

**Voices from Segregated Schooling:  
Towards an Inclusive Education System**

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**Introduction**

A local education authority (LEA), we shall call Romantown, has begun reorganising its special educational needs provision under a policy flag of 'inclusion'. The changing policy and associated changes in provision and practice are, at least in general terms, being undertaken in numerous Local Authorities around Britain.

One aspect of Romantown's reorganisation involved the closure of an all age school, we shall call Adamston, for pupils with physical disabilities, a school which first opened in the 1920s. The pupils from this school have been placed (in September 1999) in a range of provision, particularly in mainstream schools with 'additionally resourced centres' and newly opened special schools for pupils with learning difficulties. (The reorganised system did not include a school for pupils with physical disabilities.) We explored the pupils' views about their education, and the changes they were experiencing, in a project in which a photograph album of pupils' memories of Adamston was created.

In this paper, we have three related aims. The first is to present an analysis of the judgements disabled people bring to bear on their education, from experiences of segregated schooling, through a review of the literature. Second, we explore the views and experiences of Adamston pupils prior to the closure of the school under the policy of inclusion. Our third aim is to examine the contribution of disabled adults' and pupils' views in moves towards inclusion. In attempting to realise these aims, our overall argument is that moves towards inclusion must be founded on the participative involvement of disabled people (adults and pupils) in changing education.

### **Inside Stories: Histories of Segregated Schooling**

In general terms, much of the research on disability, including disabled children, has ignored the views and experiences of disabled people themselves. Non-disabled people have researched disability and given their perspectives. Histories of segregated schooling are, for the most part, the official histories of non-disabled people and professionals, documenting such things as changing numbers and types of schools and official rationales for changing policies. Furthermore research into disability has focused primarily on medical and psychological issues rather than

on the disabling environment. These critiques have led to a growing literature on the problematic nature of disability research (Barnes and Mercer 1997). In relation to research with disabled children, Robinson and Stalker state:

‘While there is a well established body of knowledge about the way parents experience life with a disabled child, children’s own accounts of their lives are largely missing, their voices have not been heard.’ (1998:7)

Shakespeare (1998) makes the point that children can have profound experiences of life, including disability, and yet they have not been consulted or taken seriously by academic or professional ‘experts’.

The literature on disabled people’s experiences of segregated education is not extensive and comes mainly from disabled adults reflecting on their childhood experiences. In reviewing what disabled adults and children say about their education it becomes apparent that their experiences are varied and their views are diverse. Themes do emerge, however, in terms of what is seen to be important about their education. These themes, of educational standards, personal and social liberation and education as an experience in itself, will be explored in the first part of this paper.

## *EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS*

Educational standards have consistently been important for disabled people. Segregated schools are judged by insiders in terms of what is taught, how it is taught and the effectiveness of the teaching they experience. The educational standards experienced by disabled people in segregated schools have generally been low (Barnes, 1991). Paul, a visually impaired man we interviewed, said:

‘The schools were too isolated, they set their own very low standards. It has been shown many times with blind and partially sighted people from our generation, that they’ve left school and then gone on and done quite well by their own efforts. On the other hand they did give me a certain amount of independence and I was able to do things on the sporting side that I probably wouldn’t have been able to do in an integrated setting.’ (French et al 1997:30)

Many special schools placed a huge emphasis on practical tasks like cleaning and gardening. Henry, a man with learning difficulties, recalled:

'We used to play games, learning to read and write, spelling and how to clean places up - how to wash windows, how to clean anything you can mention.' (Potts and Fido 1991:68)

In addition to low educational standards, physically impaired people frequently complain about the amount of time spent in various forms of therapy. Phil Friend, who features in Davies's book, states:

'.....looking back from the age of nine to sixteen, the primary concern of that school was to 'therup' me. It was nothing to do with education really' (Davies 1992:37)

Similarly deaf people complain that their education was eroded by an obsessive emphasis on the ability to lip read and to talk (Craddock 1991). These views are supported by Alderson and Goodey who state:

'Too many therapists in a school can divert the school's main remit away from education so that learning is fitted around therapy and students risk being further disabled academically.' (1998:154)

Poor educational standards in special schools, though common, were, however, never universal. Selective schools for visually impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired children, who were judged to be academically able, have existed for many years,

preparing their pupils for university or entry to some professions.

Disabled people who have attended such schools sometimes express satisfaction with the education they have received.

