possible- staff ... pupils." Therefore, a semi-structured questionnaire was designed to obtain the opinions of members of staff (questions 2 and 3, criteria 1-4, Appendix 2 and 3). It was decided that data would be collected from the children via interviews rather than a questionnaire. This will be discussed later. The staff sample comprised of 31 people which were mainstream class teachers from both Key Stages 1 and 2, specialist teachers, teaching assistants from both Key Stages 1 and 2 and senior management (SMT). The questionnaire was distributed and a deadline was set so that members of staff were given one week to return it. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) advise researchers, "Be satisfied if you receive a 50 per cent response." However, the response rate was much higher than this initial expectation, 23 of the 31 questionnaires were returned making the response rate 74%. (Appendix 4) This method was selected so that members of staff could complete the questionnaire with total honesty, privacy and in their own time. The questionnaire was "administered without the presence of the researcher." (Wilson and McLean, 1994; cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000) The researcher viewed this positive aspect of the questionnaire as essential in gaining valid data. By allowing privacy and guaranteeing total anonymity it was hoped that the information gathered via this method would be reliable and reflective of the staff's current opinions. "How satisfied are staff [and] students ...with the policy in practice?" (Sharp and Thompson in Lindsay and Thompson, 1997)

In order to collect as much valid data as possible the questionnaire did not use any Likert-scale questions. Fowler (2002) believes that by using this type of question, “respondents tend to give a positive response regardless of how they actually feel.” (cited in Macleod, 2006) If this were true and the sample did respond more positively; the picture created of the Learning Support room (question 3) would not only be inaccurate but it would also mask possible areas of weakness, where recommendations could be needed (question 4).

### Observations

Initial observations were made to establish the size and location of the Learning Support rooms in light of McNamara’s (1989) claim that, “The size, location and appearance of the room are important considerations that should not be overlooked.” He believes that “the physical setting of the Resource room can have an impact on student behaviour.” (McNamara, 1989) If the underlying implication is that the setting could lead to disruptive behaviour it is vital that the above factors are analysed. Disruptive behaviour interferes with learning and therefore student progress; this in turn would influence the effectiveness of the Learning Support room.

Teacher observations were conducted in two separate Learning Support rooms. The aim was to investigate what was actually happening and whether the practice reflected the intended aims of the Learning Support policy (questions 1, 2, 4, criteria 1, 2, 4). The researcher was looking for: children to be working on IEP targets or strategies deemed necessary for them to progress in the mainstream class (C 1, 2); any evidence of monitoring during the lessons and children being challenged, working on realistic but achievable targets, as opposed to being entertained for an hour by the Learning Support teachers. Gross and White (2003) claim that there has been “an emphasis in the SEN world on providing support for children with special educational needs, rather than on the outcomes of that support.” In addition, the researcher intended to focus on how the learning was delivered, was it “a multi-sensory approach” (C 4), were learning activities interactive and fun or were children sitting at tables completing worksheets or copying from the board? “Children with learning difficulties have ... a greater

need than other children for work which is interesting and stimulating and makes them think.” (Dean, 1996) Does the lesson focus on one activity or does it comprise of multiple, short activities, are various teaching strategies used? In reference to teaching strategies, Hodgson (1995) stated, “Few teachers use many of them, many teachers use few of them.” (cited in Tod et al, 1998)

In an attempt to ensure the validity of the data collected the researcher made numerous visits to the Learning Support rooms. Flick (2002) stated that, “A research project is an intrusion into the life of the institution studied.” It was hoped that disruption and the feeling of intrusion would be minimised if the teachers and children became used to the researcher’s presence. During each visit the researcher sat in the same place and completed the same observation sheet (Appendix 6) “You can rarely discount completely the effect of your presence in a situation as an observer.” (Brown and Dowling, 1998) To try to reduce this effect on the data only 3 observations from each room contributed to this study. Observations from early visits were discarded, which is when the researcher felt that the teachers’ and children’s behaviour was most likely to be affected by the researcher’s presence.

### Interviews

To compliment both the questionnaire and the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all Learning Support teachers (questions 1-4) and the children who receive pull out support (questions 1-4, criteria 1, 4). Due to demands on time and job security mainstream teachers did not want to participate in interviews and were unwilling to publicly verbalize their views, even with the guarantee of confidentiality.

The Learning Support teachers were probed on various issues including: their opinions of the department’s strengths and weaknesses (question 1, 4), the practice of withdrawal support (question 3), monitoring children (question 2) and their daily practice (question 2). These interviews were designed to produce qualitative data from open-ended questions. It was hoped that this information would help to establish a clearer picture of the department’s current practices and add support to what was observed by the researcher. Gross (2002) would support

this approach, “list strengths in current practice ...then list the major gaps or problem areas.”

The researcher chose to conduct interviews with the children as opposed to administering a questionnaire (question 1-4, criteria 1, 4). Firstly because many of the children who receive Learning Support have difficulties with reading, in addition, one must also remember that English is their second language. The researcher did not want to put the children in an uncomfortable situation in order to obtain data. Secondly, the researcher had concerns regarding the data that this method may produce. If children mis-read words or the meaning of a question they may have responded with an unrepresentative answer, thus producing unrepresentative data. By interviewing the children the researcher could ensure that they understood the questions and had the opportunity to confirm their answers. “A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate...feelings, which the questionnaire can never do.” (Bell, 2005)

Pupil interviews were designed in particular, to obtain their views on being withdrawn to the Learning Support room and their learning preferences (questions 3, 4). “Student preference is considered to be an influential variable in the performance of the students.” (Miller et al (n.d) online [www.cehs.wright.edu](http://www.cehs.wright.edu)) It was hoped that these interviews would provide an insight into the world of each child who receives withdrawal support and that this insight would enable the researcher to identify areas for improvement (question 4). After all, it is these children who need to feel satisfied with the education they are receiving in the Learning Support room and who need to feel that their needs are being met. Norwich and Kelly (2004) would support this method of data collection because it, “enable[s] a full and in-depth exploration of perspectives expressed by pupils in their own terms.”

#### Document Analysis (SATs results)

The final part of the investigation focused upon the school’s database of SATs results (questions 1, 4). SATs are the standardised tests used to measure progress at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2) and 2 (Year 6). However, there are optional SATs papers which the school administers in Years 3, 4 and 5. The researcher

made a conscious decision to leave this part until the end of the investigation because she did not wish to be contaminated throughout the course of the study with any evidence of academic progress or loss. The researcher felt that this knowledge could produce subconscious bias throughout the observations and interviews. For instance, if the SATs results indicated that children had made considerable progress in the Learning Support room, observations conducted may have been viewed (subconsciously) more positively by the researcher, than if the results were unknown.

The SATs results for children receiving Learning Support were collected and tabulated. Their progress year on year was determined and recorded in terms of academic gain or loss. "Value added data, which measures pupils' progress over a Key Stage are ...more useful than measures of "absolute" attainment." (Gross and White, 2003) SATs results were chosen because they are produced from standardized tests and can be tracked year on year. IEP targets were rejected because they are supposed to be achievable. "IEP targets are intended from the start to be inherently within the child's reach." (Gross and White, 2003) If data were collected based on how many IEP targets were achieved then one would expect an extremely high figure; this would produce a deceptive picture of progress and effectiveness. These could not be tracked year on year and would not be comparable, they would only be relevant to the particular child they were designed for.

