Provision for Additional Learning Needs

The views of children and young people with developmental coordination disorder

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

This study was undertaken in partnership between NCB (National Children's Bureau) and Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC). The aim of this project was to raise awareness of the importance of listening to children with additional learning needs (ALN) about the support and services that they receive in school. The study's specific objectives were:

- To ascertain the views of children with developmental coordination disorder/ motor impairment about the additional provision (support and services) they receive in school.
- To use the findings to develop policy and improve service provision for children with developmental coordination disorder/ motor impairment.
- To make recommendations for developing workable systems and tools for gathering and considering the views of children with ALN on a regular basis (within BCBC).

A literature review undertaken by NCB (see section 3) found little published material on the participation of disabled children and those with ALN in decision-making about their needs, highlighting the need for further research. Therefore the aim of this research was to add to the existing body of knowledge on the importance of listening to children with ALN about their experience of the provision they receive in school.

The research focused on children with developmental coordination disorder (DCD) whose needs were being met at School Action Plus (the stage of support for special educational needs at which children receive support from agencies external to their school). The study focused on children and young people with DCD because this is a group which is particularly under-researched. Restricting the research to a relatively small group of children with broadly similar needs also meant that analysis and interpretation of findings would be relatively straightforward, as responses would be more comparable. As the needs of children with DCD extend beyond the classroom (e.g. breaks, lunchtimes and after school activities) there are implications for staff throughout the school, and therefore the findings are likely to have a broad relevance and be of interest to a wide range of professionals and practitioners.

1.1 Background – pupil participation in Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government's vision for children and young people is embedded within three key documents:
- Children and Young People: A Framework for Partnership (WAG, 2004a)
- Extending Entitlement: supporting young people in Wales (WAG, 2003)
- Extending Entitlement: Creating Visions of Effective Practice for Young People in Wales (WAG, 2004b).

'Better Wales', the strategic plan of the Welsh Assembly made a commitment to treating children and young people as *valued members of the community whose voices are heard and needs considered across the range of policy making'*. The framework recognised the importance of listening more closely to the views of children and young people, ensuring they are able to take an active part in decision making and determining the services they receive, and that consultation is meaningful and interactive to promote inclusivity.

'Extending Entitlement', launched in 2000, is the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy for promoting opportunity and choice for all young people in Wales aged 11-25 years. It states that every young person in Wales has the basic entitlement to be consulted and to participate in decision making. Key objectives include focussing on young people's capacity for independence in the democratic process; quality and responsiveness of services; participation of young people; and more effective co-ordination and partnership at a local level.

The Welsh Assembly Government has adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis for all work with children and young people in Wales. 'Children and Young People: Rights to Action' sets out the Government's seven core aims underpinning services for children and young people, which are based on the Convention Rights. One of the core aims of Rights to Action was that all children and young people 'are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised'. These three documents are based on a number of core themes:
- a foundation of principle in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; (Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, sets out the right of all children and young people to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure which affects them);
- entitlements to services based on the needs of the child or young person;
- listening to and acting on the views of children, young people and families;
- giving the highest priority to those most in need;
- a commitment to partnership working between different local organisations as the key way in which these aspirations can be achieved.

The focus on listening to and acting on young people's views has been taken forward through a number of national and local structures, including Funky Dragon[1], the Participation Consortium, the Participation Unit, the Participation Project, School Councils, and Youth forums[2].

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[1] http://www.funkydragon.org/
[2] http://www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/

2. Methods

The research had two main components, a review of the relevant literature, and a small-scale empirical study. The following sections outline the methods employed in both elements of the study.

2.1 Literature review methods

NCB researchers conducted a broad search of relevant databases and key journals through the NCB library catalogue, as well as databases including Childata and BL Inside. Recommendations were also taken from colleagues in NCB and BCBC with expertise in the area. A variety of websites were searched for 'grey' (unpublished) literature, including: Council for Disabled Children (CDC); Department for Children, Families and Schools (DCFS); the Disability Archive; the Dyscovery Centre; Dyspraxia Foundation; Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC); Every Disabled Child Matters (EDCM); Nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs); National Assembly of Wales; National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER); Participation Works; and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

Initial searches were screened for relevance, using articles that included at least one of the following:
- developmental coordination disorder (DCD)
- ALN and disability support in school
- views and experiences of disabled children and/or those with ALN.

Only articles from the last 15 years were included, with a few key exceptions, and only those published in English. Identified articles were then checked for further references, summarised and key themes and associations drawn out and analysed.

2.2 Empirical research methods

The initial population of children and young people on BCBC's database was relatively small at just under 50. It was possible to carry out individual semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with students. Interviews were seen as preferable to conducting a survey, as children with DCD often experience difficulties with their handwriting, and may have needed the services of an amanuensis in order to complete a survey (Dixon 2003). In addition, NCB conducted a follow up focus group with some of the interviewees. This provided an opportunity to feed back findings from the interviews to the participants, and to gather additional data related to these findings. The data from the interviews and focus group were analysed using Framework Analysis, see section 2.24 (Ritchie et al, 2003).

2.2.1 Sampling

BCBC staff carried out the sampling. They established the following inclusion criteria for the sample:

- DCD/Dyspraxia or coordination difficulties
- below the 15 per centile when last tested on Movement ABC Assessment
- no other known impairments such as ASD, ADHD, Cerebral Palsy or MLD
- pupils in Year 6 – 10 as of September 2008.

Initially it was planned to conduct between 12 and 20 interviews, from an overall population of almost 50 children and young people with DCD. The number of prospective interviewees that met the above inclusion criteria were 14. Of these, 10 were able to take part in the interviews. This group of 10 included nine boys and one girl, which reflects the fact that DCD is more prevalent amongst males than females (Gordon & McKinlay, 1980). Five participants were in year 10; two in year 8; one in year 7; and one in year 6.

2.2.2 The interviews

The purpose of the interviews were to:

- ascertain their views about the additional provision the children and young people receive, or would like to receive
- explore alternative methods for gathering the views of children with ALN in future (given that resources will not be available for one-to-one interviewing across the service in future years).

