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Research Associate Report

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Opening doors, opening minds

Exploring co-location as a route to inclusion

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Introduction

How are schools seeking to include pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties (SLD/PMLD) into mainstream schools? One approach is through models of co-location in which mainstream and special school provision is located in the same building so that links can be established for the benefit of its pupils.

Currently, there are three main models of co-location operating in England:

- *mixed*: the two schools mix their classes together, so that a special class is next to a mainstream class
- *two schools under one roof*: the two schools operate in separate areas of the same building
- a *combination* of these two approaches.

The two schools have some areas for shared use, such as the staff room, dining hall, assembly or sports hall, library and school grounds. There may be a shared reception area but, in all other respects, the two schools operate separately and have separate governing bodies, although there are usually link governors who attend each other's meetings.

Where two schools have separate buildings on the same site, the arrangement offers locational inclusion opportunities rather than co-location as defined above. This study explored the co-location models described above in order to determine how SLD/PMLD (Severe Learning Difficulties/Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties), their mainstream partner schools and their local authorities were endeavouring to achieve effective inclusion, what the impact of this was for the schools and what lessons leaders could learn from this. (Where the 'SLD school' is referred to, this means that the SLD school is for pupils with SLD and for pupils with PMLD. Similarly, the term 'SLD pupil' always includes those with PMLD. Where the word 'pupil' is used, this also includes those aged 16–19 within SLD schools.)

The full title of this study is *Exploring co-location as a route to inclusion: a commentary on the inclusion into mainstream schools of pupils/students with severe and profound learning difficulties*. Although a great deal of research has taken place and the conclusions are evidenced, an emphasis must be placed on the word 'commentary', a commentary inevitably filtered through my own experiences and values.

Research methodology

The data was collected from sources within nine local authorities (LAs). These sources included:

- interviews from a range of schools including co-located schools, other SLD schools, and other Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools. Interviews and discussions carried out included those with headteachers, other staff, pupils and governors
- interviews with LA representatives.

In addition, interviews/discussions were held with senior representatives with SEN responsibilities from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) and Ofsted.

Does full inclusion work for the pupil with SLD?

Before co-location became established in some areas and then more generally understood, by and large it was thought that eventually, given time and input, all mainstream schools would be able to meet the needs of all of the children in their catchment area, including those with SLD. However, that prediction has not proved accurate. The London Borough of Newham, one the greatest proponents of full inclusion, has recently substantially refurbished their one remaining SLD school.

Pupils with SLD need highly skilled staff who are able to get to know them through and through; who can work exceptionally closely with their parents/carers; and who can teach them individually or in very small groups. The staff need to be able to work in a collegiate atmosphere that offers regular training, curriculum development and peer support. Every aspect of the facilities that pupils with SLD need is specialised and individualised, from the design of the classroom and toilets, to the provision of specialist areas such as multi-sensory rooms and hydrotherapy areas. And all this needs to be provided in an emotionally secure environment. It is most unlikely that every mainstream school could be provided with all of the physical facilities that are needed to provide for these pupils.

Full inclusion potentially offers the pupil with SLD enormous social benefits. Although these social benefits are very important, they cannot outweigh the enormous loss of a specialised and continually improving curricular input. In some cases there have been reports of some pupils with SLD, isolated in an inappropriate classroom within a mainstream school. Recently, the debate has fortunately turned away from the political imperative of reducing the number of special school places (so that special needs have to be met within mainstream schools), and is slowly returning to looking at how and where these special needs can best be met. This debate needs to be fostered.

What is co-location?

Co-location is where two schools, a special school and a mainstream school, share the same building. The two schools may have their classes 'mixed' together, so that a special class is next to a mainstream class; or the two schools may operate within separate areas of the building ('two schools under one roof'); or they may have a mixture of these two arrangements. The two schools have some shared use areas, such as the staff room, dining hall, assembly/sports hall, library and school grounds. There may be a shared reception area but, in all other respects, the two schools operate separately (and with separate governing bodies, although there are usually link governors who attend each other's meetings).

Co-location was first developed in Oxfordshire in the 1980s. From the perspective of those working with pupils with SLD and the pupils themselves, co-location offers:

- access to the specialist resources provided by an SLD school
- the benefits of being socially included
- the opportunities that having access to a mainstream school provides.

If the two schools have separate buildings on the same site, this cannot truly be said to be co-location, but instead provides locational inclusion opportunities (except possibly at further education [FE] level where it can be argued that this is co-location).

The co-location models

There are two main models of co-location, these being the *mixed* co-location model and the *two schools under one roof* co-location model. Both share many advantages, and have a few further advantages and minor disadvantages in comparison to each other. No one model has all of the answers. It is also possible to combine aspects of both models within the one co-located set up.

Where two schools (special and mainstream) are co-located, they operate separately in terms of their organisation. For example, they each have their own headteacher, senior staff and staffing structure. They each have their own curriculum, timetables, budget, and usually have their own governing body. However, the two schools are physically located together, and share the use of certain areas (how many and which depends on the co-location model used, and the design of the individual schools).

Why co-locate and not fully integrate the two schools? Because the curricular needs of the two sets of pupils remain radically different, with virtually no functional overlap. Therefore, full integration would inevitably mean compromise for those pupils with SLD. These two types of schools (SLD and mainstream) actually operate in very different ways, and there is no indication that this will not continue to be the case well into the future. (This is not to say that the two schools cannot both benefit from working together in many ways.)

In the *two schools under one roof* co-location model, the two schools are physically adjoining, but predominantly operate as two separate schools. The SLD school area has its own classes and many (if not all) of the specialist facilities that it requires, but it is also likely to have some shared use areas with the mainstream school, to which the SLD school will have timetabled access. The shared use areas are usually, but not exclusively, based within the mainstream school. In this model, the SLD school pupil can move about their school, and 'goes into' the mainstream school in order to join in with their activities or to use their (shared use) facilities. These shared use facilities usually include the dining and assembly halls, library and PE facilities. The staff room in a co-located school should always be 'shared use' for both sets of staff.

In the *mixed* co-location model, classes from both of the schools may be next door to each other; across a corridor from each other, or with classes grouped in areas that are immediately adjacent to each other. They have fully shared use of the corridors and the resource areas of the school. As soon as the pupil with SLD leaves their classroom and steps into the corridor, they are in a shared use area and are likely to be in contact with mainstream pupils.

The main advantage of the *two schools under one roof* model over the *mixed* model is that you still have the security of the SLD school for the pupils with SLD.

The main advantages of the *mixed* model over the *two schools under one roof* model are that there is almost constant social integration taking place, and that both the mainstream school and SLD school feel constantly in touch with one another.

Which co-location model works best and when?

From the school observations and other visits, interviews and research, including that within my own school, I draw the following conclusions.