### Limitations

Throughout this study the researcher has encountered several challenges. Distribution of the questionnaire posed one of the biggest challenges. It was intended that the questionnaire would be distributed at the beginning of this study in order to give participants adequate response time and the researcher adequate time for analysis. However, at the proposed time it was announced that there would be staff restructuring within the school and ultimately job losses. The researcher felt that distributing the questionnaire at this time would not only be insensitive but also inappropriate with staff morale at an all time low. In addition, the researcher was concerned that the response rate would be low and would run the risk of collecting potentially more negative feedback from staff



with low morale. In order to counteract the possibility of collecting unrepresentative data, the researcher decided to distribute the questionnaire at the beginning of the new school year when job cuts had been made. It was hoped that there would be an increase in staff morale after the summer break and that staff would be more willing to give up their time to complete the questionnaire. The researcher deemed this delay necessary in order to maximize the chances of a favourable response rate and to obtain valid data.

The terminology which refers to the pull out system is varied and seemed to differ according to country. During the research process a wide variety of terms had to be investigated when searching for relevant literature. It was apparent that in America educators favoured the terms Resource room and remedial support. In England the terminology changed to Learning Support or Support for Learning. Additionally, literature referring to withdrawal support, pull out support and base rooms all had to be investigated.

The actual literature on this subject posed a further challenge. "It was common practice in the 1960s and 1970s to withdraw from the classroom children with particular difficulties." (Lewis, 1995) As a result of ever evolving practice and the current popularity of inclusion, the literature tended to be older than one would like. Books specifically on this subject were scarce, the researcher located one which was not only difficult to obtain but was written almost twenty years ago (1989). Articles on this subject were somewhat easier to find but once again those dedicated to this subject tended to be written prior to 2000. In order to gain as much information as possible on this subject the researcher read current books about inclusion as many of these mentioned withdrawal support, although usually in a negative context.

The potential size of this study was challenging. How can one possibly establish the effectiveness of a whole support system in a study of this size? In order to limit it somewhat, the 4 criteria were chosen. They aimed to show a broad overview of the Learning Support room's effectiveness. Inevitably, to do more justice and to establish more accurate findings, a more in-depth study would be necessary.

A final limitation of this study was the fact that it was conducted in a specific school with very specific features, therefore the findings would be difficult to generalize to other situations. The research questions were specific to this school; therefore the level of generalization would be limited. Flick (2002) states that, “the level of generalisation that is appropriate and obtainable depends on the research questions pursued.” Although replication in a school with exactly the same features of the focus school would be difficult, these research questions could be used as a basis for future research to examine the effectiveness of Learning Support rooms in different schools with differing features. Alternatively, schools could use criteria from their own policy in the same way as this study, to assess effectiveness.

### Chapter 3. Literature Review.

#### Education in the UAE

The United Arab Emirates is a rapidly developing country which comprises of seven Emirates. “Rampant poverty in the various emirates ... prevented the creation of a state education system until the beginning of the oil era...in 1971.” (Talhami, 2004) Prior to this, “the level of illiteracy ...was nearly 90%.”(Talhami, 2004) As a result of this late formation and its previous hardship, the country has a relatively young education system compared to many western countries. In order to create an education system the UAE looked to more established systems for guidance such as the U.S and the U.K. Talhami (2004) claims that the country was, “determined to reverse the tide of history by modernizing without totally yielding to Western prototypes and models of development.” Pull out support was at its most popular in the U.S and U.K during this time, this could explain why the focus school uses this type of provision to support children with special educational needs; it was the system observed in the West and then replicated by the UAE in the focus school. The fact that the UAE didn’t want to, “totally yield...” could explain its resistance to full inclusion which is currently the popular model in the west for educating children with special educational needs.

At present the UAE’s education system comprises of two separate sectors; the public sector, in which this study was conducted, and the private sector. The public sector is funded by the government and only educates Emirati children. This rule is the result of the, “Ministry of Education’s decision to enroll nationals only in national schools.” (Gaad, 2005/2006) Emirati children have the choice of which sector they are educated in, however expatriates do not and have no alternative but to attend a private school. Schools in both sectors are governed by the Ministry of Education, yet it would appear that schools in the private sector have greater autonomy than their public sector counterparts. However the Minister of Education, Dr Hanif Hassan (2008), disputes this, “Private schools are accountable for anything they do.”

The UAE government is extremely forward thinking and recognizes the crucial role that education will play not only in the country's continued development but also in its future prosperity. In 2008, Dr Hanif Hassan announced that, "The UAE Federal government... has made education a top priority, with an allocated budget of Dh7.4 billion for 2009." Gaad et al (2006) would welcome this announcement as they believe that education in the UAE has, "continued to progress primarily due to the generous funding from the government." The country's commitment to education is clear; in turn schools, such as the focus school, should be equally committed to providing effective, quality education.

In addition to substantial funding, a policy called the 2020 vision demonstrates the strength of commitment and investment in the UAE's education system. The policy has been devised to focus on future improvement for the education system which will progress until the year 2020. This policy acknowledges the need for evolution in its somewhat new system and "the importance of continuous improvement consistent with changing conditions both within the educational system and the needs of the society." (Gaad et al, 2006)

Throughout the recent developments the country has referred to education as a general theme. Children with special educational needs have not been specifically discussed within this. However, the UAE Federal law number 29, article 12 (2006) states that, "The country assures equivalent educational chances for the Person with Special needs in all educational establishments." (Appendix 7) Emirati children with special educational needs are provided for by the state, "the provision of special needs facilities includes free school placements, but only for national children." (Gaad, 2001) Federal law number 29, article 15 (2006) claims that it will provide, "assistance to all educational establishments that like to receive the special needs people."

The Learning Support room

(As previously discussed the Learning Support room is used as synonymous with the Resource room.)

“Children deserve an education of quality but there are real dilemmas in meeting needs.” (Lindsay in Lindsay and Thompson, 1997) Although inclusive education is the modern approach to educating children with special educational needs, great debate continues over whether it can actually meet the needs of all pupils. If inclusive education fails to meet the needs of its’ pupils can it really be described as quality education? “The argument among educationalists ... is still heating up over the effectiveness of including all learners in regular schools.” (Gaad, 2004) Despite declaring an overall philosophy of inclusion, “all children have the right to be educated alongside their peers,” (LS policy) the focus school provides a continuum of services. The Learning Support room is one way in which the focus school strives to meet the needs of all pupils and endeavors to provide quality education for all. This study intends to investigate its’ effectiveness and whether the education pupils receive can be described as quality.

“We see a resource centre as a room...where special materials and equipment are kept and to which groups of children may be withdrawn for special help.” (DES, 1978) This statement surmises the Learning Support room upon which this study is based. Kephart (1970) describes it as a place where an “intensive attack is made on [the] learning problems.” (Cited in Zigmond and Baker, 1996). Meyers et al (1990) believe that it provides, “intensively structured, individualized instruction.” In the focus school, children attend the Learning Support room on an individual or small group basis. The max number of students per group is six, however McLoughlin and Kass (1978) would consider this to be too large, claiming the, “need for smaller teacher-student ratio probably means one teacher with no more than three students.” Pupils are supported for Literacy, Numeracy or both and attend the mainstream class for the remaining school subjects. Therefore, the withdrawal placement is a,” part-time model of service delivery,” (Zigmond and Baker, 1996) McNamara (1989) identified three types of Resource room. According to his criteria the focus school’s Learning Support room would be defined as, “cross-categorical.” Children attend the room, “on the basis of their specific needs rather than on their particular classification.” (McNamara, 1989) Therefore, one might see a group of children which have learning

difficulties, dyslexia and a hearing impairment in the same Learning Support group.