### *PERSONAL AND SOCIAL LIBERATION*

The experience of education also has meaning in the broader terms of how it impacts on the lifestyles and quality of life of disabled people. Disabled people may judge the education they receive in terms of empowerment-disempowerment and oppression-liberation. Some disabled people find that they receive a superior education and have a more favourable lifestyle than their non-disabled siblings and peers by virtue of being excluded.

Martha, a Malaysian woman with a visual impairment we interviewed, was separated from a poor and neglectful family at the age of five and sent to a special residential school. She said:

‘I got a better education than any of them (brothers and sisters) and much better health care too. We had regular inoculations and regular medical checks and dental checks.’

(Swain and French, in press)

Martha subsequently went to university and qualified as a teacher, which none of her siblings achieved.

Some of the people interviewed by Willmot and Saul (1998), about their experiences in 'open air' schools, give examples of their escape from poverty and abuse. This is illustrated in the following quotation by Jill Embury:

'I was there because of a weak chest; every cold turned to bronchitis and also I suffered very badly with my nerves because of emotional and physical abuse by my stepfather and mother..... Before I went to Cropwood I had absolutely no self-esteem because of my traumatic home life. But Miss Boothroyd took me under her wing and made me feel of some worth.....I was determined to get out of the inner city back streets and try to make something of myself.'

(1998:174)

A recurrent theme in the accounts given by disabled adults is the confidence they gained by attending segregated schools. John O'Shaughnessy, a man interviewed by Willmot and Saul, said:

'I remember my very first day at Uffculme as a very shy 14-year-old lad who had spent half of his life at home, ill with asthma and wrapped in cotton wool.....I left Uffculme two years later an 11 ½ stone, self-confident young man ready to face the working world.' (1998:168-9)

The positive social effects of being with similarly disabled people can even emerge within highly abusive institutions:

‘Attending special school at the age of nine was, in many ways, a great relief. Despite the crocodile walks, the bells, the long separations from home and the physical punishment, it was an enormous joy to be with other partially sighted children and to be in an environment where limited sight was simply not an issue. I discovered that many other children shared my world and, despite the harshness of institutional life, I felt relaxed, made lots of friends, became more confident and thrived socially. For the first time in my life I was a standard product and it felt very good.’ (French 1993:71)

Although some disabled people have found that the experience of special education gave them self-confidence, others have found the opposite to be the case (Leicester, 1998). Eve, a visually impaired woman, said:

‘There was too much discipline. They were ever so strict. They used to run people down all the time and make you feel that you were useless. They used to make you feel that you were there as a punishment rather than to learn anything.

They didn't understand children at all, never mind their sight. They used to expect you to do what they wanted and they used to get really cross if you couldn't see something, or you couldn't clean your shoes properly, or do anything they wanted you to do; what confidence I had they took it all away.' (French 1996:33)

### *EDUCATION AS AN EXPERIENCE IN ITSELF*

A major theme throughout the literature documenting disabled people's experiences of segregated education is the quality of the experience in its own right. As for non-disabled people, one way of judging experiences is in terms, for instance, of enjoyment and happiness or boredom and unhappiness. John O'Shaughnessy, who went to an 'open air' school, said of his experiences, 'In later years my thoughts drift back to the happiest two years of my childhood' (Willmot and Saul, 1998: 169). However, regardless of impairment, accounts of physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse are commonly disclosed by disabled adults especially those who went to residential schools. Harriet, who attended a school for visually impaired girls in the 1950s and 1960s, recalled the physical abuse:

'We went to bed at five o'clock in the evening and we didn't get up until seven o'clock in the morning but we weren't allowed to get out of bed to go to the toilet. I was very unsettled because I'd gone to foster parents at the age of three and then to school at the age of five, and one night I wet the bed. The prefect on duty realised what had happened and she tried to cover up for me, she got me out of bed and put me in the bath, but one of the matrons came along. She picked me up out of the bath, just as I was soaking wet, and gave me the hiding of my life.....I yelled and screamed, it terrified me.' (French 1996:31)

Emotional and psychological abuse was also rife in residential special schools and was often maliciously focused on the child's impairment. Evelyn King, who is physically impaired, recalled:

'I used to use a spoon and if I spilt anything, like tea, they used to get a cloth and make me wipe it up.....Sometimes they would say, 'If you do this again, you won't see your mothers and fathers again, I won't have this.'.....I hated some of them.....it used to make you upset, you know.'

