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The development of  
resource provision for children with  
Specific Language Impairment or  
Autistic Spectrum Disorder  
in Manchester Local Authority

**Follow-up Report**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Acronyms used in the report**

AHT	assistant head teacher
ASD	autistic spectrum disorder
CPD	continuing professional development
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an additional language
HT	head teacher
IEP	individual education plan
LA	local authority
NHS	National Health Service
OT	occupational therapy
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System
RP	resource provision
SEND	special educational needs and disabilities
SENCO	special educational needs co-ordinator
SALT	speech and language therapist
SLCN	speech, language and communication needs
SMT	senior management team
SLI	specific language impairment
TA	teaching assistant
TEACCH Children	Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children

## **Executive Summary**

### **Manchester resource provision schools**

As part of Manchester City Council's strategic plan for supporting children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder/Specific Language Impairment (ASD/SLI), nine resource provision (RP) schools were commissioned and developed across the city from 2010. The resource provisions have formed part of the Local Authority's (LA) continuum of provision for pupils with ASD/SLI within the city. An initial evaluation of 8 of the provision schools during their first 18 months of admissions (Bond & Hebron, 2013) provided positive evidence of their effectiveness and positive outcomes for many children and young people attending the schools, as well as their families.

The current evaluation is a smaller scale follow-up study focusing on professionals' perceptions of how the resource provision schools have continued to develop up to four years after they were initially set up and how they contribute to the continuum of provision for pupils with ASD/SLI within Manchester.

### **Aims and objectives of the evaluation**

This evaluation sought to address the following research questions:

- RQ1 How have the Manchester ASD/SLI resource provision schools continued to develop their role since the initial set-up evaluation? (2010-2013)
  - a) At the resource provision level?
  - b) Within the broader school context?
- RQ2 How have the resource provision schools impacted on the continuum provision available for pupils with ASD/SLI within the LA? (2014)

In order to answer these questions, 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Participants were the LA autism lead, the lead speech and language therapist (SALT) and staff working in the resource provisions. The provision staff included members of school senior management team (SMT) and staff specifically working in the resource provisions: teaching assistants (TAs), SALTs, resource provision leads, and resource provision teachers. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

### **Key findings**

The findings relate to three key areas: the development of the resource provisions themselves; the development of the resource provisions within the broader school context; and the development of the resource provisions within the LA.

- 1. Continued development of the resource provisions.** At the provision level, staff felt that despite now admitting more complex pupils, they had developed flexible systems which enabled them to maximise resources in response to need. Recruiting staff committed to working with pupils with ASD/SLI and being able to work flexibly was viewed as key to success. Complimentary staff roles and responsibilities had also developed within the resource provision teams. The contribution of SALTs was valued, although this did present some challenges for them in developing new ways of working in a school context, including some tensions with their NHS employment. Input from other external professionals and the Independent Development Service were also viewed positively. A range of strategies including personalisation, tracking progress and consistency of approach helped to underpin academic and social progress of pupils in the resource provisions. Staff also reported positive feedback from parents regarding their child's academic and social progress. Outreach was an area of work that was still at a relatively early stage of development in which resource provision staff were sometimes less confident. Areas for future development included induction and joint planning with mainstream staff in resource provision schools, LA admission planning, and training for other local mainstream schools.
- 2. Resource provisions within the broader school context.** An inclusive and positive school ethos helped to underpin the effectiveness of the resource provisions. The resource provision itself was often viewed as an extension of the school's general provision, enabling mainstream pupils and staff, as well as resource provision pupils, to benefit from the additional staffing and resources. Ensuring resources were ring fenced for the resource provision pupils and supporting staff who were reluctant and/or lacked the confidence to take a lead role in supporting pupils with ASD/SLI in their classes could present challenges. The support of senior managers was invaluable in embedding the resource provision within the school as a whole. Induction for new staff had been developed in some but not all resource provision schools and this was complimented by informal ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) for all staff.
- 3. Local Authority provision development.** The resource provisions had evolved to meet an identified gap in the continuum of LA provision. However, some perceived on-going gaps in provision were related to pupils with mental health needs, some mainstream schools providing insufficient support for pupils with ASD/SLI, and insufficient special school places. Resource provision staff valued the Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) panel but were concerned how merging it with the SEND panel might affect current collaborative ways of working in relation to admissions. The resource provision staff



continued to value the network meetings and the strategic direction provided by the LA Lead for Inclusion alongside informal support from each other. Further clarity was needed regarding the roles of special schools and resource provision schools in relation to outreach. Support to mainstream schools through training and outreach was discussed as an area for development.

### **Recommendations for the future development of the resource provision schools and ASD/SLI strategy**

The findings from this evaluation indicate that the Manchester resource provision schools have consolidated their role and responded to challenges such as a changing pupil demographic and increased pupil numbers. The resource provisions have also become an established part of Manchester's continuum of provision. There are a number of factors which need to be considered in order to maintain the effectiveness of the resource provisions and continue to enhance provision for pupils with ASD/SLI within the LA in the future.

- **Joint planning in relation to admissions** - the SLCN panel was perceived to be collaborative and working well, however changes to the panel may mean less resource provision representation. In order to continue this positive process, **opportunities for continued collaborative planning in relation to admissions need to be ensured.**
- **Given the potential number of children who might meet criteria for a resource provision place in the future**, particularly with the growing numbers of children receiving diagnoses of ASD in the early years, **a system for collecting data on current and future need would be beneficial to assist in future provision planning.**
- **An audit of current pupil needs within the City would help to identify current gaps and areas for potential future development.**
- **Information for schools and parents about the resource provisions and their admission criteria** (e.g. through leaflets, SENCO networks and HT meetings) would be helpful to ensure that there is **a shared understanding of the resource provision remit and role.**
- **Given the limited take-up of L2 Enhanced training** by mainstream school staff, **this training will need to be reviewed and updated** according to current need. As this is slightly less specialised than the original L2 training, it might be possible to offer a shorter, more compact version alongside opportunities to visit existing resource provisions.
- **Greater clarity regarding the outreach roles of the special school and resource provision would be helpful.** Discussion between special schools and resource provision schools to

agree respective roles could be followed up with a presentation at SENCO networks to publicise the support available.

- **Resource provision schools would benefit from greater clarity regarding support available to them from special schools.**
- **Mainstream schools would benefit from further clarification regarding their expected core offer for children with ASD/SLI** and how they can access support to ensure they are able to provide this. The *Matching Provision to Need* tool or the Autism Education Trust's *National Autism Standards* may be a useful starting point for self-evaluation.
- **A programme of induction and on-going training needs to be available to all staff in the resource provision schools**, with more specialised training available for resource provision staff. It may be useful for resource provision schools to share their systems and resources in this area.
- **Given that the network meetings are currently only attended by resource provision** leads it would be useful to explore the possibility of **a wider event or series of events which could be open to more resource provision staff** and would enable greater sharing of expertise across resource provisions.
- **A joint Health and Education review of the role of SALTs within the resource provisions** would assist in resolving some of the current tensions in the role for SALTs. This would need to look at flexible referral systems and SALT professional support and contracts.
- **Using assessment to inform intervention was identified as an area of progress.** However, feedback on Ofsted inspections and SALT data indicate that this could usefully be an area for continued collaboration between SALTs and resource provision staff across resource provisions.
- Although **joint work between resource provision teams and colleagues in mainstream classes** was evident, further strengthening of work in this area was identified as an area for future development, particularly in light of the new SEND processes. This might include:
  - Audit and review of whole school provision
  - Sharing expertise across resource provisions regarding systems for joint working with mainstream staff
  - Ongoing CPD with mainstream colleagues

# **Chapter 1 Introduction to the Manchester project**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This project is a follow-up evaluation of a previous research project (Bond & Hebron, 2013) which evaluated the effectiveness of eight primary and secondary resource provision schools supporting pupils with ASD/SLI in Manchester during their first 18 months of being established. This comprehensive evaluation utilised staff training data and pupil, parent and school data to explore organisational and individual pupil progress. Prior to this study there had been very few evaluations of resource provision schools, and therefore the research sought to address this gap. Previous research has identified a number of areas of concern for pupils with ASD/SLI attending mainstream schools which include: a high risk of exclusion for pupils with ASD (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009); potential vulnerability to bullying for both groups (Humphrey & Hebron, 2014; Green, Collingwood & Ross, 2010) and lower attainment than peers, particularly for pupils with SLI (Knox, 2002). Bond and Hebron (2013) reported that the impact of the resource provisions was largely positive, especially in terms of schools developing practice to meet the needs of young people with ASD/SLI, effective use of resources within the provisions and more widely in the schools, improved self-efficacy among specialist staff, and academic and social progress demonstrated by the resource provision students. Findings also provided evidence to show that concerns highlighted in previous research were being addressed. These included sustained levels of attendance that were comparable to peers, very few reports of bullying, and no exclusions.

Prior research suggests that new educational practices can take between three and five years to become fully established (e.g. Fullan, 2001), and different factors may be important for embedding and sustaining an intervention over time compared with initial set-up (Swain et al., 2009). A follow-up evaluation offered the opportunity to identify factors that are important for sustaining the intervention and exploring how practice has continued to develop. For instance, the provision of outreach support to other mainstream schools was just beginning to take place at the end of the initial evaluation and was a potential area for further development. The previous report also focused mainly on how the resource provisions contributed at the level of their own schools and how LA systems supported this. However, the resource provisions have now become more established, and it was felt that this would be a timely opportunity to explore how they have become embedded within the local continuum of provision up to four years after admitting their first students.

This follow-up evaluation is smaller in scope, focusing primarily on how systems have evolved to support pupils with ASD/SLI at the LA and resource provision school levels. Although it would

potentially have been beneficial to include parent and pupil perspectives on these processes (as was the case in the initial report), this was not possible within the resources and time available.