According to Zigmond and Baker (1996), Kephart (1970) is credited with proposing the Resource room model, despite its use more than forty years prior to this. McNamara (1989) claims that this special provision was in use, "as far back as the 1930s...for students with visual impairments." However it was Kephart (1970) who drew attention to the potential benefits for children with learning difficulties. "Utility for students with mild disabilities...was not proposed until the late 1960s or early 1970s." (McNamara, 1989) This demonstrates that the model of support used in the focus school is indeed an old one, especially in educational terms where trends and practices are constantly evolving. Despite its' age and opposition from inclusionists, "Nearly one in eight of the children in mainstream classes spends some time withdrawn from the class." (Croll and Moses, 2003) The popularity of this model is evident from these statistics; Clark et al (1997) continue to vouch for its' popularity in mainstream schools, "It is the exception rather than the rule for schools to have abandoned withdrawal work." When one considers the use of the Learning Support room at the Emirati school, in relation to schools in other countries, it is clear that the school made a well thought out decision to implement this type of special provision. The model was particularly well-liked in America, "61% of students with disabilities were receiving Resource room support." (Giangreco and Meyer, 1988, cited in Jenkinson, 1997) In addition, the school's support system is alike to the prevalent one in Canada, "a combination of Resource room and regular classroom is also the most common model for special education provision in Canada." (Winzer, 1994, cited in Jenkinson, 1997) One can see the influence that the more established education systems, such as the U.S, U.K and Canada, have had on the Emirati school.

Although the focus school aims to be as inclusive as possible; it acknowledges where the children's needs are not being fully met in the mainstream class and begins additional pull out support. However, inclusionists would not agree with the school's decision to implement this type of support. "The Resource room model has been rejected by the inclusive schools movement which envisages all

services being provided in the regular classroom.” (Jenkinson, 1997) They would argue that mainstream teachers are not differentiating the curriculum enough for the child, that pull in support should be used instead and that the school is actually segregating the child from his peers. Despite these viable concerns Jenkinson (1997) would disagree with the latter idea, “The Resource room model represents a less segregated form of education than the self-contained special class.” With regards to inclusion, Gaad (2004) claims that the country in which this study was conducted, the UAE, was just, “catching up.” Therefore the focus school appears to be forward thinking by trying to be as inclusive as possible but continues to use the Learning Support room as a much needed safety net.

Educators world wide are passionate about their profession and how best to provide effective education, therefore opposing views on the use of the Learning Support room exist. There are those who support the use of the pull out system and focus on the benefits they believe it can provide, “We believe that pull out settings are more likely to provide these.”(Zigmond and Baker, 1996); there are those who oppose its use and focus on the negative aspects they believe pull out support can produce. Flavell (2001) “There needs to be sensitivity with regard to the withdrawal of individuals,” “Children may be stigmatized for going out of class for extra help.” (Gross, 2002)

#### Effectiveness of pull out support

Of the studies conducted, Jenkinson (1997) claims that, “no study had been able to demonstrate conclusively the superiority of either integrated or segregated settings for educating students with disabilities.” Much of the research conducted on the pull out system, in particular resource rooms, has been based upon perceptions of the system and the role that the support teacher plays. Very little has been published on effectiveness. One explanation could be the difficulty involved in trying to prove effectiveness, due to the many variables which it entails. For example, the different types of special needs which pupils attending the room may have, their varying ability levels and teachers’ expertise in providing pull out support, all differ according to school and even amongst classes within a school. To conduct a general study comparing Learning Support

rooms in various schools, with the aim of drawing an overall conclusion on effectiveness, would be extremely difficult and subject to a vast number of variables. Conclusions may not be reliable due to the validity of data. Can data be valid if the numerous variables between schools cannot be controlled? This is the underlying reason why this study has been based upon one specific school; data collected is directly relevant to the school and comparison with other schools is not required.

“Regardless of what is being taught, it is imperative that it be taught with maximum effectiveness and efficiency.” (Robinson and Deshler, 1988, cited in Zigmond and Baker, 1996) Effectiveness has been on the lips of educators for many years but exactly what constitutes effective education for children with special educational needs is somewhat difficult to define. The above statement is all well and good but rather non-committal. The researchers do not make any practical suggestions for how to ensure effectiveness whilst teaching or even indicate what they deem it to be. When one reviews the research in this area, one discovers many researchers are non-committal regarding effective interventions, “If withdrawal is most effective, it is the best way to proceed.” (Croll and Moses, 2000) Researchers all favour effective intervention yet are not forthcoming in expressing exactly what this method of intervention is. The, “problem with special educational interventions is that we do not know when they work, with whom they work or how well they work.” (Mann and Kenowitz, 1985 cited in Jenkinson, 1997)

The Learning Support teachers in this study aim to meet, “the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties so far as is reasonable.” (LS policy) However, Roger (1969) warns that, “The Resource room program...will not make all children “normal” and will not eliminate all problems of most of the children enrolled.” (cited in McNamara, 1989) Therefore one must be realistic when trying to establish effectiveness; if one deems effectiveness to be that all children who attend the Learning Support room will return to the mainstream class at the same academic level as their mainstream peers, one may end up unpleasantly surprised. Hocutt (1996) claims that, “no intervention has been designed that eliminates the impact of having a disability.”



Clark et al (1997) believe that pull out support is effective, claiming that the underlying reason why schools stop this support, “is often simply because the resources to sustain withdrawal are unavailable rather than because of an ideological commitment to including children in mainstream classes.” Thompson (1989) strengthens the case for using additional SEN support, “children with Literacy difficulties who have only regular classroom teaching and no special help will fall progressively further and further behind their peers.” (cited by Gross, 2002) The “special help” could be deemed as effective because Thompson (1989) implies that without it the child will deteriorate. However, Thompson (1989) does not expand upon “special help.” One can assume that it refers to extra adult support; however one cannot be certain that it is pull out support being referred to. Brighouse and Woods (1999) would support the claim that pull out support is effective, “We know that pupils will benefit considerably from having a program of one-to-one tutoring...or other support at critical moments in their school life, which usually involves overcoming a learning difficulty.”

As opposed to concentrating on evidence of effectiveness many researchers choose to focus on perceived effectiveness; what the Learning Support room can provide for children, which could lead to increased effectiveness. Extra teacher time and attention are perceived to be effective, “10 to 15 times as much time was allocated to individual ...instruction in the resource room.” (Thurlow et al, 1983) If it were the case that extra time leads to effective learning, this finding would support the notion that pull out support is effective for children with special educational needs. Jenkinson (1997) would agree that extra time and support are vital for children with special needs if effective learning is to take place, “to achieve... goals, they need a great deal of support, often far beyond that provided in most classrooms.” Despite this support, Hocutt (1996) questions whether the skills and strategies taught in the pull out system are actually retained and transferred, she found that, “students do not use the strategies in the general classroom to the same extent they did in the special education resource room where they originally learned the strategies.” (Hocutt, 1996) Therefore, is it effective to teach these strategies in the Learning Support room or better to

teach them in the mainstream class which may encourage retrieval and application in the same setting?

The way in which support teachers modify the curriculum and focus on specific areas of need is deemed to be effective, “there are skills and strategies that need to be acquired if instruction in the mainstream is to be meaningful and productive and these ... must be taught explicitly and intensively.” (Zigmond and Baker, 1996) If this statement is to be believed then there is a clear need for the Learning Support room in the focus school. According to this claim, children with special needs who may not have mastered basic skills would need to acquire them through intense teaching in the Learning Support room, before they would be able to make further progress in the mainstream class. “A number of researchers have suggested that the effectiveness of the Resource room program should be judged by the student’s performance in regular educational settings.” (McNamara, 1989) Therefore, if the child successfully masters these aforementioned skills and can cope with mainstream education then the pull out system would be deemed effective.

