2. Literature Review

2.1 Stakeholder Theory

The implementation of Liverpool Education Authority's Inclusion Strategy for pupils with SEN will be approached for the purposes of this dissertation in the context of stakeholder theory.

The term 'stakeholder' has become widespread in recent years and first arose in the USA as a response to the emphasis being placed on financial value led by the figure of the shareholder. According to Mercier (1999), stakeholders are 'all of the agents for whom the firm's development and good health are of prime concern'. Freeman (1984) defines them as 'any group or individual that can affect or be affected by the realization of a company's objectives'. This more inclusive sense of stakeholder has been widely adopted, as has the view that organisations should be conducted for the benefit of all their stakeholders.

Caroll (1989) argues that nowadays we tend to distinguish between: 'primary' stakeholders – referring to those actors who entertain a direct and contractually-determined relationship with the organisation and 'secondary' stakeholders – those who are situated at the borders of the organisation and who may be impacted by its actions without having any contractual connection to it. Clarkson (1995) also drew the distinction between primary and secondary stakeholders. According to him, 'a primary stakeholder group is one without whose continuing participation the organisation cannot survive as a going concern'. Whereas Evan and Freeman (1993) view stakeholders in terms of whether or not they are influenced by an organisation, Clarkson considers the most important distinction between those that influence an organisation and those who do not. For most organisations, primary stakeholders will include government, customers and suppliers. Secondary stakeholders include communities and, in some cases, the management of the organisation itself.

Other distinctions exist as well, including internal stakeholders, 'traditional' external ones and other external ones with the power to influence matters

(Pesqueux & Damak-Ayadi 2005). Pelle Culpin (1998) proposes a further distinction between institutional stakeholders, i.e. those involved in laws, regulations or any professional organisations that may be particular to a specific industry; economic stakeholders, i.e. those operating in the markets of the organisation in question; and ethical stakeholders from ethical and political pressure groups.

Evan and Freeman (1993) classify stakeholders as narrow and wide, the criteria being which stakeholders are affected by the organisation's policies and strategies. Narrow stakeholders (those that are the most affected) typically include shareholders, management, employees, suppliers and customers that are dependent on the organisation's output. Wider stakeholders (those less affected) may include government, the wider community and other peripheral groups. This model may lead us to conclude that an organisation has a higher degree of responsibility and accountability to its narrower stakeholders.

Mahoney (1994) divided stakeholders into active and passive stakeholders, active being those that seek to participate in the organisation's activities. They may or may not form part of an organisation's formal structure. Management and employees clearly fall into this active category but this group may also include groups from outside an organisation, e.g. pressure groups. Passive stakeholders are those that do not normally seek to participate in an organisation's policy-making. This does not necessarily mean that they are less interested or less powerful but that they do not take an active part in the organisation's strategy. Passive stakeholders normally include shareholders, government and local communities.

In order to apply these ideas to the stakeholders involved in Liverpool's Inclusion strategy, we must first establish who those stakeholders are (see fig. 1) and which have the most importance or influence.

