

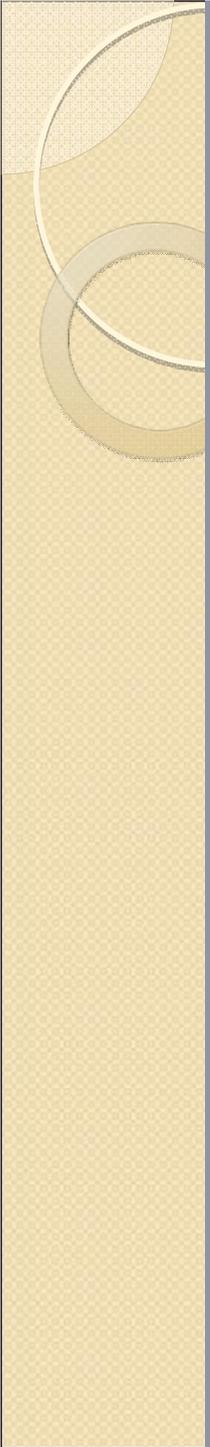
# 'Mini' ASD Resource Hubs in Mainstream Secondary Schools

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# Inclusion and ASD – realities

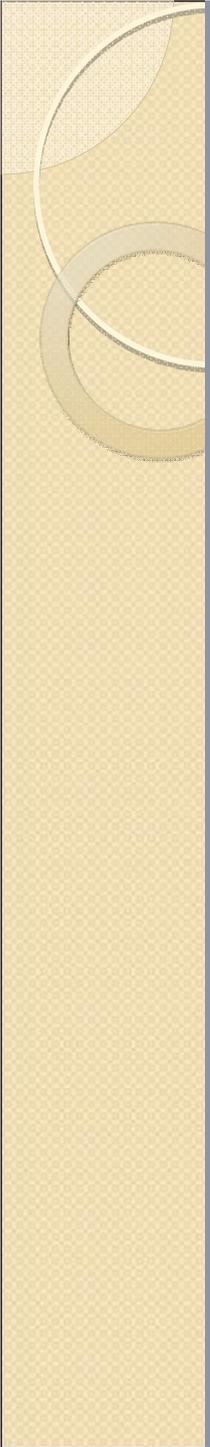
- Despite positive aspirations, there is evidence to suggest that there are difficulties for adolescents with ASD in mainstream secondary schools :
- ‘...the typical cognitive profile and preferred learning styles of such pupils (academically capable ASD students) challenges professional assumptions about teaching and learning more than other groups of learners’ [Jordan, 2005](#)
- [Moore, 2007](#); [Wing 2007](#) also comment that:
  - ‘..the preference for routine, predictability and low sensory stimulation expressed by pupils with ASD is at odds with the noisy, bustling and often chaotic environment of mainstream schools – particularly at secondary level’



# Resource base, perceptions

Research about the effectiveness of resource bases in a study by **Frederickson, Jones, and Lang, 2010** investigating inclusion provision for students with autism where a resource base was attached found that:

- 'Parental views of inclusive placements are consistently more positive where there is an ASD resource base in the school' similar views were found by **Barnard, Prior and Potter, 2000**
- **72%** of parents with ASD children in an ASD resource base considered this to be an ideal option for their child while **43%** without a resource base would prefer one.
- Parental satisfaction based on:
  - perceptions of the knowledge of staff;
  - flexibility of support
  - quality of home-school communication.
- **ASD specific expertise** seen to be higher in schools with resource bases; with almost all staff in schools receiving training compared to only SENCOs and **half** the TA's in schools without a resource base.



# Resource base, perceptions

## Further findings from this study:

### Curriculum approaches:

In schools with a resource base, academic work was often woven round special interests:

'Special interests . . . that's the beauty of the whole system we have the time and flexibility. When they are in mainstream with the best will in the world you just couldn't do it. We teach a reduced curriculum, we don't fight our way through teaching everything..'

### Challenging behaviour approaches:

'Staff experienced in working with pupils on the autistic spectrum did not rely on the pupils to be able to articulate the cause of a temper tantrum, rather, they sought to identify triggers in the environment that could be modified or worked on in teaching coping strategies'



# Resource base, perceptions

In my own research in this area, I visited two secondary ASD resource bases to gather first hand experiences.

