

Support bases

Another school we worked with during the 'What about us?' project had a designated local resource base for pupils with physical disabilities housed in a specially designed and designated building. This centre provided educational and therapeutic support for these students and made assistive technologies available to them. The centre was also used by a wider group of students with special and additional needs as a 'safe haven'. Many young people chose to go there at break or lunch times, as the centre was seen as offering some respite from the hustle and bustle of a typical secondary school campus. Students knew they could find a quiet space here, seek the support of a member of staff or simply talk to someone who will listen.

Elsewhere in the same school, there was another separate building that provided a further discrete support base for students experiencing a range of difficulties with learning. It offered teaching in small work groups and individual support. It was a place where identified students could get extra guidance to help them 'catch up' with their studies or where they could undertake alternative curriculum options – for example, we met one group who were following an accredited life skills programme. Students also used the space at break and lunch times or dropped in when they felt they needed help from the teacher who ran the base.