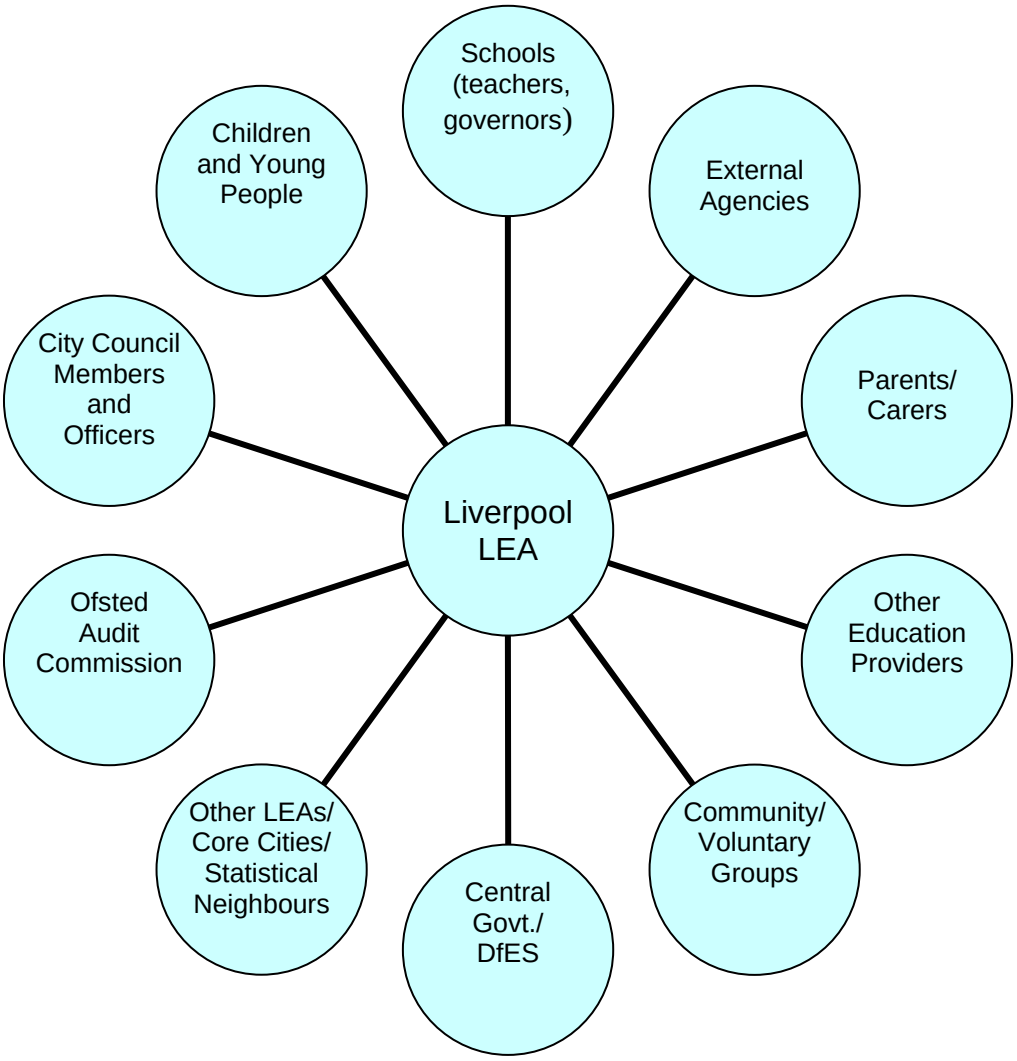

Fig.1: Liverpool LEA Stakeholders

According to Nwankwo and Richardson (1996), systematic stakeholder mapping involves a formal process of identifying those people who are likely to have an interest or stake in a proposed development and the mapping of these people to create a diagram which indicates their relationship, with the organisation at the centre of the development.

Once the various stakeholder groups have been identified, the next step is to consider the extent to which they are likely to support or obstruct a proposed strategic development. Campbell, Stonehouse & Houston (2002) suggest that a useful model for demonstrating how stakeholders exert influence on an organisation's objectives is that of Mendelow (1991). According to this model,

stakeholders can be ranked depending upon two factors: the stakeholder's interest and power. Stakeholder power refers to the ability to influence the organisation and stakeholder interest refers to the willingness to influence the organisation. In other words, interest concerns the extent to which the stakeholder cares about what the organisation does. It follows then that stakeholder influence = power x interest.

The actual influence that a stakeholder has will depend upon where they are positioned with respect to ability to influence and willingness to influence. A stakeholder with both high power and high interest will be more influential than one with low power and low interest. It is possible to map stakeholders by showing the two variables as in fig. 2.

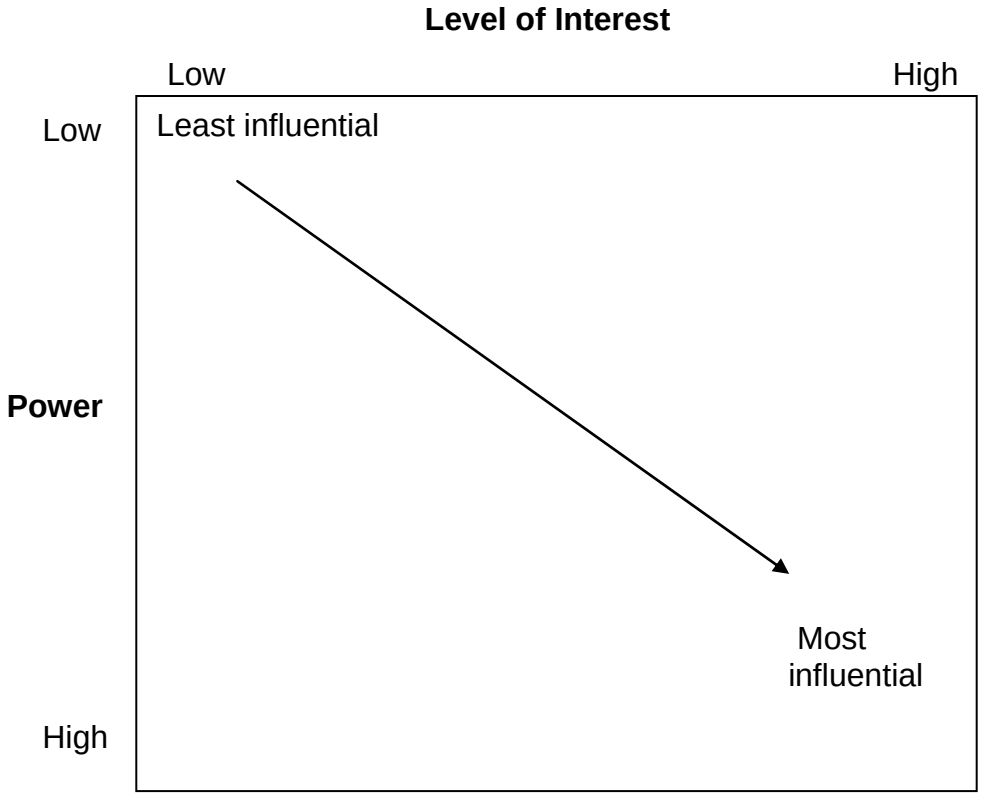

Fig.2: The Power/Interest Matrix (Mendelow, 1991)

The map can tell us two things:

- which stakeholder is likely to exert the most influence upon the organisation's objectives and:
- the stakeholders that are most likely to be in potential conflict over strategic objectives.

The stakeholder groups who are most likely to be affected by Liverpool's Inclusion Strategy can now be put into the matrix (Fig. 3).