NCB researchers developed the interview schedule, which was based on the key areas that emerged from the literature review. The schedule was finalised after an initial pilot by BCBC. Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) at the interviewees' schools arranged the interviews and obtained consent, and a member of staff from BCBC conducted the interviews at the schools during Autumn 2008. A non-teaching room was chosen for the interviews, in order to help the interviewees feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible.

2.2.3 The focus group

In April 2009 we carried out the focus group at one of the schools whose pupils had participated in the earlier interviews. Two NCB researchers facilitated a group, held in a non-teaching room, with five boys and one girl, all of white, Welsh origin. Five of the pupils were in Year 10, and one was in Year 8.

The focus group consisted of a variety of activities, including discussing a scenario related to a child with DCD, and discussing what the job description for the ideal teacher would be. The participants also looked in small groups at the emerging findings from the interviews, both to validate them and also to elicit further data on particular topics such as transition from primary to secondary school.

2.2.4 Analysis

Data were analysed using a Framework approach (Ritchie et al, 2003). We developed a series of matrices reflecting the study objectives and the interview schedule, in which the columns represented key topics and the rows the individual cases (for this purpose the focus group was treated as a single case). The data from each interview was summarised, noting the context and transcript page number. The matrices were then explored to draw out the key themes, and the range of views and experiences within each of them.

3. Literature review

3.1 Definition and diagnosis of developmental coordination disorder

Historically, a variety of terms have been used to describe DCD, including clumsiness, motor impairment, developmental dyspraxia and congenital maladroitness (Peters et al; 2001 Jones 2005). However, developmental coordination disorder (DCD) is now the generally accepted term (Peters 2001; Jones 2005) and will therefore be used in this report. In terms of medical definitions the World Health Organisation's Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) (WHO, 1992) refers to DCD as 'Specific Development Disorder of Motor Function'.

It has been estimated that 5-8 per cent of children aged 5-11 may have DCD (Jones 2005, Banhart et al, 2003). DCD also affects more boys than girls in a ratio of 3-4:1 (Gordon & McKinlay, 1980), but this may reflect higher referral rates for boys due to more problematic behaviour (Barnhart et al, 2003).

DCD is not generally accompanied by a learning disability or other physical impairments such as Cerebral Palsy or Down's Syndrome. However, for many children DCD may co-exist with other specific learning difficulties such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Barnhart et al, 2003; Kaplan et al, 1998: in Jones, 2005). There are issues around accurate diagnosis of DCD and Jones (2005) writes that there is no consensus over the criteria for diagnosing DCD.

3.2 The UK policy context

The emergent policy context in the UK is one of encouraging the participation of children and young people in matters and decisions that affect their lives (Franklin 2008). This increasing emphasis on participation is accompanied by policy and guidance on effective listening and creating change at national and local government level (Participation Works, 2008).

Since the 1990s UK governments have demonstrated a commitment to increasing the involvement of children and young people, including disabled children and those with ALN, in decision-making processes concerning service development. In England these include the government's responsibilities to fulfil the requirements of the Children Acts (HMSO, 1989; 2004), Youth Matters: The Next Steps (DfES, 2006); the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in England (DH/DfES, 2004); the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN,1989); the Human Rights Act (HMSO,1998); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006); all of which embody the participation of disabled children and young people.

3.3 SEN Code of Practice for Wales

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (WAG, 2000), which came into force in 2002, is of particular significance to this research. It replaces the previous code of practice (1994) and incorporates new duties and rights brought in by the SEN and Disability Act (HMSO, 2001). The Code of Practice must now be taken into account by local authorities, schools and all those settings and services that provide support for children with special educational needs.

The revised Code emphasises pupil participation much more strongly than the previous version. The principles underpinning the Code's chapter on pupil participation are based on human rights, with particular reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

The Code states that children who are able to form an opinion have a right to express that opinion and to have attention paid to their views in matters that affect them. The Code also states that it may, in certain circumstances, be difficult to ascertain a child's views, but stresses that it is still a principle to be adhered to. Schools and local authorities are encouraged to involve pupils in the following ways:
- through setting and reviewing Individual Education Plans during the school year
- during statutory assessment
- in the annual review process
- in the formation of Transition Plans
- choices about schools and provision.

3.4 Participation

In the following sections we explore definitions and cultures of participation and how they relate to education practice. We then move on to discuss the evidence on the participation of disabled children and young people, particularly children and young people with DCD.

Participation is increasingly addressed from a rights-based approach, and a 'process by which individuals and groups of individuals can bring about change' (Participation Works, 2008:9). Kirby et al (2003) also describe participation as a process and suggest that it is a multi-layered concept. The key factor is that participation is a process that creates change.

3.4.1 Cultures of participation

Kirby et al (2003) suggest that there are a variety of cultures of participation, and that organisations need to have clarity about their reasons for involving children and young people and in planning the development of the work.

Evidence suggests that the benefits of participation for children and young people include promoting general self-confidence and positive self-image (Rose et al, 1996; Cooper, 1993).

The idea that participation is multi-layered is further explored by Kirby et al (2003) who delineate six dimensions of participation: 'level of participation; focus of decision-making; content of decision-making; nature of participation activity; frequency and duration of participation; the children and young people involved' (2003:4). In addition, organisations may need to make a shift in their thinking if participation is to be effective. Jones (2005) suggests that 'the ultimate goal for effective pupil participation must be to make participation meaningful and ongoing so that:

- everyone involved with children and young people commits themselves to the challenge of ensuring pupil participation and making it work
- there is long-term commitment to the involvement of pupils
- pupils are trained and encouraged to become actively involved
- teachers are taught how to involve pupils actively in the decision-making process
- there is a determination on all sides to make it work'.

 (Jones, 2005: 116)

3.4.2 Participation of disabled children and young people

The literature on the participation of children with DCD in education is extremely limited, but Peters et al (2001) found that teachers were often poorly informed about the links between movement difficulties and failure to make progress in school. However, there are lessons and ideas that can be drawn from the more general literature on the participation of disabled children and young people, which we explore below.

There is evidence to suggest that despite the policy agenda, and an overall increase in the participation of children and young people, disabled children, and those with ALN, are much less likely than their peers to be engaged in decision-making processes (Department of Health/Department for Education and Skills, 2004; Sinclair, 2004; Cavet and Sloper, 2004; Franklin and Sloper, 2007, 2008). Cavet and Sloper (2004) concluded that the participation of disabled children needs further development, with little available evidence of good practice.