There was clear evidence that :

- Opportunities to develop and expertise in developing social skills were excellent
- Parents were keen for their child to experience the 'best of both worlds'
- Students have space to express their autism without the pressure of conforming in a typical mainstream setting
- Flexibility in adapting the curriculum to best suit student's strengths and limit negative experiences

# ASD resource base - examples



Spectrum Centre, ASD resource base, Croydon.

# ASD resource base - examples



Communication and Learning Centre, ASD resource base, Essex



# Establishing a resource base

While benefits may be clear, there are constraints:

- Cost
- Physical space and facilities
- ASD training and understanding
- Commitment to a small population of the school

Given these barriers, headteacher's are limited in their ability to commit to establishing resource bases in their schools.

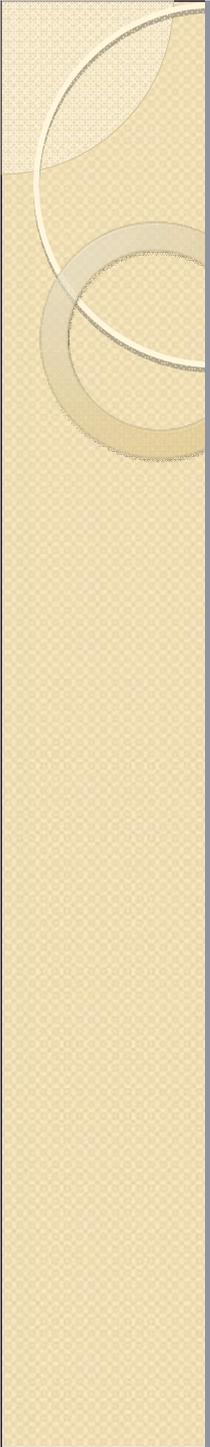


# ASD 'Mini-Hub' resource base

To provide ASD students with benefits of resource bases given these constraints, Hammersmith and Fulham have begun a project to establish 'mini-hub' resource bases in secondary schools.

These are:

- Scaled down resource units at fraction of typical cost
- Exist within the main body of the school, using existing rooms and facilities
- Staffed by existing group – committed to and trained in autism (Training provided by Queensmill School)
- Located in a quiet area of the school/provision
- Exists as a retreat/ 'safe haven' for ASD group
- Students use 'hub' in a ratio best suited to them eg 70:30 or 80:20 with main school predominant
- Central point for delivery of treatment/therapies



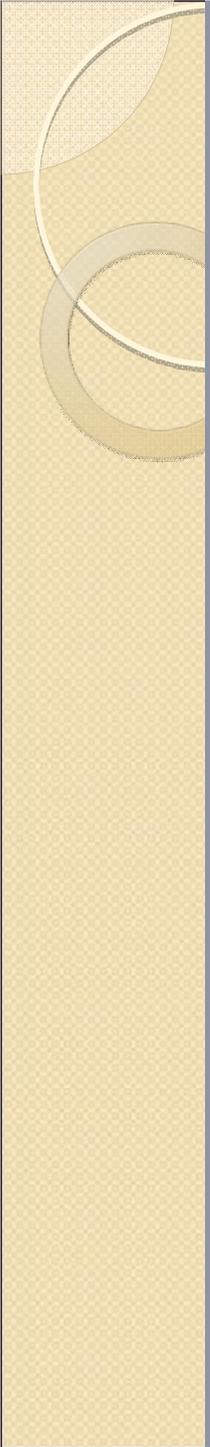
# ASD 'Mini-Hub' resource base

Project has been well received by heads with projects well underway in:

- London Oratory School
- Holland Park School
- Henry Compton School
- Hurlingham and Chelsea

Schools benefit from:

- Provision tailored specifically to their needs (current ASD population and staff knowledge)
- Reduced initial financial outlay
- Evidence (**within the school**) of good practice in the teaching and managing of students with autism.
- Scope to grow or reduce the size of 'mini-hub' according to changing ASD population
- Ongoing support and advice from Queensmill School



# ASD 'Mini-Hub' resource base

It is intended that hubs will be established in all Hammersmith and Fulham secondary schools according to their individual needs.

A similar project has begun also at primary level at Fulham Primary School in partnership with Queensmill School following the same model.