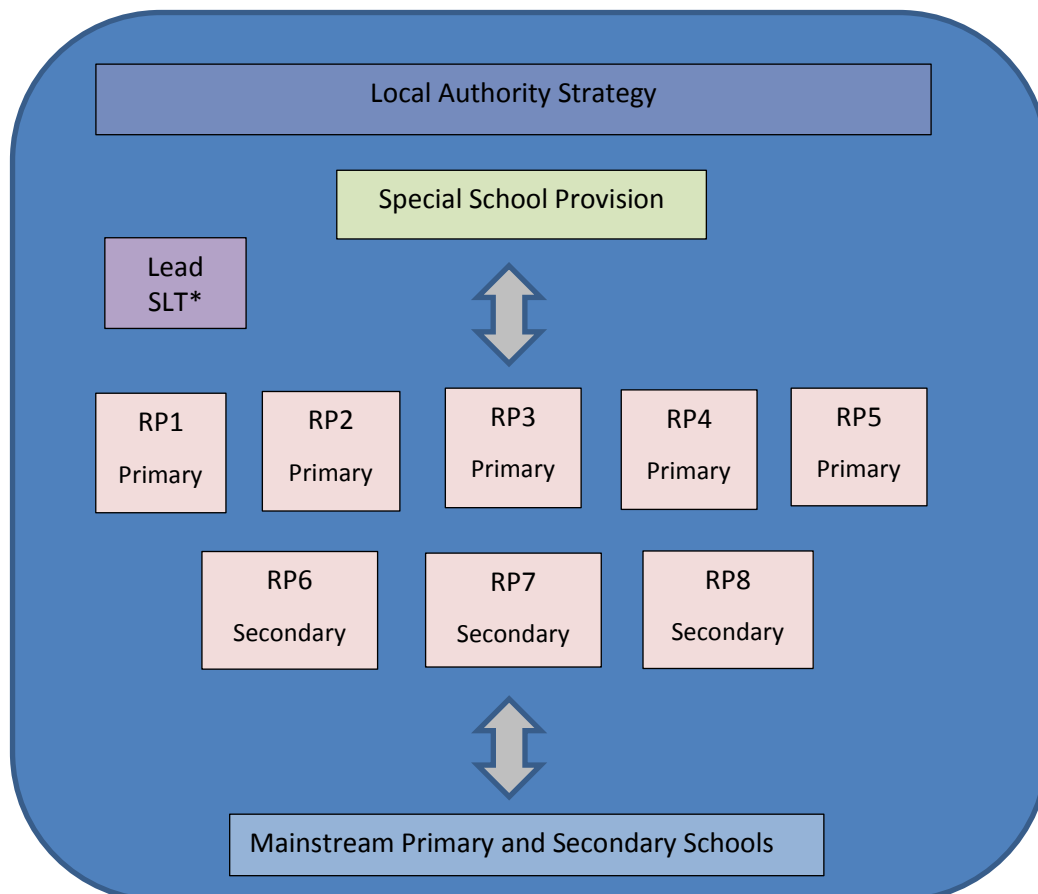
## 1.2 Aims and objectives

This evaluation seeks to address the following research questions:

- RQ1 How have the Manchester ASD/SLI resource provision schools continued to develop their role since the initial set-up evaluation? (2010-2013)
  - a) At the resource provision level?
  - b) Within the broader school context?
- RQ2 How have the resource provision schools impacted on the continuum provision available for pupils with ASD/SLI within the LA? (2014)

## 1.3 Research design

The research design focuses on the eight resource provision schools within the context of the Local Authority, as shown in Figure 1:



\*Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)

Figure 1: Model of the resource provision schools within the local authority

The research design aimed to focus particularly on the ongoing development of the resource provision schools with additional contextual data from the LA lead, the HT of the special school provision for children with ASD and the SALT lead. The lead SALT was also included to provide a perspective on how the deployment of SALTs within the resource provisions worked alongside National Health Service (NHS) contracts and requirements. It may also have been useful to elicit the views of mainstream schools which had worked with the resource provision schools either through outreach or pupil moves. However, within the context of this evaluation they would be less likely to be able to provide the strategic overview of provision within the LA which could be offered by the LA lead for inclusion, the lead SALT or the head of the special school for ASD.

The data collected consisted of 28 interviews undertaken in June and July 2014. Interviewees included the LA Lead for Inclusion, the lead SALT, and key staff from seven of the eight resource provisions (four primary and three secondary): seven resource provision leads, six SALTs, six Teaching Assistants (TAs), and six members of school Senior Management Teams (SMT). Unfortunately it was not possible to meet with the Head Teacher of the ASD special school or staff from one of the primary resource provisions within the period of time available for the interviews.

Interviews followed a semi-structured format tailored to the role of respondents, enabling the research team to pursue particular topics in more depth as interviews progressed. For school staff and SALTs, interviews focused on the ongoing development of the resource provision at the school and LA level. The interview with the LA lead and lead SALT focused on the role of the resource provisions within the LA and NHS continuum of provision for pupils with ASD/SLI, and the impact of the resource provisions within the LA more broadly. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then analysed as a whole set within a data analysis package (NVivo). Data from interviews were coded and then grouped into subthemes and themes. Maps showing these themes and subthemes are presented in the next section, along with an analysis and discussion of the findings.

## Chapter 2 Findings

Findings are presented in relation to the two research questions:

- RQ1 How have the Manchester ASD/SLI resource provision schools continued to develop their role since the initial set-up evaluation? (2010-2013)
  - a) At the resource provision level?
  - b) Within the broader school context?
- RQ2 How have the resource provision schools impacted on the continuum provision available for pupils with ASD/SLI within the LA? (2014)

The data are presented by means of thematic maps. These are first presented in an overall summary thematic map. Each of the main themes is subsequently presented with its subthemes and discussed separately.

### **2.1 RQ1a: How have participating schools continued to develop at the resource provision level?**

The first sub-question consists of 10 main themes (see Figure 2).

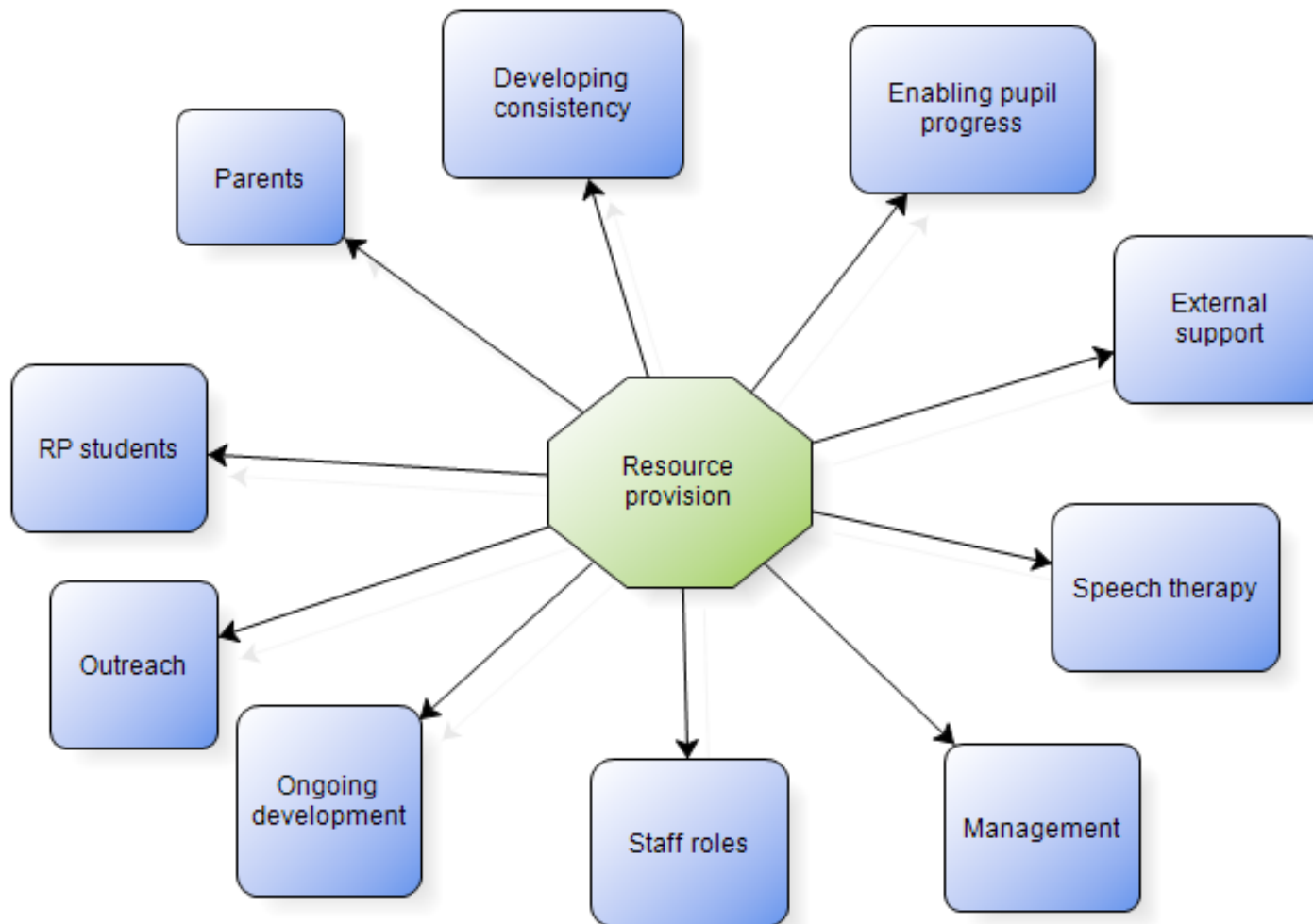


Figure 2: RQ1a: Development of the resource provisions

### 2.1.1 Management of resource provision

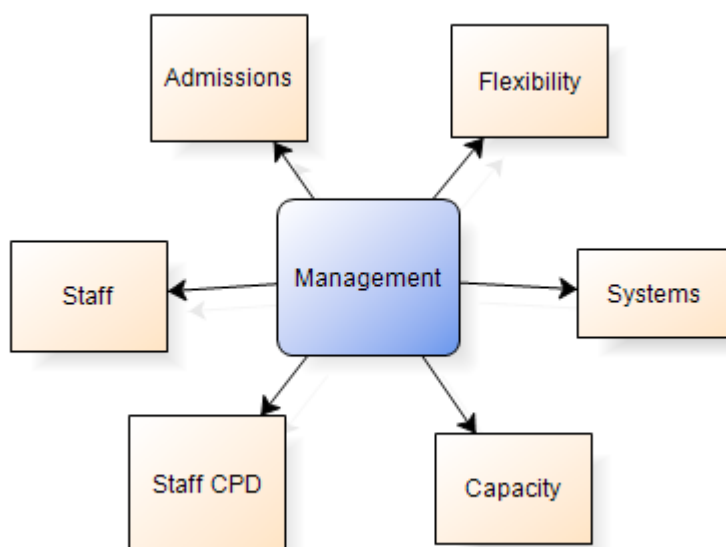


Figure 3: Management of resource provision

This initial theme relates to managing the intake of children into the provision; managing and supporting resource provision staff; enabling flexible staff deployment; and leading on developing resource provision systems. This was mainly undertaken by the resource provision lead in collaboration with senior managers, including the SENCO. In most schools resource provision leads were on the school SMT which assisted these decision making processes.

In relation to admissions provision staff felt they had a good understanding of the types of pupils who would benefit from resource provision placement. However, they also highlighted that there appeared to have been a shift in the profile of the children and young people being admitted since the previous evaluation, with an increasingly complex range of needs apparent.

*“We have children who are currently with us who prior to coming with us have been getting two hours a week education...ok, some of them two hours at home, some of them two hours in a library” - SENCO*

In some cases the resource provisions were able to be proactive and begin working with at risk pupils before statements or admission had been finalised. This had positive benefits, particularly for those pupils who were beginning to disengage from education, although there was a consequential increase in demand on provision staff.



*“We do talk about being victims of our own success ‘cause the more successfully we include children with complex needs, the more complex needs children come here” - SENCO*

Meeting the needs of pupils with complex needs often required intensive intervention which had implications for the staff’s capacity to deliver the full range of resource provision, particularly once all the places had been filled. Meeting the wide range of needs across year groups was referred to as “a balancing act” to ensure everyone received the support they needed, particularly as needs across the group could change on a day-to-day basis. For small primary schools in particular, admitting pupils with more complex needs into a year group which already had a number of children with ASD presented challenges.