At *nursery* level, an almost full inclusion model can work well, but this is dependent on there being a very well staffed, organised and resourced SLD input. Probably much of the parallel education (special/mainstream) taking place will be with the mainstream children 'learning through play', and the child with SLD being taught 'how to play' (before they can 'learn through play'). It is also necessary for integrated nurseries to have some specialist withdrawal facilities, particularly for their children with the most complex needs.

At *primary school* level, full inclusion often becomes a deficit model for the pupil with SLD (that is, it doesn't work to their benefit), but both of the two main co-location models can be seen to work well.

At *secondary school* level, experience is showing that the *two schools under one roof* model can be very successful. The *mixed* model is harder to operate in the secondary school environment. As with primary school education, full inclusion for the pupils with SLD is very difficult to make work well at this level.

At *FE department* (16–19) level, experience is again showing that the *two schools under one roof* model is potentially successful. In a large FE college campus, where there are many separate faculty buildings, it is possible to argue that co-location is taking place even where the students with SLD have their own building, as this fits in with the overall pattern of provision (the students with SLD must access facilities and courses across the campus).

Exceptions to the rules?

There will always be some exceptions to the above conclusions and it should be borne in mind that these conclusions can only be based on the data collected. The Darlington Education Village, opened in April 2006, where an all-age special school, a mainstream primary school and a mainstream secondary school, are co-located together into the one building, with a chief executive working alongside separate headteachers, is an interesting innovation.

Making co-location work: some good practice examples

From the data emerged examples of good practice that I outline below.

Where you have co-located facilities, the mainstream school pupils and staff do not learn disability awareness through 'osmosis'. Mainstream pupils have to be told about the SLD school and its pupils; given repeated opportunities to ask questions; and be taught about understanding and respect. The special school has to be prepared to take the lead and work at this with the mainstream school.

A common example of good practice is where all new Year 7 pupils at a mainstream secondary school that is co-located with an SLD school get an induction to the SLD school. This includes a tour and talk from the SLD school staff, and follow-up teaching by the SLD school staff in the mainstream school PSE (Personal and Social Education) lessons. The sooner the mainstream pupils get to know what happens in the SLD school classes the better it is. Otherwise they may hear 'odd noises' and occasional 'shouts' from the SLD classes that they do not understand. The same introduction for all staff new to the mainstream school is also very helpful.

Another example of good practice is where the SLD school employs a member of staff as their 'inclusion coordinator'. This can be a senior teaching assistant, or a teacher, who can be employed in a dual-purpose role that is:

- To promote inclusion. To find out what inclusion the SLD class staff would like for their pupils, and to do their best to organise and set it up; to promote reciprocal inclusion from the mainstream school to the SLD school; and to set up joint projects.
- To teach in the mainstream school about disabilities; to promote an understanding and empathy as to what it may be like to have a disability – leading to recognition of the achievements of the SLD school pupils; and to organise sessions such as 'question and answer' sessions about the SLD school (which are generally very popular with mainstream school pupils).

One inclusion coordinator said:

"I have a queue of the mainstream school pupils waiting to get into my SLD school – more than we can satisfy for some time. They particularly want to be involved for general socialising rather than formal lessons, but there's also a queue for those wanting to help with the reading and maths programmes."

There is nothing to stop both schools (SLD and mainstream) from jointly appointing and funding an inclusion coordinator post, especially as this is likely to lead to enhanced inclusion from the mainstream school into the SLD school.

The deputy headteacher of a co-located SLD school was keen to point out that having a co-located building does not automatically mean that the co-location will work well. Having a shared staff room can be seen as one essential step to getting the staff of the two schools together, but beyond that there is still a lot of work to be carried out if schools are to get the best of the opportunities presented.

The benefits of co-location to the mainstream pupil and mainstream school

The following observations were made by staff and pupils from mainstream schools that are co-located with SLD schools. Some of these benefits could be considered of equal benefit to the SLD school.

- By getting to know more about disability and severely disabled people (through the co-location experiences), the mainstream pupils gain a greater understanding and awareness of the issues around disability and prejudice. With good teaching, this can be broadened not just to cover disability, but also to cover sexism, racism and other prejudices. The mainstream pupils can have clear examples to show that we are all 'normal', with each of us having a rich variety of individual characteristics. The mainstream school pupils who themselves have a disabled sibling, or other close relative with a learning disability, get a better understanding from their school peers. Often for the first time in their school education, having a sibling with learning difficulties is something that gains acceptance from their peers. It is often thought that the 'disruptive' and lower achieving pupils from the mainstream school benefit most from contact with the SLD school pupils. This is not always the case, as the example of a mainstream school GCSE Design Technology project, with higher achieving mainstream pupils, illustrates. These pupils surveyed a need in a PMLD class; made new and enhanced existing multi-sensory equipment; and evaluated its use. Another example is an academic study undertaken by mainstream pupils of a specific syndrome, followed by investigation of the psychological effects this may have for those who have close contact with that disabled person.
- Some of the mainstream pupils in co-located schools have gone on to develop careers in special education (teaching, teaching assistant and clinical and educational psychology).
- A mainstream school teaching assistant said: "The children I individually support have differing degrees of special educational needs. Without the co-location, these children would have a harder time with their classmates".
- Some mainstream school pupils may join the SLD school classes to assist with reading and maths work. The mainstream school pupils may not realise it, but often they have been chosen to help in this way because this is an area that they are struggling with themselves. Working with the SLD school pupils promotes their self-esteem and interest, and helps them to make progress.
- There are some, albeit limited, opportunities for joint curriculum development work across the SLD and mainstream schools, involving a curriculum for the mainstream school lower achievers, and the SLD school higher achievers.
- The mainstream pupils are often better behaved when pupils with SLD are in the class with them – they respond positively to being seen as 'role models': "Even hard-nut boys will use less of the inappropriate language when the [SLD school] pupils are around. They don't necessarily want to be involved with the [SLD school] pupils, but they do moderate their language and behaviour".
- The same co-located schools report only one incident of cross-school bullying in the seven years the two schools had been co-located. The SLD school headteacher said: "The irony is that it was one of our bigger lads who was obsessively wanting to 'play cops and robbers' with one of our mainstream partner school's Year 7 pupils!".
- The mainstream school pupils often complain that they don't see or have enough contact with the SLD school pupils. They say that they want more time to 'stop seeing the disability and to start seeing the person'. They cite activities such as joint school journeys as the most successful, when they have the time to really get to know the SLD school pupils well. A mainstream schoolteacher said: "Social invitations for our pupils to be invited into [the SLD school] at a break time, or to a birthday party, are very sought after. Events like these often lead to stronger bonds when individual pupils [from the SLD school] may later join one of our lessons or pupil groups".
- All newly appointed mainstream schoolteachers ask about the involvement they are expected to have with their co-located SLD school. The answer co-

located school leaders tended to select in response was “They are there, and you have to accept this. However, there is no expectation of you being involved at all. When you feel settled, and if you want to, you can become more involved, but you don’t have to”. Initially, new mainstream school staff are concerned about having pupils with SLD placed in their classes owing to concerns that they won’t know how to deal with them. But, given support, they soon get to learn about the pupils with SLD, and very often want to work with them.