(Humphries and Gordon 1992:90)

It should not be assumed, however, that all insider experiences of segregated schools are negative in terms of the quality of the experiences themselves. Some of the people interviewed by Willmot and Saul (1998), speaking about their experiences in 'open air' schools, suggested that even though the regimes of these schools were institutional and harsh, they regarded their time there as a highly positive experience, including in terms of the basic necessities of life such as food. This is illustrated in the following quotations by Jill Embury and Peter Holmes:

'I thought the food was great because we had porridge and always something fried, like sausage and bacon, I especially liked the deep fried bread.....' (1998: 174)

'My first impression at the age of seven or eight years was its vastness. Previously all I had ever seen was factories, terraced houses and bomb-sites. To a child like myself it was magnificent. The countryside and woods were overwhelming and very beautiful and the air so sweet.....One of my happiest memories is the long walks.....we would walk through the woods and visit farms seeing animals and flowers and trees that most of us had only ever seen in books.....The food was very good. We also had indoor

toilets and bathrooms, something we didn't have at home, and real toilet paper - not newspaper.' (1998: 257)

A strong and recurrent theme in the accounts of disabled people who have attended residential schools is the distress at being separated from their families, particularly when very young. Chris, a young man we interviewed (French and Swain 1997), recalled being very unhappy and crying every Monday morning as he waited for the bus to take him back to school where he was a weekly boarder. He was much happier when transferred to a 'special' unit in a mainstream school. Similarly Stella recalled that on one occasion she screamed and struggled so much that, not only did she miss the train, but her mother had to buy her some new clothes (French with Swain, 2000). The literature on educational exclusion is full of harrowing stories of separation (Monery and Jones 1991). Adam a young visually impaired man we interviewed in 1994 (see French and Swain 1997) had negative feelings about being at a special residential school. He said:

'I'm a boarder here, and so is Chris, we share a room together and I hate the way we.....It's like 'you should be sent to bed early' or you should be doing something you don't want to do.'

He could, however, find some advantages:

'You don't have to worry about fights with your parents. If I have a fight with them I can just put the phone down, hang up on them. And then my Mum rings me up ten minutes later and says she's sorry.'

Many disabled adults have found that the experience of segregated education interfered with, or even ruined, their family relationships. Richard Wood, who is physically impaired, said:

'I think it destroyed my family life, absolutely, I don't know my family.....I never looked forward to going home in the school holidays.....I never felt I belonged there.....within two or three days I couldn't wait to get back to school because I really wanted to see my mates.' (Rae, 1996: 25 -26)

Detachment from the entire home community is also a common experience of disabled people both during school holidays and when they leave school. Lorraine Gradwell, a physically impaired woman, recalled her isolation during school holidays:

'I didn't have any contact. There was one little girl who sometimes came to play. I think that was because her mum knew mine and it was a bit of a duty for her. We played

together but, I couldn't really understand why she was coming.' (Rae, 1996: 7)

Even children who live at home and attend a special unit in a mainstream school can find themselves isolated from their peers in their immediate home environment. Peter, a young visually impaired man we interviewed (see French and Swain 1997), said, 'It's hard because my friends are up there . . . I find it hard to mix with them round here because I don't go to their school and I don't know them.'

We turn in the second part of the paper to the voices of pupils in a day special school for pupils with physical disabilities. They are also voices from segregation, but speak from and of some very different experiences. Their experiences are particularly pertinent to our analysis in this paper as their school has been closed under a policy of 'inclusion'.

### **The Pupil Project**

This analysis is based on a project conducted with pupils at Adamston School during the half-term before it closed. The project involved the planning for, and production of, a book of photographs by the pupils of things they wanted to remember about their school. We hoped to involve pupils in discussions

about Adamston, their experiences there, and their thoughts and feelings about the closure of the school and their future.

We worked with two groups: three primary aged pupils; and four secondary pupils, who participated on a voluntary basis and whose parents were aware of their participation.

This project took place in the July before the school closed.

Although six of the seven pupils knew which school they would be attending in September, one did not. The delay in being allocated school placements affected the time scale of our work. It had been felt by certain members of the LEA and school staff, that to interview children who had not yet received their school placements would heighten anxiety and could be unduly stressful for those pupils. We therefore waited until the end of the term when most pupils knew which school they were moving to. At the time of the interviews, the secondary pupils who were placed in new schools had all made visits to those schools, but all three primary aged pupils maintained that they had not seen their future school. The research project was carried out at the school over three sessions.