*“Let’s say there were five Year 6 children, I would say you’ve got to stagger transition in terms of the second wave, particularly if children are coming from placements in mainstream that have not been positive. So it’s not only your needs that you’re dealing with, it’s all that baggage that they bring” – member of SMT*

Capacity was also a concern for many schools. Increasing the number of resource provision places presented staffing challenges and required careful management of resource provision group dynamics. Agreement between the schools and LA that provisions were full was helpful for long-term planning. However, pressure on places within the ASD special school meant that some young people who needed placements were being admitted into resource provision. For some it was felt that this might not be the best provision to meet their needs, with the potential for further failure and reduction in self-esteem if placed inappropriately. For others this was successful, when some additional staffing was provided.

*“He was meant to be going to a special school because they felt that socially and cognitively he wasn’t right for a resource provision, but he made huge progress and a year ago his mum said ‘I don’t want him to go to the special school’ and so we got him re-assessed and he stayed” - RP Lead*

Flexibility of resource provision was viewed as a key to success.

*“I love the timetable that it is so kind of fluid...and you can just change things around to suit the children and suit the teachers” – RP lead*

Although it sometimes put pressure on resources to have a member of staff in the resource provision when most pupils were out in mainstream classes, this was regarded as important so that a safe space was available for pupils if they were finding it difficult to cope.

A number of flexible systems and support models had been developed by resource provision staff focusing on consistency and routine. These often began with structured transition planning which enabled resource provision staff to get to know pupils well before they began gradual inclusion in mainstream classes. Once pupils were attending the resource provisions regularly, other systems included predictable routines; strategies for managing busy times in the school day such as registration and lunchtime; structured resource provision lessons; individualised timetables; targeted interventions; frequent communication between staff; and staff having the flexibility to change plans according to pupil need.

Recruiting the right personnel was viewed as essential. A SALT described the resource provision staff as having:

*“A real clear commitment to working with the children which...I mean I don’t know if you call that a skill, probably an attitude really, but I think it’s absolutely key.”*

Having a calm approach was described as important alongside specific skills and knowledge. Some staff had a specific brief such as language development work, while others brought individual skills and interests such as a specialism in science which was highly valued.

A number of factors were taken into consideration when deciding deployment of staff. At primary staff knowledge and experience of working with individual children were likely to be taken into consideration. This was also considered at high school, but alongside increased opportunities for developing pupil autonomy and independence.

CPD for resource provision staff often happened on an ad-hoc basis with staff being trained on the job and through informal learning alongside colleagues.

*“It’s targeted training throughout, you know, for who needs it really, it’s needs driven really”*  
– RP lead

More formal induction for new staff in the resource provisions was also identified as an area for development. External conferences also provided opportunities for networking and developing new ways of working.

### 2.1.2 Resource provision staff roles

This theme relates to the roles of specific staff within the resource provisions. These roles included resource provision lead, resource provision TA, SALT and specialist teacher.

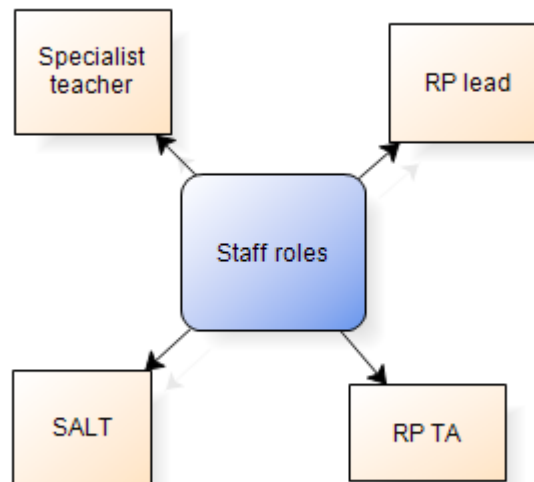


Figure 4: Resource provision staff roles

The resource provision leads were often experienced teachers with a range of mainstream and special school experience. Their role was crucial for linking the resource provision into the rest of the school. The importance of provision leads being senior managers was emphasised in order for them to have a whole school overview. Some provision leads were also SENCO which they found useful for having an overview of SEND and provision across the school. Leading the provision teams included organising regular meetings to enable information sharing and development of a consistent approach for pupils. Liaising with mainstream staff and parents was also a key aspect of the role. Another main role of provision leads related to leading on the planning for individual pupils. This included setting targets and planning inclusion. One resource provision lead mentioned that they had recently begun to receive supervision and she had found this very useful. This may be an area for further development.

The resource provision TAs also had diverse roles and tended to play an instrumental role in the children's inclusion in mainstream classes. Supporting pupils in class was a very varied role which involved developing good working relationships with pupils, provision leads and classroom teachers, to provide flexible and responsive academic and social support. In some primary schools, a key worker role had been developed to ensure consistency of support for pupils. At high school, support was less likely to be delivered by one person, so TAs might share strategies for pupils within the

support team to ensure consistency of support. TAs who had undertaken the Level 2 training and were more experienced were also more likely to take a role in liaison and training for other staff.

Although it had originally been envisaged that the resource provisions would be staffed by a lead and a specialist teacher, not all of them developed in this way, notably in the primary schools. The specialist teachers were more likely to have less of a role in relation to the management and running of the provisions and were more likely to be involved in teaching lessons in the provisions, working with mainstream staff to support inclusion, or delivering targeted interventions.

The SALT role was one that continued to evolve. Having SALTs working directly in schools presented a number of opportunities, including developing new ways of working (e.g. moving away from traditional 1:1 therapy to consultation approaches to support pupils' generalisation of skills) and more collaborative working.

*“Kind of moving away from a model where the specialist teacher delivers their education based packages and the speech therapist communication packages to a more joined up approach where there's joint planning and joint target setting and in some cases joint delivery of activities” – member of SMT*

The role of the SALTs included assessments, 1:1 work, and small group work. Small group work might also include broader aspects of social skills such as supporting the development of pupils' friendships. Whole school development work such as training and working with pupils in mainstream was also valued. Being part of the staff or regularly in schools also meant that SALTs might be consulted about broader issues such as mental health or safeguarding. The role of speech therapy is discussed further in the next theme.

### 2.1.3 The role of speech therapy in a mainstream setting

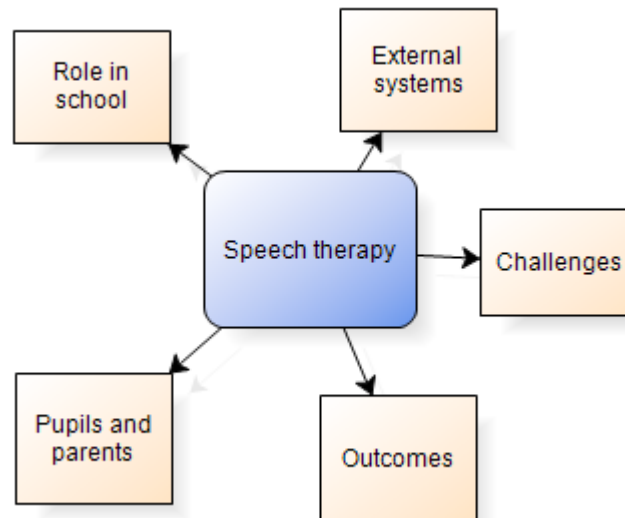


Figure 5: The role of speech therapy

The role of SALTs in schools was a category with a large number of responses. Providing an outline of SALT roles and responsibilities at the outset was useful but over time the role evolved differently across schools. A particular source of concern for many therapists related to SALT time being contracted for the resource provision pupils but perhaps not being used most effectively if it was targeted solely towards ongoing direct therapy for this group of pupils. Both SALTs and resource provision leads mentioned the importance of auditing need across the school so that the speech therapy resource could be targeted towards the children who most needed input, particularly when plans were in place for meeting the needs of the resource provision children.

*“I think initially when the resource provisions were set up, we were very protective of that time because that was how it was supposed to be, the speech and language therapist was there for resource provision pupils but I think it’s kind of evolving now and schools want more of a say of how that speech and language therapist works [...] as part of the inclusion.” - RP lead*

The concepts of entry and exit criteria and episodes of care, rather than continuous therapy were mentioned as useful ways of thinking about how services could be delivered most effectively for the resource provision pupils. The most appropriate way of delivering SALT input to children with ASD and challenging behaviour was also discussed with consultation being suggested as most appropriate at certain times. Overall, developing a more flexible strategic role which included prioritisation of resource provision when needed appeared to be a favoured delivery model.

A relatively large number of responses from SALTs were in the challenges category. As described above, a major challenge related to developing new models of work such as consultation. Further challenges for SALTs also related to their school based role and how they were employed. Most were employed by the NHS but felt rather isolated from it, and despite being based in the schools some SALTs did not always feel part of the wider school.

*“Some people I feel I can approach, but some people I feel I can’t. I still think that I’m seen as an external member of staff sometimes and I’m not always seen as a full member of the school.” - SALT*

This perception of difference may have also been compounded by differences in employment contracts such as annual leave entitlement, CPD requirements and time logs. Information sharing issues could also lead to some difficulties, such as SALT protocols requiring schools to gain consent for SALT involvement or schools not realising that it might be useful for a SALT to see a child’s behaviour plan.

Some external systems had been developed to support the SALTs, for instance, regular supervision provided by the SALT clinical lead and case discussion groups which were perceived as helping in reducing potential professional isolation, although more frequent informal contact with colleagues was something SALTs said they would value. The SALT lead also provided a link to management systems within the NHS and liaised with the LA lead to ensure continued development of the SALT role within the resource provisions.

SALTs felt that parents were happy with the input for their children. Contact with families included home visits and communication workshops. The workshops provided an informal opportunity for parents to meet and had been evaluated very positively.

SALTs were expected to provide outcome data for the NHS and had begun to develop some systems for doing this.

*“So if you’re delivering a Lego therapy intervention, you might be delivering that with specific outcomes in mind like problem solving or communication repair, in which case you could probably map some quite concrete outcomes and do that. So again, I think although we have a system in place for measuring outcomes, I think that is something that we want to move forward with and develop” - SALT*

SALTs were looking at different ways of measuring outcomes for pupils as the children’s needs often changed rapidly. Positive data on the wider impact at the school and family levels had also been collated by the SALTs.

SALTs also identified a number of other successful outcomes. These included witnessing pupil progress; developing a collaborative model of working in schools; opportunities for sustained work with individual pupils and being part of the resource provision teams. The resource provision leads were also very positive about the SALT contributions, particularly IEP planning for children; collaborative working; advice regarding mainstream pupils; staff training and intervention groups.

*“It’s a lot more than speech and language therapy, it’s more like wellbeing and like full service school, that type of thing, she’s my link to that full service school” - RP lead*

#### 2.1.4 Enabling Pupil Progress

This theme relates to methods used by resource provision staff to support individual pupil’s academic and social progress. These included personalisation, tracking progress, interventions and managing transitions.