- Joint projects (SLD and mainstream school) that are well prepared can provide excellent results. An example from one co-located school would be pupils from both schools working together with an ‘artist in residence’ team on self-portraiture. As one mainstream teacher put it: “My pupils queue up for such opportunities, and want more than we can possibly arrange”.
- One co-located SLD school said that their pupils had been welcomed into games in the mainstream school’s PE lessons, even though this clearly weakened the teams that the pupils with SLD joined. The mainstream school pupils saw that enabling the pupils with SLD to take part could be every bit as gratifying as ‘winning’ a race.
- When the ‘unthinking’ actions of the mainstream school pupils have a negative effect on the SLD school, time spent in the SLD school can rectify the situation. An example occurred where some mainstream school pupils deliberately set off the fire alarm and both co-located schools had to be emptied out. Once identified, these pupils were assigned to carry out some work in the SLD school, so that they could gain a better understanding of the distress that they had caused (getting pupils with ASD and PMLD out of the building when they may have been in the hydro-pool, for example, can cause both physical problems and great pupil distress). A mainstream school senior teacher is quoted as saying: “Perversely, our pupils sent to your [SLD school] classes to atone for their misbehaviour always then really enjoy working with you. The good thing is that it also has a positive effect on their understanding and behaviour when they return to us”.
- The special school, its pupils and its work, become understood by the mainstream school staff and pupils. They are, as a consequence, valued. The mainstream staff are able to benefit from aspects of the SLD school staff expertise, for example, expertise in behaviour management, and areas such as autism, epilepsy, meeting pupil medical and physical needs and drawing up Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- In one interview, three staff from a mainstream secondary school were asked if they would be happier if their school was not co-located with an SLD school, and they immediately replied “No”. When asked if they would recommend co-location to colleagues in other mainstream secondary schools, the answer was an equally emphatic and united “Yes”

Comments from mainstream school pupils

Below are quotes from Year 9 pupils at a mainstream secondary school, having had two years’ experience of co-location (taken from the video ‘Two schools under one roof’).

“At first I was a bit wary of sharing a school with disabled people.”

“It’s different having to share our school because we learn how they [the SLD school pupils] are different and how they do things differently to us, like sign language and speaking differently.”

“In another school you’d never have these experiences.”

“It makes you more respectful for people in general.”

“They’re [the SLD school pupils] not just, like, strange, they can learn properly and stuff.”

“The people in our school, I think, wouldn’t like them as much if we didn’t share a school with them.”

“Before I moved to this school I was, em, I just didn’t like disabled people.”

“What I like best about sharing a school with Hazel Court is that you can all learn together.”

“I think it helps you understand people and their problems.”

“You kind of feel what it would be like to be disabled.”

“At lunchtimes I see my sister’s class and my sister, and I sit with her.”

“I think it’s a good thing that schools are co-located.”

“I think that I’ve bonded with some people [in the SLD school].”

“Some share the same likes and dislikes as you, which makes them your friends.”

“I think the world would be better if all schools were integrated.”

“I think that in the future, that more schools should be co-located, to get the opportunity and experience of sharing the school with disabled people.”

“You get to become a lot more tolerant of other people and you get a better experience of what it’s going to be like in the real world.”

The benefits of co-location to the SLD school pupil and the SLD school

The following observations were made by staff and pupils from SLD schools that are co-located with mainstream schools.

- Co-location gives the opportunity for each SLD school pupil to have as much or as little inclusion into the mainstream setting as is appropriate to their needs. It would be very wrong to assume that every child with SEN, including those with SLD and PMLD, can benefit all the time from being placed in a mainstream class if we can only get the staffing and facilities right. Co-location offers “the best of both worlds” for the SLD school pupil, with all of the specialist teaching and facilities they require, and immediate opportunities for access to and inclusion in the mainstream school.
- When you operate from a SLD school on its own, it is often the transport and staff issues that dictate the amount of integration/inclusion you can undertake, not the actual needs of the pupils. With co-location, transport is not an issue at all, and staffing problems are greatly reduced; staff aren’t wasting time getting pupils to and from a placement, and only give the level of support that is needed when it is needed.
- Many, more of the SLD school pupils get inclusion opportunities in a co-located school than they can from a segregated special school provision. Fifty per cent of one co-located SLD school’s pupils attend at least one mainstream school lesson, or part lesson, each week, in addition to the social inclusion opportunities that can take place during, for example, shared lunchtimes.

- The SLD school pupil doesn't have to stay for whole lessons in the mainstream school (the investment in attending part of a lesson wouldn't be worth it when travelling from a separate special school). Where appropriate, the SLD school pupils can join part lessons in the mainstream school, for example, the practical part of a food technology session or the first 20 minutes of an academic lesson for the pupil with high functioning autism who can't maintain concentration for longer.
- Co-location can make it possible for the special school pupil to 'go to the same school' as their mainstream sibling.
- Both sets of pupils (mainstream and SLD) learn to readily accept and cope with the presence of the other. It is usual for both sets of pupils to wear the same colour school uniform (except that each school may have their own badge – although some co-located schools share this as well).
- Both sets of pupils and their parents/carers can come together at a range of events. Having said that, one school that has been co-located for some time reported that they have moved away from these. For example, they no longer have a shared Christmas entertainment for parents, finding it more appropriate for each school to stage its own with contributions from the other. Now they only have shared events where they feel it is genuinely appropriate and with benefits all round.
- The mainstream school pupils, with support and direction from the staff of both schools, learn to respect the SLD school pupils, and to recognise their achievements despite very considerable obstacles. This leads to acceptance, and, as often reported, a lack of cross-school bullying.
- The SLD school can provide the psychological support in a sensitive and safe setting from which the special school pupil can safely venture into the mainstream school. The understanding of the mainstream school pupils towards those from the SLD school then ensures their acceptance, and their success, in this overall supportive environment.
- The mainstream pupils recognise and acknowledge, for example, say 'hello' to, the SLD school pupils when out of school. This simple greeting, acknowledging 'worth', can have a very positive effect on the SLD pupil and their parent/carer. The SLD school pupils have ready access to a range of specialist teaching that they wouldn't come close to in the SLD school alone. The SLD school teaching staff have access to this specialist support from their mainstream colleagues. Over time, the mainstream staff develop the confidence to work with the SLD school pupils. One excellent example is a mainstream secondary school science teacher who set up and ran practical science sessions for pupils from an SLD school special unit for extreme challenging behaviour. Due to the interaction with the mainstream school, the SLD school curriculum is likely to develop additional breadth and depth.
- The SLD school pupils have access to a range of physical facilities in the mainstream school that they could not expect to find in an SLD school on its own. For example, one co-located SLD school said the mainstream school's design technology area was more like a manufacturing factory floor, including full computer-aided design (CAD) facilities. It is now possible for their SLD school pupils to be able to design an item on a computer screen and then to see it produced on an industrial lathe. Also, they have access to fully equipped sports facilities, the range of instruments found in an orchestra, an assembly hall with cinema quality projection facilities and so on.
- The practical elements of some of the mainstream school curriculum areas (such as PE, music and food technology) are obviously more suited to bring together the pupils of the SLD and the mainstream school. However, as one SLD inclusion coordinator said: "PE is excellent, but we have also had great successes with science, maths, design technology and history".

