

#### 4.12 Is inclusion working?

Amidst the myriad problems cited by teachers there were many positives. Those cited by teachers were:

- Social benefits to children and young people from being more accepted by their peers and by adults
- Social benefits to children and young people who come to a better understanding and acceptance of people with special needs
- A broader professional awareness of diversity of needs and learning difficulties
- Enhancement of teachers' and LSAs' repertoire of skills in dealing with a diversity of special needs
- Parental satisfaction from feeling their children are being educated within the community alongside their neighbours' children

Seeing things through a positive lens, there was evidence that having to accommodate a range of special needs had helped teachers to be more perceptive, more flexible, accommodating and ultimately more learner-centred.

It does make you a better teacher because it raises your patience threshold. It forces you to try new strategies, new techniques and to be the best teacher you can be to keep that child with you. (Reception Teacher)

Such 'value-added', as one member of staff put it, was often bought at a heavy price. In virtually all cases the benefits enumerated above required some qualification. Learning to cope with diversity was a professional plus for teachers **but** only if there was a culture and support to allow teachers to realise the benefits. There were clearly social benefits for many pupils **but** only where conditions were right and where special needs did not create resistance and resentment. Parental satisfaction was rewarding too **but** only where special needs were such that they could be met adequately within the mainstream and teachers' efforts were appreciated. For these benefits to be realised it relied on a quality of leadership, goodwill among teachers and a shared cultural belief that inclusion could, within reasonable bounds, be a force for good.

Even in the most positive of schools, however, questions remained as to the viability of policy which had not given adequate thought to the impact on teachers' work and job satisfaction. Concerns expressed by LSAs, teachers and headteachers were:

- Lack of entitlement to learn and develop emotionally and intellectually for children with special needs
- Restriction of entitlement for learning for children who appeared to be coping well and were less demanding
- Lack of acknowledgement of the needs of children without 'Special Needs' in that a disproportionate amount of time is given to a few
- Feeling of inadequacy among teachers who recognised their lack of specialist expertise
- Pressure on school staff due to inadequate resourcing by government and local authorities
- 'Successful' schools attracting parents of SEN children and reaching a critical mass
- Inadequate and inappropriate professional development
- Heightened tensions between the inclusion and testing agendas
- Increased workload among teachers, LSAs and senior leaders

While the positives refer primarily to social and learning benefits owed to the efforts and goodwill of teachers and school leaders, the concerns all point to systemic issues which work at cross grain to the essential purpose of inclusion.

## Notes and References

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<sup>20</sup> Feiler, A, and Gibson H. (1999) Threats to the inclusive movement: *British Journal of Special Education* 26 ( 3).

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## Chapter 5 The Impact on Pupils

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Inclusion policies can have a far-reaching impact on children's disposition and ability to learn. For children who would, in the past, have been in special schools we find evidence of children thriving in the company of their peers supported by enlightened and supportive staff. We also find children and young people struggling in schools and classrooms ill equipped to meet their varied and complex needs. For their peers, changes in teachers' priorities and classroom management often means less time and attention by teachers to the detriment of all children's learning. While there are many examples of social benefits both for children with special needs and their peers, there is much less positive evidence that learning needs are being met across the whole spectrum of ability.

How these issues play out depends on a complex range of factors which this section explores. Transitions - from home to school, from nursery to primary, from primary to secondary and secondary to FE or elsewhere, as well as lateral transfer from school to school, were mentioned most frequently by parents as the single most prevalent cause of difficulty for children with special needs. For schools and teachers managing transitions effectively requires resourcing and expertise which are typically in short supply. We examine the imbalance in support for children when the demands on teachers exceed their capacity to cope and we question the nature of a curriculum which is demonstrably not fit for many of the children which it tries to accommodate.

### 5.1 Transitions: from primary to secondary

Children with special needs not only experience more transitions from one school to another but also find it much more difficult to cope with new environments and new expectations. It was the move from a primary to secondary school that was the most common recurring problem for parents. They worried about what would happen in secondary school, often accompanied by horror stories from friends and neighbours, sometimes from the experience they had had with older children in the family

You spend the whole of year six preparing them to move to a new school because they're not going to have TAs, making sure they do this and that. When they go into secondary it's gone. (Primary school parent)

Parents often described the erosion of self-confidence in their children after a few weeks or even days in the 'big school'. Sometimes the change was dramatic and occurred within a relatively short space of time.

He's gone from being a polite, shy and sensitive boy to being a boy with a criminal record. (Primary school parent).

This was explained by some parents in terms of the loss of support of a Teaching Assistant in the transition.