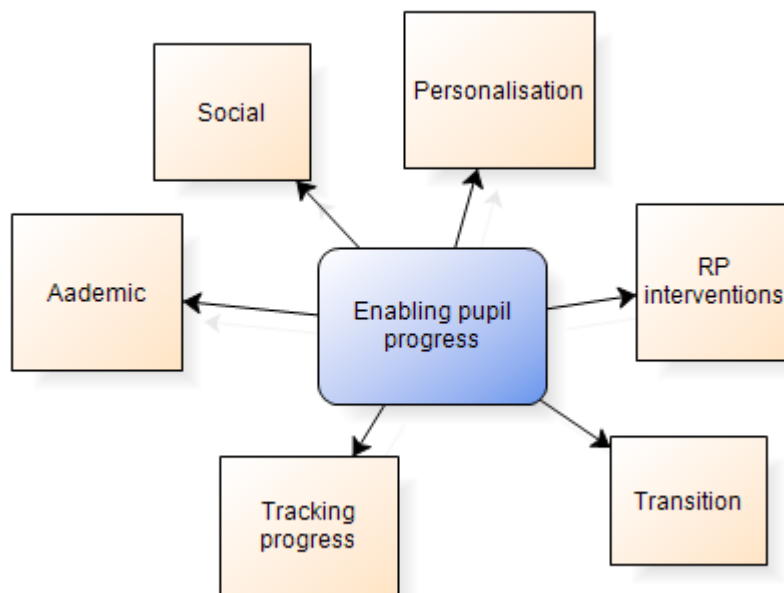


Figure 6: Enabling pupil progress

Resource provision staff used a number of strategies to facilitate access to the academic curriculum. These included supplementary activities related to a class theme, withdrawal for supplementary

skills teaching, and using data to inform planning. However, staff working in high schools identified a tension between successful outcomes for children attending the resource provision and more formal high school academic outcome measures such as GCSEs. There was concern that key aspects of progress for this group of pupils such as increasing independence and tolerance for change were not taken into consideration by external evaluators such as Ofsted, although these are important skills for adulthood.

Provision staff felt that a major aspect of their role was facilitating social inclusion. This meant providing social activities such as snack time and social skills groups, and monitoring pupils' social inclusion to make adjustments as necessary. For instance:

*"I find out individually what their needs are, so for example, I identified that a lot of them needed help with friendship" - specialist teacher*

Breaks and lunchtimes also needed careful planning and management, usually by offering lunchtime clubs or discrete monitoring of pupils on the playground.

A key to enabling academic and social progress was personalisation. Staff worked hard to get to know children individually and identify strategies which might work for them, such as a particular style of visual timetable or reward system. Taking time to build a relationship with a child was viewed as an important foundation for learning.

*"I need to build a good relationship with this child, he needs to trust me, he needs to understand that obviously he likes football, show him that I like football, so build a good relationship. And then once we've built that relationship, then we will go back to the IEP and look at what his targets were" - RP lead*

This knowledge of the child helped to feed into individualised planning.

*"It's about setting up sort of personalised timetables for children, seeing what they can cope with in the classroom, where they can manage, whether that's with support or without support, then that's what's put in place as much as possible we want them to be able to be in class" - RP lead*

Resource provision staff aimed to increase inclusion in mainstream for all children but tried to ensure that time in the provision was available and supported the development of skills for inclusion. The most effective use of mainstream was also planned, for instance through lessons which provided opportunities to learn alongside appropriate role models or which capitalised on



pupil strengths. Enabling independence was important at both primary and high school with pupils being challenged incrementally, for instance by keeping routines the same but changing the adult working with the child. When strategies did not succeed, observation and discussions with pupils also helped to inform alternative strategies.

For some pupils personalisation extended beyond the school to very individualised packages of support.

*“We’re currently working with one student in home tuition package in the care home because he won’t attend school” - RP lead*

The provisions offered a wide range of planned interventions and interventions in response to pupil need. Planned interventions included small group interventions, such as fine motor skills and narrative therapy, or withdrawal groups which provided catch-up opportunities for pupils who found the pace in mainstream too fast. Interventions developed directly in response to pupil need included social stories and helping pupils manage anxiety by jointly developing practical strategies.

Tracking pupil progress was viewed as important for demonstrating pupil achievement and informing pupil progress. SALTs and other resource provision staff used data to inform regular reviews of IEP targets. A range of data such as attendance, house points and data from class teachers also enabled academic and social issues to be identified and compensatory strategies put in place as needed.

*“If the level seems to be dropping I will then go and talk to the class teacher and see what it is, see whether it’s something as simple as not a liked topic or he hasn’t put much effort to being...well, there’s a massive problem, there’s clash or something’s going wrong in class and then systems are in place to try and support or to change, so we’ll possibly do catch up work inside the resource provision or we’ll look to change classes or to the other end of the spectrum we might actually remove him from that subject altogether” - RP lead*

However, one high school expressed concern that they had not received assessment data from some primary schools which would make it more difficult to apply for an Education Health and Care Plan.

Resource provision staff were involved in a range of pupil transitions. Transitions for new pupils often needed to be gradual given the complexity of some of the children’s needs, and this had implications for staffing. Transitions from primary to secondary resource provisions were generally reported to have been successful.

*“We made fantastic progress with those Year 6 children last year and...three of them moved from here to the resource provision at secondary school and are all doing really well and very happy, very settled” - SALT*

High schools had established transition programmes with primary schools which might involve secondary staff observing pupils, pupil visits and timetable planning. However, some high schools felt that being involved earlier at Y5 reviews would be helpful. Strategies such as transition booklets were also found to be of benefit for within school transitions, such as between year groups.

### 2.1.5 Developing consistency

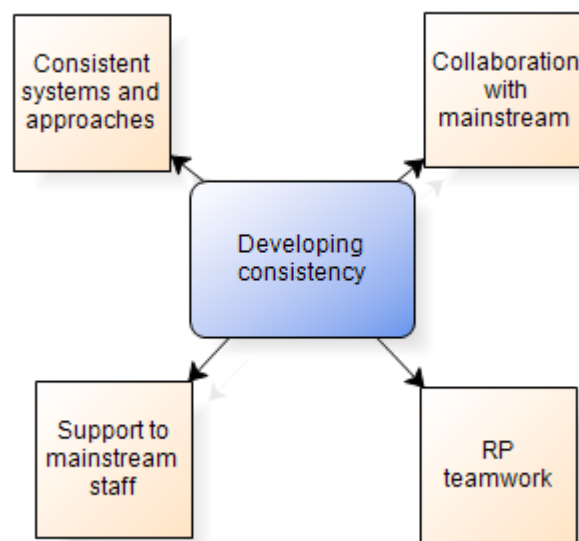


Figure 7: Developing consistency

Developing consistency emerged as a theme which included work within the resource provision team and work with mainstream staff. Within the provision team there were a number of strategies for ensuring consistency of approach through team work. These strategies included regular sharing of information through activities such as update briefings regarding individual children, ongoing informal discussion and a shared continuous assessment process.

*“It’s a record but it’s also looking what next, what needs, what’s a problem, what needs changing and at the end of the week I go through all those, add any bits that I can think of as well and then I draw up what we call a diary and a pupil support plan” - RP lead*

Activities in the resource provision were also structured and consistent for pupils who found inclusion in mainstream classes difficult.

*“If they’re not managing within the classroom, they’ll come back to resource provision and...and do some like pick up and go activities, because the reason they’ve not managed in class is because they can’t cope with the demand of whatever’s been put on them so we bring them back and just take all the demands away, not to reward them, but just to give that break and then once they’re ready we’ll either try back in class or whatever work they were doing in class” - RP lead*

The provisions also developed an important role as a consistent and safe space for children to go to if they were feeling upset, and in most schools this included access for mainstream pupils. The provisions were available for pupils to go to whenever they needed, and this was seen as instrumental in enabling pupils to learn to self-manage their emotions.

Continuing professional development (CPD) also supported staff in developing a consistent approach.

*“I watched her do it, observed her say the first say couple of weeks and then ‘cause it’s fairly easy to do, but you just need to know how to do it, so yeah, I learnt that from her” - TA*

Support was also provided to mainstream colleagues. This happened through TAs working with class teachers to extend their ASD awareness in areas such as transition and sensory issues. In some high schools a wider group of staff within Learning Support departments were given additional training so they could support the resource provision pupils in mainstream lessons and at lunchtimes. Staff briefings on the provision children and techniques for supporting them were included in one school’s September training day, and this was followed up with twilight sessions for mainstream staff on supporting specific pupils. TAs also took a lead role in bridging between the classroom and resource provision.

*“They [pupils] also have the continuity of me, they know how I work and I know how they work and they know that how much they can get away with” - TA*

Collaboration with mainstream staff also included sharing information about any changing pupil needs and supporting teachers with pupil assessment, differentiation strategies and report writing. Whole class work included raising awareness of diversity through experiential activities or stories.

*“It’s just a mainstream story, it’s not aimed at children with particular ASD difficulties but Giraffes can’t Dance is a story that, so it’s about this Gerald the Giraffe who can’t dance and all the others laugh at him and that, but then, you know, that can go on to. In the end, he can dance but then that obviously leads on to, you know, we’re all good at certain things, but*

*not good at others and is there something you feel you can't do yet and how do you feel if other children laugh at you? The children have really responded to it and are very, very supportive of our children" - RP lead*

### 2.1.6 Resource provision students

This theme relates to the profile of pupils attending the RPs and their outcome.

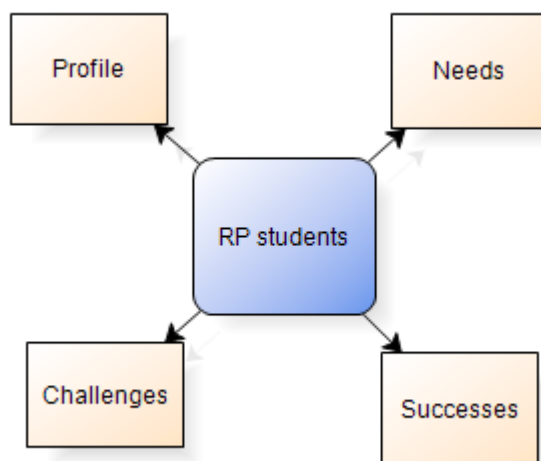


Figure 8: Resource provision students

As mentioned in the admissions section, provision staff were acutely aware that the more recent pupils often had a different profile to the children who were initially admitted following the closure of the special school for children with SLI. One provision lead commented:

*"The profile of the ones coming through now, from this provision's experience, I would say are more what I expected, I did expect the more complex and challenging individuals but higher functioning and those are the ones I would really like us to be able to provide places for"*

Younger children were also being referred which staff identified as a potential difficulty for future provision capacity, particularly at high school. As mentioned previously there were concerns that some children who were not able to access the mainstream environment were being inappropriately placed in the provisions. It could also be difficult to access outreach support from the special school for these children.

Staff commented on the needs of the children attending resource provision, with behavioural issues most commonly mentioned. Staff discussed the need to understand the child in order to proactively

manage situations. Once pupils were settled in the provisions, supporting the wider staff to ensure consistency of approach became more of a focus.