- For the teaching staff in a co-located SLD school, the mainstream staff learn about their work and value it – the SLD school staff are not seen as ‘something different’ but as a professional service, with work of equal quality to that of their own.
- One of the biggest benefits that the staff of one co-located SLD school report is moving the school from an ‘all-age’ 2–19 school to separately phased and separately co-located SLD schools, that is, from one all-age school, to separate primary, secondary and FE phases. They were then able to start thinking about the curriculum from the perspective of each phase, and the curriculum developed exponentially (to the considerable benefits of the pupils). A further advantage from this phasing is that the pupils enormously benefit from the change of school. When they move from primary to secondary, and from secondary to FE, the change not only allows the SLD school to develop an ethos and approach that is appropriate to that age range, but the pupils themselves ‘mature’ into the requirements of this next stage.
- Co-location offers the special school staff a constant ‘mainstream child development model’.
- Co-location can give constant social integration opportunities although the ‘mixed’ model does so more than the ‘two schools’ model.

Comments from SLD school pupils

These comments were from secondary-aged SLD school pupils after two years of secondary co-location (taken from the video ‘Two schools under one roof’).

“Sharing a school is like talking to each other.”

“You can get lessons in [the other] school.”

“It’s nice, integrating.”

“I’m going into [the other] school to do textiles.”

“I’m going to do music with [the other] school soon.”

“This school is lovely. I’ve enjoyed it – being here.”

“I prefer sharing this school.”

“All schools should be integrated.”

“My brother goes to [the other] school.”

“I like going to [the other] school because you can make friends.”

“I like all my friends in [the other] school classroom.”

“I’ve made friends [in the other school].”

“All other schools should be like this.”

“I think that all schools should be shared.”

Some case examples Of SLD/PMLD inclusion into mainstream school provision

Bishopswood School (SLD)

Bishopswood School in Oxfordshire was probably the first SLD school to practice co-location, when it sent some class groups into the Sonning Common Primary School. Now, and for many years, Bishopswood has been fully co-located onto the Sonning Common Primary School site, and onto the Chiltern Edge Secondary School site. Interestingly, while the primary co-location is very much the *two schools under one roof* model with newly built SLD school facilities, the secondary school classes are more of the *mixed* model, mainly due to the constraints of the mainstream secondary school building. Bishopswood has no SLD 16–19 provision – this is provided by the local FE college. Information on Bishopswood School is available from www.bishopswood.oxon.sch.uk

Springfield School (SLD)

Springfield have just opened new co-located primary facilities with Madley Park Primary School on a site that they together call 'The Bronze Barrow'. These newly built schools have been designed and built together for co-location – a true *mixed* model. The schools have a central corridor that runs for three-quarters of a circle, with the mainstream classes on one side and the special school classes on the other. There is an integrated nursery, with an additional nursery facility that the SLD school alone use.

Springfield are building new secondary facilities on the site of Wood Green Secondary School, and these are to be the *two schools under one roof* co-location model.

Glyne Gap School (SLD) Nursery

Glyne Gap is a (Beacon) SLD school in Bexhill, East Sussex (and a sister school to Hazel Court). Working in partnership with their neighbouring mainstream primary school, a nursery has been built on the land of the primary school, with half of the total funding fundraised and half from grants. This new nursery (opened in Spring 2005) has around 20 mainstream places and six full time (or 12 x 0.5 full-time) SEN places, and was purpose-designed with the SEN pupils in mind. A private provider (the local FE college) operates the nursery, but Glyne Gap staffs and operates the SEN nursery provision. This provides excellent inclusive provision for the pupils with SEN, especially as Glyne Gap School, with all of the SLD school facilities and back up it offers, is just a few metres away.

Glyne Gap School (SLD) FE department provision

In September 2004, Glyne Gap School opened a co-located FE department with Bexhill FE College. This differs from the Hazel Court School FE department, which has a separate building on the larger Sussex Downs College campus that is made up of separate buildings. Bexhill College built one large new building for their college, and Glyne Gap has their premises sited directly inside the main entrance area – a very clear statement that 'these students are here and included'. Glyne Gap has also introduced an 'open front door' policy, which contrasts with the security that the Hazel Court FE department maintains. The 'open front door' policy clearly encourages the involvement of the mainstream students, and allows those SLD school students who can be more independent every opportunity to be so – there are greater social inclusion opportunities. The 'security first' model provides an

environment within which those who are vulnerable, less able, or more challenging, can safely operate with minimal supervision. However, both of these co-location models are overwhelmingly better than segregated provision.

Beaumont Hill School (SLD) – Darlington Education Village

This opened in April 2006, and brings together three schools (mainstream primary, mainstream secondary and an all-age special school – Beaumont Hill), into one complex. These three separate schools, each with their own headteacher and their own organisation, but with one chief executive and one governing body, come together in one new and purpose-designed building. The Beaumont Hill classrooms are spread out among the mainstream primary and secondary school classes, mainly in a *mixed* co-location model.

Briarwood School (SLD)

Briarwood built the Briarfield Centre, which is a secondary and FE-aged SLD school, onto the Whitefield Fishponds Secondary School in Bristol. The Briarfield Centre's new facilities opened in 2002 and, using the *two schools under one roof* model, built onto a mainstream secondary school that is itself due for complete rebuilding in the next few years. The Briarfield facilities will remain, and the new secondary school will be rebuilt around them. They have plans to co-locate their FE department next, hopefully soon followed by the co-location of their primary school.

Local education authority developments

I visited several local education authorities (LEAs) where they have taken the lead with plans to move their existing special schools into co-located facilities. Different methods of achieving this are being used, from formally closing all of the special schools in the LEA and reopening them as new schools in co-located faculties, to discussing and moving to co-location on an individual special school basis. Some LEAs are using this opportunity to make other changes to their special schools, such as primary/secondary phasing; changing the disability range they cover; and reducing the overall number of special school places.