I know the parents of children who have been excluded permanently from school because of their behaviour. I know that these children were the ones with TAs. They cannot handle that transition. They just can't deal with it. (Primary school parent)

Looking around and seeking advice as to the best secondaries was common among parents we interviewed, with travel tending not to be seen as a major issue given distances their children often had to travel to find a 'good' primary school. Parents exchanged success stories too when they found a secondary school that catered well for special needs.

A parent of a child with dyslexia explained how her son had moved from one secondary school in which he was unhappy and constantly in trouble to one in which he was well supported by teachers and a head who understood the issues, had access to the relevant expertise and made provision accordingly. It took a long time in the new school and an exceptional level of tolerance, however, to undo the damage of the three months of what this parent described as 'hell'.

As well as the different cultures of primary and secondary, other social factors come into play - the onset of puberty, the growing independence of teenagers from their parents, the peer affiliations and rivalries that develop in a secondary context. All of this impacts in compound ways to alloy the 'perfection' of the primary school provision. As one parent commented:

I truly believe that in this school it is perfect. But as a child gets older, it depends on the child's special needs, I fought against inclusion. She could no longer take part in school. She was never invited to parties. The age difference is so big and that gap widens.

Parents' criticisms were not leveled at secondary school teachers but rather at systems and structures which were simply not equipped to deal with the kinds of needs and demands these children and young people brought with them. Some of these may be depicted as pace, speed and fragmentation of the secondary school day, differing pedagogies and subject demands, inconsistencies among teachers, communication flow and information exchange within and between schools, and resourcing to meet differing individual needs.

### ***Pace and speed of the secondary school day***

Pupils and teachers spoke about the speed and 'urgency' of a secondary school day, bells directing pupils and teachers to the next in the series of lessons, moving rapidly down crowded corridors to reach the next learning episode, getting books out quickly, settling down, maintaining a pace and variety in the three/four part lesson, an impatience to cover the ground, keeping to task and achievement of objectives with the spectre of testing ever present in the background.

### ***Fragmentation***

The secondary school day, fragmented into periods with rapid switches of subject and teacher, in which a child finds herself working with different class group from one period to the next requires constant psychological and social adjustment. Each new situation and subject demands new adjustments and behaviours to be learned, which have not been provided for in the familiar routines and comfort zones of the primary school. Many pupils simply become 'lost', sometimes physically but often in a psychological sense, disorientated by the logic, or illogic, of what they were expected to do.

### ***Inconsistency***

In a secondary school in which a child meets with ten or more teachers in the course of a week it is impossible to expect a consistency of treatment or relationships with a class. Teachers have their own classroom management routines, their own personalities and idiosyncrasies, their own standards and expectations and the disciplines of their own subject which cover a spectrum from mathematics and science to art, music and drama. The onus generally falls on the child to make the adjustment and learn to live with rapidly shifting social norms – a bridge too far for many children.

### ***Pedagogy***

In a secondary school children encounter a much wider range of teaching and learning styles than in the primary. Classroom layouts differ from subject to subject reflecting different teaching approaches. Teacher exposition is more common in some subjects in which children quickly get lost in the flow of the narrative or try to concentrate on a TA sitting beside them, mediating and translating the rapid flow of words and ideas. Paired or group work presents other kinds of challenges to the peer group. Video, use of interactive whiteboard, experiments in science, coping with activities in P.E., all demand a flexibility, an ability to cope with diversity and the constantly unexpected.

### ***Resourcing***

Few secondary schools are equipped with the special resources that would be available in a special school or in a primary school equipped to deal with special needs. In one exceptional secondary, for example, there is a 'flat' to prepare young people for independent living, a sensory room for a range of pupils with special needs and a dedicated trampolining session in a well-equipped sports hall for autistic pupils.

### ***Communication***

The flow of information about children's needs is in part a function of size, in part down to management and monitoring and the ability of numerous staff to translate information about special needs into strategy and practice. This is often in a context of a high staff turnover and temporary supply teaching. It is easy for children to slip through the safety net when all staff are not fully conversant with special needs, the myriad ways in which they may express themselves, and the critical do's and don'ts in addressing them.

### ***The peer group***

Most challenging of all for young people in moving to the secondary school environment is the volatility and unpredictability of new constellations of peers, some understanding and sympathetic, some hostile, requiring a sophisticated reading and coming to terms with different personalities and group norms. For young people on the Autistic spectrum this is particularly bewildering as they cannot interpret the underlying intent in social behaviour or the nuances in humour, irony or teasing by young people who do not understand, or constantly misinterpret, their response. With the best will in the world it is unrealistic to expect secondary school pupils to 'look after' and 'hang out with' another pupil in their class who, although is at the

same chronological age, becomes increasingly distanced as the developmental age difference increases.