*“The teacher’s almost being a little bit scared of not knowing what to do and how that child will react so has had them removed from the classroom and brought to resource and I’ve had to have a conversation with that teacher saying ‘no, you treat them like you treat the other children’” - RP lead*

For SALTs behaviour could be a concern, as it made it difficult for children to access and benefit from 1:1 sessions. Sometimes in these situations SALTs worked with staff on provision or classroom targets until the child was more settled.

Challenges identified by resource provision staff included enabling pupils to access particular sessions such as assembly, physical education and religious education. Pupils might be withdrawn from these sessions initially and build up to them once they were settled in other lessons. Another major challenge with the changing pupil demographic was supporting pupils who had failed in their previous schools. This raised concerns about how other mainstream schools were supporting pupils.

*“Some of them have been failed by their school because their school has not actually done what a mainstream school should do and those are the ones who make me incredibly angry because it’s not about resource provision. Some of those have the same profile as children who are here in our mainstream, who have been successful” - SENCO*

Staff also spoke about successes in their work with pupils. These included pupils who arrived with challenging behaviour but were now successfully included in mainstream for significant periods of time, and pupils who were becoming more social in mainstream classes. Staff also reflected on pupils’ academic progress.

*“We’ve had some really good successes, so I’m very pleased with that. I mean there was a young girl last August who was probably our first resource provision place pupil to take GCSEs and she got five A-Cs, so if she’d been in her previous school she actually wouldn’t have taken any GCSEs” - SALT*

These successes in school were also important to families.

*“The young man we’ve just got who’s got severe language impairment, he’s totally different from the others in many ways because nearly all of our youngsters are autistic and he’s severe language impairment and he again, wasn’t having his needs met in the secondary*

*school he was in. And when his dad came here, his dad said 'I just want, I want him to be successful, I want him to be happy.' And dad then came to parents' evening last night and said 'he's happy, he's successful, I'm happy' – member of SMT/SENCO*

Staff attributed these successes to aspects of personalisation, such as getting to know the young person and working through individualised support plans at an appropriate pace for the young person.

### 2.1.7 Parents

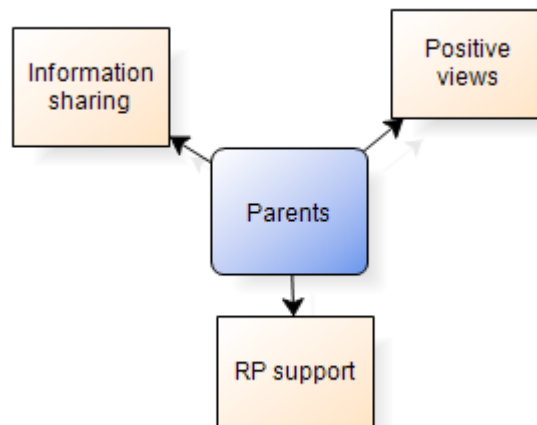


Figure 9: Parents

This was a relatively small theme but included a number of examples of parents being supportive of and positive about the provision.

*"His mum came in last week and she just said, 'can I just see you for five minutes' she just said 'I can't say thank you enough' she says 'he's a different boy, he's a different boy'" - RP lead*

Parents reported being able to do things they had not previously been able to do with their children and being able to relax, knowing that their child's needs were being met in an inclusive environment. Home-school information sharing was also a valued part of developing and sustaining an ongoing relationship with parents and meeting pupils' needs on a day to day basis. A number of resource provision schools also arranged coffee mornings for parents of all pupils with SEND which were often accessed by parents of provision children. These enabled parents to access advice from a range of professionals and support from other parents.

### 2.1.8 External support

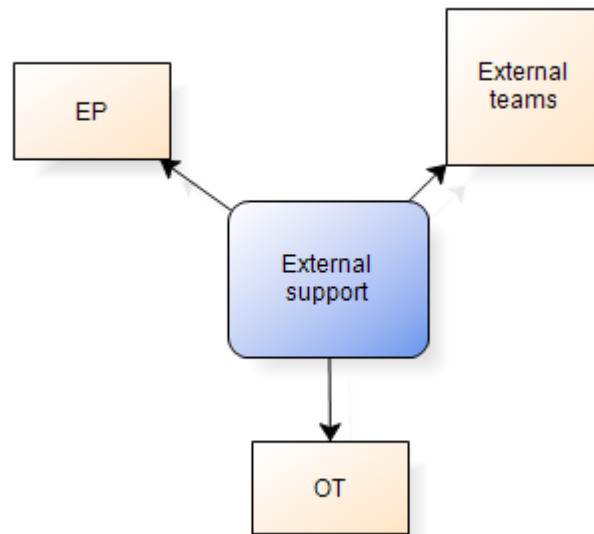


Figure 10: External support

Resource provision schools were positive about support from external professionals. Schools appreciated having additional educational psychologist (EP) time and found the EPs to be:

*“Accessible, very approachable, giving good support, good suggestions” - RP lead*

They appreciated having access to EPs to support their work with complex children, although some schools would have liked more time or their own EP. In addition to this input the schools also found access to occupational therapy very useful, although this tended to be on an individual child basis.

*“It tends to be kind of quite a, it’s not like a, it’s not as ongoing as speech and language obviously, but it tends to be quite [...] a limited timeframe of they contact us, come in, do maybe two or three visits and then leave us with a list of recommendations” - RP lead*

Other external team input included a range of professionals from organisations such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and social services, which was very helpful for children with complex needs. The Independent Development Service was also described as an extremely useful resource for older students to support the development of independent skills, for example through living in a flat for short periods of time.

### 2.1.9 Outreach

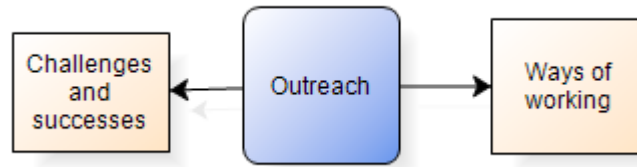


Figure 11: Outreach

There were a small number of comments about outreach which indicated that this was an area of work that was early in its development. A challenge of providing outreach support for high schools was that although there was capacity to offer outreach, other high schools might be reluctant to ask for support. In some cases schools had been directed to ask for outreach support which had been moderately successful. Undertaking outreach work was described as being a trial and error process which staff seemed to feel they would like to be more confident in delivering.

### 2.1.10 On-going development of the resource provisions

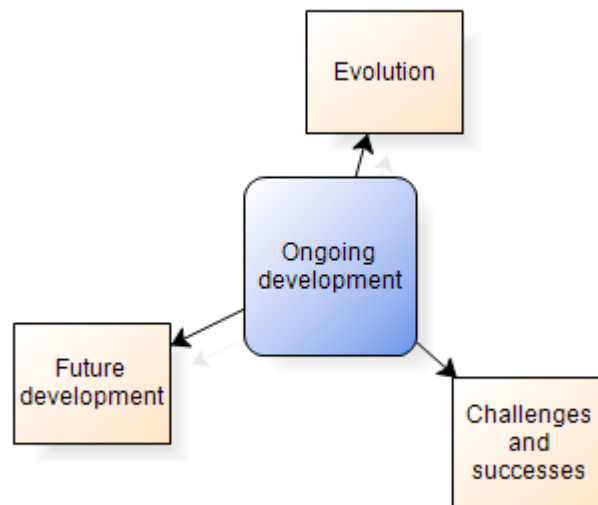


Figure 12: Ongoing development

Staff described aspects of evolution since the previous evaluation. This included focusing on embedding resource provision processes and working with a new cohort of more challenging pupils. Some staff felt that if they were to set up the provisions again they would spend more time getting to know children, and which is now very much part of their practice. Other staff also commented on



the wider benefits of the provision for the school as a whole and other pupils (e.g. additional staff expertise, fostering a more diverse and inclusive ethos).

A number of challenges and successes were identified. Challenges included: meeting the needs of children with significant behaviour problems and who might not be appropriately placed; managerial aspects (e.g. timetabling support in mainstream for a diverse pupil group); issues related to staff turnover (e.g. recruiting and training new staff); and developing the skills of staff within the wider school and ensuring continued development of the provisions. Successes included; a whole school approach supported by senior school managers; pupils being able to access a local mainstream school; being able to provide a high level of adult support; access to SALT; developing the knowledge and skills of the wider staff; and removing the stigma of SEND. There were many comments about seeing the progress made by pupils across a range of areas including behaviour, communication and independence.

*“They came in and you can see the unbelievable difference in the young people who’ve had that year in there who are now confident to have a conversation with you, give you eye contact, go to lesson independently if they’re asked to” - TA*

*“Ofsted did say that it was a safe and tailored environment so the pupils, you know, are happy, they do feel safe, they know that they’ve got the support” - RP lead*

Staff identified a number of areas for potential development in the future. At the school level these included auditing provision using the Autism Education Trust standards; supporting the wider staff; joint target setting between resource provision and mainstream staff; induction and access to counselling for pupils. At LA level, staff identified the need for more joint planning by provisions schools around managing admissions; a clearer system for placement moves; and the possibility of dual role with the special school for ASD. A model of training for other mainstream schools was also suggested.

*“I think there was always a vision for the resource provisions having...a practice sharing function within their district and I think the speech and language therapists, particularly in the primary schools, are quite keen to have a role in terms of extending and sharing good practice with neighbouring schools on how to you know, support and develop communication needs of children” - SALT lead*

## 2.2 RQ1b: Development of the resource provisions within the wider school context

The second sub-question relates to the role of the resource provision within the school as a whole. Within this main theme there are six themes (and sub-themes).

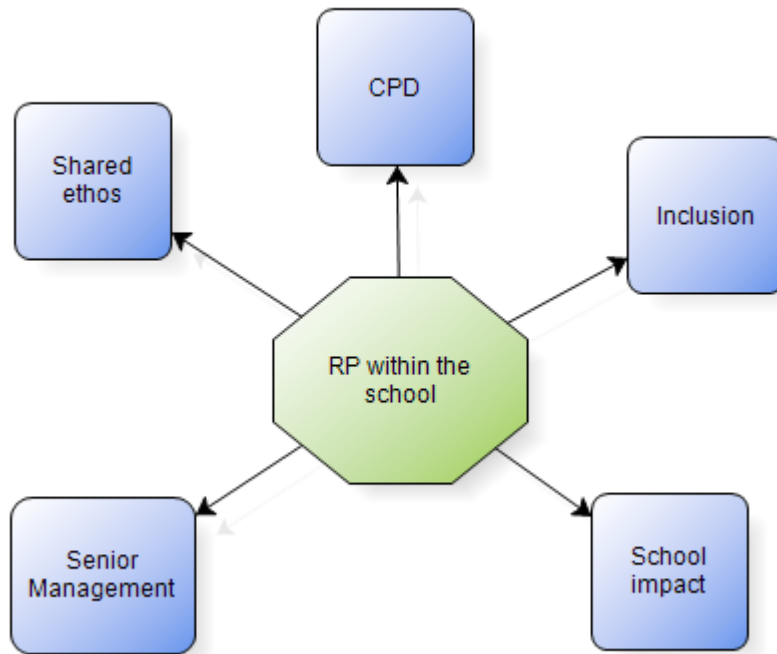


Figure 13: RQ1b: Development of the resource provisions within the wider school context.