Level of Interest

Power	Low	High
Low	Other Education Providers Other LEAs/core cities etc. **Minimal effort** **A**	Community/Voluntary Groups External agencies **Parents/Carers** **Children and Young People** **Keep informed** **B**
High	City Council Members **Schools** **Keep satisfied** **C**	Central Govt./DfES Ofsted, Audit Commission **Key Players** **D**

Fig.3: Liverpool LEA's Power/Interest Matrix vis a vis the Inclusion Agenda

The matrix indicates the type of relationship which organisations might seek to establish with stakeholder groups in the different quadrants. The acceptability of Liverpool's Inclusion Strategy to the DfES, Ofsted and the Audit Commission is, clearly, of major importance. Although the stakeholders in quadrant C, i.e. Councillors and schools, may generally be relatively passive

with regard to the strategy, their influence if underestimated could potentially thwart its success if they reposition themselves to segment D. It could be argued that Liverpool LEA should seek to raise the level of interest of these powerful stakeholders, possibly followed by participation to increase their ownership of the strategy (Johnson & Scholes, 2001). Those organisations in segment B, i.e. community/voluntary groups, parents/carers and children and young people, might traditionally have had their expectations addressed through information. Such stakeholders can be vitally important to an organisation in influencing the views of more powerful stakeholders.

For the purposes of this dissertation, we will be examining the role of three different stakeholder groups: schools, parents and carers and children and young people. These three groups can all be deemed to be 'primary 'stakeholders (Caroll, 1989 & Clarkson, 1995); 'narrow' (Evan & Freeman, 1995) and 'active' (Mahoney, 1994).

Stakeholder mapping in this way can assist in promoting a better understanding of the following issues (Johnson and Scholes, 2002):

- Whether the levels of interest and power of stakeholders adequately reflect the corporate governance framework within which the strategy is being developed;
- Who are likely to be the main supporters and opponents of a strategy and how this could be addressed;
- Whether organisations should consider trying to reposition certain stakeholders, for example to ensure that there are more key players who will support a particular strategy;
- The extent to which stakeholders may need assistance in maintaining their levels of interest or power.

These questions raise a number of important ethical considerations which managers should bear in mind in deciding their role in the political activity surrounding strategic change. For example, is it the role of the manager to try and balance the conflicting aspirations of the various stakeholder groups or are they accountable to one key stakeholder?

One way of conceptualising stakeholder theory is as a social contract, under which social institutions can only enjoy social legitimacy if they continually modify their policies and activities in line with societal opinion.

2.2 Organisation-Stakeholder Relationship

In looking at the organisation-stakeholder relationship, we can examine why organisations do not always take account of stakeholder concerns in their strategy formulation and implementation. Donaldson and Preston (1995) drew a distinction between two motivations describing why organisations accede to stakeholder concerns. They describe the two motivations as instrumental and normative. The instrumental view posits that organisations take stakeholder opinions into account only if they are consistent with other, more important objectives, e.g. profit-maximisation, or in the case of a public service, financial savings. The normative view of stakeholder theory argues that organisations should accommodate stakeholder concerns, not because of the benefits it may give the organisation but because it observes a moral duty to each stakeholder. This view sees stakeholders as ends in themselves and not as merely instrumental to the achievement of other ends.

A reasonable criticism of the stakeholder model is that it fails to explain how managers are able to treat each stakeholder in an equitable manner. How are they to prioritise, or choose between them when critical decisions must be taken which will result in a benefit to one at the expense of another?

Stakeholder doctrines have become a staple of management theory and conventional business ethics and the subject of extensive academic examination. Whilst the majority of literature on this topic would appear to appreciate the value of stakeholder theory to an organisation, there are also a number of strong critics, including Sternberg (1997) who argues that stakeholder theory is incompatible with business because the definitive stakeholder aim of balancing benefits for all stakeholders precludes all objectives which favour particular groups. Further, she argues that balancing stakeholder benefits is an unworkable objective. This is because the number of people who can affect or are affected by an organisation is infinite and that

for a balance to be struck, their numbers would somehow have to be limited. But stakeholder theory does not give any guidance as to how such a selection could occur nor how individuals who belong to more than one stakeholder group should be dealt with. Even if the stakeholder groups could be identified and restricted to a manageable number, Sternberg argues that stakeholder theory does not explain what should count as a benefit and raises some important questions:

- Should everything that a stakeholder regards as beneficial be taken into account?

- How are the managers to know what stakeholders consider to be benefits when even members of the same notional stakeholder group often have significantly different views as to what is beneficial?

Sternberg develops the argument further by pointing out that even if the relevant benefits could be identified, stakeholder theory provides no guidance as to how a balance can be achieved. Given the divergent interests of the different stakeholder groups, that which benefits one group can often harm another. Stakeholder theory does not assist with this dilemma. In practice, what tends to happen is that the goals of the organisation are used to identify which groups need to be considered and which of their benefits are relevant and legitimate.

Although Sternberg, amongst others, is highly critical of the value of stakeholder theory, she does acknowledge that there is some meaningful use for the concept of stakeholder. Firstly, it serves as a convenient label for the various groups and individuals that organisations need to take into account when pursuing their objectives. Secondly, it can serve to illuminate the proper meaning of ‘social responsibility’, i.e. if individuals have views as to how organisations should be conducted, they should ensure that their individual choices accurately reflect those views. When each potential stakeholder acts conscientiously in their personal capacity and strategically bestows or withholds their support on the basis of their moral values, then this will automatically lead organisations to reflect those values. Although this concept

can possibly best be applied to the business world, it nonetheless has some value to the public sector as well.

2.3 What is Inclusion?

CSIE is the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education. It is an independent centre working in the UK and overseas to promote inclusion and end segregation and is funded by donations from trusts, foundations and grants. Their definition of inclusive education is 'all children and young people – with or without disabilities or difficulties – learning together in ordinary pre-school provision, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate networks of support' (CSIE, 2002).

This definition, however, as with many others, describes an ideal situation to which we might aspire. A more realistic interpretation of the current situation on educational inclusion in this country, as recognised by CSIE, is to view inclusion as a journey in which individual education authorities and indeed schools, are at different stages of the process. CSIE's position is that full inclusion means the deconstruction and eventual closure of separate special schools, the transfer of resources to the mainstream sector and the restructuring of ordinary schools.