Conclusions

My school visits, interviews and reading suggest that:

- Co-location has great benefits for both the SLD school and mainstream school pupils. It offers specialist provision and inclusion, 'the best of both worlds', to the pupils with SLD/PMLD.
- Having SLD schools with primary and secondary phases on the same site is also difficult to justify (except possibly in the case of very small schools). Where there is no primary/secondary divide in the SLD school, plans ought to be developed to create a primary/secondary divide with new co-located provision.
- Where the local mainstream provision has separate secondary and FE (16–19) provision, then the SLD school should mirror this (except possibly in the case of very small schools). As above, any new provision should be co-located. The SLD school should operate their 16–19 provision (not the Learning and Skills Council [LSC]), and the LEA should maintain the statement as school-based provision. Then, the students with SLD could have full access to an LSC-funded SEN course at age 19.
- Full inclusion for pupils with SLD into mainstream school classes is difficult to make work well apart from at nursery level. However, it is fully acknowledged that for many pupils with other SENs (that is, not SLD/PMLD), a well resourced and well staffed full inclusion model can be highly appropriate.
- Where the opportunity arises, it is better again to co-locate the SLD school with a new-build mainstream school, so that both schools can be purpose-designed for the co-location. Therefore, every new-build mainstream school should be considered for co-location.
- Co-location is clearly the model that many LEAs are now looking towards and developing for their SLD provision. Co-location is the future for SLD schools.

Other points of interest that arose during the research

You cannot research into co-location in SLD schools and SLD education without touching on a number of points that are of significant interest in the development of SLD education, and some of these are listed here. Many of these areas would benefit from further research in their own right. Below are my personal views built from the experience of this study:

- There is no suggestion that existing segregated ('on their own') SLD schools do not do their very best to include their pupils in mainstream education wherever they can, but all acknowledge that they would like to do much more. All are likely to already have some inclusion activities that are exciting and truly innovative, but this just serves to illustrate how much more they could achieve in a co-located setting.
- When you get a new SLD school co-location build, the SLD school staff must work closely with the architect and builders, so as to effectively design and build their new co-located premises themselves. SLD schoolwork is so specialised that there are few useful blueprints for classrooms, facilities and buildings. The message is: 'Learn from what others have done, then design and build it better yourself'.
- In designing a new co-located SLD school, argue first for as much space as you can get. Bigger classrooms help with providing separate areas for pupils who find confinement difficult (for example, the increasing number of pupils with autism), and another priority is storage space for the ever increasing specialist equipment that is needed.

- Dynamic leadership from the SLD school itself is likely to bring about the best results in setting up co-location. The headteacher who is clear and convincing in their drive for co-location is likely to develop the best facilities with the most committed staff, with the greatest benefits to the pupils. However, this should not prevent LEAs from taking a lead where this lead is not coming from the schools, then hopefully handing over to the special school headteachers. But, problems are more likely to occur if the LEA includes other and contentious actions alongside a co-location project (such as a reduction in the overall number of special school places, or the closing of schools rather than an agreed amalgamation).
- Often, it is headteachers who have been in post at a school for many years who have been able to work, over time, to bring about co-location developments for their schools. Co-location aside, SLD schools are changing at a frenetic rate, and the good SLD school can list the moves forward it has made year on year. The curriculum, teaching quality, school organisation and so on remain vital, but it is essential that the headteacher can 'look up and see the bigger picture'.
- There are some areas/aspects that really should be shared in a co-located school. These include the staff room, reception area, school uniform, dining facilities and assembly halls. One area that the SLD school always needs, including in a co-located setting, is a safe and secure external play area.
- Some years ago there was the suggestion that co-located schools would, in time, develop into the one school with just the one (usually mainstream) headteacher. There is no sign of this happening, except possibly for the Darlington Education Village with its 'chief executive' model (where the special school headteacher is currently the chief executive). For all other co-located schools, including those who have been co-located for many years, there is no sign of one headteacher being appointed, as the leadership and management demands of SLD and mainstream schools remain very distinctly separate (that is, the ever developing specialist knowledge that is required to operate an SLD school is not taking SLD schools any closer to the mainstream school agenda).
- For the co-located SLD school headteacher, effectively managing and leading with more than one site, and working with a co-located partner school, takes much additional planning and effort. Making better provision for pupils requires additional work from the team leaders (and especially the headteacher). On the positive side, it also demands an organisational set-up that may lead to enhanced distributive leadership.
- The SLD school is inevitably more flexible in its curriculum and other organisation than a mainstream secondary school can be – SLD schools are used to constantly making adaptations and changes. Therefore, in the co-located setting, it should come as no surprise that the mainstream school often has to work under constraints that mean the SLD school has to be the most flexible partner in the agreement.
- If you decide to draw up a formal agreement across the co-located schools (that is, about use of shared areas, cleaning arrangements, energy costs, etc), trying to 'dot every i and cross every t', means you could find yourself either constantly changing the agreement, or caught in a straightjacket. Where possible agreement should be in principle, with the day-to-day practice left for the practitioners to develop with understanding and in partnership. Sometimes having an outside expert can help, for instance to determine the energy cost divide (where these can't be metered separately), or to produce a simple arbitration process to cover any disputes that may arise. From the SLD school point of view, one piece of excellent advice I received and always pass on is, if you have the *two schools* model of co-location, have your own caretaking and cleaning staff! It's always a good idea

to then contribute to the costs of cleaning the shared use areas (or to arrange for the SLD school to clean some of them).

A final personal comment

All special schools are changing. More pupils with SENs are having their educational needs met in mainstream provision; increasing numbers of pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are being recognised; improvements in the curriculum and teaching methodology are coming apace; there is ever greater understanding and diagnosis of individual disability; IEPs are improving; and so on. In this line of work, we can never stop innovating and moving forward, and we have so much more yet to achieve. Most LEAs have a SEN development group looking towards the future of their special schools. With all of these developments going on, now is the time to recognise that co-location is the way forward for pupils with SLD. Those LEAs who are still building new, or extensively refurbishing, segregated and 'all-age' SLD provision, when they could use this opportunity to build phased co-located SLD schools, should rethink their policy.

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Appendix 1: A case study – development of special education, then co-location, focusing on Hazel Court School

Hazel Court is now an 11–19 SLD special school for some 90 pupils and students, working across two sites (plus some limited further facilities on a third site). The two main sites are:

- a co-located secondary school (SLD school and mainstream secondary school together)
- a co-located FE department (SLD FE provision and mainstream college together).

Together, they provide some of the best secondary and FE provision for pupils with SLD in the country (Ofsted Inspection Report, April 2004).

A brief look back into history

Hazel Court was originally built in 1964 as a ‘junior training centre’, operated by the Department of Health, and at that time it was the one junior training centre for the whole of East Sussex (an area that was later covered by no less than five SLD schools). There was no state education for people with learning difficulties at that time, and if you had learning difficulties you could attend a training centre for ‘constructive occupation’ as long as you could walk, talk and had no behaviour problems. If you didn’t fit into the training centre set up, you lived in or attended a long-stay hospital, or stayed at home with your parents. Although special education has progressed a very long way in the 30 or more years since then, it may be argued that special education has got easily as much to achieve in the next 30 years, and co-location is the future for SLD schools.

In April 1971, at the inception of state special school education, the Hazel Court ‘junior training centre’ was transformed into Hazel Court School, using exactly the same building and staff. The terminology of the time was that Hazel Court was a school for children who were ‘Severely Sub-Normal’ (an SSN school).