3.5 Methods of participation

There is relatively little evidence to illustrate what works in facilitating participation and in the main, disabled young people's views on what constitutes good participation are still lacking.

Franklin (2008) writes that for the participation of young disabled people to be real and meaningful, various issues need to be addressed, participants must:

- be consulted on what they require in order to participate
- have their needs for access met
- be offered support with transport, personal assistance and the facilitation of communication.

Children with DCD may experience difficulties with handwriting, and may need to use an amanuensis, or have extra time if a written response is required (Dixon 2003).

Participation studies in the main concentrate on formal mechanisms for facilitating participation, but Lightfoot and Sloper's (2003) study found that young people urged an informal approach, in addition to formal structures.

Norwich and Kelly (2006) found that participation was defined as both 'eliciting pupil's views and preferences' and 'shared negotiations and decision-making', two very different interpretations. They also found that the following were all key to effective participation in schools:
- the ethos of the school
- use of informal and formal methods to gain children's views
- consistency between policy and practice.

3.6 The views and experiences of disabled children and young people in education

In a review of the literature on disability discrimination in education, Gray (2002) found that there were few examples of large scale studies about the educational experiences of young disabled people and their parents or carers. Therefore further research is necessary to look at issues faced by disabled children and young people in education. The review suggested that greater priority needed to be given to listening to the voices of disabled people themselves.

Following Gray's review, the Disability Rights Commission (now subsumed into the Commission for Equality and Human Rights) commissioned research on the education experiences of disabled children and young people in Great Britain (Lewis et al, 2006). The research found that many schools (both mainstream and special) had made great efforts to give accessibility to disabled pupils, in terms of both the curriculum and the learning environment. Lewis et al (2006) also found that:
- Curriculum adaptations need to be individualised and flexible in order to best meet children and young people's needs.
- Young people appreciated having extra time and support in exams.
- Some young people had problems accessing less structured activities, for example lunchtime clubs.

Many of the young people in the study said that they had needed particular support in making plans for the future, and assimilating what their needs would be in order to have the future that they wanted.

In 2003 the Welsh Assembly undertook a consultation to inform the National Service Framework. The report on the consultation (Turner, 2003) outlines the views of a variety of young disabled people. Issues that emerged were:
- relationships with teachers and other staff
- high incidence of bullying of disabled children and young people

- respondents' dislike of being made conspicuous for example, by having to leave a lesson early to meet the taxis that transported them home
- not being listened to by teaching staff.

Popular teachers were those whose sensitivity allowed them to know when to give disabled children time and space to complete their work, and when to offer support. An awareness of children's individual needs was appreciated. In terms of teaching assistants, disabled children and young people spoke about the benefits of having in class support, and felt that it had improved their work. Priority issues outlined by the study included good healthcare services in schools, a happy and non-judgemental environment and staff that listened to and respected disabled children and young people. However, with regard to DCD, as it is generally not an obvious impairment, it is worth noting that there are additional barriers faced by those with hidden impairments, as was mentioned in the focus group (see section 4).

4. Findings

This section outlines findings from the interviews and focus group, as well as reflecting on lessons from the research process and tools.

4.1 Interviews and focus groups

4.1.1 Personal experience of additional learning needs

In terms of how they defined DCD, interviewees tended to talk about how it affected specific areas, such as handwriting and ball skills. They also talked at a more general level, about having motor, and/or coordination difficulties. One respondent summed up the impairment in the following way:

It's a breakage between you, the body and the brain.

At the focus group, we wanted to use terminology that the participants themselves understood and felt comfortable with. So, when discussing the scenario of a boy with DCD, we asked what terms they were familiar with. Dyspraxia was the only term that any of them had used, or been told about, although they said that they had seen developmental coordination disorder written on documentation. The expression 'clumsy child' had also been used to them, in informal situations generally when classmates were teasing them. In the interviews there was evidence of some confusion between the terms dyspraxia and dyslexia. But when we asked about this in the focus group, the pupils said it was not a confusion that they themselves had experienced, but that other people had confused the two impairments. They thought that this was because dyslexia has a much higher profile than dyspraxia. As one of them pointed out in relation to dyslexia:

Yes, see, that's put on television so much that's the problem.

By this he meant that it is quite common for characters in soap operas and television dramas to have dyslexia.

Interviewees were diagnosed at various times in their school careers, ranging from Year 4 to Year 7. However, there were instances of the interviewees and/or their family members being aware of difficulties long before diagnosis, sometimes since babyhood. Conversely, one respondent reported feeling that they were '*just like everybody else'* until tests at school showed they had DCD.

Diagnosis occurred in one of two locations: either interviewees were diagnosed at the local hospital, or specialists came into school to conduct assessments. The role of parents and teachers was important, in picking up on indications that the child was experiencing problems, or in explaining the impairment to them. A member of the focus group reported that he had been diagnosed when having hospital treatment for another, unrelated illness, when a doctor had noticed problems he had when playing with some

blocks. In the focus group, when discussing diagnosis, the pupils felt that an earlier diagnosis would have been helpful, as it would have given them longer to find treatment and strategies for the disorder. They suggested that all children should be tested for DCD at an early age.

In terms of how participants felt about having DCD, it was common for them to say they felt 'alright' or 'not bothered'. There were contrasts in how they felt about other people knowing they had DCD. Some found it easy to tell people, and reported that their peers were not bothered, others had chosen not to disclose the information, and preferred spending time with children and young people who also had DCD.

Disability was a term that the interviewees seldom applied to their impairment. Those who talked about the terms disabled or disability compared themselves to others such as wheelchair users, whom they perceived to be disabled rather than themselves.

4.1.2 Understanding of own support/ learning needs

In the interviews, pupils talked about various areas of school life which caused difficulties for them:
• practical subjects e.g. design and technology, and science
• aspects of PE such as catching, throwing and balancing.

Interviewees mentioned the issues they had with learning second languages, such as Welsh, or French. But when we discussed this in the focus group, it transpired that this was not necessarily related to having DCD. As they pointed out, other pupils who do not have DCD also find learning second languages difficult. They felt that it should not be compulsory to learn other languages.