The Salamanca Declaration (Unesco, 1994) has been used in many parts of the world to formulate strategies towards inclusive schooling. It states that 'inclusive schools' are the most effective at building solidarity between children with special needs and their peers'.

Since 1997, the present Government has been committed to improving the educational experience of children with SEN. It has produced a series of policy and guidance documents to LEAs including a new SEN Code of Practice (2001) as well as enacting a number of Acts of Parliament.

However, the Audit Commission's report Special Educational Needs – a mainstream issue (2002) highlighted a number of continuing challenges, the most relevant to this report being that children who should be taught in

mainstream settings are sometimes turned away and many staff feel ill equipped to meet the wide range of pupil needs.

In response to this report, the Government published its national strategy for SEN: Removing Barriers to Achievement (2004) in which it sets out its vision for enabling children with SEN and disabilities to succeed and sets a new agenda for improvement and action at national and local level. This includes a programme of enhanced collaboration between mainstream and special schools with the sharing of expertise and experience and an emphasis on improved specialist advice and support for mainstream schools by developing generic minimum standards for SEN support services.

The Government has enshrined its policy on Inclusion in primary legislation, the 1996 Education Act and the SEN and Disability Act 2001 being the principal frameworks. The latter introduced a stronger right for children to be educated at a mainstream school and prohibits schools from discriminating in their admission arrangements, in the education and associated services provided by the school for its pupils and in relation to exclusions from the school.

In addition to national legislation and guidance, the two main drivers for change are the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Audit Commission. Ofsted's report, SEN and Disability: towards inclusive schools, 2004, sought to assess the extent to which the vision of inclusion is becoming a reality in schools and to make recommendations to support the Government's strategy for SEN. The report's key findings include the following:

- The Government's revised Inclusion framework has contributed to a growing awareness of the benefits of inclusion, and response to it has led to some improvement in practice;

- Most mainstream schools are now committed to meeting special needs. A few are happy to admit pupils with complex needs. The admission and retention of pupils with social and behavioural difficulties continue to test the inclusion policy;

- The teaching seen of pupils with SEN was of varying quality, with a high proportion of lessons having shortcomings. Support be teaching assistants can be vital;

- Effective partnership work between mainstream schools and special schools on curriculum and teaching is the exception rather than the rule.

Liverpool's own Ofsted inspection of 1999 highlighted some major weaknesses in the LEA's SEN policies. In particular, it referred to the high proportion of pupils educated in special schools in the city compared to other local authorities. A follow-up inspection in 2000 showed that some progress had been made towards developing a clear and detailed strategic plan in relation to Inclusion. The subsequent inspection conducted in 2003 concluded that there had been 'improvement in almost all aspects of the LEA's support for SEN since the inspection in 2000'. More pupils were being educated in mainstream schools and the implementation of the SEN strategy was found to be well led by officers.

The Audit Commission's report (2002) highlighted some significant findings, some of the key ones being as follows:

- Whilst some schools have placed great emphasis on developing an inclusive ethos, others have far to go. Some children with SEN are regularly excluded from certain lessons and extra-curricular activities and most children who are permanently excluded from school have SEN;

- Many teachers feel ill-equipped to meet the needs of pupils with SEN;

- There is a real tension between the standards agenda and the policy of Inclusion.

The report stresses that resources, both human and financial are a key determinant of how much support schools are able to offer individual pupils

and expresses concern about both the effectiveness of resource allocation by LEAs and schools' management of SEN resources.

District Audit's report, Provision for Pupils with SEN – Liverpool City Council, 2001, concluded that due to the relatively high proportion of pupils in special schools, especially in the secondary phase, the LEA was in danger of being perceived as not addressing the Government's agenda on inclusive education.

Since the Inclusion Strategy became Council policy in 2000, Liverpool LEA has closed or commenced the process of closure of nine special schools. At this point in time, there remain 14 special schools in operation. The Strategy aims by 2014-2015 to have only four special schools: one day/residential school for boys with behaviour, emotional and social development needs; one school for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and two schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties.

2.4 The Liverpool Context

Liverpool has a very strong historical tradition of special schools provision and has always had one of the highest special school populations in the country (fig. 4).

It is, therefore, starting the journey towards Inclusion from a low baseline. In keeping with tradition, there is an entrenched expectation amongst mainstream schools and many parents that special schools are the appropriate vehicle for meeting the needs of children with SEN.