Originally a school for boys and girls with SLD aged 5–16, following changes in the law the Hazel Court School age range developed to 2–16, and then to 2–19 (as did all such schools). These became known as ‘Educationally Sub-Normal – Severe’ schools’ (ESNS for short), before they advanced again to become SLD schools, the name by which they are still usually called today.

Since state special school provision commenced in 1971, the ability range of the pupils catered for at Hazel Court School, and SLD schools in general, has considerably widened, fortunately paralleled by radical improvements in the breadth and quality of the education on offer. However, by the early 1990s it was clear that the Hazel Court School building (the ex-junior training centre) was fast approaching the end of its usefulness, particularly in that it had to cater for children from 2–19 years of age across a very wide ability range, and with limited opportunities for integration with mainstream peers when operating from this segregated educational setting.

Hazel Court School had first heard about ‘co-location’ from South Oxfordshire. In October 1986, the headteachers from Bishopswood SLD School and Sonning Common Primary School had gone to Eastbourne, at the invitation of a local parents’ action group, to talk about how their two schools were coming together with classes in the one building. For those SLD school staff who had been wondering (for some time) where SLD schools should be going in the future, attending this meeting was

quoted as “like having the shutters lifted from my eyes”. Hazel Court School started to push for co-location and, coming from the position of having very poor and unsuitable accommodation, found a willing partner in the LEA.

The process of persuasion

Learning from the Oxfordshire experience, it was realised that there was an order to follow if everyone was to be taken forward to co-location without becoming involved in drawn-out arguments, especially without unnecessarily worrying parents/carers and pupils.

Developing co-location starts with the school staff – they need to be involved first. If the staff are not accepting about co-location, then parents and governors will immediately pick up this negativity. So, Hazel Court started by telling their staff all about the Oxfordshire experiences, what the staff and parents there felt, and they sent some key staff on visits to see for themselves and to report back. All this took time, and it was only once the staff really knew what co-location was, and that their basic class roles were not going to radically alter (but they would develop), that the next step was taken. Hazel Court then approached some local mainstream schools with requests for co-location opportunities, and a junior school and a secondary school responded saying that they had empty classes that Hazel Court could use, so Hazel Court started sending some of its SLD class groups to spend time in these schools. It wasn't straightforward, with transport and covering staff breaks particular problems, and all sorts of other minor issues arising (such as the deputy headteacher regularly doing an additional lunch duty guarding the open exit from the mainstream school playground, but the SLD school pupils were far too involved with everything else to realise the possibility of ‘escaping’!). Each issue was dealt with one by one. The biggest problems arose from not having access to the facilities of the special school – it wasn't possible to spend more than a day or so comfortably in the mainstream schools without needing access to some of the specialised facilities and support back at the SLD school. Clearly, only a co-located set-up with most of the SLD school facilities available on the mainstream site would solve these difficulties.

Once all of the staff were at least not ‘over concerned’ about the idea of co-location, the headteacher and senior staff started talking in more detail to the governors and the LEA, and used the local ‘co-location experiences’ as further positive evidence. Both of the mainstream schools that had been involved said that their pupils had benefited so much by having involvement with the SLD school pupils that they would welcome the LEA building co-located premises onto their schools. The Hazel Court School governors quickly accepted the benefits of co-location and became actively supportive. Then the LEA, given the poor Hazel Court School building (the ex-junior training centre), started to look at which local mainstream schools Hazel Court could best build co-located premises onto.

Only then was it time to start working in detail with the parents/carers, with the idea of Hazel Court moving whole sections of the school onto existing mainstream school sites. Having worked with the governors, the headteacher and senior staff had already spent time with the parent governors, explaining the co-location, and the parent governors became passionate advocates (some of them had been involved bringing the Bishopswood and Sonning Common headteachers to Eastbourne in the first place). The parent governors were also perfectly placed to speak of the main concerns that the parents/carers had, and these were:

- Would their children be bullied by the mainstream children?
- Would the co-located school be physically safe (that is, could their children get out, or could others get in and therefore put their child at risk)?

- Would the special school, in time, be taken over by the mainstream school? (They very much didn't want this.)

These concerns were addressed head-on with all of the parents/carers, by those working to promote the co-location raising them first. They showed that the co-location to date had no evidence of cross-school bullying; that there was a need to build physically safe and secure premises; and that the governing body would do all it could to ensure that Hazel Court School continued to exist as a separate entity from any mainstream school partner (and the LEA publicly accepted this – at least for the medium term).

Then Hazel Court School had a major stroke of luck. The LEA decided they needed to build an additional mainstream secondary school in Eastbourne. It was clearly better to design and build a new co-located secondary school for Hazel Court than to co-locate it onto an existing mainstream secondary school.

The appointed architect produced some nice designs for a co-located Hazel Court School, based on the DfES outlines, and which the Hazel Court staff politely put aside. They invited the architect to visit the existing school to meet the children and staff, and to work *with* them to design a co-located school – a challenge the architect readily accepted. The Hazel Court staff asked the architect to argue for as much space as possible for the new school, and then sat down together and designed every element of the new building. The school staff learned from the architect what was possible, and then produced the outline designs for him to draw up.

The Hazel Court senior staff asked their existing class staff teams (that is, teacher and teaching assistants) to design their own 'ideal' class, and then came together with their ideas, and incorporated the best ideas into the final design (although each class also had unique elements). They also very specifically designed different classrooms with the different needs of the pupils in mind (for example, specific PMLD classes).

All of the Hazel Court staff were asked what resource and other areas they would want in a new school, and the staff were then allocated responsibility for coming up with the design for each area. For example, the secretary designed the school office; the mid-day supervisory assistants worked with the class staff on the dining halls and playground; the teachers and teaching assistants with pupils with PMLD designed the specialised toilet areas (they drew them out on the playground floor, and then tried manoeuvring with hoists and wheelchairs, and so on); the NHS physiotherapy team designed the hydro pool area; the staff with an interest in multi-sensory equipment designed the multi-sensory room; and so on. The visiting teacher of the deaf made sure the materials used produced good acoustics and that sound loops were included where appropriate. The visiting teacher of the visually impaired had an enormous say in the colour schemes used throughout (that is, all of the doorways were picked out in a specific colour scheme). All fed back to each other, then to the headteacher and the architect. The headteacher or another member of staff attended every meeting that the builders held (at least weekly, including throughout the school holidays), and therefore nothing happened in the design and building of the school that the school staff didn't know about and had an influence on. It was very hard work (there was a school to run at the same time), but now, seven years after the new co-located secondary school opened, it can be said that there aren't many things that would have been designed better. The lesson is that no one knows better than the practitioners what is needed, and if you allow the practitioners to contribute to and take control of the process, no one else can do better. There are only a very few co-located secondary or FE SLD schools that come close to the quality of provision that the Hazel Court School pupils have.

Then, in September 1998, all of the secondary and FE-aged Hazel Court School pupils moved into their new, purpose-built, SLD secondary school (the 'Hazel Court Secondary School'), co-located with the Causeway School, the new Eastbourne mainstream secondary school. Inspired by the co-location achieved by the Oxfordshire SLD schools, this was the first 'purpose-built' co-located SLD and mainstream school in Britain (and the first that we know of anywhere).