When asked in the interviews whether they felt able to participate in lessons on equal terms with their peers, views about this were mixed. Interviewees tended to talk about how they felt about asking teachers for help. Some did not mind this, but others disliked it and avoided doing it: 'because it shows you up'.

However, they did find ways around this, for example by staying behind at the end of a class to ask teachers for clarification. It was reported that their level of participation very much depended on the subject of the lesson; they were less likely to participate during lessons in which they struggled, such as science.

In terms of everyday aspects of life that caused difficulties for participants, they nominated: tying laces and ties, using a laptop without an external mouse, and using cutlery and kitchen tools. Participants reported that these aspects improved over time, the more practice they had as they grew older.

4.1.3 Who listens?

In the interviews, pupils mentioned a variety of people that they felt able to talk to about their learning needs, and difficulties they encountered. Prominent amongst these were the learning support staff in their schools, those in the school where the focus group was held were seen as particularly understanding and kind. Other people mentioned included form tutors, heads of year, and the school counsellor. Friends and other people with DCD were seen as supportive both in school and out of school. Parents were the main people that the interviewees would go to out of school if they were having any problems, and for some they would discuss problems at their school with parents who would then liaise with the school to resolve any problems.

Participants in the focus group mentioned a system of peer mentoring at their school. They reported that volunteers had received training in listening skills, confidentiality, and understanding different types of people. In fact one of the group was a peer mentor, and we were told that the peer mentors were stationed in a particular room every lunchtime and any pupil in the school could drop in and find someone to talk to if they needed to. The group also mentioned that occasionally the school's SEN staff encouraged them and arranged mentors for them, thus providing someone to listen to and support them.

4.1.4 Support from teachers

Interviewees had differing perceptions of the support and understanding of their teachers. It was not always obvious to the interviewees whether teachers knew that they had DCD, and it was not clear to them whose role it was to make teachers aware of the difficulties experienced by the student. Pupils said also that teachers may know they have DCD, but may not know how this affects them, or conversely other pupils thought that teachers may know about the impairment, but not know that particular pupils have it. As time went on, interviewees found that teachers became more aware of their problems, and how to help them. It was reported that some teachers did know when to offer extra help and support. Although in the focus group, teachers who go too far in the other direction were mentioned; those who seem to constantly ask if the participants needed help, for example, if the pupil paused in their work to think. The participants did not like this, finding it demeaning.

In terms of unhelpful actions on the part of teachers, participants frequently reported that teachers:
• made negative comments about their handwriting
• paced lessons too quickly
• frequently did not give them enough time to copy work down from the board.

The interviewees also said that noisy classrooms affected their concentration.

In the focus group, issues to do with teachers were the most frequently raised by the participants. The group reiterated the view brought up in the interviews about the helpful and unhelpful behaviour of teachers. They felt that teachers could help more by listening to them, and finding out about their needs. Difficulties caused for the participants by having to copy notes or work from a board featured prominently in our discussions. A pupil remarked that the school has interactive whiteboards in the classrooms and said teachers could print directly off the boards exactly what was written there, and the group thought this would be extremely helpful.

When discussing with the group the issue of teachers knowing and understanding about DCD, it emerged that for each class there is a folder of information which is given to teachers of that group, that explains about the additional needs of any pupils in that group. However, given the frequent experiences pupils had of teachers making negative remarks about their writing, or the reprimands they received for being slow in copying from the board, the group queried how familiar teachers make themselves with this information. They also doubted whether supply or cover teachers have access to it. The group wondered how much detail the information gave about how to meet their additional needs.

4.1.5 Other support

Pupils often talked, both in the interviews and the focus group, about the fine and gross motor clubs they attended in school, to help them with DCD. Activities they did at the groups included:
• games to help with hand/eye coordination
• activities to help with balance
• handouts which involved copying letters to improve handwriting.

In the focus group we were told that staff from a local school for children with disabilities had also run a session at the motor club. Pupils also talked about adapted PE classes, and one pupil mentioned a specialist teacher coming into school to help with handwriting.

Pupil's feelings about the motor group and the PE class were generally positive. They felt the groups were enjoyable, they had met friends through the group, and also the activities had had a positive effect on their DCD. One pupil said that they had helped improve his skills at football.

However, some older pupils stopped attending, or became bored by the groups. They claimed that the activities became boring, as they were repeated each time a new year group joined the school and started going to the motor clubs. There was also a feeling that they did not always enjoy mixing with pupils so much younger than themselves.

Amongst those who had experienced leaving lessons early to attend extra support, feelings about this were mixed. Some did not mind, and had strategies for catching up with missed work or finding out what homework had been set in their absence. Others found it embarrassing, and in the focus group talked about other pupils teasing them about it, as the other pupils were envious that the participants missed some lesson time. In the

group we discussed ways to deal with this. The participants found it difficult to agree what would be the best time of day to hold the groups; some thought at lunchtime, or before school instead of assembly, whereas others thought it was fine to have the group during lesson time. But they all said it would be unacceptable to stay after school to go to the groups. A possible solution was suggested, in that groups could be run at different times so pupils could choose when to attend. If the groups were also divided by age group, or had sessions specifically for older pupils, this could encourage the older pupils to continue attending.

In terms of learning support assistants, those who had had support from them, either currently or in the past, said that they had found this helpful. But there was a feeling that it would be more helpful, and make pupils feel less conspicuous, if the support assistant worked with a variety of pupils at different times, or worked with small groups. One pupil suggested that it would be useful to have learning support staff who were trained in particular subjects rather than being general support, then that support staff could help in more specific ways.

The participants held varied views about the level of choice and control they had over the support they had in school. There were those who thought they had enough choice, and could say no if they did not want to go to motor group. Others felt quite the opposite: *'Adults, like make all the decisions and things.'*

When we discussed the issue of choice with regard to support in the focus group, none of the pupils had been offered a choice of different types of support, except in occasional informal conversations with SEN staff. The participants said that it was possible for them to ask for what they wanted, but they pointed out that nobody ever did.

Pupils were supported out of school in various ways, particularly by parents, siblings and friends, who often helped in practical ways such as handwriting practice. One pupil spoke about being encouraged by his family to take up sports which did not involve ball skills, such as cycling and life saving. He had found this very enjoyable.