Session one involved pupils in the planning of the project. They decided what they were going to photograph and why the picture

was important to them. A demonstration was provided in two ways: one of the researchers showed pictures of herself at work and explained why she had taken the photos; and an instamatic camera was used with each group to allow the pupils to take trial photos. The project was planned by each pupil drawing and noting (with the assistance of the researchers) possible pictures for the book. The session was tape-recorded and the tapes were transcribed.

Session two was the photo taking session. Each pupil was given a disposable camera to take photographs for inclusion in the book. The photos were taken in pairs: one for possible inclusion in the school memories book; and the other for each pupil to have his or her own personal record of the school.

Session three involved pupils in selecting photos for and making both their own personal records and the school memories book. Each photo chosen for the school book was accompanied by a caption, which was discussed and agreed by each group. The school book, then, had two sections: one put together by the primary group; the other by the secondary group. This session was also tape-recorded and the tapes were transcribed.

We chose to use this method to try and elicit pupils' views about their school and its closure for the following reasons:

- Taking photographs was something the pupils would enjoy and that would engage their interest.
- Some of the pupils were young and some had learning difficulties, which could have made it difficult for them to develop abstract conversations and concepts using direct interview techniques (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000). The concrete nature of the task could help focus their attention and discussion.
- The pupils would work on this in a group, and through talking about their experiences together we hoped the pupils would be more comfortable and more expansive.
- It would allow us to return to the topic at a future date with an obvious starting/reference point

It was clear that all the pupils were engaged in and enthusiastic about the project. As evident in quotations later in this paper, the photograph albums (both the one for the school and their personal album) were valued by the pupils. The project stimulated discussion both between the pupils themselves and with the researchers. Whilst this approach had a number of strengths in terms of the collection of data, there were a number difficulties.

All the children in this small sample were able to communicate verbally. Children using augmentative communication aides, or with whom participation in standard communication would be difficult, were not included. We were acutely aware of not being able to listen to these children at this point, and hope to work with them in the future. There were two main reasons within this current project for working with verbally communicating children. Firstly, due to late allocation of school places as described above, access had been slightly problematic and time became severely limited. We did not have the opportunity, therefore, to develop data collection methods using alternative communication systems with non verbal pupils. Secondly, whilst participation was on a voluntary basis, the children were suggested by their class teachers in terms of who they believed would be appropriate for the project, and therefore we relied upon their understandings of appropriateness.

There were ethical problems, including questions of informed consent. Though the pupils did seem enthusiastic, it was not clear whether the enthusiasm was directed at the project or was motivated by the opportunity to be absent from regular classes.

Though the views of a small number of pupils could be explored in depth we had no control over the explanations provided by teachers. We did find that we had to devote some time to explanations at the start of session one. There were limitations, too, in sampling. By asking the staff to recommend pupils we were unsure as to whether there was any selection of pupils other than on a voluntary basis. We were aware that there were other children who could have different views about Adamston and its closure, who were not put forward by the staff.

Given the hierarchy of adult/child interactions, and the focus we gave our work compared to the immediate interests of the pupils, our awareness of directing their thoughts and contributions was necessarily heightened. We tried not to use direct questions but allowed the pupils to develop conversations around the photographs.

Deciding what was pertinent within the data was complex and we tried to avoid 'lazy interpretation', as described by Alderson and Goodey (1996), that concentrates on inconsequential responses furnished by the children. It was not always easy, however, to spot the 'consequential' responses and there were times within our first trawl of the data when children's responses were ignored as

irrelevant, but later thought to be extremely pertinent. The basis for choosing relevance tended to be when the children insisted on having discussions, sometimes along *with* the researchers, but sometimes *despite* them.

We found too that pupils' thoughts and feelings about their future placements and the reorganisation were not easily addressed.

The immediate focus for the project was the immediate context for the pupils, that is the closure of their school, their memories of the school and what they valued. The more abstract questions about their future had to be raised by the researchers.

### **Views from Adamston**

Perhaps inevitably the pupils' discussions covered a wide range of topics. However, three broad themes did recur: education as an experience in itself; inclusion as belonging; and feelings of exclusion.

#### *EDUCATION AS AN EXPERIENCE IN ITSELF*

Their experiences were predominantly positive and related almost wholly to the quality of the experiences themselves, rather than to any educational standards or aims. The teachers who featured in the books, for instance, were said to be 'cool' or a 'good laugh',

rather than because they were skilled at teaching. The school was valued as 'the best' because it was 'different'.

