

## SPECIAL NEEDS PUPILS 'NEED MORE TIME WITH TEACHERS'

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Schools are leaving children with special needs under the supervision of classroom assistants instead of fully qualified teachers, research suggested today.

Teachers warned that vulnerable primary school pupils could be missing out on the quality tuition they need.

The finding came in a study as part of the Primary Review, the biggest inquiry into primary education in England for 40 years.

The report, by Hilary Burgess, from the Open University, examined the impact of Government reforms to school staffing.

Changes designed to cut teachers' workload have seen soaring numbers of teaching assistants employed to help out in schools.

Most schools regard the reforms as positive, the study said.

But it added: "For pupils with special needs there were indications that these pupils spent more time with teaching assistants and less with their class teachers."

The National Union of Teachers expressed concern at the finding.

NUT acting general secretary Christine Blower said: "I am concerned that children with the greatest needs are getting the least specialist attention.

"Teaching assistants have a vital role to play.

"Their work is valued by teachers but we cannot have a situation where children with special needs miss out on the benefits of personal attention from qualified teachers."

A Department for Children, Schools and Families spokeswoman said: "It is of course important for the most vulnerable pupils to personal attention from qualified teachers.

"Learning support assistants provide close additional support to SEN pupils, usually within the classroom environment, as well as extra help for teachers.

"Our guidance to schools is clear – that teachers must discuss plans with classroom assistants and ensure they include SEN pupils in the work of the class so that they feel part of the activities."