The interviewees reported having various forms of treatment, mainly in the past: physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and attending the dyspraxia club at the local children's centre for rebounding therapy. In the focus groups, participants said that the therapists always decided the duration of these therapies; pupils themselves did not have the choice. But they did agree with the suggestions made by the therapists about when to end the therapy. Pupils in the focus group also mentioned that they had heard of an out of school social group for children and young people with dyspraxia, where the attendees did activities together. They had heard that there was a possibility of a group starting nearer to them, and said they would attend if they were able to get there.

4.1.6 Transition and examinations

There were various ways in which pupils were prepared for the transition to secondary school:
• visiting the schools
• attending sample lessons with the teachers they would have when they moved to secondary school
• summer schools which featured work at secondary level
• secondary school teachers visiting their primary schools.

It was not always clear from the interview data whether pupils had experienced the above measures with all their peers, or if they had had particular planning for transition in relation to their additional needs. So this was an area that we probed in the focus group. It transpired that none of the pupils had experienced any help with the transition specifically related to having DCD. None of them had had discussions about what support would be available, and they agreed that this would have been helpful. They reported that the learning resource base had been pointed out to them when they had been taken on a tour around that school, but they had not been taken inside to meet the staff there. One pupil reported that he had gone to the secondary school that his primary school did not usually feed to, and as a consequence he had had only one visit to the school, whereas his peers had visited their secondary schools more often, up to three times, and he felt disadvantaged in comparison.

The research participants mentioned a variety of issues to do with examinations. They were concerned about:
• being able to write quickly enough to complete exams
• exams being scheduled close together
• coursework deadlines occurring around the same time, so that they would have a large amount of written work to complete in a short space of time.

Some pupils mentioned getting extra time in exams, although this was not universal. It was also suggested that revision classes were useful in boosting their confidence.

4.1.7 School culture and ethos

We have already discussed who pupils felt listened to them and understood their needs. In terms of formal mechanisms for consulting pupils, school councils were mentioned. One of the interviewees is a representative to the council from their form, and mentioned that all form classes nominated representatives to attend the council. Meetings of the council are arranged regularly and the form representatives consult their classmates about issues to take to the meetings. Those issues are then discussed and voted on, and then results fed on to the school's senior management team. Pupils said that they could see the results of this process in changes that occurred at school level. This seemed to be a mechanism for raising general issues that affect many pupils, such as the price of food in the canteen. In terms of raising more personal issues, pupils mentioned a box set up in the school

library where pupils could leave notes about more personal issues. These would then be read and dealt with by members of the school's pastoral staff.

In the interviews pupils were generally positive about their schools, particularly about the social activities and opportunities for making friends. But the presence of bullies was mentioned, and it was suggested that it would be helpful to have teachers around during break and lunchtimes to act as a deterrent.

The issue of bullying featured more strongly in the focus group discussions, perhaps because for some of the participants it had happened very recently. Their school has a strict anti bullying policy, and it was clear to them to whom they could report instances of bullying. But pupils found this difficult; as one participant pointed out, it was hard to actually prove who the perpetrators were, when this behaviour was perhaps instigated by particular individuals then taken up by a group of people:

The Head of Year, it's like they ask who it is, and you go, it's everyone, and he goes, who's everyone, it can't be everyone, and they just won't believe you.

Pupils found it more helpful to talk to parents about bullying and then they would intervene with the school. The bullying of participants was related to their DCD, but it seemed that other pupils also experienced bullying. The focus group members also felt that the punishments for bullying were inadequate; they reported that those responsible were put in isolation to do their work, but to the participants this did not seem sufficient. We asked if the school tried to promote tolerance through discussion in PSHE, but pupils said this backfired. They reported that people in their classes did not take the subject seriously and made jokes about the issues that were raised in terms of tolerance and diversity. The participants said it made them angry to have to listen to classmates mocking issues that they felt were important.

Interviewees found it difficult to think of areas where the school could improve, they seemed happy with the level of support they received although one pupil did say they would like more help with their handwriting. Participants in the focus group mentioned that at primary school they had used devices such as sloping boards to assist them with writing. But these did not seem to be available at their secondary school. It was notable that none of the pupils had actually asked for these boards to be supplied, they just assumed the boards were not available as there were none in the teachers' store cupboards.

It was reported that the practice of setting pupils by ability was unhelpful. A pupil reported that being moved to a lower group for a particular subject had set him back, the group had worked to the level of the least able pupils and as a consequence he felt that they had all fallen behind.

4.2 Reflections on the research process and tools

4.2.1 The research process

There were a number of challenges to the research process at both recruitment and data collection stages. Although parents of all children and young people in the sample (see 2.2.1) were sent information sheets and consent forms on the project, many did not reply or respond to telephone messages. A decision was therefore taken to accept written consent, combined with informed verbal consent, from Year 10 pupils; written consent was sought from pupils and their parents for those in years 6-9.

There were problems with recording several of the interviews, resulting in poor sound quality. Given these problems, several interviews were recorded manually by writing answers directly on to a question sheet rather than recording and transcribing, which brought its own problems: interviews became rather stilted, and there was only time for the interviewer to write down key points during the interview, relying on memory to provide detail after the interview was completed.

4.2.2 The research tools

One of the aims of this research was to make recommendations for developing workable systems and tools for gathering and considering the views of children with ALN on a regular basis within BCBC. Although there were some challenges to the use of the interview schedule, as described in 4.2.1 above, it was nonetheless felt that the questions were appropriate, acceptable and understandable to young people and worked well in practice. The schedule was used in different ways during the course of the research: to conduct a recorded interview; for an interview with notes taken by the interviewer, and a version of the schedule put into a self-completion format.

Recording an interview makes it easier for the researcher to maintain a connection with the child or young person and respond to and probe their answers. However, outside the context of a research study there are challenges to using this approach as a means of gathering and considering the views of children. A suitable environment and equipment is necessary for recording to be of a suitable standard; issues of confidentiality and data protection would need to be addressed and consideration would be need to be given as to how the data would be used together with any cost implications (eg transcriptions).

Face-to-face interviewing with contemporaneous notes taken by the interviewer is an alternative approach, though, as described above, it has certain limitations in impeding the natural flow of the interview, and loss of detail in the data. However, this may be a more practical option, if time can be found to conduct the interviews.