These endemic constraints of secondary schools are not impossible to overcome with highly expert management, excellent levels of resourcing, relevant expertise, consultation and development time, freedom from external pressures, and considerable latitude for individual initiative. In the absence of these it is not surprising to find children unable to cope with stress and uncertainty of their new regime.

## **5.2 Transition: a view from teachers**

These issues were echoed from a primary teachers' viewpoint. It was a common theme among primary staff that secondary school could not offer the continuity of care offered in the primary. Like parents, teachers tended to see the problems as structural issues - of size, impersonality, fragmentation of the school day and inflexibility of secondary curriculum. Over the course of six years in the primary school it was possible to build a culture and procedures which were well known to all staff, with norms and limits of tolerance that had been tested and established over time. In secondary it was starting anew, new faces among peers and teachers, and a wider variance in tolerance of staff for disruptive or demanding children. The years of work in primary, over a six year period, could be undone before the child had a chance to accommodate to new surroundings.

We've spent all this time and money and hours keeping them in here since reception and then you find out that they have been expelled within a couple of weeks (of going to secondary school). (Primary teacher)

A number of primary heads spoke of the long journey to build self-esteem among children who were conscious of being 'different', investing time and effort to help them feel accepted and valued, building self esteem to then to see it vanish within a week or two.

You keep them [students with behaviour problems] by and large in primary school. You keep their self-esteem up and then at secondary school, if they are there for maybe a week or so, then they have done well. And then they are out - they're excluded - and that is a great tension for me. (Primary headteacher)

From a secondary viewpoint there was a view expressed by some teachers and headteachers that when primary schools were over protective children arrived unprepared for the independence and resilience that a secondary school required.

A secondary head described the difficulty of trying to create the kind of close and caring environment of the primary school, admitting that it was simply impossible to replicate that very intimate kind of family environment. However, he argued that it was mainly the streetwise kids who then found themselves getting excluded in the secondary school because in primary they had been adept at working the system, which they couldn't get away with in the tougher more confrontative regime of the secondary school. The close and constant attendance of a Learning Support Assistant and the latitude afforded by primary staff, it was claimed by some secondary teachers, could often create a dependency and indulge socially unacceptable behaviour.

O.k., six years of nurturing you would think that a child could be helped to stand more and more on its own two feet rather than being arrested at a stage of infantile needs. Frankly, we can tell from the first day when a child steps through that door what primary school they have come from. It's not just a case of bad old secondaries you know.

A special school headteacher spoke about 'the blame game' which primary or secondary colleagues could too easily enter into when the issues were, in fact, larger and deeper running. While strong and consistent communication between primary and secondary were of paramount importance, this could not of itself guarantee that a disturbed or 'damaged' child would survive in what, from her point view, might be a hostile and dangerous environment.

Yet, as many primary teachers and parents were quick to acknowledge, there were secondary schools that, in spite of the difficulties, coped well with the challenges of special needs. While success was also relative rather than definitive, a number of essential factors were mentioned by primary and secondary staff - appropriate resourcing, a carefully studied admissions' policy, planning, a requisite range of expertise, accompanying professional development and a collaboration between primary and secondary grounded in good faith, good will, anticipation of potential problems and a commitment to proceed with hope and optimism.

### **5.3 Lateral transition: from school to school**

As well as coping with the transition from one phase of schooling to another, children and young people are liable to experience more lateral movement from school to school, often a matter of trial and error as their parents try to find a school in which they can be happy. A primary headteacher talked about neighbouring schools admitting to 'not having a clue what to do with children with complex needs'. She cited the case of a nine year old boy who became 'mentally ill' by being in a class where he just couldn't cope and the class teacher admitted to being 'totally out of her depth'. In a neighbouring school a headteacher admitted that without the knowledge and background experience 'We look around and don't know what to do', adding as a plea for help, 'Where is the educational psychologist?', to which the answer was 'also unable to cope with a growing waiting list of children to be assessed'.

A primary head talked about problem behaviour as prevalent among pupils who had come from other schools compared with pupils who had been in the school from reception onwards.

If they come in from elsewhere they struggle. The special needs' kids progress well if they've had the reception teacher in this school and had the continuity of care

The continuity of care, of expertise gained over time, was a constant theme in those primary schools which coped relatively well with special needs. They stressed the importance of reception as laying the foundations. One primary school head with expert Infant teachers complained that Key Stage 1 scores were so high that the school was not able to show added value thereafter. This was mentioned to emphasise the importance of those early years in a number of critical dimensions:

- Children's eagerness to learn and to be accepted
- The willingness of children at that age to accept 'difference'
- The power of the first teacher to create an inclusive environment
- The opportunity to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum

Children who did not have that positive early advantage and had been shuttled from one school to another could be so damaged by the disconnected experience that appropriate placement could prove to be too little and too late.