All children, particularly those with special educational needs, require a learning experience which will not only challenge them but also set realistic targets for their level of ability. One could argue that children would be more likely to receive this in a small pull out setting. Bennett (1991) found “on average only around 4 out of 10 tasks given to children [in the mainstream class] were matched to their level of ability.” (cited by Gross, 2002) This casts doubt onto whether all children’s needs can ever be met effectively in an inclusive classroom and provides support for the use of the Learning Support room in the focus school. Due to the small size of the Learning Support groups one would expect children to receive learning tasks appropriate for their specific ability, based upon their areas of need. As a result of such findings, Zigmond and Baker (1996) support the use of pull out support, “we cannot support elimination of a continuum of services.”

Despite the perceived effectiveness of pull out support, Le Mare and De La Ronde (2000) claim that, “Evaluations of pull out, based on students’ academic

achievement, have indicated that this approach is no better or worse than other models.” In addition, Leinhardt and Pally (1982) believe that, “Setting does not eliminate or guarantee the presence of effective instruction.” (cited in Jenkinson,1997) It is important to digest this claim with regard to the focus school; the use of the Learning Support room itself cannot automatically guarantee an effective, quality learning experience. The teachers, the curriculum and its’ delivery can only determine this. Children are unique; this should be kept in mind at all times, “for some...different patterns of teaching (e.g., withdrawal) ... are considered inappropriate.” (Lindsay and Thompson, 1997) What is effective for one child may not be the case for another. Throughout this study one must bear in mind that effectiveness of the Learning Support room will be analysed according to the sample of children who are receiving pull out support. Therefore, conclusions will be determined by whether the system was effective for these particular children and their needs.

## Chapter 4. Findings.

### Document Analysis

The Learning Support policy was analysed in depth in order to establish criteria against which to measure effectiveness. These were taken from the principles and values section and the teaching methods and approaches section. Three clear findings emerged from this analysis. The policy lacked success criteria, there was nothing written to say how the policy would be evaluated, there was merely a date when the policy would be reviewed. “‘Success criteria’: these define the situation that will exist when the objective has been attained.” (Everard et al, 2004) Based upon Gross (2002) the researcher suggests that a success criteria for the focus school could be that there will be a 5% reduction in those needed to be withdrawn. As previously discussed, the Learning Support data has never been analysed, therefore the policy has never needed to indicate success criteria before. Secondly, the policy does not include parents in the process of reviewing IEPs. Parents are only referred to with reference to “Parents day” (LS policy). The third finding also refers to the IEP process; at no point does the policy involve the child in devising their IEP targets nor does it include any information on annual review meetings. The policy only states, “class teachers will meet with the LS teacher to review the groupings.” (LS policy) According to Sharp and Thompson (in Lindsay and Thompson, 1997) the policy should lay out, “implications...for staff, students and parents.”

Research question 1: Analysis of SATs results (See Appendix 8-17).

An increase of two SATs sub-levels per academic year is considered as average progress for a child without learning difficulties. Gross and White (2003) reiterate the, “national benchmark levels” as “level 2 at Key Stage 1, level 4 at Key Stage 2.” When one examines the actual attainment levels it is clear that at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2), pupils who receive Learning Support in the focus school are on track (Appendix 9) The most frequently attained sub-level was level 2C for Numeracy, Reading and Writing. However the picture changes at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6, Appendix 16-17). The results begin to reveal a gap between the actual attained levels and the benchmark (level 4). For

Numeracy the most frequently attained sub levels were 3C and 3B. 3B/3C was the average, with no one achieving higher than 3B. For both Reading and Writing the average attainment was 2A/3C, however the most frequently achieved sub level was actually 2B for writing.

When analyzing the academic progress, one must bear in mind that these benchmarks have been based upon native English speaking children, of average ability. Value added data for all three subjects was calculated for each child attending the Learning Support room (Appendix 8). In the academic year 2007/2008, 12 of the children receiving pull out support made one sub level of progress for Reading. One sub level was the most frequently made progress, 44% (n= 12) of the children achieving this. 33% of children (n=9) made no progress according to the SATs criteria, yet one must consider that alternative needs may have been met which cannot be measured by SATs. 11% (n=3) of the children regressed one sub level, yet the same amount of children (11%, n=3) made 2 sub levels of progress. On the surface regression can appear alarming but this can be explained by a number of factors including the paper which a child sat. On an easier paper a child may be able to achieve 2A as a maximum grade. Harder papers may only start from a level 2. Therefore, if a child achieves 2A on the easier paper and then struggles on a harder paper the following year they may only achieve 2B. This result appears to show regression of one sub level but does not take into account the difficulty of the paper.

During the same academic year 38% of children (n=14) made one sub level of progress in writing (Appendix 8). Once again this was the most frequent amount of progress made. Although there was no regression in this area of the curriculum, 16% (n=6) of the children did not demonstrate any progress with their sub level. However, 24% (n=9) made three sub levels of progress which is equal to one whole level e.g. from 2C to 3C, which is considered above average progress. One child even managed to make five sub levels of progress. Like its Literacy counterparts, Numeracy revealed one sub level to be the most frequently occurring progress. 45% (n=14) of children made one sub level of progress with only one child showing regression. However, 26% (n=8) did not show any progress in this area.

## Questionnaire

Research question 1 and 2 (criteria 1): Of the 23 staff that returned the questionnaire (Appendix 18) 91% (n=21) felt that the Learning Support department was effective in meeting its aim to, “address the needs of students who experience barriers to learning.” (LS policy) In addition, 78% (n=18) of those surveyed supported the view that the department is effective in achieving its “ultimate aim...to equip pupils with the skills they need to progress in the mainstream.” (LS policy) 78% (n=18) of staff felt that it was realistic for children who are withdrawn to return to the mainstream class full time. However, many of the responses included a get out clause, “...if they make excellent progress,” (respondent 29, Appendix 20 q6) or “it depends on the child.” (respondent 2, Appendix 21 q6) In theory staff were optimistic and believed in the pull out support provided but had reservations when it came to actual implementation. This result could therefore be somewhat more ideological than representative. There was divided opinion between the 2 Key Stages (Appendix 19). All 6 of the Key Stage 1 teachers agreed that this was a realistic goal, however only 2 of the 5 Key Stage 2 teachers felt this confident. This lack of confidence in Key Stage 2 could be explained by Learning Support teacher 1, “even though they may move on in that year the rest of the class is also moving on.” (Appendix 26) 91% (n=21) believed that attending the Learning Support room was beneficial for the children, it “enables them to learn at their level,” (respondent 2, Appendix 21 q15) and they are “more...able to follow lesson objectives,” (respondent 27, Appendix 20 q15). With regards to improved academic success, staff were asked to rank the desired outcomes of pull out support. 78% (n=18) cited improved test scores as the least important outcome of pull out support. It is ironic that the highest number of responses (n=15), indicated that test scores were used to decide who received Learning Support. One can see the vicious circle that Learning Support teacher 3 suggested (Appendix 28). A child attends Learning Support because of low test scores; the expectation of his mainstream class teacher is not that his test scores will rapidly increase as a result of this support. The emphasis of the Learning Support teacher is not to focus on raising test scores but provide for the child’s needs, be this help with basic skills or with social and emotional problems. At the end of the

academic year the child who has been withdrawn may have progressed emotionally or even at their own level but standardized test scores will not have drastically improved. Therefore, “test scores become ends.” (Slee et al, 1998) They determine whether a child will remain in the mainstream class with his peers or segregated for part of the day in the Learning Support room. 39% (n=9) was the highest percentage for increased competence in basic skills and viewed this as the most important outcome of attending the Learning Support room. Improved ability to cope in class was deemed the most important outcome by 22% of staff (n=5), yet equally 22% (n=5) ranked it as 4<sup>th</sup> important.