Pupil: This school's much better. I wish it had never closed.

Pupil: There's something different about this school.

Researcher: So what's different about this school?

Pupils: Lots of things. Horses.

Sports Hall.

The teachers are different. They're funny.

When asked what they would miss, 'friends' was the first answer and most pupils had predominantly taken photographs of their friends. They appeared to have very strong friendship bonds with each other across both gender and age range.

Amongst the secondary pupils there was the general camaraderie of leg pulling and teasing, often around 'snogging', 'skipping lessons together behind the sports hall', the 'disgusting nature of school dinners' ('I'd rather eat horse muck'), people being 'boring farts', and their mutual purported dislike of anything that suggested work e.g. 'Maths. French. IT'

The primary pupils demonstrated their strong friendships in a much more straightforward manner. 'I like knocking about with my friends. I like C. I really like knocking about with him because he's

a real sort of friend.' They showed confidence in their friendships.

When one child stated that 'my favourite things I like doing is playing with my friends', another's immediate response was 'he must mean me'.

There was evidence within both the secondary and primary pupils' talk of mutual understanding and recognition of the needs of others for greater amounts of help at certain times. For example, all the secondary children were keen to place a photograph of S, a wheelchair user, in their album. When deciding on the caption one suggestion was:

Pupil: Every week S's class goes out [said with a trace of envy in his voice]

Pupil: Yes, but that's not really their problem because at the weekend they can't get out so they have to go out with the teacher. They can't get out with their parents because their wheelchairs are too heavy.

The relationships with the staff in all areas of the school were consistently highly valued by all seven pupils. It was cited as the aspect of the school they would praise most highly. They described them as 'funny', 'mental', 'dead crazy', 'excellent', but

also as 'kind' and 'helpful', not only towards them but towards their friends.

Researcher: Why do you want a picture of J [staff member] in this book?

Pupil: Because she's nice and she helps, she helped M anyway

Pupil: She helped me and all.

The pupils had a lot to say about their shared history. Some children had taken photographs of the nursery because they said that was where they had originally met their friends; it was their history. A number of the pupils appeared to be fascinated by the fact that the Teachers' Centre had once been the school, and so wanted to include a photograph of that in their book. Another source of evidence of shared history came from discussions around performances and outings they had made. The primary school pupils described a band they had formed. They had played to the school and remembered how it had made them feel.

Pupil: We get together as a group and we practice and then we put on a show for everyone.

Pupil: Even the physios.

Pupil: And it's great because we're all excited.

Pupil        Do you feel all good inside when you've done something?

This led to a number of 'feeling good' and 'do you remember' conversations among the pupils that were about doing things together and being part of something within school.

### *INCLUSION AS BELONGING*

Some judgements of Adamston were embedded in the pupils' expression of loss at the closure of the school. Some expressions of the loss of the community were poignant. One pupil told us, 'The thing is the school is closing. And the thing is when you leave a school you can come back to see it, but we cant come back and see it.' Another, talking about the book of photographs, stated, 'So like you know when I go to my new school I'll be able to take this and show them who my old teacher was. And I won't know how I'll be able to see my old teacher, and I wanted to be able to see this.' The central theme seemed to be pupils' feelings of inclusion in the Adamston community in the sense of belonging.

The school had a small residential unit (referred to as 'resi'), which provided the secondary pupils the opportunity for over-night stays. This, it seemed, was consistently highly valued and would be missed.

Pupil: Resi is going to be a really big one for me. It's absolutely excellent. It's probably one of the best things about the school.

Researcher: What do you like about resi?

Pupil: You don't have to be at home being bored. All your friends are there .....your own room.

The school had riding stables and many of the children found it hard to imagine leaving the horses.

Pupil: Well I do really want to see them again and I will see them again but I know I'll not see them at school, but I can sometimes come and visit them can't I? Or even there might be some at my other school...cos this is one of the things I want to do. . I've got loads of photos of Sparky [horse] here.

The pupils struggled to understand loss. A primary pupil who had been known to one researcher when she was young, but whom she had not seen for four years, appeared to use this experience as a spring board to try and develop her understanding about loss and connections. Despite the researcher inexpertly trying to return the conversation to the topic of Adamston, the pupil repeatedly asked questions and made statements about having known the

researcher. This can be seen as an exploration of her own previous experience of history, loss and change.