It would be possible to turn the interview schedule into an anonymous (or identity coded) questionnaire, which would address many of the challenges raised above with regard to interviews. However when this was tested during fieldwork (see Appendix II) for this research we found that participants tended to complete tick box answers but not elaborate with more detailed qualitative information in text boxes. Other issues which were raised included making sure that pupils completing a questionnaire were able to do so in a quiet and relatively private place, with no influence from teaching or support staff. Further testing and development of the schedule in questionnaire form is needed before it can be rolled out, but we think that it would be helpful if an independent adult (ie somebody who does not have a role in teaching or supporting the child in school) is there to explain the purpose of the questionnaire and the kind of information needed, and to provide advice and support during the process. It would also be feasible for the questionnaire to be easily adapted for other groups of children with ALN (see 5).

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This section revisits the aim and specific objectives of the research, and puts forward some recommendations. As the sample of interviewees who participated in this research was a small, specific group, it is not possible to generalise from the findings to the larger population of children and young people with DCD, but nonetheless the findings do highlight areas that are worthy of note.

In terms of the overall research aim, both the literature review and the views of the children and young people themselves highlight the importance and benefits of listening to children with additional learning needs about the school provision they receive. The focus group participants in particular valued the systems such as peer support and mentoring that their school offers, and said they wanted teachers to listen more to them, and find out about their needs. Participants also made several specific recommendations that would be relatively straight forward and inexpensive to implement (see below for a summary of recommendations).

It is notable that the focus group participants were aware that it was possible for them to ask for support or help, such as being supplied with a sloping board, but that none of them did. This is an issue that would merit further exploration, and having regular consultations with pupils, either individually or in small groups, would help them to voice their needs.

Section 4 outlines in detail the views of the children and young people in our sample about the provision and services they receive in school. There are several key areas which should be highlighted at this point. The research indicates that DCD does not appear to have a particularly high profile amongst teaching staff. In terms of the school attended by the focus group participants, there is scope for including specific information detailing pupils' needs in the packs that are given to teachers. Given that pupils were unsure of the exact content of these packs, it may be helpful to allow pupils to have some input into the material that it is included. It could also be stressed at school level how important this information is and steps could be taken to ensure that supply and cover staff have access too.

Relationships with teachers feature strongly in this research. Given the frequency of negative comments pupils have had about the quality and speed of their writing, there is a strong argument for more training for teachers about the effects of DCD and how to differentiate their practice to meet the needs of children with this impairment.

Bullying was a particular concern for participants in the focus group, as found by Turner's consultation (2003) with young disabled people, undertaken for the Welsh Assembly government (see section 3.8 above). Although the school has a strong anti bullying policy, this was not sufficiently enforced, in the opinion of pupils. This is a very important area for schools to consider, given that the bullying of children and young people with ALN seems, sadly, to be quite common.

Another objective was to use the findings from this study to develop policy and improve service provision for children with DCD. A key initial step would be to raise awareness of the impairment. The aforementioned recommendation to raise awareness amongst teaching staff could be extended to the wider community of professionals working for the local authority.

The findings highlight that the participants received no transition planning for the move from primary school to secondary. The revised SEN Code of Practice for Wales does suggest transition planning as an opportunity to consult pupils about their needs. This may be an area that has been addressed since the children and young people in our sample went through this move, but it is worth reviewing arrangements for transition planning for children with additional needs. As we had no participants in our sample in Year 11 or above, we did not focus on the transition from leaving school, to work or tertiary education. This too may be an area worthy of review.

In terms of making recommendations for developing workable systems and tools for gathering and considering the views of children with ALN on a regular basis (within BCBC), which was another of our objectives, the focus group was a more successful method than the interviews. Although a couple of pupils needed some encouragement to speak, as a whole the pupils did not seem to find it difficult to voice their opinions. The variety of activities, some of them such as the scenario which looked at the issues in a less personal way, and also having small group activities, meant that there were several ways pupils could participate. It could be that the relatively informal atmosphere of the group, and that the participants knew each other, meant they felt more able to talk. This would accord with the suggestions from the young people in Lightfoot and Sloper's study (2003 see section 3.5 above). Focus groups are less resource intensive and time consuming than interviews, so could be held with different groups of pupils fairly regularly. Although if pupils were to be consulted about their individual needs, then being interviewed by a person they know well and trust may encourage them to be more forthcoming. However, the issues pupils had experienced with teachers indicates that it would be more beneficial if the person interviewing/consulting them, was not a member of a school's teaching staff, thus enabling pupils to be as open as they wished to be.

To summarise the various recommendations made by this report, those that were specific to pupils with DCD are:
- having angle boards available in classrooms
- having the motor groups at different times and also having sessions for different age groups
- all children being assessed for the possibility of DCD at a young age
- schools having a whole school policy on supporting pupils to improve their handwriting
- training for teachers on the effects of DCD, and how to best meet the needs of pupils with the impairment.

Recommendations more broadly of benefit to pupils with additional learning needs, as well as those with DCD:

- reviewing transition planning for children with ALN
- teachers changing the pace of their lessons and allowing more time for pupils to complete tasks
- having learning support assistants with specific subject expertise
- teachers printing off handouts from interactive white boards
- ensuring that all teachers, including supply teachers, have access to detailed information about the ALN of the pupils that they teach
- reviewing sanctions for bullying.

Recommendations for developing workable systems and tools for gathering and considering the views of children with ALN on a regular basis within BCBC.
- developing the interview schedule to be relevant to other children with ALN, for use in instances where this is preferable too, or more appropriate than a questionnaire (for example if this would not be accessible for a child or group of children)
- testing and development of the questionnaire in Appendix II form, in consultation with children with ALN
- ensuring that pupils are given an appropriate quiet space, and sufficient time to complete the survey, ideally with an independent adult present to provide any necessary advice and support
- ensuring that issues of anonymity, confidentiality and data protection are addressed before, during and after data collection.