Research question 2 (criteria 2): The questions were designed to shed light particularly onto the mainstream teachers’ use of IEPs (Appendix 22-23). The Learning Support teachers were probed via interviews and observations. Pull out support in the focus school is only a maximum of 2 hours per day; therefore mainstream teachers should also be responsible for monitoring the child’s program and progress. 74% (n=17) of those surveyed admitted that they did not know what their children’s IEP targets were without looking at the IEPs. On the surface this could be explained by class teachers passing the responsibility for children who are withdrawn onto the Learning Support teacher, as will be discussed later. However, when one compares the data collected from the Key Stage 1 and 2 class teachers an unusual picture emerges bearing in mind the prevalent method of support. Key Stage 1 responses remain consistent with the overall result, 67% (n=4) of the teachers admitted that they do not know the targets, yet 60% (n=3) of Key Stage 2 teachers whose children are withdrawn on a daily basis claim that they actually know the targets without consulting the IEPs. This finding seems questionable. “Yes, sometimes,” was the most popular answer (48%, n=11) when staff were asked whether they include IEP targets in daily planning. Only 13% (n=3) claimed that they always include their children’s IEP targets. One must question in relation to research question 2, criteria 2, whether teachers and their planning are being closely monitored by the Learning Support department to ensure that areas of need and targets are being catered for in the mainstream classroom. The IEPs are designed to be used in both settings not just the Learning Support room. One must also question how the child’s needs and progress are being monitored in the mainstream class if only 3

teachers always plan opportunities for the child to work on their targets in the mainstream classroom.

Research question 2 (criteria 3): The partnership between the mainstream and Learning Support staff, in the focus school, is clearly a strong, positive one. All respondents (100%, n=23) believed that a positive partnership exists between the two. In addition, 96% (n=22) of staff said that they would feel comfortable approaching the Learning Support staff for advice. Meyers et al (1990) found that many general class teachers did not feel equipped to deal with LD children and deemed the resource teachers more equipped to do so. “Many ... indicated that the ... additional qualifications of pull out teachers were an advantage of these programs.” (Meyers et al, 1990) 57% (n=13) of staff in this study expressed the same opinion believing that the Learning Support teachers were better able to teach children who need support as opposed to 39% (n= 9) who felt that mainstream teachers were equally as able to teach them. This question also highlighted a difference of opinion between mainstream teachers in the 2 Key Stages. Interestingly more of the Key Stage 1 teachers (67%, n=4) deemed the Learning Support teachers to be better at teaching the children with special needs, even though pull in support is usually delivered through a team teaching approach. In comparison only 40% (n=2) of the Key Stage 2 teachers believed that the Learning Support teachers were more able to do this. This finding raises questions when taking into account the fact that 60% (n=3) of these teachers preferred their children to attend the Learning Support room. Why this preference? It does not appear to be due to the fact that the teachers feel that the children will receive a better education in the Learning Support room. Perhaps the Learning Support room is a place where teachers can send children that they do not want to deal with. With regards to this partnership on a practical level, only 52% (n=12) of staff stated that they met with their mainstream or Learning Support colleague on a regular basis. When analysed further, 83% (n=5) of the Key Stage 1 teachers said that they met with their Learning Support colleague regularly, as opposed to only 40% (n=2) of Key Stage 2 teachers. 60% (n=3) of Key Stage 2 teachers claimed that they did not meet regularly. There was also an evident difference in how regularly staff would meet; 50% (n=3) of Key Stage 1 teachers claimed to meet once a week, whereas 40% (n=2) of Key Stage 2



teachers expressed only meeting once a month. 39% (n=9) of staff felt that they did not meet enough. This again was split according to Key Stage; 67% (n=24) of Key stage 1 teachers actually felt that they did meet enough with their Learning Support colleague, whereas 40% (n=2) of Key Stage 2 teachers felt that they did not meet up enough. Interestingly 40% (n=2) of the Key Stage 2 teachers chose not to respond to this question.

Research question 2 (criteria 4): Investigation into the use of a multi-sensory approach was primarily targeted through the use of observations. However, the questionnaire revealed that 65% (n= 15) of staff felt that the curriculum was delivered differently in the Learning Support room because it was, “delivered in a multi-sensory way as much as possible,” (respondent 9, Appendix 20-21 q7) had “more kinesthetic orientation” (respondent 11, q7) and there was a “greater use of ICT.” (respondent 11, see Appendix q7)

Research question 3: Pull out support was the most popular preference amongst staff (48%, n=11) with 30% (n=7) expressing a preference for pull in. When one takes a closer look at this result a clear divide is apparent between the Key Stage 1 and 2 class teachers. 60% (n=3) of the Key Stage 2 teachers said that they would prefer their children to receive support in the Learning Support room, as opposed to only 17% (n=1) of Key Stage 1 teachers. An underlying reason for this difference of opinion could be attributed to the type of support teachers are currently working with. The Key Stage 2 teachers are used to their children being withdrawn as per the Learning Support policy whereas, although it does happen, in Key Stage 1 withdrawal occurs less frequently. One could argue that the teachers expressed preference for the mode of delivery that they are most familiar with and perhaps feel most comfortable with. Dean (1996) would support this idea, “If it is the practice of the school to withdraw children for various purposes this becomes more acceptable.” If one looks at this finding from Dean’s perspective, one could surmise that Key Stage 2 teachers have accepted pull out support as the norm and have grown to favour it; whereas Key Stage 1 teachers are more resistant towards it because it is not the norm for them, thus they demonstrate less acceptance of it. When questioned about their views on the withdrawal support provided, 91% (n=21) of staff felt that it was

beneficial for the children but equally staff recognized that this model of service delivery could also have negative effects on the children (83%, n=19). Despite the previously expressed positive partnership, 65% (n=15) of respondents claimed that they would like to know more about the Learning Support room and what takes place there. As previously discussed, 39% (n=9) expressed dissatisfaction at not meeting with their counterpart enough.

When asked for their opinions on the pull out support and stigma there were no clear answers. Some staff believed that it did occur and provided evidence to back up their claims (Appendix 20-21 q7). On the other hand the majority of staff showed great optimism, believing that children attending the Learning Support room were not stigmatized. 57% (n=13) felt that teachers did not stigmatize the children and 61% (n=14) believed that teaching assistants did not. When it came to stigma from peers, 48% (n=11) of staff were unsure as to whether it took place, yet 39% (n=9) of staff believed that it did.

Research question 4: This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5. However, ten respondents to the survey did feel that the Learning Support could be improved. 4 of the 10 felt that “more Learning support staff” (respondent 24, Appendix 20 q28) could be the answer and two claimed that there was a need for more training on teaching children with special educational needs. The new restructuring of the department was an evident concern for many staff, 74% (n=17) believed that this would have a direct impact upon them and 78% (n=18) felt it would impact upon the children. (Appendix 18)

### Observations

Upon entering the school, the Learning Support rooms were clearly visible. They were an integral part of the main school building and occupied a central location in the main corridor (Appendix 24). The classrooms were brightly decorated and had large windows which enabled one to view inside from the corridor. Bold signage on each door ensured that the purpose of the room was clear. Once inside, the rooms were smaller than the mainstream classrooms; this could be attributed to the fact that on average 4-6 children attend at a time. (57%, n=13, of staff cited this in the questionnaire) McNamara (1989) found this

to be the case for many Learning Support rooms, staff felt that “a relatively small number ...attend...therefore this setting can be much smaller than a typical classroom.” The prominent location in the school signified the importance placed upon the Learning Support rooms. The school did not attempt to hide this special provision, nor the fact that there are students who need this educational support. Such a location emphasized the integral role which children with special needs play within the school, unlike the findings of Klingner and Vaughn (2002), “the resource program was housed in a portable classroom located at some distance from the school’s GE classrooms.”