We had a little boy. We had him until Year 2 and then the Authority couldn't place him anywhere so we had him in Year 3 and then the Authority still couldn't place him so we had him until January as a Year 4. And we knew we weren't doing anything for him – we couldn't meet his needs. He went to residential and that didn't work out either. (Primary school SENCO)

There seems to be a growing number of children involved in split placements where children's time is divided between the special school and their local mainstream. Although this addresses parents' concerns about their children getting to know other children in their local community, this lack of continuity was an additional strain on those least equipped to deal with it. At secondary level this is often problematic in terms of timetabling and can mean that the pupil does not 'fit' anywhere and misses out in both schools. A Special School changed its whole afternoon timetable to accommodate pupils from mainstream but the mainstream school did little to compensate pupils for the core subject lessons that were missed on these afternoons so making it even more difficult for these pupils in the lessons that they were there. Nor did the other school take any interest in what its pupils were learning in the Special School. As one parent commented, 'Children are not school shaped'

A year 1 teacher argued that the process could be set in train by too dogmatic a desire to send children to a mainstream school, the child then, finding he/she couldn't cope, and then moving the child on to another school with detrimental consequences. Mistakes had been made with 'severe' cases, said this teacher, citing instances where it had been both inimical to the safety of both the children in question and their peers.

I think there are certain children when it is not safe to have them in mainstream. For their own safety and everyone else's safety. It's the severity of it.

#### **5.4 Imbalance in support**

In advocacy of the benefits of inclusion policy it was often said by parents and teachers that mixing with other children in mainstream classes had brought significant social benefits to all parties.

It is dependent on what you base your success on. If it's on your child's academic development and how fast they can progress in sight vocabulary and stuff like that, I'm quite sure a special school will have faster progression than we do but in terms of social and emotional well-being I think we offer the children an awful lot through an inclusive policy. We do try to do both don't we, with withdrawal for the specific academic learning and the inclusion for the emotional and social side. (Reception Teacher)

This was sometimes born out by evidence from pupils themselves who had adjusted well to a more inclusive environment. However, social benefits were not evident in all circumstances and the level of acceptance depended in large part of the nature of special needs.

It's harder for the children who don't look as though they've got a special need. If you are autistic – the other children find it harder to understand. (Reception Teacher)

There was also frequent testimony to exclusion within the mainstream classroom. 'Just being in a mainstream class doesn't mean inclusion', argued one primary headteacher. A pupil, questioning the 'inclusion' of a child admitted from a special school said:

He just sat at the back and didn't talk to anyone or anything.

In another school a primary teacher commented that the nature and amount of support given was differential depending on ways in which needs were expressed and made visible.

The children who are passive are more likely to be ignored or not given support they require even if they have a high level of need. The more visible children are the disruptive ones who demand the support. These children are often given TA support. (Y6 teacher)

While there were tangible social benefits for some children, there were also concerns expressed by teachers, headteachers and parents as to the benefits in learning. For example staff in a secondary school with a visually impaired girl who could not access written text enlarged it onto a screen. However despite their best intentions she still could not read the written materials produced and so her needs remained unmet

So they enlarged it by about half a millimetre. Of course it's not large enough for me to be able to read it.

She added that the teacher talked to the LSA as if she wasn't there while the teacher talked to her slowly and deliberately

'HAVE YOU LISTENED, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?' Yes I listened. Yes I understood. Leave me alone. I am not stupid. Half the time he speaks over my head to my LSA and I think 'Hey don't I get a say in this?'

Another example of lack of understanding was of an LSA given to a pupil because the LSA could sign and was competent in BSL (British Sign Language). It was, however, beyond the girl's understanding and proved to be confusing rather than helpful. Simply using visual signalling would have been far more helpful or training in Makaton which was, however, not familiar to this member of staff. As one teacher commented:

Those who need the most thought as to how to help them to learn get the least expert help. (Primary teacher)

There were many examples of children with special needs being disadvantaged by an unsuitable curriculum and pacing of lessons which left them behind or bewildered.

## **5.5 A curriculum fit for children?**

In one of the schools in this study an Ofsted report praised provision in a school, writing in the report that stated children 'always receive their full entitlement to

the curriculum'. However, as a SENCO commented, the entitlement ought not to be to the curriculum but to learning adapted to a child's needs and stage of development. Referring to a girl with complex needs and the efforts of teachers to adjust the curriculum accordingly, a Teaching Assistant in a primary school said:

Her needs are everyday life needs...they can't do that. They have to teach the curriculum. There is so much that is not relevant to her.