### 2.2.1 Shared ethos

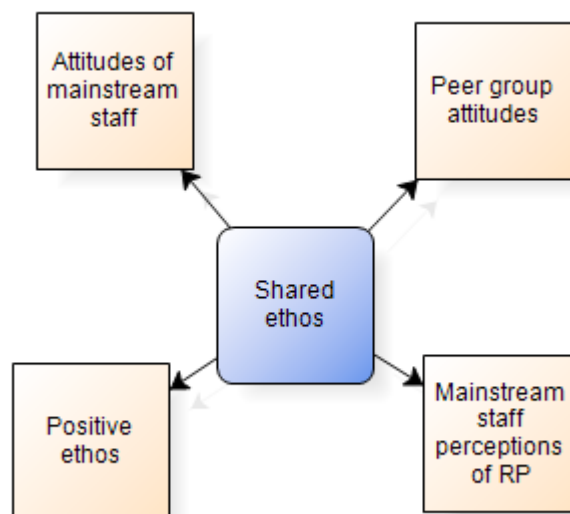


Figure 14: Shared ethos

This theme relates to the ethos, attitudes and perceptions within the school. Staff spoke consistently about the central importance of a positive and inclusive school ethos.

*“It’s a really friendly school; I mean it’s probably one of the best environments as a school I’ve worked in. I mean we kind of want the children to be inclusive, so I suppose the adults have got to be as well, but it’s not that we’ve got to be, we just are” - TA*

The resource provisions were viewed as a core part school provision.

*“The whole point of getting the resource provision was it was part of our continuum of need already and it was part of our evolution, it wasn’t an add on” - SENCO*

The attitudes and approaches of mainstream staff helped to ensure that pupils experienced this consistent ethos across the school. This included accommodating adaptations for individual pupils in lessons and feeling able to ask the resource provision staff for advice about pupils when they were unsure how best to support them.

Provision staff described how mainstream colleagues were supportive of and complimentary about the resource provisions. Some staff had expressed initial reservations about the provisions and the needs of the children who might attend, and a few members of staff still needed to be encouraged to take responsibility for provision children when in their classes. However, over time most concerns were allayed.

*“A couple of years ago no-one wanted to come anywhere near us and now we’ve got staff saying ‘I want to work in the provision’” - RP lead*

The new SEND reforms were also viewed as potentially helping with this process of class and subject teachers taking overall responsibility for pupils in their groups.

Staff also commented on how mainstream peers had benefitted from the provisions. In particular, they mentioned how peers were becoming more supportive and tolerant.

*“With input from myself, the class teachers, you know, who work together with...they’ve developed a better understanding of [pupil], I now realise that I have to walk away because that child might not be able to stop doing what they’re doing and yeah, so hopefully this is a...you know, a lesson for life” - RP lead*

## 2.2.2 Inclusion

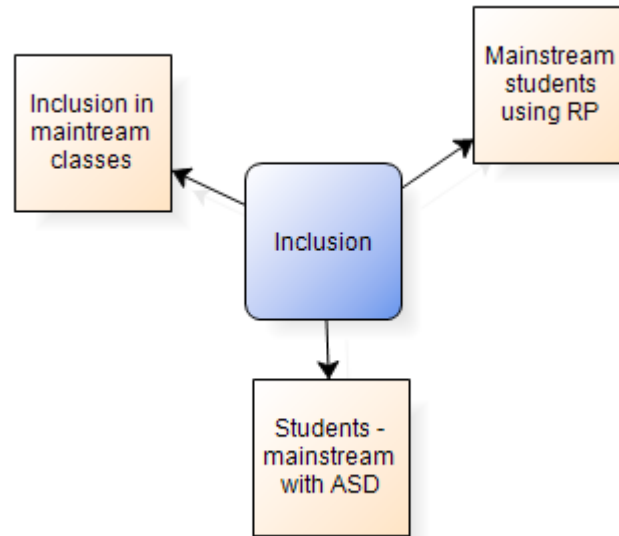


Figure 15: Inclusion

This theme relates to inclusion of a range of pupils; the provision pupils in mainstream; mainstream students accessing the resource provision and other students with diagnoses of ASD who were not on the provision roll.

Staff were clear that the aim of the provisions was that their pupils should fit:

*“Seamlessly into the main part of the school” - RP lead*

As part of their inclusive ethos, provision staff were also keen to ensure that all pupils could access some of the benefits of the RP.

*“Our calm room is used by everybody in the school, it’s not just used by resource provision children, everybody in the school knows it’s there” - RP lead*

Similarly, small group work often included other children who might benefit from activities or children who might act as good role models. Children with ASD who attended the school but were not on roll in the resource provision were also mentioned as a specific group who benefited. Although these pupils did not formally access the provisions they were able to access some aspects of them, such as having a safe space to go to at lunchtimes or finding friends from pupils in the provisions.

*“There are quite a few individuals where, I think, they’re so lucky they came to this secondary school because they don’t have statement, they don’t, you know, there’s no additional support for them but because we have the provision and this happened to be the school they came to, they, they’re luckily having a different experience of high school and they’re finding friends” - SALT*

### 2.2.3 School impact

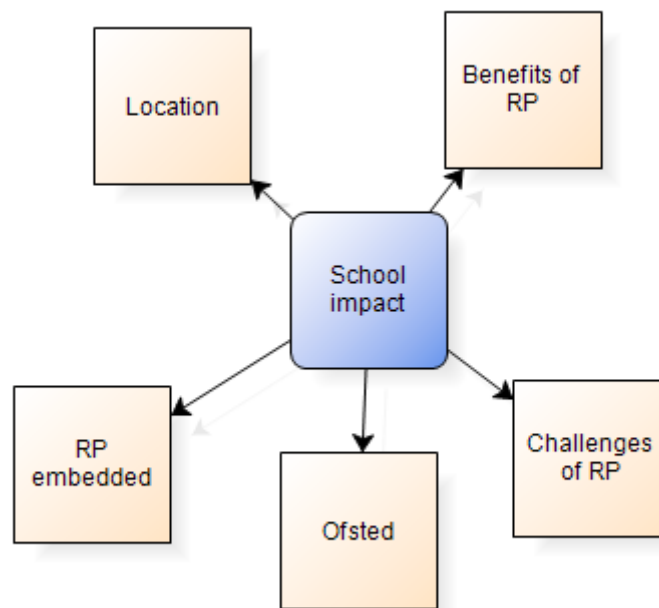


Figure 16: School impact

This theme relates to the role of the resource provision within the wider school, particularly how it is embedded within the school. Predominantly benefits but also some challenges were identified. Staff in the provisions described how they felt embedded within the school in a number of ways. These included feeling an integral part of the whole school staff; how the provisions was part of SEND provision generally within the school; and noting how the provision and mainstream school dovetail.

*“It’s kind of the resource provision is morphing into the rest of the school now if you like and we try and keep the values of the school as our values, you know, the rules and the regulations and the expectations and all that kind of thing, they’re ours as well” - RP lead*

The physical location of the resource provision rooms was also seen as an important factor.

*“It always has fitted in with the whole school because as far as we’re concerned it’s always been part of inclusion, so inclusion in this school is, we’ve got a three floor building and*

*inclusion is in the middle floor in the middle, of the middle floor and that's what's really key"*  
– member of SMT

A number of benefits of having the resource provisions were highlighted. These included the wider benefit to the school as a whole. Although the money for the provisions was ring-fenced, activities which included other pupils from the wider school were valued.

*"I think the good thing that works really well is the support we provide for the few pupils who don't have a place in here, but who need that support" - TA*

Staff described how the resource provision had impacted practice generally within the school as a whole through activities such as audits, training and early years screening. Strategies including visual timetables, adapted language and positive behaviour approaches were also becoming embedded in mainstream classes and were seen to be beneficial for a range of pupils (e.g. those with English as an additional language in a school with high levels of pupil mobility). Resource provision leads often had wider responsibilities within the school such as behaviour or SEND which also ensured consistency of approach. Having children with ASD/SLI in mainstream classes also had an impact on other pupils.

*"I do feel that the children themselves are a lot more attentive of the needs of other children"*  
- SALT

Some challenges were also identified. These included supporting mainstream staff who may have felt that some children and young people with challenging behaviour were inappropriately placed; managing occasional incidents of bullying; and ensuring the provision resources were used most effectively.

*"I mean the children who haven't got a diagnosis or have got a diagnosis but don't have a resource provision place, do gain...but I have to be very, very careful about gatekeeping the places because our resources are not spread thinly with [them], but if I let them be spread over the whole school they would be spread too thinly and then I can't demonstrate the appropriate impact for the resource provision monies and that's not" – member of SMT*

Ofsted also posed a challenge: although the resource provisions kept detailed records of pupil progress and were able to demonstrate substantial progress across a range of social and learning areas, Ofsted's narrower academic focus was perceived as more difficult to address.

*"Ofsted, they don't care less, they want to see what they're doing in lesson. So...so they had a look at the Year 7s and the Year 7s hadn't made like the three, four levels of expected*

*progress, they'd made progress but it wasn't at the rate that they expected. But I was trying to say but they've come into a new school, a new environment, you know, they're not in one class, they're being taught by several different teachers, you know, they're making massive progress" - RP lead*

#### 2.2.4 Senior Management within the school

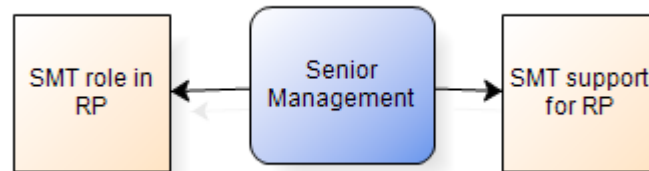


Figure 17: Senior Management

The support for the resource provisions from senior management was regarded as a key to success.

*"One of the big successes is that the mainstream schools, the head teacher and the senior leadership team are so embraced with it...so it's coming from the top" - LA lead*

The vision of the head teacher and the SMT in relation to inclusion was viewed as a strong foundation for the provisions. Staff felt:

*"Really well supported, yeah, they're always hands on to anything we need. And they've always said like...we've got like...obviously problems with a child they'll always support us...they'll always back our case ... if we say something to a teacher like, we're not happy with the situation that's going on at the moment, you know, we need to pull this child out, the head teacher will always support what we're saying"- TA*

In some primary schools members of the SMT were based in the resource provision, so they had a detailed knowledge of how they worked, while in other schools they had more of an oversight role and generally delegated day to day running to the provision teams. Where leads were new in post, HTs or other members of the SMT might take a more active support role.

## 2.2.5 Continuing Professional Development

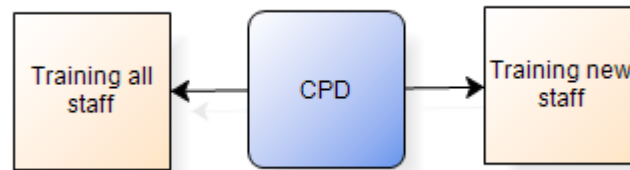


Figure 18: Continuing Professional Development

A range of CPD activities took place in the schools. These included training for new staff and ongoing training for established staff. In some schools there was an established induction programme for newly appointed staff, and this often included some initial input followed by opt-in sessions. At high school, resource provision leads were aware that not all staff might work with pupils with ASD so training needed to be meaningful and flexible.