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Appendix I – websites used

- Child data: http://www.childdata.org.uk/
- Council for Disabled Children:
  http://www.ncb.org.uk/Page.asp?sve=785
- Department for Children, Families and Schools: www.dcsf.gov.uk
- Dyscovery Centre: http://www.dyscovery.co.uk
- Dyspraxia Foundation: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/
- Equality and Human Rights Commission:
  www.equalityhumanrights.com
- The Disability Archive UK: www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-
  studies/archiveuk/
- Every Disabled Child Matters: www.edcm.org.uk/Page.asp
- Nasen: www.nasen.org.uk
- National Assembly of Wales: www.assemblywales.org
- National Foundation for Educational Research: http://www.nfer.ac.uk
- Participation Works: http://www.participationworks.org.uk/
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority: http://www.qca.org.uk/
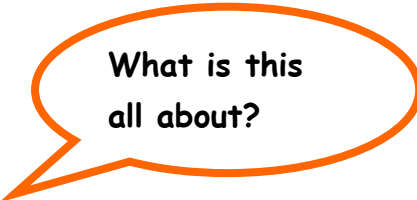
Appendix II – research tools

See following pages

Additional Learning Support Services for Young People - Tell us what you think!

You are being invited to take part in an interview. It is up to you whether you take part – so here is some information to help you decide …

What is this all about?

We want to know how you are doing in school. Are you getting extra support? Is it what you need and do you have a say in what happens to you? The Access and Inclusion Service (AIS) wants to make sure that pupils get the help they need so we are carrying out a review of services that we offer pupils. As part of this review we are talking to young people in interviews and will make a DVD with a small group of pupils to find out how education services could work best for young people with additional learning needs.
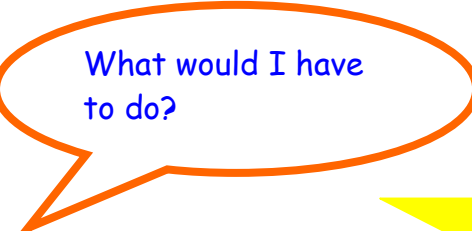
Who are the AIS and NCB?

The Access and Inclusion Service (AIS) looks after the additional learning needs of pupils in the Bridgend County Borough Council schools and our partner in this review is The National Children's Bureau (NCB) which is a charity that works to improve the lives of children and young people.

Who can take part?

We want to talk to young people in Years 6, 7, 8 9 and 10 who are receiving educational support services to help them to learn and take part in school life.

What would I have to do?

We would like to come to school and do an interview with you (we'll ask some questions and then listen to your answers) to find out what you think about how well different services meet your learning needs. We also want to listen to anything you want to tell us about your personal experiences or any problems you may have faced during the school day.

The interview will last up to an hour, but you can stop at any time if you don't like it. We will take some notes and record the interview so we don't forget anything. Your words are then written down into a report which you can check.

What happens to the information?

Once the information has been collected NCB will analyse it. AIS can then use the results to help people who provide Education Services to listen to pupils about the help they need to learn and wherever necessary make changes to how they offer help in the future.

Will anyone know what I've said?

Your name will not be passed on to anyone or used in anything written about the project. Only the researchers and the person who is typing it up will hear the recording of the interview. No one else will know what you've said; unless you say something that makes us believe that you or another child might be in danger. If this happens we may need to discuss what you have told us with someone else, and we would

What is good about taking part?

You can have your say and hear what other pupils think. It is really helpful to hear the views of young people, rather than just what the people who run services think. You may also be invited to take part in a short film by talking in a group about the services.

What about my parents or carers?

As you are under 16, one of your parents or carers also needs to agree you can take part. They will need to sign a separate form (you'll be given one by the person who gave you this leaflet) **Please post the signed form back to the person who gave it to you as soon as possible**.

Who can I talk to if I have any other questions?

Please get in touch with ...

DCD Participation Research – Pupil Interview Schedule

Before starting interview:
Interviewer to introduce self and research.
Go through information sheet, answer any questions and ensure consent form signed
Explain confidentiality and child protection
Request permission to record.

Pupil Number:
A: Personal experience of ALN
First I would like to ask you some questions about yourself…

Main question	Prompts/sub-questions	Body language or responses
Do you get help at school or belong to a motor group or club? Do you know why this is? Would you say that you had a special educational need or additional learning needs?	Probe for language used in relation to impairment, and use throughout interview. What would you say having ALN/SEN/DCD/movement difficulties means? How do you feel about these words?	
A2. How would you describe your learning/support needs?	Do you say that you have DCD/movement difficulties? How have you explained this to other people – friends, teachers, other people at school or outside? What does it mean to you?	
A3. How long do you think you have had DCD/movement difficulties/ALN?	Do you remember when somebody first told you/your parents that you had DCD/movement difficulties/ALN?	
A4. How does it affect your everyday life?	Home, outside, generally [continued, with focus on school, in next section so don't need to cover here]	

B: Understanding of own support/ learning needs

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about any help you may need…

Main question	Prompts/sub-questions	Body language or responses
B1. Can you tell me about any things you find difficult to do [compared to your class mates]?	What do you find difficult? When/why? Are some things more difficult at school/home/when you're out?	
B2. What support or treatment are you currently having for DCD/movement difficulties/ALN?	Prompts: what, where (eg in or outside school), when, who?	
B3. What has helped you to do the things you want to do?	At school/home/ outside? Formal/informal support? Equipment/ people/ motor clubs? [school culture and teaching staff support to be probed further later on]	
B4. What hasn't helped, or has made things more difficult?	What did people do/not do? Why do you think this didn't help? What would you have liked them to do instead?	
B5. Who do you think you can tell about getting the help you want?	Why/why do you not feel you can talk to [person/role]?	
B6. Who do you feel listens to you what you want?	What makes you feel like people are listening/understand?	
B7. How much control do you feel you have over what support you get, and when and how you get it?	Why/why not?	

C: Support from teachers

Thinking now about the support you get from teachers…

Main question	Prompts/sub-questions	Body language or responses
How well do you think your teachers understand your needs?	What do teachers do that helps you? Do you think they understand when you do or don't want help? [probe only if not covered in preceding questions]	
What do teachers do that doesn't help, or makes things difficult?	Probe for what they don't do [eg lack of time/ needs of classmates] as well as what do	
How well do you feel you are able to take part in lessons, compared with other students in the class?	Why/ why not? What would help?	
How easy is it for you to ask for help in class when you need it?	Why/ why not? How do you feel about asking for help in class? What would help?	