Observations in the two Learning Support rooms (Appendix 25) clearly demonstrated a multi-sensory approach to learning throughout all 6 of the observed lessons (question 2, C4). The children appeared to be having fun and were engaged throughout. The researcher felt that this was due to, “the frequent change of activities and location in the classroom.” (Observation 1, Appendix 25) On all 6 occasions the learning objectives were determined by a current IEP target, which was deemed necessary for progress to take place in the mainstream class. Therefore, the system was providing learning opportunities which would equip the children for learning in the mainstream class (question 2, C1) Throughout the course of lessons, monitoring was carried out on an informal basis, only once was a teacher observed recording, “mistakes in an assessment file.” (question 2, C2) (Observation 2, Appendix 25) However, the teachers spent time with the children to ensure understanding, “teacher informally monitored who ...understood the importance of equal parts.” (Observation 6, Appendix 25)

#### Interviews with Learning Support teachers

Research question 1: All of the Learning Support teachers (n=5) believed that the pull out system at the focus school improved academic standards, however some made additional comments such as “at their level.” (LST 4, Appendix 29) The unanimous opinion was that the children do make progress but their academic level is not comparable to that of their peers, they “won’t ever be as strong as their peers in the mainstream.” (LST 4, Appendix 29)

Research question 2, criteria 1: Despite the perceived improvement in academic success and the provision of learning experiences based on preparing children for the mainstream class; all 5 of the Learning Support teachers felt that it was not realistic for all of the children to return to the mainstream class full time (Appendix 31). Can the Learning Support room actually be meeting its' objective "to equip children for the mainstream"? (LS policy) The teachers felt that they do their best to achieve this goal but that, there is a "wide gap between the children in Learning Support and their peers in the mainstream," (LST 3) and "some pupils are too low attaining to be able to access the curriculum in class." (LST 2) (Appendix 27-28) The problem is that the children are working at a slower pace in the Learning Support room and on basic skills and strategies that they need in order to facilitate their learning. The Learning Support room is successful in providing these learning opportunities but it is always going to be playing catch up to try to get the children to a level where they can be independent in the mainstream class.

Research question 2, criteria 2: All teachers said that informal monitoring and continuous assessment made up the largest part of their assessment process, in addition to the school's standardized tests. However, none of the teachers had a set of criteria for when a child would return to the mainstream class full time. It seemed to be the assumption that once a child was in Learning Support they would be there for the academic year unless "others spring up that are worse." (respondent 5, Appendix 21 q6)

Research question 2, criteria 3: All teachers believed that they were viewed as approachable by mainstream teachers; the researcher was well aware of bias so probed for evidence to support these claims. One member of the team explained, "it's a deliberate and important policy ...to recruit staff who exhibit the ability to mix and get on with other staff." (LST 2, Appendix 27)

Research question 2, criteria 4: When probing to see whether the curriculum in the Learning Support room is delivered differently from in the mainstream, none of the teachers actually used the term multi-sensory approach. Only one teacher

referred to, “more hands on” learning. (LST 5, Appendix 30) It was clear from observations that this took place. This oversight could be attributed to the fact that the teachers used this approach every lesson; it has become usual practice so not considered as different and perhaps the teachers believe that this takes place in the mainstream classroom too. Four of the five teachers cited, “individualized learning” or terms to this effect, as a difference. However, one must question how individualized it really is when children in the same Learning Support group have three of the same IEP targets. Is this because the children all have the same needs or does this make planning and lesson delivery easier?

Research question 3: On the whole the pull out system is viewed favourably by the staff working in it. One issue which stands out is regarding responsibility for pupils who receive support. All 5 teachers stated that there should be “more responsibility on the class teacher.” (LST 1, Appendix 26) One Learning Support teacher referred to, “class teachers’ disinterest in their pupils whom they do not teach.” (LST 2, Appendix 27) Two of the teachers actually used the term “offload” to describe the actions of some mainstream teachers; Learning Support was viewed as a place to “offload” (LSTs 3 and 5, Appendix 28 and 30) problem children, “Can you work your magic on this child?” (LST 5, Appendix 30) Gross and White (2003) cite this as an issue which could decrease effectiveness of the Learning Support room, “Factors likely to prevent ... success included being used ... as a dumping ground.” Wheal (1995) believes that, “the existence of specialists implicitly encourages teachers to pass on their responsibility (“I can’t deal with kids like that, you’re paid to know about it. Take him away and do something”)” (cited in Clark et al, 1997)

Research question 4: One could assume that by working in the system, Learning Support teachers would be ideal candidates to spot flaws within it; however they may be too involved to question what happens as it has become daily practice. Despite this concern, the teachers did identify some valid weaknesses of the system which could lead to future recommendations. “Reduction in staff,” was cited by two of the teachers as a weakness, which linked to the “lack of time available for one-to-one support” (LSTs 1 and 2). Two staff highlighted the fact that IEPs are only devised for Literacy and not for Numeracy. (Appendix 28 and

30) “Lack of contact with parents” was only raised by one teacher (LST 2, Appendix 27) yet this issue is a most important one which will be discussed later.

Interviews with children who attend the Learning Support room.

Throughout the interviews it was evident that the older children in Years 5 and 6 were more opinionated in their views of pull out support and more forth coming (Appendix 36-39). The younger children in Years 1 and 2 (Appendix 32-35) needed more probing and were more preoccupied with superficial aspects of the Learning Support room such as the fact that it had “big chairs” (child 4) and was located “in secondary.” (child 3, Appendix 32-33) The Key Stage 2 children focused on more learning based factors such as it is, “quieter and [there are] less children.” (child 19, Appendix 38-39) Research question 3: Le Mare and De La Ronde (2000) found, “All pullout students liked going to the resource room.” This study found that 86% (n=18) of the children did. The system was more popular in Key Stage 2, 91% (n=10) liked it as opposed to 80% (n=8) of Key Stage 1 children. Only one child expressed a dislike for the Learning Support room in Key Stage 2. 62% (n=13 ) of the children stated that “fun” (child 15) was a positive aspect of the Learning Support room (Appendix 36-37) This could be explained by the multi-sensory approach used. In comparison, Norwich and Kelly (2004) found that only 24% (n=12) of children in their study cited “more fun”. This could be explained by the well delivered multi-sensory approach in the focus school. They also found that 47% (n=24) preferred it because there was, “less noise.” This study revealed that only 19 % (n=4) viewed this as an advantage of the pull out support with a further 19% (n=4) citing “more help.” (child 11, Appendix 36-37) Throughout the interviews the children did not indicate that any stigma was associated with attending the Learning Support room. Only 19% (n=4) of children said someone had said something to them about their withdrawal, “my friend asks me what I do there.” (child 14, Appendix 36-37) Comments regarding the Learning Support room did not take the form of name calling or bullying. “The presence of individual differences and individual needs was so taken for granted that withdrawal for some sessions during the day invited little comment from other students.” (Jenkinson, 1997) However, when the Year 6 children were asked about receiving in class support they did demonstrate an awareness of the potential stigma which could be caused by

receiving support. 83% (n=5) said that their friends would ask, “Why is she here?” (Child 16, Appendix 38-39) Child 20 in particular did not like the idea of this support, “I don’t need the teacher just to be with the children.” Even though, “base rooms ...can encourage separation on mainstream sites,” (Flavell, 2001) the children seemingly preferred to hide their need for support by taking refuge in the safety of the Learning Support room. Only 33% (n=2) of the Key Stage 2 children claimed they would rather stay in the mainstream classroom.