Pupil: It's really sad that I'm going.

Researcher: Do you think you'll enjoy your new school though?

Pupil: Well, here I will come back and see them.

Researcher: But they are not going to be here are they?

Pupil: Yes they are. [said in a questioning voice but also assertive]

Researcher: Who is?

Pupil: You know Mrs T? She'll still be here... I've got [lists children] in already. Have you known me for ages?

Researcher: I knew you when you were little, yes. But I haven't seen you for a long time. Your mum used to bring you to the hydrotherapy pool at the Centre.

Pupil: Did you used to work there?

Researcher: Yes. And then you went to AW Nursery

Pupil: Did you come and see me there?

Researcher: Yes, I saw you there as well.

Pupil: So did you used to come to my house.

Researcher: No, I don't know where you live.

Pupil: It's in [region of the city].

Researcher: I would go past it but I didn't come to your house.

Pupil: Do you know [gives her address], its got a red door.

Do you know the one? You go past the fence, my next door neighbours fence, and my house is in the middle.

[ . . . ]

Pupil: You know when you were at the Centre, what did we used to call you?

Researcher: T, you've always called me that.

Pupil: Didn't we call you 'Mrs' something?

Researcher: No, we've always called ourselves by name at the Centre.

This pupil had clearly set an agenda here and was determined to direct the conversation. Her insistence demonstrated the importance for her of teasing out history, renewed contacts and change.

The primary pupils repeatedly talked about using the photographs they had taken as a link between the past and the future

Researcher: Why do you want to keep these [particular photographs].

Pupil A: They have all my memories in....and I want to take some of my friends in secondary...because they have been my friends for quite a long time

Pupil B: Physios. I want to take a picture of them in this school and then in my new school.

The older pupils offered their thoughts on leaving the school less readily than the primary children, but when they did, their conversations included both anger and sadness. In a conversation about why the school might be closing, one pupil suggested the Governors were to blame.

Researcher: So you think the governors have closed the school?

Pupils: Yes.

Researcher: Why do you think they wanted to do that?

Pupil A: Because they opened their big mouths.

Pupil B: It's not fair. It's not fair on anyone. It's not fair on us.

Researcher: In what way?

Pupil: Because there's a lot of people here that need help, physios . . . and it's not fair on them.

### *FEELINGS OF EXCLUSION*

In separate interviews their parents had reported what they considered evidence of anxious behaviour, one parent reporting that her child had restarted having fits during this unsettled time. Teachers too reported incidents of unsettled behaviour within the school such as a certain amount of disinterest and disaffection within the classroom that was uncommon in that environment. The central theme embedded in pupils' anxieties seemed to be feelings of exclusion from Adamston, their school.

There was evidence within the interviews that pupils were feeling anxious. Most had worries about their new placement. When asked if they were feeling they were going to be all right in their new school, they offered a mixed response ranging from definite 'no' and 'yes', to 'probably' and 'don't know' replies. With secondary school pupils replies were often tinged with teenage bravado and it was not always possible to engage in conversations with them about their thoughts on their new schools.

All the pupils, primary and secondary, said how they would miss their friends, especially as they did not live in the same neighbourhoods and Adamston was the main point of contact. One primary pupil, whilst acknowledging he was going to miss his

friends, was pragmatic about this and was making arrangements to go and stay with them. He also said:

Pupil: It's quite a big move and I'm a little bit frightened and it's going to be funny at first but I think I'll get into it.

Secondary pupils reported:

Researcher: You went to (mainstream) again on Tuesday?

Pupil A: Got more homework.

Pupil B: It was rubbish.

Researcher: Why was it? Why do you say that?

Pupil B: Because it's not like Adams, it's not a special school. Plus it's boring. All the teachers are boring.

Researcher: Why do you want to go to a special school?

Pupil B: Because I've got (medical conditions) and I'm incontinent.

Researcher: And you don't think they can cope with that in a mainstream school?

Pupil B: No. [An emphatic no which ended this discussion]

Others worried about practical details that had not yet been resolved, such as transport. Many pupils took photographs of the Adamston bus drivers and the buses. They associated them with 'great trips out' and 'getting out of lessons'. The bus photographs

prompted a discussion with a primary pupil who, whilst looking at all his photographs of the bus, stated that his new school was not near his home and he did not know how he would get to his new school.