There were numerous examples of LSA trying to adapt or customize a topic, sometimes described as 'watering down', an apt description of a process which started not from the basis on needs, values or first principles but from a body of content deemed appropriate for all. A special school senior leader cited a lesson he had witnessed in a mainstream class in which a girl from an Egyptian background with complex needs struggled with increasing frustration to make sense of a lesson on the Saxons. An example from an SEN Support Assistant, cited as positive progress, does however raise questions about the value of the activity in question.

We thought we might find it difficult to prepare stuff for him. I mean sometimes he is just cutting and sticking pictures that are related to the story but it's what his needs are and it's always related. Most of the times we've got him in class a lot more than we thought we'd have. We thought we might have had to withdraw him. He has progressed – he's got a one! That's huge in three and a half years! (SEN Support Assistant)

In a primary school with a nearly half of all children on the special needs register and around five per cent statemented, teachers commented on the futility of following the Literacy Strategy.

We are talking about a huge percentage of the class for whom the literacy strategy doesn't work... It's designed for the average school and we are not the average school. (Year 3 teacher)

A primary school headteacher commented that the Literacy and Numeracy strategies had made staff over reliant on off the shelf solutions which were simply not appropriate for the pupils they taught.

We have had teachers who have relied too heavily on literacy and numeracy schemes and they just couldn't cope.

She added that these children required a different approach to literacy teaching and that many of her staff, particularly the younger ones, were just not happy about departing from the schemes and programmes they had learned to become dependent upon.

In a neighbouring primary school with very similar challenges they laid particular emphasis on the arts because they recognised that they could spend all of the time teaching core skills with minimal returns whereas working with the arts had given children with special needs opportunities to excel.

## **5.6 Winners and losers**

One of the salient benefits of inclusion policies is to children and young people who might never come across or dream of socialising with children with complex needs and behaviour that would commonly be described as 'anti-social'. There were

numerous examples given by teachers and LSAs of children learning to understand and live with difference and diversity.

In Reception if you have a very timid child they can be very threatened by physically, tantrum specials – it's the noise they make – their way of communicating – and yet I wouldn't take them out because I think it is important that they learn to deal with that. The only time you'd take them out is if the noise – the rest of the class were suffering. (Reception Teacher)

Learning to deal with difference does not come about simply by 'presenteeism' as one teacher put it, but by a concerted effort to discuss acceptance of others, 'to talk about differences and similarities and tolerance' as a Reception Teacher said. Describing successful 'integration' in her school, she added:

I think in the main it's a benefit because it's nice if a 'special' sits on the carpet or does something that they don't normally do, the class will always say 'oh – look they have done that today – they couldn't do that last week. (Reception Teacher)

A special school deputy head, expressing concern that in many instances children with special needs were patronised and infantilised, argued the need for greater mutuality in the relationship. The reciprocal relationship is described by a pupil in a primary school where children from a special school visited the primary for project work.

You can teach them things that they haven't learned and they can teach us things that we haven't learned. It's quite cool actually.

The view from children often provides an insight into classroom relationships which is more direct and less overlaid with professional caveat. The following dialogue among a group of Year 6 primary children reveals something of the classroom dynamic but also the differing attitudes that pupils can take up in relation to special needs.

"He gets on people's nerves."

"He's annoying though."

"He got up my nose."

"I don't think he can help it though."

"Yes he can, he threatened to hit me over the head with a book bag."

Pupils seemed to be less understanding of other children's needs when there wasn't a Teaching Assistant to mark that child out as having special needs.

If he did have difficulties he would have a teaching assistant but he doesn't so that's how we know that he doesn't have learning difficulties.

This does suggest a failure to engage in the kind of dialogue that would promote greater understanding and the more flexible use of TAs. It was generally regarded as good practice among those with expertise in special needs to detach TAs from one-to-one custodianship and use them in more creative ways. The ability to use TAs more flexibly, was helped, it was claimed, by having more than one child in a class with a statement.

Two or three children with a statement is best because then that means you have virtually full time support in that class and so everyone benefits from that. If there is only one who has four hours support or something that's when nobody

benefits really. That's why in the village school – where there's only one SEN child it's not what I would think was the right thing really. (SEN Support Assistant)

This is not, however, a precondition. In a secondary school the headteacher described classroom management which did not do disservice to 'gifted and talented' students. The policy was for the teacher to give time to that group of young people while the teaching assistant took over the rest of the class. TAs could not meet the special needs of these young people, some extremely advanced in their subject.