## Chapter 5. Discussion and recommendations

The focus school promotes inclusion in its Learning Support policy, “All children have the right to be educated alongside their peers.” (Appendix 40) Throughout the course of this study it became clear that the Learning Support room was becoming a source of exclusion. The special provision on offer aimed to meet the needs of its’ pupils and was established with the best of intentions, yet it is clear that by attending the Learning Support room children were becoming increasingly segregated from their mainstream peers and teachers. Some pupils were withdrawn from the mainstream classroom for as much as, “ten hours per week,” (LST 5), which resulted in a “disinterest,” (LST 2) towards them by some mainstream teachers. The withdrawal support in the focus school, “played a part in encouraging the notion that certain children were ‘someone else’s problem...or only specialists could handle these kind of children.” (Lunt in Lindsay and Thompson, 1997) It became apparent that the children with special needs were only included in the mainstream classes for the less academic classes such as Art and PE. This observation is supported by Agar et al (1989) “Participation tended to be limited to “safe” areas in which academic standards were less formal.” (cited in Jenkinson, 1997) If indeed children are, “excluded” from the mainstream class for such extended periods of time it is critical that the Learning Support room is meeting its objectives. “Withdrawal provision can be justified in inclusive terms if the short-term separation promotes enhanced longer-term participation.” (Norwich, 2000)

This study has produced many findings which in turn have future implications for the focus school. It is evident that the effectiveness of the Learning Support room could be improved. Recommendations as to how this could be achieved will be discussed where appropriate (research question 4) (Appendix 40-45). In order to do this, it is necessary to discuss the findings from research questions 2 and 3 in greater detail.

Research question 2, C1: The observations, questionnaires and interviews provided data which support the fact that the pull out system in the focus school



does effectively 'equip pupils with the skills they need to progress within the mainstream classroom,' (LS policy). 79% (n=18) of staff felt that the department does this. All six of the observed lessons were based upon targets which the children needed to achieve, in order to progress further during mainstream activities (Appendix 41). However, the problem which is apparent throughout this study is that the children attending the Learning Support room are, "achieving targets but these are far below the standard of the normal work of the class." (Dean, 1996) This is the underlying reason that all five of the Learning Support teachers claimed that it was not realistic for all children to return to the mainstream class full-time. "The children are so weak that very few make it back into the mainstream class." (LST 4) The evidence demonstrates that the Learning Support team are meeting the objective effectively, therefore why does Learning Support become, "a vicious circle...once a child is in...it is very difficult to return them to the mainstream"? (LST 3) Could it be that the answer lies in the mainstream approaches, are they too different from those used in the Learning Support room?

65% (n=15 ) of staff believed that the curriculum was delivered differently in the Learning Support room, respondent 19 cites one difference as the, "need for more concrete material as aides," (respondent 19, Appendix 21 q7) Why can this not be provided in the mainstream class in order to increase the time which children with special needs are included? Does this really have to be such a difference between the mainstream and the Learning Support room? "Responsibilities for the student's failure always lies with the educational system rather than with the child." (Kaniel and Feuerstein, 1989) Throughout the observations the Learning Support teachers made excellent use of the resources available; lessons were creative and interactive, therefore it is concluded that the Learning Support room is fully meeting its objective to use a multi-sensory approach to teaching (research question 2, criteria 4) If staff can help bridge the gap between the mainstream classroom and the Learning Support room perhaps more children could be accommodated in the mainstream. Respondent 25 states that, "in KS1 all teachers should be delivering a multi-sensory approach to teaching." However, LST 5 claims that in the mainstream class, "the work is more dull and boring...it is not differentiated." I recommend that the Learning

Support teachers use their evident strengths of providing a multi-sensory approach to learning, by hold training sessions for the mainstream staff and teaching assistants. These sessions could give examples of how to deliver the curriculum in a multi-sensory way. To compliment this training I propose that the Learning Support teachers provide drop in clinics on a set day each week, mainstream teachers can then seek advice on how to approach a concept from a multi-sensory perspective and borrow any extra resources. Respondent 27 stated that she would like, “general training in how we can adapt our teaching to suit the children’s learning styles.” (Appendix 20) In addition, during a free period I would encourage mainstream teachers to attend a lesson in the Learning Support room to see what actually happens there (65%, n= 15, of staff said that they would like to know more) and to acquire new teaching ideas.

The evidence indicates that the department is successful in meeting the objective regarding “continually monitor the progress of pupils” (research question 2, criteria 2). Teachers keep an assessment file on each child in which progress notes and observations are kept. This was seen in use during observation 2. Progress with IEP targets is monitored through learning activities and when a target is achieved a new target is focused upon. However, one must question why this continual monitoring takes place. At present the purpose is to inform planning and to track how the children are progressing towards IEP targets or achieving basic skills. The Learning Support room should be a short term system of support where the, “teacher provides...the ways and means to succeed in the regular classroom.” (McNamara, 1989) LST1 claims that the school views success as, “whether they go back to mainstream.” At present nobody within the school is responsible for monitoring when this will happen. Despite such importance being placed upon this, children who are withdrawn to the Learning Support room do not have any criteria which they must fulfill in order to return to the mainstream class. Likewise the teachers do not have any criteria against which to monitor the child with the view of returning them. In order to improve effectiveness of the system, I recommend that when a child is considered for withdrawal support both the mainstream and Learning Support teacher meet. During this formal meeting both teachers should discuss the needs of the child and what areas should be targeted in the Learning Support room. Once these

areas have been agreed upon the teachers should devise a checklist of criteria which should be achieved by the child (Appendix 46). Once these criteria have been met then the child should be given the opportunity to return to the mainstream class full time. The checklist should then be completed by the Learning Support teacher, which both teachers should commit to with a signature. A copy of the checklist should be kept by both members of staff, and one put into the child's file, alongside the minutes of the meeting.

In spite of the increased paper work this would cause, the researcher feels that it would be of great benefit to the child because both teachers would have committed to a formal action plan and success criteria to determine a return to mainstream will have been established. In addition, the SENCO should be responsible for monitoring these checklists and instigating the return of children to their mainstream classes.

In order to monitor progress once the child has returned to the mainstream class, I recommend that the SENCO "ask[s] to see samples of pupils' work over time, so as to assess progress." (Gross, 2002) This way she can keep supervise the quality of activities being provided, and the child's progress with targets. Is the child achieving them, are they too easy or too difficult? Do the targets need to be modified and broken down into smaller steps? LST 5 cited an area of weakness as, "the Head of department does not do enough assessments on children." This recommendation intends to strengthen this current area of weakness.

A further recommendation is that the SENCO and senior management monitor teachers' planning to ensure that IEP targets are incorporated into mainstream planning. At present only 13% (n=3) of staff do so. In order to consolidate the work which takes place in the Learning Support room, mainstream teachers should provide opportunities for children to work towards their targets. Such additional practice could allow children to meet their targets quicker and perhaps this could influence their return to the mainstream class. Thus increasing effectiveness of the system as the child is withdrawn for a shorter period. If one examines this concept from a negative angle, perhaps teachers do not provide these opportunities because they do not want the child, and the extra work that they bring, back in the classroom full-time.