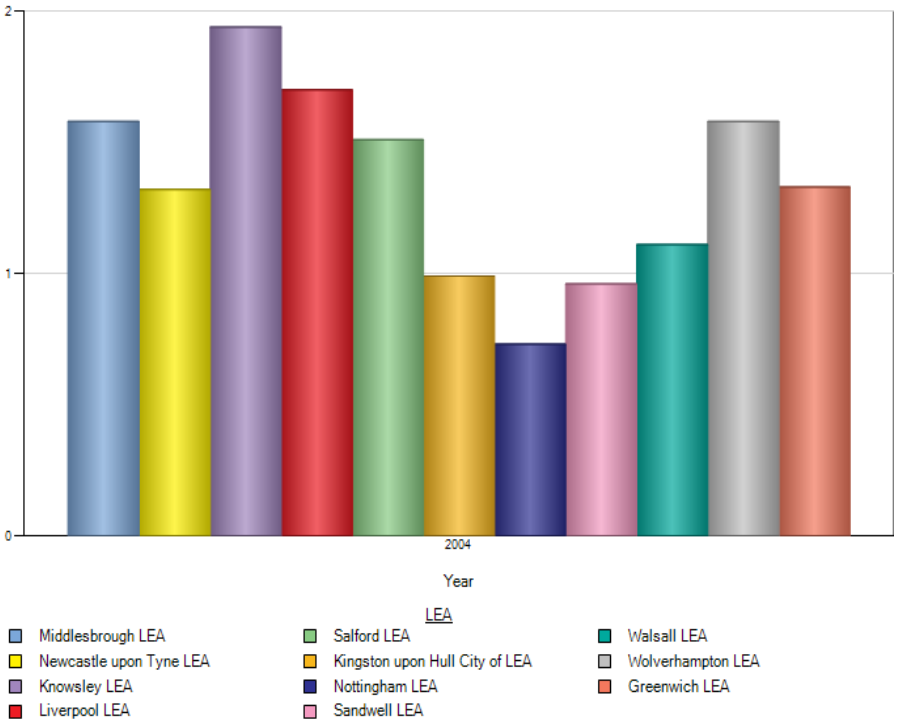

Fig. 4: Liverpool's position in comparison with its statistical neighbours in the number of pupils placed in special schools (Source: National Performance Framework)

The impact of the decline of the shipbuilding industry, so prominent and prosperous in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has led to Liverpool becoming amongst the highest areas of social deprivation in Europe. Unemployment is high and there has been a steady decline in population over the last 30 years. There is some evidence to suggest that there is a correlation between the incidence of Special Educational Needs and socio-economic factors. Some would argue that a City such as Liverpool needs special schools owing to the high levels of deprivation and special educational need. Liverpool has the highest level of social deprivation in the country. Its position vis a vis its statistical neighbours can be seen at fig. 5.

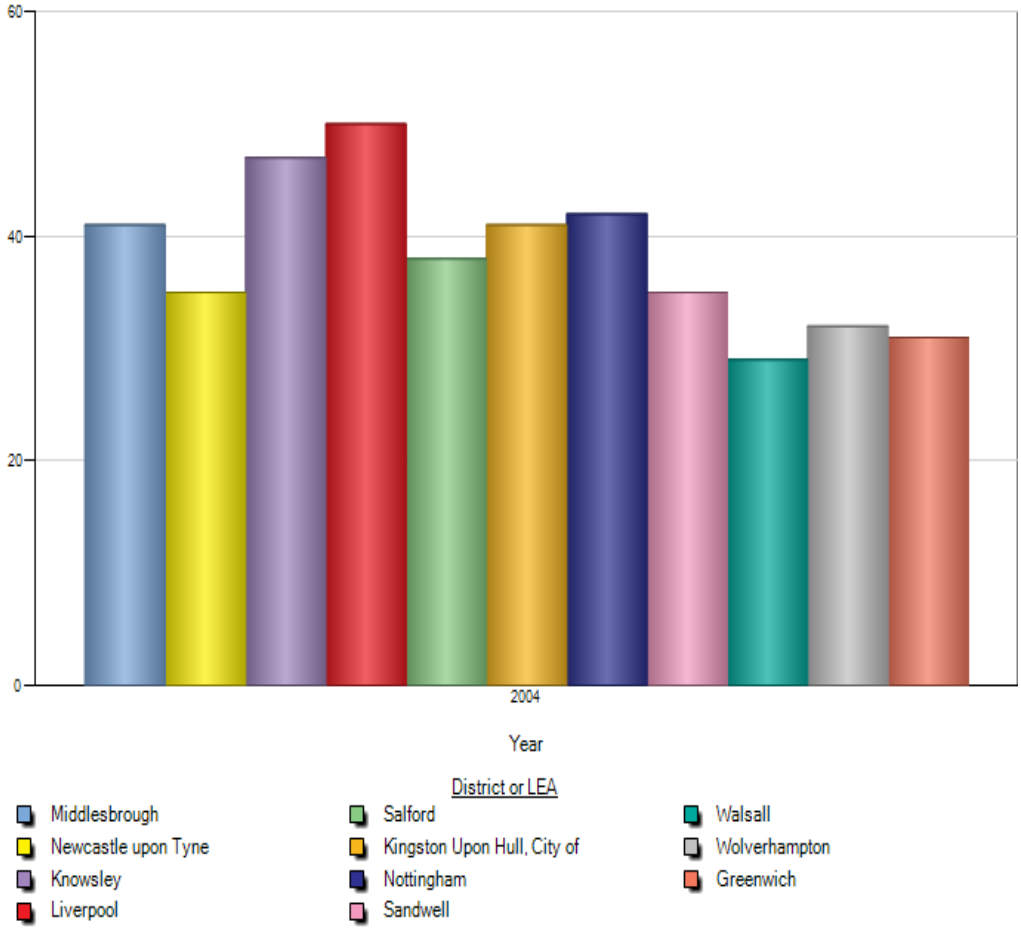

Fig. 5: Indices of Multiple Deprivation- Liverpool in comparison with its statistical neighbours (Source: National Performance Framework)

2.5 Schools

It was determined earlier that, in terms of stakeholder theory, schools sat in the high power/low interest category in the Power/Interest matrix as far as the Inclusion strategy is concerned. This is based on the fact that traditionally, mainstream schools have not been as involved in the delivery of the inclusion agenda as they have been in the last twenty years. Even today, for a variety of reasons, many schools have not engaged with the concept of inclusion to any great degree and have tended to view the education of children and young people with SEN to be a local authority responsibility. In recent years, the impetus of inclusion has grown rapidly and schools have been obliged to work more closely with local authorities in meeting the needs of pupils with a wide range of SEN and disabilities. Government policy supports the principle

that children with SEN should, wherever possible, be educated in mainstream schools.