One primary pupil, who had not been placed in the local school attended by his sibling, despite it having an additionally resourced centre for children with physical disabilities, worried both about the travel across the city and the size of the classes. He reported that he had seen his younger sibling in a large class and didn't know how he himself would manage, but he was pragmatic about it: 'they decide what's best for us and I'm willing to take a chance. . . I'm willing to do it.' He could not tell us why such choices had been made and he himself had not been involved in the decision making. A secondary child referred to this non involvement in decision making.

Pupil: Well most of the kids here have to go to mainstream.  
I'm going to Daleview (special school). That's the only school I can go to.

Researcher: Why are you going to Daleview? Did you decide you wanted to go to Daleview?

Pupil: No I got a letter. From the Civic Centre.

Researcher: So they decided?

Pupil: Well, yes. And my mam. The first time my mam went to visit the school they wouldn't let us go.

Some of the secondary pupils felt the closure had not been fair, on either themselves or others and felt quite angry about it. Others could engage with their new school, to a certain extent, and were beginning to make visits, but demonstrated mixed emotions and loyalties.

Researcher: And what do you think of the [new] school generally? Do you like going there?

Pupil A: Yes, but this school's better....

Pupil B: This school's much better.....in Harpers Lee you get shouted at all the time.

Researcher: Did you get shouted at when you went?

Pupil A: No.

Pupil B: We were late so we got shouted at.

### **Including insider voices from segregated settings**

One way of interpreting the views of disabled people documented in this paper is in terms of the pros and cons, or arguments for and arguments against, segregated schooling. This has been the dominant discourse at least since the 1944 Education Act, if not

since the inception of mass schooling. Given that there has been no significant decrease in the numbers of disabled pupils placed in segregated schooling over the past thirty years, this debate is at best sterile and, at worst, maintains the status quo.

There is another way of understanding these views and experiences, however, which looks towards inclusive education. Listening to the insider voices from the wide variety of experiences in segregated settings, from historical contexts and Adamston, we are struck first and foremost by the variety itself. They speak of abuse, but also of belonging. If there is a dominant common story, it is of subjugation in a context of unequal power relations between disabled and non-disabled people. Historically it is a story of disabled children being subjected to various forms of abuse. At Adamston, it is a story of disabled children being subjected to the loss of their community, originally created by non-disabled people through a policy of segregation and then terminated by non-disabled people in the name of inclusion.

Adamston was a small community which provided social, emotional and psychological security for these young people. It is not at all surprising that young people want to hold on to the community they are part of. The reorganisation - closure of their

school and placement in the new system - has been done to these young people. They (even more than their parents) have been powerless. The idea that pupils could or should be involved in policy-making or even decisions about their placement in the reorganised education system did not arise for the pupils themselves or anyone else involved. They were completely excluded from the consultation process and did not attend their annual reviews at which decisions about their placement in the reorganised system were discussed. Only once did a pupil appear at her own annual review. She burst into the room asking, 'What are you saying about me?' The meeting immediately stopped and she was gently ejected. The decision at the meeting was that this fourteen year-old should attend a mainstream school. No account has been taken of these disabled pupil's views in the planning of inclusive settings. No account has been taken of what these young people valued about their education, how their views might affect processes of change, or what they would look for, and need to feel included, in a so-called inclusive setting. Similarly, no account has been taken of disabled adults' views, their experiences, their culture.

From the evidence in this paper, insider voices from segregated schooling have much to say about inclusion and the process of changing towards an inclusive system, whether they are the voices of disabled adults who speak from experiences of abuse or they are the voices of disabled young people who speak from experiences of belonging in a long established community. We shall pin-point just four specific messages.

1. There are positive personal and social effects for disabled people of being with similarly disabled people. Inclusion cannot be realised through the denial of disability.
2. Inclusion has a powerful psychological dimension of belonging. Whilst being included in educational policy terms is about having access to ostensible universal standards of education, the confidence that comes from social inclusion is the context for such access.
3. Moving pupils around the system of schooling, especially outside their own neighbourhoods, has dramatic and traumatic consequences for the lives of individuals.
4. Young disabled people can tell us what inclusion means for them.

Most important, however, is the general message that moves towards a more inclusive education system must begin with the

inclusion of the voices of disabled children and adults. Insider voices from segregated schooling should inform the processes of change from a segregated to an inclusive education system, if 'inclusion' is not to perpetuate the subjugation of disabled people in other settings.

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