The Hazel Court/Causeway School co-location is often (and aptly) described as *two schools under one roof*. Both schools operate as very separate entities, but come together wherever they can and when it is appropriate. Both schools have their own separate facilities and areas, but also have shared areas (the main hall, sports hall, library, dining halls and outside grounds). Having the one shared staff room is integral to the success of the two schools. In addition, each school is able to use the specialist areas of the other (for example, music rooms, hydro pool, etc). The two schools are very clearly known to be 'co-located', with shared external signage and the one entrance area (with separate reception desks). The two schools are divided only by doors and windows, but the doors can only be operated by a swipe card system. Every Hazel Court pupil can get an integration experience at lunchtimes in the dining hall, and at the time of writing this report, some 50% of the Hazel Court pupils are regularly attending lessons within the Causeway School.

Prior to the opening of the Causeway School there were concerns raised by the parents/carers of the mainstream pupils who would be attending there, that being co-located with a special school would have a negative effect on the education of their children. The headteacher of Hazel Court School therefore attended the initial Causeway School recruitment meetings, and assured their parents/carers that this would not be the case. A year later, when the Causeway were recruiting their second intake, the Hazel Court headteacher offered to attend these meetings again. "No need" said the Causeway's headteacher, "120 pupils have gone home and told their parents and the community that sharing the building with Hazel Court is great".

Although the Hazel Court School had 11- to 19-year-olds in the new co-located secondary school building, their partner co-located mainstream secondary school (the Causeway School) only covered the 11–16 age range. Therefore, the SLD school headteacher had previously approached the local FE college with a request to build an SLD FE department on their new college site. At the very first meeting and only ten minutes into the proposal, the college principal said "Yes". The discussions and formal planning between the two different bodies (the LEA and the Further Education Funding Council [FEFC], now the LSC), took some time, but in September 2000 the new Hazel Court School FE department building opened in the middle of the local FE college campus (Sussex Downs College), and the Hazel Court students aged 16–19 moved out from the co-located secondary school and into these new co-located FE department facilities. Again, this project was developed and designed by the Hazel Court staff every step of the way, and this allowed them to make some radical changes to the design well into the process, learning from the experience of the new co-located secondary school. For example, they moved some classes from the first floor to the ground floor (to get all of the classes together on the ground floor), *after* the building work had started! Again, this was the first 'purpose-built' co-located SLD school FE department known of. This new Hazel Court School FE department was so successful that it opened with every place taken (including immediately filling the additional class space that had been built in for longer-term expansion), with a number of students attending from MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulty) school provision that stopped at age 16.

At this stage, Hazel Court School as a whole consisted of the Hazel Court Primary School, the Hazel Court Secondary School, and the Hazel Court School FE department. With the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body

overseeing these three separate phases, there were superb opportunities for each phase to develop an individual identity and to focus on the curricular needs of their age range alone. For example a pupil aged six at a one-year developmental level needs a different approach from a pupil aged 16 but who is at the same developmental level. At a younger age there may be a case for a purer academic input, whereas at the FE department education will be much more about putting skills and knowledge into practical use. All of this is much easier to focus and build on in age-related settings. As a consequence, the curriculums at each phase started to rapidly evolve, and then to diverge from each other, as the staff were able to focus on the needs of their age groups. Some of the Hazel Court teachers say that the benefits of phasing the school (into primary, secondary and FE), are as great as the benefits that the co-location has brought.

With a co-located secondary school, and a co-located FE department, the LEA agreed that the next stage in the development of the school would be to co-locate the Hazel Court Primary School. By this stage, Hazel Court was so sure of the benefits of building new co-located facilities that it was agreed to co-locate the primary school with the next new-build mainstream primary school in the Eastbourne area, and not to co-locate with an existing mainstream primary school. However, the LEA and DfES policy of placing pupils with SEN in mainstream settings (in SLD terms this is a political imperative, not an educational one), left the existing Hazel Court Primary School with a decreasing number of pupils. So, led by the headteachers of Hazel Court and the local MLD primary school, the Hazel Court Primary School was successfully amalgamated with the Downs School (MLD primary) in September 2003, to form a new school (the South Downs School), under the direction of the staff and governors of the MLD school. However, the plan remains to co-locate this new SLD/MLD primary school with a new-build mainstream primary school at the soonest opportunity.

Currently this leaves Hazel Court School as an 11–19 special school with some 90 places, on two new and co-located sites. The school covers the SLD and PMLD range, but also attracts and provides for an increasing number of pupils and students with abilities well into the MLD range.

The staff at Hazel Court still look to others with greater co-location experience, to plan for the future. In particular, five of the Oxfordshire SLD schools are now fully co-located and have been for many years and, consequently, they have many years of collected experience to learn from.

How the co-location has changed the nature of Hazel Court School

- From visiting and learning from the experiences of the Oxfordshire SLD schools, the Hazel Court School staff and governors knew that their new and co-located premises would attract a broader ability range. The new facilities, and their 'on tap' immediate mainstream integration access, made this provision much more attractive to some of the pupils who had previously attended the local MLD special schools. Once a core group of pupils with abilities into the MLD range had been established, many more wanted to attend Hazel Court. Although Hazel Court still registers with the DfES as primarily being an SLD school, approaching one third of the pupils at the secondary school have abilities into the MLD range, and around half of the students at the FE department are also within the MLD range. Initially, the staff found meeting the educational needs of this broader ability range daunting, but they were able to appoint some teachers with good MLD teaching experience, and to organise their classes appropriately, and now all of the Hazel Court teaching staff cover the ability range without difficulty.

- Hazel Court chose to build large classrooms (more so in their secondary school than the FE department, where less building land was available). The 68m² to 72m² classes at the secondary school (plus 1:1 rooms off each class), for a maximum of nine pupils, mean that they can set up areas for individual pupils, and have great flexibility within each classroom to reorganise. They realised in advance that having this classroom space, and other facilities, would mean having pupils with additional challenging behaviours referred to them from outside of their designated catchment area, where their local special school may be struggling with a lack of facilities, and this indeed happened. Fortunately, the staffing expertise in working with challenging behaviours at Hazel Court is very good, and the LEA recognise the additional pressure this places on the school – they support the school through supplementary funding to provide additional staffing support for these challenging pupils. However, Hazel Court are now having to place a limit on the number of pupils they can accept from outside of their usual catchment area with additional challenging behaviours.
- Because of the co-location and the new facilities, it is inevitable that Hazel Court may appear more attractive than some of their sister schools, and parents/carers who live outside of the usual catchment area may want to send their children to them. The school tries to resist this.
- Just before they opened their first co-located facility in 1998 (the Hazel Court Secondary School), Hazel Court School as a whole had some 70 registered pupils. By the start of 2003, when they still had the Hazel Court Primary School, their pupil numbers had risen to 120. Now, without the primary phase, the LEA has capped the numbers at around 90 (the school has space for another secondary class group and the pupils who want to attend, but the LEA do not want the school's pupil numbers to rise further).