In other schools with a less flexible policy, or without the necessary resource, pupils as well as parents were alive to the disadvantages to children who did not demand attention or whose needs were apparently less acute. Disruptive or needy pupils or children with an obvious medical need could divert a hugely disproportionate amount of teachers' time and energy and detract from other children, while two or three highly demanding children could sabotage every lesson. Children with low level needs who would previously have been considered for specialist support found themselves overlooked because they were now in the middle of a broad spectrum of need.

When the teacher is working with the purple group she says 'shoo'. I'm working with the purple group. She's always working with the purple group. And then when it's our turn she comes and says 'Are you ok?' and then she walks away and that's supposed to be our time.

'Who do you take support from?' asked a deputy head, recognising that within a finite resource there are winners and losers.

We found that we couldn't take any support from any of the teachers because they all had a child in their class who warrants extra support. Every single class. We can't say you can't have support.

## **5.7 The power of the peer group**

A key ingredient of success was described by some headteachers as harnessing the power of the peer group rather than allowing it to be a negative influence. In order to gain that support there has to be an explicit approach, continuously reinforced and with the kind of expert help that demonstrates to children new forms of communication such as Makaton or Signalong.

There is one little boy who doesn't have language – but the other children support him through Signalong and the children wanted to learn it – and the parents as well - so they can invite him to tea. He is very much part of the community – not as a little pet – and that can be a danger – you just have to say no. Sometimes you have to draw the line for children and be quite explicit. (Primary school headteacher)

This investment may require a great deal of tolerance and understanding in the short term if there are to be long term benefits.

I had one particular young man who had foetal alcohol syndrome. Came to us in Year 2 and my word that was a challenge, thinking are we going to make it through, biting, tantrums, screaming. And he did. He made it through all the way to Year 6, tremendous support from his peer group. He still comes back to visit. (Primary school headteacher)

Where the power of the peer group could pay off most tangibly, brought 'on-side' by comprehensive policy and practice, was in transition from primary to secondary.

[The SENCO] sets up pre-meetings and additional transition days so that the SEN children have a very positive view of their secondary school – and we have had some quite good transitions. We've had children with Downs Syndrome and severe learning difficulties – successfully transferred into mainstream with a very, very supportive peer group. It has to be said without that peer group, I don't think that support would have been so good. If they transfer without their year group then it's much harder. (Primary school headteacher)

Given the considerable research on the 'social mix' (Thrupp<sup>3</sup> 1999, Harris<sup>4</sup>, 1998), the compositional (or 'peer group') effect (MacBeath and Mortimore,<sup>5</sup> 2001), this is a key ingredient in successful transition and in accommodating children with special needs in the main stream of school life. Such tolerance and support is by no means guaranteed however concerted the efforts made by staff. Its promise is most likely to be fulfilled when the wider resourcing, policy and contextual issues are attended to at local school and authority level but more critically still, at a higher national policy and funding level.

#### Notes and references

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<sup>3</sup> Thrupp, M (1999) *Schools Making a Difference, Let's Be Realistic*, Buckingham, Open University Press

<sup>4</sup> Harris, J R (1998) *The Nurture Assumption*, London, Bloomsbury.

<sup>5</sup> MacBeath, J and Mortimore, P (Eds) (2001) *Improving School Effectiveness*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

## Chapter 6 The Impact on Parents

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### 6.1 Supporting special needs at home

Parents of children with special needs, like all parents, view upbringing and education of their children as a challenging, volatile and precarious enterprise. The problem is, however, compounded when their children's behaviour is outside normal social bounds and learning doesn't follow the expected developmental path. As interviews with parents consistently revealed, they were bewildered by their children's behaviour and often had no idea where to turn to get the help they needed.

Parents were often confused because they didn't know what was wrong with their child, and therefore did not know how to best help him or her at home or how to support their children's schoolwork. This was often compounded by a lack of information from health professionals or by diagnoses which were ambiguous. It was a relief when a condition was given a label rather than left indeterminate. Even if the label did not bring with it any immediate help it allowed parents to talk to or seek out others with similar diagnosis or to look for books or web sources. A group of primary school parents discussed books they had got from the library which had helped them more than any other source.

I just couldn't get inside Matthew's head until I read that book [The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night] and I began to understand a bit of what my wee lad was going through. (Primary school parent)

Often parents spoke about keeping their children happy and occupied, indulging demanding behaviour, taking the line of least resistance. As well as coping with other children there were extra financial demands. They had to spend more on their children, on food, special equipment, clothes, toiletries, medical items, or materials bought to amuse, pacify or stimulate their children. Although for many parents there are allowances, this does not apply to all children and not all parents know how to access social services or have enough residual energy to engage the 'battle'.