*“We’ve done like INSET for new staff, for the new teachers, NQT teachers as well and yet it’s good imparting that information but unless you’ve actually got a child...with autism or one of our children in the class then it’s pretty difficult to put those things into practice and we talk about having an autistic classroom ..., if you set it up to suit an autistic child, then it’s quite...there is a knock on effect for everybody else, it makes it more accessible to them” - RP lead*

However, not all schools had an established induction and this was a concern given ongoing staff changes.

In many resource provision schools there was a combination of planned CPD events involving outside speakers or more tailored CPD.

*“I’ve also run staff meetings where we’ve talked about the needs of children with ASD, strategies that we use, strategies that work well with children with ASD and some of those strategies work well with other mainstream children” - RP lead*

There was also informal CPD through drop in sessions and joint working.

*“I mean most of the stuff I’ve done is just like informally in the staff room or in the corridors. I mean just discussing children that we work with, so it is on an informal, unofficial basis” - TA*

SALTs took a key role in contributing to both of these CPD strands, including the lead SALT.



*“They came and did a whole staff training day on Mr Word and mind mapping and...different bits around language. We’ve done some language friendly environment training myself and the speech and language therapist for the rest of the staff...the educational psychologist has come in and done some therapeutic stories work and...we don’t tend to do separate training. If we’re doing something that’s going to benefit the resource provision, we tend to try and get it to do for the whole school because at some point, they’re going to have a child from resource provision in their classroom” - RP lead*

CPD was regarded as an ongoing need for all staff and most effective when tailored to their individual role and needs.

### **2.3 RQ2 How have the resource provision schools impacted on the continuum provision available for pupils with ASD/SLI within the LA?**

There was considerably less data available to address this question, although some key points emerged. The data are presented in a thematic map relating to LA provision. There are three main themes (and sub-themes) in this map.

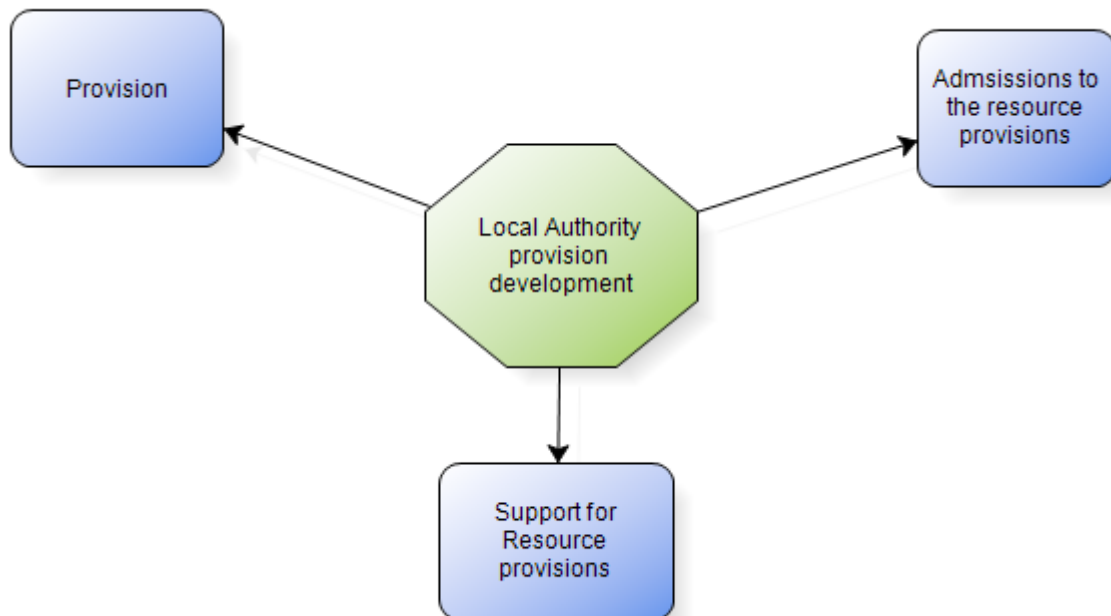


Figure 19: LA provision development

### 2.3.1 Provision

This theme related to how the resource provisions fitted within the overall provision for ASD/SLI within the LA. This included how the LA strategy had been enacted; the impact of current SEND reforms and how the provisions interacted with other special school provision and outreach teams.

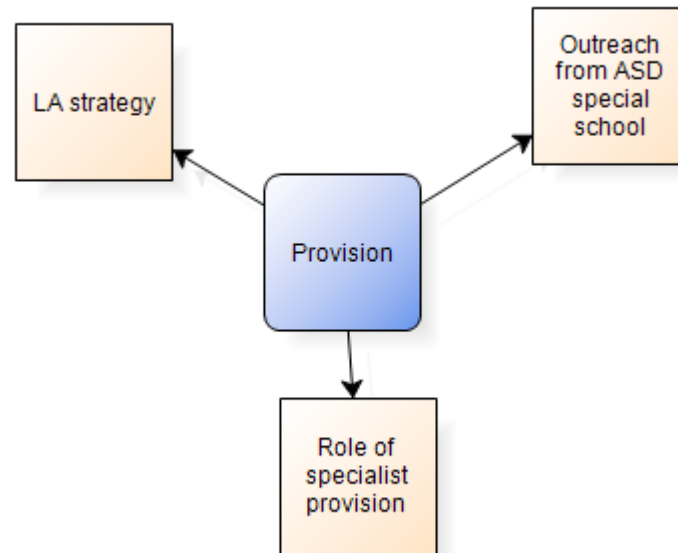


Figure 20: Provision

The resource provisions were initially set up in response to consultation with parents and professionals to ensure a continuum of provision which was accessible across the City. The strategy as a whole was perceived to be a success.

*“We listen to children and young people with autism through the strategy, and that told us we needed this and certainly, well, you’ll know from the report, you know, that parents, parental evidence is very high in terms of...they’re delighted, they’re so pleased that their child is in a mainstream setting and the friendship groups are being developed in a normally developing peer group” - LA lead*

Although the model had been successful there was some concern that other mainstream schools were not being sufficiently challenged about what they should provide.

*“Manchester’s got to get to grips with and particularly in this area because we’re the only state school in this area, secondary, every other school is an academy and they do have slightly different approaches to things, but also the local authority seem to have less clout with them than, you know. I mean we laugh about the fact that we get children who come,*

*we read their information and they're getting three hours a week or something ridiculous and Manchester's giving the school twenty-five hours of support a week and the child's getting three and yet they're getting away with it" - SENCO*

The LA was continuing to review provision and had been approached by other schools to ask if they could become a resource provision school. Provisions for other types of SEND were also being developed.

As discussed previously, there were some concerns regarding appropriate placement of children in the provisions. Some children with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD) as a primary need or lower levels of cognitive ability had been placed in the provisions, which had created challenges in meeting needs, inclusion and managing challenging behaviour. These experiences highlighted some gaps in provision.

*"Because what Manchester doesn't have at the moment is a resource provision for children with complex behaviour and mental health needs and that is actually what they're short of"*  
*– member of SMT/SENCO*

The special schools were described as now taking children with a much higher level of need, so there was a need to review overall criteria for placement in special and resource provision schools.

The respective roles of special school and resource provision outreach were also discussed. The outreach provided by the special schools was perceived to be more in-depth and focusing on the needs of and planning for individual children. While the provisions were perceived to be a resource for other schools to visit rather than provision staff going out to other mainstream schools to provide advice. Support from the special schools for provision schools was seen as variable. Although some knew staff at the special school and felt they had support if they needed it, others had not been able to access support.

*"There are a couple of children where we've really struggled in terms of managing their behaviour sometimes, it's been suggested on one or two occasions to ask for outreach support from the ASD special school. At one point we were told to ask for outreach and then they said, 'no, you can't have outreach because you've got the staff in school who've got the expertise' but actually, these are children who are really beyond resource provision and have a higher level of need" - SALT*

### 2.3.2 Admissions to the resource provisions

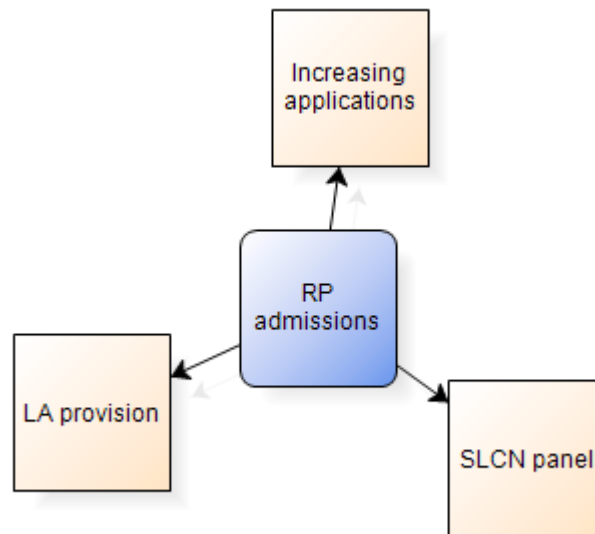


Figure 21: Admissions to the resource provisions

This theme relates to admission criteria and processes. As discussed previously demand for places had increased. This might involve parents hearing about the school from other parents and requesting a place for their child. This could be difficult to manage if there were a number of parents of children with ASD/SLI choosing the school's general mainstream provision. Staff also felt that resource provision placement was a useful 'middle ground' between special and mainstream which might be perceived as more acceptable than special school provision by some parents. Although this was a positive it could lead to some inappropriate placement requests.

Although staff were clear about the children who should be admitted to the provisions, LA availability of places generally was a concern, as pressure for special school provision had knock-on effects for the resource provisions. This had to a certain extent been addressed by the opening of an additional resource provision high school.

Resource provision staff commented that admission criteria and systems were continuing to develop and evolve over time. Staff described the SLCN panel as an appropriately challenging multi-agency process which included the resource provision schools.

*"The schools are invited to be on the panel and we have a rota system as you probably know or a rota system, so that the head teachers of the six schools, the six primary schools as they stand at the moment are on a rota...the three high schools are supposed to be on a rota but*

*they all come, they each come. But anybody can come, anybody from the schools could come if they wanted to, so for example, a head teacher of a resource provision school will be part, will be party to the decision of a child going to another resource provision primary school” - RP lead*

This was described as providing a clear process.

*“I just think that opportunity to go to panel meetings is quite good because I think it gives a confidence about the transparency of what goes on at that meeting” - member of SMT*

Staff who had been part of this process felt that the SLCN panel provided a useful gatekeeping role, particularly when children were inappropriately referred by the SEND panel. However, the process was also challenging, particularly when the special school was full and children with very complex needs were in urgent need of a school place. Due to new SEND legislation the SLCN panel will be merging with the SEND panel in the future. Staff felt this could be potentially challenging as the panel would be meeting more frequently with a potential reduction in resource provision staff attending.