Hazel Court School into the future

- With the Hazel Court FE department co-located onto the local FE college site (Sussex Downs College), it is easier for far more of the Hazel Court students to progress onto an LSC special needs course at the college. However, a significant percentage of the Hazel Court students, and always including those with profound learning difficulties or challenging behaviour, cannot access these courses. Having looked across the South of England, the Hazel Court FE department staff have found some FE colleges that offer part-time courses for those with profound learning difficulties, but the quantity and/or quality of the provision is limited. Hazel Court wants this post-19 education to be of the same quality as at their FE department. Therefore, Hazel Court is going into partnership with Sussex Downs College, and is allowing them to build two large classrooms onto the existing Hazel Court FE department building. This will allow Sussex Downs College to provide for post-19 students with profound learning difficulties, as they can have continued access to the Hazel Court FE department facilities (hall, food technology room, multi-sensory room, art room, curriculum resource room, library, staff room, etc). Most importantly, as the building will be shared, Sussex Downs will have access to the Hazel Court staffing expertise. It is hoped that this new provision, funded by the LSC, will open in 2006.
- Hazel Court currently operates an additional and highly specialist class for the LEA, with a small number of pupils (currently four) with ASD and very severe challenging behaviour, to seven staff. Without this facility, these pupils would have to attend incredibly expensive private residential schools, none of which are near to East Sussex, when their parents want them to remain living at or close to home. This class group is accommodated in temporary facilities and not on the Hazel Court Secondary School site. Hazel Court is now

working with the LEA towards designing and building the very specialist facilities required onto their co-located secondary school for this very complex class, plus working with a private home provider to set up 24-hour provision (a 'waking curriculum' – the school will guide the staff training, the pupil activities, and set the programmes; the private provider will staff and operate them for the 'out-of-school' time). Particularly where you have parents who want to keep these most changing children with them at or close to home, Hazel Court wants to do all that it can in support. If all goes well, this could be up and running in around three years' time.

Appendix 2: Some definitions and understandings

Severe Learning Difficulties, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties, Profound Learning Difficulties

Throughout this research, where the 'SLD school' is referred to, this presupposes that the SLD school is for pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), *and* for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).

Similarly, a referral to the 'pupil with SLD' always includes those with PMLD.

Where the word 'pupil' is used, this also includes the 'students' (that is, those aged 16–19) within SLD schools.

Traditionally, pupils with PMLD are likely to have severe physical disabilities and be wheelchair users. However, it is increasingly recognised that there is a group of pupils who can be very physically active but who also function at a level of Profound Learning Difficulties (PLD), and these may be said to be pupils with PLD.

Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)

A person with SLD is likely to be within the first percentile in child development terms; and P Level scores are likely to be around Levels 4 to 8 (but they may hit Level 1 in a few National Curriculum areas).

A person with SLD will not learn by experience in the same way that 'mainstream' children and people do, unless those experiences are structured, supported and repeated for them. For example, they will need to learn 'how to play' before they can start to 'learn through play'.

A person with SLD is likely to have a very spiky and uneven development profile, sometimes with some abilities that are considerably enhanced, or considerably poorer, than others. Specific disabilities will cause specific deficits.

On the whole, people with SLD will not be 'street-wise'.

Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and Profound Learning Difficulties (PLD)

People with PMLD/PLD are functioning at a level that always requires substantial additional support. They will be working within Levels 1 to 4 of the P Levels, and will not achieve Level 1 of the National Curriculum in any area. They will mainly be functioning at up to a one-year level in child development terms. They will have little or no speech; may need help with feeding and toileting; and are likely to have multiple impairments, including medical problems (for example, uncontrolled epilepsy, gastrostomy, etc). They may be wheelchair users or unsteady on their feet but, on the other hand, some can be highly mobile. Occasionally you find areas of ability that are above the usually accepted PLD range but, because of their multiple disabilities (and often because of additional autism), they effectively function at this lower level. These people are likely to benefit from a sensory and experiential-based approach throughout their lives.

Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)

People with MLD will be functioning within Levels 1 to 4 of the National Curriculum. Many, but not all, will be 'street-wise'. They will benefit from a mainstream school

curriculum that is substantially differentiated and delivered at a pace (and in a setting) appropriate to their individual needs.

Appendix 3: Types of special schools – PANDA statistics (2004)

The DfES categorises special schools into 11 types:

Autism (AUT)	56 schools
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD)	247 schools
Hearing Impairment (HI)	21 schools
Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	321 schools
Physical Disabilities (PD)	76 schools
Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)	27 schools
Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)	310 schools
Specific Learning Difficulties (SpecLD)	51 schools
Speech and Language Difficulties (SD)	27 schools
Hospital Schools (HOSP)	21 schools
Other (OTH) are also included as a separate grouping	82 schools

Of the 1,239 special schools identified, 1,105 are maintained special schools.

Special schools are still categorised by their 'main provision', even though more and more special schools are now working across an ever-widening number of the above categories. The DfES (in the PANDA) acknowledge the difficulties this brings to such statistics.

This study is concerned with pupils and students in the maintained SLD and PMLD sector. I consider that virtually all of the 27 schools identified above as PMLD schools will be from the non-maintained sector. All of the 310 SLD schools are likely to include provision for all of the pupils with PMLD in that catchment area. Therefore, the SLD schools should be considered as SLD/PMLD schools, and these are the schools addressed in this study. Approximately 1 in every 250 pupils will attend an SLD school (around 0.4% of the population), and this may seem a very small number to be so concerned about. However, if the quality of our society is judged against its care for its most vulnerable people, then this most vulnerable group of all deserve considerable attention.

Different LEAs organise their special education and their special schools in different ways. Some LEAs prefer to have just one type of special school to provide for all special needs that are not or cannot be met by their mainstream schools (sometimes known as 'area special schools'). These are more prevalent in smaller and more sparsely populated LEAs. Other LEAs, such as the one I work for, have separate SLD, MLD, EBD and other special schools.

Then there are private special schools, who tend to specialise in low incidence disabilities, extreme challenging behaviours or therapy provision. These schools are likely to be segregated.

Appendix 4: Peter Gordon – brief biographical details

Following school in Bethnal Green, then a year in the civil service working in central London, Peter trained as a teacher in special education at King Alfred's College, Winchester, qualifying in 1979. He then worked for the ILEA in both SLD boarding and day schools, before moving to East Sussex in 1986, to be the deputy headteacher at Hazel Court School. In 1994 he gained the headship of Hazel Court School.

Peter and his wife (a nursery nurse – they met when both working in an ILEA SLD school) have two children, the oldest of whom (now age 20) has profound and multiple learning difficulties. Therefore, in addition to his 26 years as an SLD school practitioner, Peter has also been through the SLD education system from the parent's perspective.

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