Such findings from this small sample of parents are none the less reflected in large scale national data (Dobson et al., 2000)<sup>6</sup> which found that parents of children with disabilities spent twice the average amount on comparable items. In poorer families this meant adults doing with less and making sacrifices. For lone parents, perhaps with three or four other children, living in cramped accommodation necessitated the sharing of rooms or the one bed, leaving neither the time nor the emotional reserves to devote to these

It got so bad that I phoned social services and said I was going to leave him in a field, would they go and pick him up for me... it got to a point where I didn't want him any more. (Primary School parent)

For looked after children life was even more precarious for their house parents or key workers. These were the children most likely to be excluded.

As children get older and mix with their peers, issues of social awareness, adaptability and resilience become increasingly apparent. Passing children into the care of others, child minders, nursery and infant school teachers, is fraught with uncertainty for parents as their children are vulnerable in so many ways. Some parents were assertive and had learned painfully through dealing with bureaucracies to make demands and not take 'no' for an answer, but there more others who confessed to being too intimidated to approach the school or ask for help. Some, who themselves had a bad experience at school, said they lacked confidence to deal with teachers and drew attention to the imbalance in the power relationship.

I didn't know how to approach them. I didn't know how to talk to these teachers, I'm only a parent. (Primary School parent)

This was much more prevalent in the secondary context where the 'big school' was too big and, as one parent said, teachers also seemed bigger and more intimidating.

A parent whose son's learning difficulties were not diagnosed until his second year in primary school said that had he been in a special school, or had access to expert advice the problem would have surfaced much sooner. She was sympathetic to teachers who, she said, could not have been expected to know where the problems lay or how to deal with them.

There is so much pressure on mainstream teachers that they don't always know that the child has a problem. They are just seen as a slow learner or 'trouble' if they act out and this can go on for years before a child is properly diagnosed. (Primary school parent)

Another parent expressed concern over teachers' conflicting responses to her child who had cerebral palsy by sometimes treating him like everyone else when he needed consideration, for example, refusing to allow him to use his wheelchair when his legs really hurt him and at other times underestimating what he could do such as being made to sit in a 'special chair' because of his leg splints when he wanted, and was able, to sit on the floor like the other pupils in his class.

Withdrawal from the class took place for certain subjects but, in many instances, not for literacy and numeracy in which context parents worried about the pressure on targets and the stress this could cause for children who 'couldn't do it and then wouldn't do it' because they found it so frustrating.

## **6.2 Learning in and out of school**

The challenges and frustration experienced by parents were more easily apprehended when teachers own children had special needs.

I bring something different to the job because I have got a child with special needs. I think my understanding is very different from everyone else's in this situation because I live with it so I also have empathy with the parents.

With the range of special needs in a classroom teachers are now more reliant on parents to help them get a better understanding of a child's needs. There was an explicit acknowledgment that, to further learning in the school, teachers have to understand learning in the home. While this might be held to be a general principle it is brought sharply to the surface in an SEN context.

Evidence from parents and teachers alike raised a number of issues of support for children's learning out of school hours. Often teachers admitted to their own lack of expertise in offering useful counsel to parents who simply couldn't understand or cope with their children's behaviour or help them with their learning. More generic parenting skills were sometimes clearly applicable. A primary head talked about parents who 'love their children to bits' but simply didn't know how to help them become more independent. In some cases parents were overprotective, not allowing their child to take risks such as making toast or boiling a kettle or venturing out of the house on their own. There were also cases of parents being too accepting of bad behaviour, too indulgent or not willing to challenge their children enough. Others again didn't know how to stimulate, or encourage their children to learn, or to exercise greater initiative.

Some schools, particularly primaries and special schools, had made extensive and imaginative efforts to engage with parents, running Easter shows, bingo nights, jumble sales, open days, parent workshops, outings, special assemblies and other forms of activities designed to develop close relationships and build trust as a basis for a more challenging stance on behavioural issues and parental support. 'Red Hen' was a scheme mentioned, offering parents support in a facility set up by an outside agency but taking place in the school on a weekly basis.

A number of initiatives have been set up for parents, particularly in schools in more deprived areas, to help parents cope with the demands on them such as parenting classes, workshops on literacy and numeracy, family support programmes, family learning programmes, bring your family to school weeks for example. But as a SENCO in one such school said: 'you don't always get the parents that you want', and a senior manager in a secondary school expressed the view that both pupils and parents could become over-dependent on the school through such initiatives.

From a parent point of view, however, there were complaints that on the one hand, teachers underestimated their children's ability and, on the other hand, could overestimate ability. One parent complained that the school did not provide enough challenge for her son who was disruptive simply because he was bored.

I am the mother of a naughty child... he had learning difficulties... he was too bright.