It is easy to understand why there are often tensions between schools and local education authorities on the subject of inclusion. As Ainscow and Tweddle (2001) recognise, in a climate in which the power of LEAs has gradually been eroded and there is increasing emphasis on school-led improvement strategies, it will be more difficult for LEAs to implement their inclusion strategies. The current debate taking place by the Education and Skills All Party Select Committee on how we should educate children with disabilities or other special needs will undoubtedly raise a number of additional issues.

One of the reasons why there has been significant pressure in the recent past to close some special schools has been because of the variable quality of special educational needs provision. Ofsted's report: Special Educational Needs and Disability: towards inclusive schools (2004) which looked into how children with special needs are being integrated into mainstream schools, highlighted doubts about the quality of teaching for special needs pupils and uncertainty about their expected levels of achievement.

Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden (2002) who conducted an in-depth case study of an effective inclusive secondary schools concluded that inclusivity in education may conflict with the principle of excellence as measured by academic achievement. It may mean, for example, that schools with a high proportion of SEN pupils may lose academically able students to other schools which do not have an SEN 'label'. This dilemma, they argue, brings into question prevailing notions of effectiveness, particularly whether a school is effective if it produces good academic outcomes, irrespective of social outcomes.

Pearpoint & Forest (2005a) explain how both inclusion and change are inevitable and whether we choose to grow with and from these changes is a choice. The real topic under discussion, they believe, is fear of change, and state specifically that in the field of education, there is a great fear of new

responsibilities, a fear of what is not understood and a fear of being accountable. The article cites examples of where teachers have protested the following;

- We don't have enough money.
- I haven't been trained to take care of those!
- I didn't choose special education
- I don't have time to create special programs for "them".

Pearpoint & Forest (2005b) explore solutions to making inclusive education a viable option for students who exhibit severe behavioural problems. They argue that even those children can and should be included in the mainstream of our schools and communities and that the key to making it possible is relationships. For them, a fundamental element of relationships is that everyone has a role to play and that the answer lies in harnessing the talent, creativity, commitment and resources of those who are labelled as problems.

Blandford, in her article 'Teachers have special needs too' (Education Guardian 2004), highlighted the concerns expressed in schools at the management and level of resourcing associated with SEN. As it is principally the job of the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to manage staff, pupils, parents and external agencies in providing the most appropriate education for pupils with SEN, it is the SENCOs who encounter the daily concerns voiced by their colleagues.

SENCOs are rarely trained, either as experts in SEN or as managers. Yet they take on responsibility for the most difficult and complex of tasks – the management of individual needs. Most SENCOs spend a large proportion of their time teaching and are also expected to attend meetings with external agencies, co-ordinate learning support assistants and convene meetings with pastoral and academic staff within their school. When not managing their teaching, or that of others, they have a mountain of documents to prepare, from the school's SEN/Inclusion policy to the individual education plans required for each child with SEN.

In her article, Blandford argues that all teachers should be given adequate training to manage and deliver a curriculum that responded to the needs of all pupils. This would help schools meet their inclusive aims that have featured in Government policies for many years. She also warns that if SENCOs continue to be so over-burdened, another generation of children with SEN will fail to be educated and that the building of capacity to support SEN provision has to be the next priority of Government.

There are some very positive examples of successful inclusive practice in mainstream schools across the country. Florian & Rouse (2001), building on work they had carried out earlier in 8 secondary schools, set out to investigate policies and practices in a further 5 schools with long-standing commitments to inclusive education. They found that these schools treated SEN as a challenge to develop practice for the benefit of all children, pupils with SEN participated in and belonged more fully to the school community and in one school visited, parents and pupils felt that school initiatives towards understanding of disability and diversity had helped to reduce bullying in the school as a whole.

Ofsted's latest report Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught? (2006) has highlighted that the most important factor in determining the best outcomes for pupils with SEN is not the *type* but the *quality* of provision. Effective provision was distributed equally in the mainstream and special schools visited, but there was more good and outstanding provision in resourced mainstream schools than elsewhere. Pupils with even the most severe and complex needs were able to make excellent progress in all types of settings. High quality, specialist teachers and a commitment by leaders to create opportunities to include all pupils were the keys to success. Pupils in mainstream schools where support from teaching assistants was the main type of provision were less likely to make good academic progress than those who had access to specialist teaching in those schools.

2.5.1 Inclusion and the Standards Agenda

One of the perceived obstacles to Inclusion appear to be the tension between the standards agenda and Inclusion policies. Headteachers can be reluctant

to admit pupils with SEN into their schools because of the impact this may have on 'league tables' of school performance. When conducting research leading to the production of their report 'Special Educational Needs: A Mainstream Issue (2002), the Audit Commission came across the following comments:

' I am all for inclusion, but when a child arrives with high levels of need my heart sinks because we don't have the resources to support them and because of the effect on the SATs results.' (Headteacher)

'SEN kids are included in the performance indicators, so they drag them down…they need to find ways to recognise what the school is achieving with kids with SEN.'. (Headteacher)

'We were lucky that he was able to sit his SATs as they said he would not be allowed to if his behaviour was not up to standard – they didn't think he would get the grades'. (Mother)

Schools are judged largely on the basis of the progress they make with children who do not have substantial learning difficulties, ie. those who are capable of reaching national benchmarks such as 5 A-C grades at GCSE. A school that is highly inclusive is likely, almost by definition, to have a higher proportion of pupils at the lower end of the attainment spectrum. It may therefore appear to perform poorly in a league table. Conversely, a school that is not welcoming to children with SEN may appear to be a 'good school' simply because it has fewer pupils with learning difficulties.