*“Which makes me slightly anxious because I don’t want people making decisions about my school’s RP without me there” - member of SMT*

### 2.3.3 Support for resource provisions

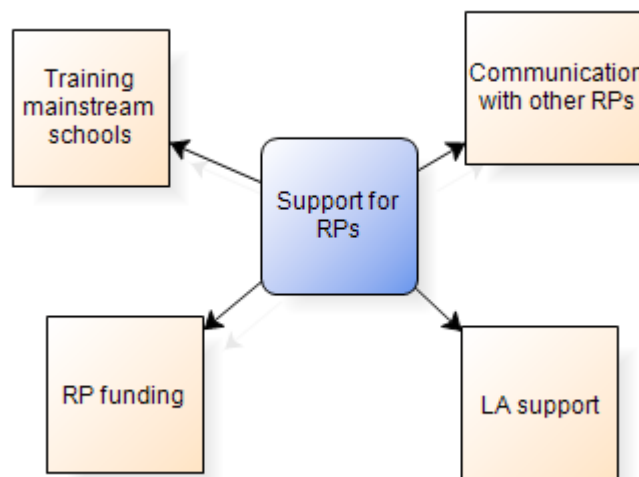


Figure 22: Support for resource provisions

The resource provisions discussed how ring-fenced funding for the provision was used in a transparent way.

*“We’ve greatly safeguarded the extra money that we got from Manchester, we can show how that’s used for the designated children. But then for instance the speech therapist wanted to do work with one of the children, but wanted them in a group, she then asked the head of year, could you give me the names of some of the children who would benefit from social interaction and therefore I can form a group around this child” – member of SMT/SENCO*

The LA also provided money for training which had worked well but when key members of staff left this could cause problems as there would be a skills gap and it might take time to train up new members of staff.

The LA support role included quality assurance; leading on the development of provision across the City and consulting resource provision staff in relation to strategic decisions. The staff felt that the LA had been supportive, particularly around pupils with challenging needs.

*“The provision lead speaks to me on many issues and I think that she feels the local authority have always been very supportive, in good times and bad times” - member of SMT*

The LA lead also continued to lead link meetings which supported regular communication between the resource provisions. These had moved to termly from half termly but the schools found them particularly useful for sharing ideas and providing mutual support.

*“Sometimes you do need somewhere to go and have a little...let off steam!” - RP lead*

The meetings were also perceived as useful for keeping up to date and learning about new initiatives, so it was planned to move back to half-termly. These meetings were only for the provision leads, so there were no formal opportunities for all provision staff to meet, which some viewed as a limitation.

*“So the teachers do meet with the lead from the authority, they do meet, but I think it doesn’t feel very collaborative working, joint working” - SALT*

The long-term aim was that agendas for these meetings should be led by provision staff rather than the LA.

There were also more informal support networks between the resource provisions. These included emailing queries or visiting other provisions.

*“We have a new specialist teacher - she’s been going out to meet some of the others and seeing how the others work in their resource, the other specialist teachers work in their resource provisions. So there is a lot of sort of mutual support” - LA lead*

Some felt that more could be made of this opportunity:

*“Sometimes they could share some really good practice and see each other’s provisions. I know kind of the TAs here have said ‘oh, I’d love to go and see another provision and see how they work” - SALT*

In order to improve the skills of other mainstream schools the LA continued to provide level 1 and level 2 training. The level 1, half day training was well attended.

*“We’re going to be running it again anyway for our resource provision schools that are coming on board, but then aside to that because it...we feel it’s a very good multiagency delivery, high quality course” - RP lead*

Although the level 2 training was valued, there were issues with uptake by schools as it involved five days of training, so this was to be reassessed by the LA to ensure that schools would have the capacity to send appropriate staff for training as needed.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

In this chapter we draw together and synthesise the main findings of our follow up evaluation of the Manchester resource provision schools for pupils with ASD/SLI and consider the implications for future policy and practice in this area. When considering these findings and their implications, the limitations of the current research should also be borne in mind. As this was a smaller piece of research than our previous study, it was not possible to triangulate the data by including pupil and parent views. It was also not possible to arrange an interview with the HT of the ASD special school, who would have been able to provide an additional perspective on the range of LA provision. Nevertheless, we feel that the interviews permitted an in-depth understanding of the evolving nature of resource provision within the schools over time.

### **6.1 Main findings**

The interview data demonstrate that the resource provision schools have continued to develop within three key areas: as resource provisions, as part of general provision within each school, and as part of the provision within the LA. The themes identified within the current evaluation are very similar to those identified in the initial evaluation report (Bond & Hebron, 2013), indicating that the main focus since the previous evaluation has been upon consolidating the initial successful set-up of the resource provisions.

Positive underpinnings for the success of the resource provisions remain a shared and positive school ethos and continuing SMT and LA support. The resource provisions have continued to strengthen their model of working and become more established within the school as a whole. It was also evident that many areas for development identified in the previous report had been addressed and were becoming securely embedded within resource provision practice. These included: continuing development of panel processes to ensure transparency and collaboration; L1 training being rolled out successfully; resource provisions being integrated within the school's provision; the resource provision being represented at SMT level; flexible models of delivery and staff deployment; and careful tracking of pupil progress to inform intervention. Particular challenges that were identified in the current evaluation were: developing the SALT role; outreach; induction; training for other mainstream schools and developing a continuum of provision across the City.

### **6.2 Implications for policy and practice**

The findings from this follow-up evaluation indicate that the Manchester resource provision schools have consolidated their role and responded to new challenges such as a changing pupil demographic



and increasing pupil numbers. The resource provisions have become an established part of Manchester's continuum of provision. However, there are a number of factors which should be considered in order to maintain the effectiveness of the resource provisions and continue to enhance provision for ASD/SLI within the LA in the future.

- **Joint planning in relation to admissions** - the SLCN panel was perceived to be collaborative and working well, however changes to the panel may mean less resource provision representation. In order to continue this positive process, **opportunities for continued collaborative planning in relation to admissions needs to be ensured.**
- **Given the potential number of children who might meet criteria for a resource provision place in the future**, particularly with the growing numbers of children receiving diagnoses of ASD in the early years **a system for collecting data on current and future need would be beneficial to assist in future provision planning.**
- **An audit of current pupil needs within the City would help to identify current gaps and areas for potential future development.**
- **Information for schools and parents about the resource provisions and their admission criteria** (e.g. through leaflets, SENCO networks and HT meetings) would be helpful to ensure that there is **a shared understanding of the resource provision remit and role.**
- **Given the limited take up of L2 Enhanced training by mainstream school staff, this training will need to be reviewed and updated** according to current need. As this is slightly less specialised than the original L2 training it might be possible to offer a shorter, more compact version alongside opportunities to visit existing resource provisions.
- **Greater clarity regarding the outreach roles of the ASD special school and resource provision would be helpful.** Discussion between special school and resource provision schools to agree respective roles could be followed up with a presentation at SENCO networks to publicise the support available.
- **Resource provision schools would benefit from greater clarity regarding support available to them from special schools.**
- **Mainstream schools would benefit from further clarification regarding their expected core offer for children with ASD/SLI** and how they can access support to ensure they are able to

provide this. The *Matching Provision to Need* tool or the Autism Education Trust's *National Autism Standards* may be a useful starting point for self-evaluation.

- **A programme of induction and on-going training needs to be available to all staff in the resource provision schools.** With more specialised training available for resource provision staff. It may be useful for resource provision schools to share their systems and resources in this area.
- **Given that the network meetings are currently only attended by resource provision** leads it might be useful to explore the possibility of **a wider event or series of events which would be open to more resource provision staff and** would enable greater sharing of expertise across resource provisions.
- **A joint Health and Education review of the role of SALTs within the resource provisions** would assist in resolving some of the current tensions in the role for SALTs. This would need to look at flexible referral systems and SALT professional support and contracts.
- **Using assessment to inform intervention was identified as an area of progress.** However, feedback from Ofsted inspections and SALT data indicate that this could usefully be an area for continued collaboration between SALTs and resource provision staff and across resource provisions.
- Although **joint work between resource provision teams and colleagues in mainstream classes** was evident further strengthening of work in this area was identified as an area for future development, particularly in light of the new SEND processes. This might include:
  - Audit and review of whole school provision
  - Sharing expertise across resource provisions regarding systems for joint working with mainstream staff
  - On-going CPD with mainstream colleagues

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## Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Semi Structured interview Schedule for school staff and Speech and Language Therapists (SALTs) working in the resource provisions (questions will be tailored to SALTs as appropriate depending on interview context)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We are very interested in finding out your views regarding the continued development of the resource provision that is part of your school since the previous evaluation in 2013.

1. Could you tell me how the resource provision has continued to develop as part of the school?

Prompt if not covered:

**School level** – how does the resource provision fit within the whole school e.g. ethos? What ongoing training have all staff received? What skills do all staff have in working with pupils with ASD/SLI? Is there an induction for new staff? Have you contributed to staff training? If so, how?

2. Could you tell me how the resource provision has continued to develop within the LA?

**LA level** – how are requests for places managed by the LA and school? Have these processes altered over the past year? Do you currently have capacity to take new children? How do you work with the other resource provision schools in relation to admissions/strategically? How do you fit within Manchester's provision for pupils with ASD/SLI? How do you support other mainstream schools? Has the profile of children joining the resource provision altered over the last year?

3. Could you tell me how the resource provision itself has continued to develop?

**Resource provision level** – what skills do staff working with the resource provision children have? What additional training have they received over the last year? How has this been provided? How does the resource provision support pupils/staff/parents of children with ASD/SLI? What targeted interventions are offered? How are staff flexibly deployed to meet fluctuating pupil needs? What are the benefits for other pupils in the school? What is the role of the resource provision lead? Are they part of Senior Leadership Team?

4. Could you tell me how the resource provision has continued to meet the needs of individual pupils?

**Pupil level** – what progress have pupils attending the resource provision made? (Learning/social/behaviour). How is the curriculum personalised? How are transitions managed?

5. Could you tell me about the external support the resource provision has continued to receive?

**Support** - What has been the role of the Speech and Language Therapist within the school? How has this developed over the last year? What access does the school have to other external agencies? (e.g. EP. OT)

6. What do you regard as the successes and challenges for the resource provision?

Thank you for participating in the interview.

## Appendix 2 Semi Structured interview Schedule for Stakeholders

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We are very interested in finding out your views regarding the continued development of the resource provision schools since the previous evaluation in 2013.

1. How have you supported the development of the resource provision schools over the past year? (LA staff only)

**Prompts:** Refining admission panel and processes; publicising admission criteria; developing capacity in other schools; facilitating training of mainstream staff; supporting strategic development of the resource provisions; joint training with special schools

2. How do the resource provision schools fit into the Manchester continuum of provision for pupils with ASD/SLI?

**Prompts:** Which sorts of children access these provisions? What do the resource provision schools offer to their pupils/parents and other schools? How effective are the provision mapping tools for helping schools decide whether a child should attend a resource? What are the benefits of having the resource provisions? Are there any challenges? How do you see the strategy developing in the future?

3. What has been the impact of having the resource provision schools on your role/school?

**Prompt:** admissions; appeals; use of out of authority provision; appropriateness of pupil placements; pupil placement processes; capacity; using data to inform future placement need; support to mainstream schools.