Whilst analyzing the school's Learning Support policy a distinct lack of reference to the children who would receive support and their parents was noticed (Appendix 42). According to the English system an annual review meeting should be held to monitor and discuss the child's progress, needs and IEP targets. The children should be involved where possible but the parents should certainly be involved. I recommend that the school establishes this practice as soon as possible. One can argue that the parents may not understand due to language barriers or levels of education but interpreters are readily available throughout the school. A further defence could be that parents don't get involved with their child's education. Perhaps this is because they have never really been provided with opportunities to do so. I strongly suggest that the school begins these annual reviews. At present the school is denying parents the opportunity to support their child's education; should they decide not to become involved then that is personal choice but at least the Learning Support department will have encouraged a parental partnership. The school needs to open up communication with parents to keep them informed and to teach them how they can support their child's needs at home. If parents are present at IEP reviews they can help in the formulation of targets and agree to support the school with these at home. Effectiveness of the Learning Support room would increase because targets may take less time to achieve if the child is working towards them at home as well, hopefully this will allow them to return to their mainstream class quicker. As early as 1978 The Warnock Report encouraged schools to work closely with parents, "It is a partnership and ideally an equal one." (DES, 1978) At present there is very little practice in the focus school which reflects this ideology. In addition, parents see the child in a variety of settings and could contribute essential information to a review meeting. In effect, the absence of this partnership could be limiting the effectiveness of the Learning Support room unnecessarily.

"The relationship between parents of children with special educational needs and the school ... has a crucial bearing on the child's educational progress and the effectiveness of any school based action." (DFE, 1994)

Staff working in the Learning Support room clearly meet the objective to, “establish a positive partnership with teachers.” (question 2, criteria 3) as 100% (n=23) agreed that there was a positive partnership, 96% (n=22) of staff viewed them as approachable. However, when the word “partnership” was probed during interviews, weaknesses were exposed based on the equality of this partnership. The Learning Support staff expressed the need for mainstream staff to take increased responsibility or interest in their pupils who are withdrawn for support. The researcher feels that time constraints could be contributing to this lack of interest and responsibility. In order to improve this area and the effectiveness of liaison between teachers, I recommend that time is allocated on a weekly basis for such liaisons (Appendix 43). At present the focus school blocks one hour per day for meetings and preparation. I propose that one hour of this time is scheduled for liaison with Learning Support staff. 57 % (n=13 ) said that they had between 4-6 children attending the Learning Support room, therefore this time would only be the equivalent of 10-15 minutes per child. If this meeting time were to become a regular, compulsory feature of the working week then not only would this working relationship increase in effectiveness but it would also provide the time to discuss when a child may be ready to return to the mainstream class. As a result more children may return to the mainstream class under the guidance of the Learning Support department, helping to bridge the gap between the two settings. With more face to face meetings, mainstream teachers may reduce the number of children that they “offload” (LST 5) onto the Learning Support teachers. “Only the children with learning difficulties should attend not...children who are ‘difficult’.” (respondent 25, Appendix 20) This could lead to increased effectiveness in the Learning Support room because greater focus could be directed towards meeting needs rather than dealing with children who are unwanted. In order to reduce this “offloading,” (LST 5) I propose that the department should observe the mainstream teacher and provide advice for in class strategies, as opposed to withdrawing the child. If the process which leads to withdrawal is made more stringent, mainstream teachers will focus more on meeting needs rather than on how to exclude a child.

The pull out system, as opposed to pull in, is preferred by 48% (n=11) of the staff; with 22% (n=5) stating no preference. 91% (n=21) of staff believed that the

department is effective in addressing the needs of the children. However, the findings have revealed that it is also viewed by some mainstream teachers as a place to send unwanted or “difficult children” (respondent 25). The Learning Support room allows teachers to pass on responsibility and feel better when children are labelled as “Learning Support” because someone else “can work [their] magic.” (LST 5) Unfortunately staff in the Learning Support room cannot always, “work [their] magic.” (LST 5) The view of the Learning Support staff is that once a child is in Learning Support, particularly in Key Stage 2, it is very difficult to reintegrate them into the mainstream class. 100% (n=5) said that full-time in the mainstream was unrealistic for all children. Therefore, one must consider the double-edged sword. Is this system actually helping or hindering the child? The Learning Support room aims to meet children’s needs and return them to the mainstream classroom; by removing them they may have their needs met but they fall further behind their peers in the mainstream. The underlying good intentions result in an ever widening gap which becomes almost impossible to fill in the majority of cases. Therefore, I recommend that the remaining two support teachers focus attention on short, sharp burst of early intervention as much as possible, in order to keep withdrawal to a minimum in the future. “Effective phonics keeps children off the SEN register.” (Marks, 2000) In addition, as previously discussed, I would recommend the SENCO to increase the stringency of testing which determines withdrawal.

After considering the results that this study has produced, the system is clearly popular amongst both staff and pupils (Appendix 44). However, is this because it is the system currently in place or the one which they think meets needs most effectively? The findings demonstrate that effectiveness of the Learning Support room can be improved and recommendations to this effect have been proposed. To accurately answer the main research question (1) “Is the Learning Support room effective in improving the academic success of children with special educational needs?” a much more in depth study would be necessary. However, based upon these findings one would have to answer yes. One sub-level was the most frequently made progress by children attending the Learning Support room. This is not in line with expected standards for average children but the children who receive pull out support are not average children. They are unique, with

their own unique set of needs; therefore one should not envisage that they will conform to this expectation. Academic progress is progress (Appendix 45). One could argue that in a class of 21 children with very little differentiation, these children would not even make one sub level of progress without pull out support.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion.

This study was designed to investigate the effectiveness of the Learning Support room in the focus school. The data had never been analysed, therefore, no one within the school could be 100% certain that the Learning Support room was an effective way to support the pupils with special educational needs. The researcher was astonished at this revelation, “It is extraordinary that so little has been done to shed light on such an important and expensive matter.” (Marks, 2000)

Once information had been collected, via document analysis, questionnaire, interviews and observations, it was analysed. The ultimate aim of the study was to make recommendations in order to improve the effectiveness of the Learning Support rooms. “Evaluation is the tool which leads to decisions about what to do next: whether to go on doing what we have put in place, or do something different.” (Gross and White, 2003)

This study has found that although the Learning Support department is effective according to the selected criteria, there are a number of improvements which need to be made, in order to further increase its effectiveness. “Education, including special education, cannot remain static.” (Jenkinson, 1997)

The Learning Support room, in the focus school, supports children who have complex needs and issues, it focuses on so much more than the limited number of criteria which this study could measure it against. Therefore, future research into this area is necessary to evaluate the true effectiveness of such a complex support system. A further study into remaining policy objectives could be conducted. As a result of the recommendation for annual review it would be interesting to assess effectiveness after its introduction, to investigate whether parental involvement can indeed increase the effectiveness of the Learning Support room. A future research area could be to investigate whether more children return to the mainstream classroom full time if the recommended training on the multi-sensory approach is delivered. Due to its limited size and



time constraints, this study was unable to investigate the social and emotional areas upon which the Learning Support room focuses. A study into confidence levels prior to and after receiving pull out support would be additional area for investigation.

It is hoped that the recommendations resulting from this study will be considered and implemented. The debate over whether the Learning Support room is outdated and segregatory will continue for years to come. The most important finding which one must bear in mind during future debates is that 81% (n=17) of the children attending the Learning Support room were happy there. When given the choice only 24% (n=5) said that they would prefer to stay in the mainstream classroom than receive this type of support.

“The basic human right is to an appropriate education, not to an inclusive education. How far this basic right can be met by provision in the same settings ... has still to be determined...indications are...it will extend to a very large majority but not to the full diversity of pupils.” (Norwich, 2002)

This investigation has clearly answered the 4 research questions upon which it was based (Appendix 47):

- (Main question) 1: Is the Learning Support room effective in improving the academic success of children with special educational needs?
- 2: To what extent is the system meeting the objectives set out in the school policy?
- 3: How is the system viewed by teachers and students?
- 4: Based on the research findings, can the effectiveness of the Learning Support room be improved, if so how?

Considering the findings of this study and Norwich's (2002) claim that not all needs may be met in the mainstream classroom; this study concludes that the Learning Support room is effective in the focus school and at present, "there is a clear need for special education." (Hocutt, 1996)

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