Moves towards 'value-added' tables will undoubtedly help the Inclusion agenda as these will enable more meaningful judgements to be drawn up about how a school has helped its pupils to progress. But even these may not do justice to the achievements of children with significant levels of need, whose progress may need to be measured in very small steps and may perhaps only be compared meaningfully with children with similar levels of need.

The New Relationship with Schools (NRwS) is a Central Government initiative designed to give schools greater autonomy. The Education and

Inspections Bill (2006) will empower schools by devolving as much decision-making as possible while giving local authorities an enhanced strategic role as the champion of pupils and parents. Hand in hand with increased autonomy for schools is an increasing responsibility for their own finances and a key say in local funding decisions. These changes in the relationship between local authorities and schools could have potential implications for the Inclusion agenda and raises the following questions?

- What power will the local authority have to direct schools to admit pupils with SEN?
- What control could the local authority exert upon schools which do not spend the resources allocated for SEN on the pupils for whom it was intended?
- What influence could the local authority exert over poor inclusive practice in schools?

2.5.2 Funding Issues

Ofsted's (2004) report revealed a number of significant findings as far as SEN funding is concerned:

- Funding arrangements were identified by some headteachers as a major barrier to inclusion;
- Those schools in LEAs which delegated more funding for pupils with statements were able to manage their staff more effectively;
- Smaller primary schools had much less flexible funding than large ones and usually less scope for economies of scale.

However, the Audit Commission/HMI's report (1992) on special education found that on average it was no more expensive to educate a child with learning difficulties in a mainstream school than in a special school but that resources were not being moved to the mainstream as pupils were included. CSIE (2002) believes that the real barrier to inclusive education is not lack of money, but attitudes and a lack of commitment to transfer resources from segregated to mainstream settings.

2.6 Children and Young People

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) is the world's most widely accepted human rights agreement. It applies to children and young people aged under 18. Article 12 states that young people have the right to say what they think and to be listened to by adults when decisions are made affecting their care and education. Willow (2002) recognises that 'participation is the keystone of the arch that is the UNCRC. Without the active participation of children and young people in the promotion of their rights to a good childhood, none will be achieved effectively'. The UNCRC has made a positive impact on legislation to improve opportunities for young people to participate. The Children Act 2004 provides the legislative foundation for whole-system reform to support the improvement of the lives of children, young people and their families. Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2004) sets out the national framework for local change programmes to build services around the needs of children and young people.

Traditionally, local authorities have not engaged directly with children and young people in the planning and delivery of their services. However, the present Government has pledged its commitment to designing policies and services around the needs of children and young people (CYPU, 2001). The Government believes that the result of effective participation will help achieve its key ambitions of preventing and tackling the social exclusion of the significant majority of children who experience poverty and disadvantage.

The core principles for partnership which Government departments are all committed to, as set out in 'Learning to Listen: Core Principles for the Involvement of Children and Young People' (2001), include:

- A visible commitment to involving children and young people, underpinned by appropriate resources to build capacity to implement policies of participation;

- Children and young people's involvement is valued;

- Children and young people have equal opportunities to get involved;

- Policies and standards for the participation of children and young people are provided, evaluated and continually improved.

There is a considerable body of literature (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin and Sinclair, 2003) on the rationale for involving children and young people in public decision-making and on the methods of involvement. However, as Partridge (2005) points out, there is considerably less written on the impact or outcomes of their involvement and on the quality of participation (Kirby and Bryson, 2002). The existing research has tended to concentrate on the impact on children and young people themselves rather than on the services and organisations involved and points to positive benefits including increased confidence and self-esteem, new knowledge and skills, improved achievement at school and raised aspirations (Hannam, 2000).

However, there is some evidence of negative outcomes for children and young people where their involvement is regarded as tokenistic, e.g. a feeling a disillusionment and subsequent disengagement (RBA Research, 2002). There are very few examples of participation initiatives that have provided training or support for the adults involved despite general recognition that working participatively requires a major cultural shift for most organisations. This is particularly pertinent to the involvement of children and young people with SEN where different approaches and methods of engagement will often be required.

Most of the research emphasises the importance of the commitment of senior managers within an organisation to participation and the vital role played by champions (Geddes and Rus, 1999; Shenton, 1999). Formal systems and structures are needed to ensure that the involvement of children and young people is not tokenistic.

Kirby et al (2003) identify four stages that may be necessary in order to change cultures and embed participatory practice in organisations:

- ***Unfreeze*** existing attitudes and methods of working;
- ***Catalyse*** change through the use of champions, collaboration, funding;
- ***Internalise*** change through developing a shared vision and understanding of participation in practice, acknowledge conflict/opposition and evaluate progress;
- ***Institutionalise*** in mainstream practice.

Sustaining and embedding participation in organisations is a crucial issue as Children's Services move towards greater integration at strategic and operational levels. However, the concept of real empowerment is a demanding one since an essential component of increasing the power and influence of children and young people is the surrendering of adult control. Partridge (2005) found that children and young people of all ages, circumstances and abilities can act with great responsibility when trusted, trained and supported to do so. They are able to make responsible and fair decisions and offer helpful and practical solutions to problems that adults may not have considered. The experience is positive for children and young people as long as their views and needs are respected, feedback is guaranteed, their time and expertise is recognised and the whole process is fun. It can help to raise confidence and self-esteem and make children and young people feel valued and important.