D: Other support

Thinking now about learning support assistants/ other people who help you in school…

Main question	Prompts/sub-questions	Body language or responses
D1. If you have a support assistant(s), what help does s/he give you?	How much time/ which lessons? If no – do you know what this is, and do you think it's something that would help you? [+ go to C4]	
D2. Do you think you get the right help from your support assistant(s)?	Would you like more help? Why/when? How would this make things better/easier?	
D3. How does your support assistant work with you/the teacher to help you take part in class?	Are you happy with this? Could anything be different/better?	

D4. Who else in school helps you?	Eg - school nurse, counsellor, mentoring. Where do/would you go if you need help or want to talk to someone?	
D5. Which other people [professionals] come into school to help you?	Who are they? When do they come in? What do they do? Do you know when they will be coming? How does it make you feel?	
D6. How much choice do you think you have about the help you get in school?	What help you get/ who/ when?	
D7. Do you sometimes have to leave lessons for some of the support you get?	If yes – how do you feel about this? How do you catch up on things you miss in class/ homework?	
D8 – Overall, how do you feel about the extra support you get in school?	What is good? What could be improved – how?	
D9. Is there any extra support you would like, but don't get at the moment?	If you could choose exactly the help you wanted, what would it be like? Who would help you/when/ how?	

E: Transition
Now, thinking about moving up to secondary school/ preparing for exams…

Main question	Prompts/sub-questions	Body Language or responses
E1-Yr6 pupils –What have you done to start getting ready for your move to secondary school next year? -Yr7/8 pupils –What did you do to get ready for your move to secondary school? -Yr9 pupils – What support do you think you might need when you do your GCSEs?	-How do you feel about changing schools? What are you looking forward to? Is there anything that particularly worries you? -What was it like moving up to secondary school? What helped? Was there anything that particularly worried or upset you? -Do you think the school will give you any help you need? Is there anything that particularly worries you?	
E2. Who could you /did you talk to about what you want?	Do you feel that people listened/will listen to what you want?	

F: School culture and ethos

Almost done! I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your school more generally…

Main question	Prompts/sub-questions	Body language or responses
F1. Thinking about the support you get outside lessons – how would you say the school helps you?	[Focus on areas not covered already – e.g. in playground/ lunchtime/ breaks/ getting to & from classes/ during exams]. What/why/hen/how?	
F2. What could the school do to help you better?	Areas above – What/why/hen/how?	
F3. Thinking about the definitions we talked about earlier [ref flash card] - what do you think your school does well to help you and other young people who are disabled and/or have ALN?	What do you think is good? What could they do differently/better? Why/how?	
F4. How do you think the school listens to what pupils want?	How do they do this, or not do this? Does everyone have a voice?	
F5. What is good about this school?	What do you like? Why?	
F6. What do you think the school could do better?	Is the school made friendly/safe for everyone?	

- **Is there anything else you want to tell me about the help you get, or would like to get at school?**
  - Thank you for your time -

Additional Learning Support Services for Young People - Tell us what you think!

The Access and Inclusion Service along with the National Children's Bureau in London are interested in looking at the support pupils with additional learning needs get in and out of school. We hope that this study will help us improve the service pupils get. We would love it if you would help us with this by answering the following questions as honestly as you can. The form is confidential and no-one will know who you are or which school you go to. When you have finished your questionnaire, you can give it to your SENCO or place it in the SENCO's office. You could put it in an envelope if you would prefer to.

Now, are you male or female? …………………………
How old are you (in years and months)……………………………………
What ethnic group do you belong to? (For example are you white British?)
………………………………………………………………………………

Not much writing to do now unless you want to add to your answer to make it clearer for us to understand.

Question	Yes	No	Don't know	Comments
Do you get extra help at school?				
Do you belong to a motor club or group?				
Would you say that you had additional learning needs?				
Have you ever been given a diagnosis or a name for your difficulties? (Can you tell me what it is called?)				
Who gave you this diagnosis or name?	☞	☞	☞	Doctor/Therapist/Teacher/other *tick the one you want.
Do you tell people you have difficulties?				How do you describe them?

Are you bothered by this?				
How long have you had difficulties?	☞	☞	☞	
Do they affect you in class?				
Do they affect your handwriting?				Speed/ can other people read it/can you read it/can you write lots? *tick the ones you want.
Do they affect you in science and technology? (E.g. Using equipment)				
Do they affect you in PE?				Throwing/catching/kicking/striking with a bat/jumping/climbing or balancing? *tick the ones you want.
Do they affect you at home?				Can you make a drink, sandwich, toast, do zips, buttons and belts, do your tie up and shoe laces? *tick the ones you want.
Do you go to any clubs outside school?				What do you do?
Do you have any help for your difficulties in school?				What?
Do you think you need help in school?				
Has anything helped you do the things you want?				What?
What hasn't helped you or made things more difficult?				What?
Is there someone in school you can tell about getting help you need?				Teacher/support officer friend/other *tick the ones you want.
Do you think you have any control over the help you get and when you get it?				
Do you have to come out of lesson for your extra support?				
Does this bother you?				
Is it easy to catch up with any work you miss?				
Do all your teachers understand your difficulties and needs?				

Can you take part in all your lessons?				Science/technology/languages/PE Maths/other *tick the ones you want.
Are you able to put your hand up in class when you need help?				
Do teaching staff LISTEN to you and your opinion?				How do you know?
Do you have a Learning support officer with you in lessons?				Every lesson/some lessons/PE/other? *tick the ones you want.
Does this bother you?				Why?
Do they know when to help you and when to stay away?				
Does anyone else come into school to help you?				Physiotherapist/Occupational Therapist/Advisory teacher? *tick the ones you want.
Would you like extra support?				What for?
When you moved to Comp. what things helped you settle in?				Visits from Comp staff/Comp pupils Visiting school/maps/other? *tick the ones you want.
If you are in Year 10, are you getting help for your GCSE's?				What?
Does the school look after pupils with additional learning needs?				How?
Could they do anything better?				Like what?
Does the school listen to the views of pupils?				How?
Do you know when changes have been made?				How?
If there is a school council, do you think it would be important for pupils with additional learning needs to be on it?				
Would you like to help make a DVD to teach teachers about additional learning support?				

Thank you very much for your help with our study. Your answers will help make a difference for pupils who have additional learning needs.