There is very little research that has been published nationally on the views of children and young people on inclusion. However, Smart (2000) explored the role of children's attitudes to SEN as a foundation for successful inclusion in schools. The chosen methodology involved a quasi-experimental design using questionnaires, sentence completions and video-ed circle time, which investigated the children's cognitive understanding of disability, affective responses to it and behavioural intentions of actions towards children with disabilities. Her report concluded that the programme of interaction between children from a mainstream school and a neighbouring special school had significant effects on the reported attitudes of the mainstream pupils.

2.7 Parents and Carers

The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) sets out the Government's expectations for the involvement of parents of pupils with SEN in the decisions affecting their children. It offers some key principles for effective communication by suggesting that those working with parents should:

- acknowledge and draw on parental knowledge and expertise in relation to their child;
- focus on the children's strengths as well as areas of additional need;
- recognise the personal and emotional investment of parents and be aware of their feelings;
- ensure that parents understand procedures, are aware of how to access support in preparing their contributions, and are given documents to be discussed well before meetings;
- respect the validity of differing perspectives and seek constructive ways of reconciling different viewpoints;
- respect the differing needs parents themselves may have, such as a disability, or communication and linguistic barriers;
- recognise the need for flexibility in the timing and structure of meetings.

The Code of Practice acknowledges the importance of empowering parents to enable them to recognise and fulfil their responsibilities as parents and play an active and valued role in their child's education; have knowledge of their child's entitlement within the SEN framework; make their views known about how their child is educated and have access to information, advice and support during assessment and any related decision-making processes about special educational provision.

All local authorities must make arrangements for parent partnership services and ensure that parents, schools and others are aware of how they can access the service. The aim of parent partnership services is to ensure that parents of children with additional needs have access to information, advice and guidance so they can make appropriate, informed decisions.

The Government's Strategy for SEN: 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' (2004) attempts to address some of the problems faced by parents in accessing support from their local school, local authority education and social services and the health service. It recognises that a culture of mistrust has developed in some areas whereby parents feel they need to fight for the support to which their child is entitled. There is often confusion about what provision should be made by the school and what provision should be made by the local authority, giving rise to disputes, delays and gaps in support. The Government seeks to build on the success of local parent partnership services and consider the scope for increasing their effectiveness and impact.

Every Child Matters (ECM): Change for Children (2004) sets out a national framework for change across the whole system of children's services. One of the central tenets of this change agenda is the involvement of parents, carers and families in the development and delivery of multi-agency services. There are three main areas in which parents can be actively involved:

- **Participation in Consultation and Planning**

The voluntary sector can be used effectively in engaging with parents and carers. Rather than holding formal, business-oriented meetings with parents, it is suggested that it is often better to hold 'fun' events to attract more people. Clearly, the disadvantage of this approach is that the informal structure of such events can make it difficult to discuss service details. It is also advised that services should avoid 'consultation fatigue' by overloading parents at an early stage.

Consultation processes can reach many people although they often do not allow for any in-depth discussion. More information and input can be gained if parents are involved in service planning which can take a number of forms.

Parent forums, for example, help provide a formal structure for the voice of parents and carers to be heard. It can be less daunting for parents to work in a group with others in a similar situation. Another option is to involve parents in working groups to look at different aspects of service development. It is important, however, that the needs of parents are taken into account when setting up and holding meetings. For example, meetings need to be held at a time and location that is convenient for parents; jargon should be avoided and the group has to be inclusive and allow for all members to express their views. In some cases, parent representatives may find training helpful in equipping them with the techniques and confidence to understand and represent the views of others.

- **Participation in Service Delivery**

The ECM guidance offers two main ways in which organisations can involve parents in service delivery. The first is involvement in governance which entails parents sitting on steering groups either as members or even the chair. Parents are increasingly being involved in interviewing and selecting the service manager and other key staff. The second is working for the service which can be achieved either through actual employment or voluntary assistance in particular initiative. Positions such as parent liaison workers lend themselves very well to the employment of parents who, in many cases, will have built up contacts and trust within the local community.

- **Participation as Service Users**

Given the profound effect that parents and carers have on children and young people's well-being, they are likely to be key partners in any work to support children and young people with additional needs. Engaging with parents in a variety of different ways such as disseminating leaflets, hosting one-off community events, outreach programmes, home visiting, drop-ins, use of local media etc. can all help to promote awareness of the service.

Although it is with the needs of children and young people in mind that education authorities have to plan and make provision, it is parents and carers who have traditionally been the key stakeholder group with whom authorities have engaged in addressing the needs of pupils with SEN.

Parents' views on Inclusion are extremely wide-ranging and diverse and are often influenced by a number of factors including: their own educational experiences; the specific needs of their children; their children's experiences at school and the levels of support their children can access in their area.

Some parental organisations and individual parents view Inclusion as a fundamental human right to which every child is entitled. For example, the Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE), a national network of individual families and groups, believes that all children and young people need to be educated in a single mainstream education system. Parents for Inclusion, a sister organisation, support the 2020 campaign, launched in 2004, to close all special schools and colleges in the UK by 2020. Disability Equality in Education believes that Inclusion 'is a human rights issue about equality in the classroom – not just an issue of special needs'.

There are, however, equally strong views voiced by parents in support of the continuation of special schools. Mr. D. Clark (The Observer, 2006) acknowledges that resources in the current education system are severely limited and that his daughter, a 16 year old girl on the autistic spectrum, could never handle mainstream education. Mr. S. Chinn (Times Educational Supplement, 2005) advocates the right of parents to choose special schools if they feel that is the best option for their child and argues that the inclusion principle, applied universally, denies him and his child their human right to choice.

What is interesting, however, is that there appears to be no evidence that those parents who support special schools, do so on the basis of a philosophical belief that segregation is the ideal system of education for their children but rather that special education is sometimes the only option available to them given the inability of the mainstream system to meet their children's needs.