Once he had completed his work, she said, he would disrupt other children. Another parent complained about 'mixed messages' coming from the school, messages which did not coincide with her own experience. Reports from the school said that her son 'read really well' but the mother's evidence was that he couldn't read at all. She wondered aloud as to what really went on in the classroom and if the teacher really knew her son at all. By contrast another parent insisted her child was a good reader at home while the teacher's view was that she could hardly read at all.

One can find running through these interviews a consistent theme – that the contexts of home and classroom learning bring out different forms of behaviour and different apparent abilities and dispositions. In some special schools there are mechanisms such as the home-school diary, or even the video record that travels back and forward from home to school, capturing learning episodes at home and in the classroom. These can prove helpful in dispelling some of the miscommunication and show how learning bridges can be built in and out of school. While similar strategies are feasible within the mainstream setting, they are much less easily applied without smaller class size, time and freedom from curricular and testing pressure.

### **6.3 School: a source of support and arena for conflict**

For parents of children with special needs the school was typically a valued source of support and parents were full of praise for schools and teachers who gave unstintingly of their time to advise and support. For their part teachers found it gratifying to work with parents who were concerned for their children's education and kept regular contact with the school. When there were many such parents in the one class it could make considerable demands on teachers' time and goodwill.

At the other extreme there were instances of confrontation with parents. In one primary school serving a highly deprived housing scheme, teachers complained of a rising incidence of violence and abuse. Although these parents constituted a small minority they could be intimidating, particularly in cases of exclusion and perceived unfair treatment of their child, and a number of instances of parental assault were cited, in one or two cases serious enough to cause extended teacher absence. While such parents were not necessarily those of children with 'special needs' they were often adults with their own special needs, lacking the capacity to cope with the stresses of poverty, inadequate housing, violent neighbourhoods and disobedient children. Teachers would go to great lengths to avoid excluding children not simply to avoid parental conflict but because it was not in the interest of the child or the family.

Tensions arose when a school refused to admit a child whom they thought would be too difficult to handle and the child ended up being shuffled around from school to school, exacerbating disaffection in the process. From a parental viewpoint this could cause immense distress and fuel frustration, eventually boiling over into confrontation. For their part schools found themselves caught between meeting parental demand, on the one hand, and pressure from local authorities to take the child, on the other.

Disadvantaged communities are often typified by a core of families who have lived for generations in the same house or street alongside others who are constantly on the move. The impact on schools in coping with new admissions at different times in the year meant needing to be able to rapidly assess a new child's needs and find appropriate support. Teachers talked about the frustrations of having to liaise with schools in other authorities who could have different assessment procedures and sometimes inadequate recording systems. One teacher gave an example of a reception age pupil who arrived from another authority with no records but who was clearly in need of assessment. Yet when, on the first day of school they tried to contact his previous school the head there was off sick, the SENCO was not available and the child ended up sitting in a classroom for some days with his needs going unrecognised. His mother was relieved when the head asked her to authorise an assessment by the educational psychologist but this involved a long wait before the next visit, increasing the sense of frustration.

Such stories from parents, often caught in a systemic Catch 22, help to explain why parents can be easily seen by teachers as unreasonable or too demanding, and it can take very little provocation to become a major incident. It required, as one headteacher said, 'an extra layer of skill and forbearance'.

#### **6.4 A matter of school choice**

Choosing the right school could prove to be a key decision both for the welfare of the child and for the reassurance of the parent. For many parents, however, this was more of a lottery than a studied and well informed choice. In many cases parents had simply to choose the school nearest to them.

We offer different things. There are some parents who want the special school and others who want their child to be part of the community. We offer different things. We don't have everything a special school has. We have a sensory room, we have specialist equipment but we don't have everything a specialist school has –we don't have a hydrotherapy pool. What we offer isn't any better or any worse. It's different. (Primary school headteacher)

For some parents who were keen to have their children in the mainstream a headteacher counseled against it, in part on the grounds of the mother's own volatility.

The parent of a child with severe autism is very volatile herself, therefore getting her to appreciate that the school might not be the best placement for him is very difficult. The school has offered her support which she hasn't taken up. (Primary school headteacher)

Although there is evidence from teachers, and from some parents as well, that children with special needs are accepted by their peers, there was also counter evidence of children feeling excluded, exacerbated as children grew older.

As Jamie grew older other kids began to tease him more, a bit of a peer group thing. It was like these innocent children had been transformed into other cruel beings, more intolerant. Frankly it made that lad's life a misery. At least in his special school they were all in the same boat.

This sentiment was echoed by another parent who argued that 'At special schools all the children are different so they are all the same'. She added that the diversity was so great and the level of tolerance for difference so high that there was no 'normal' benchmark against which to judge others, and the levels they were working at did not require a lockstep measure of progress.

They get life skills and things that they actually need in the special school. In the mainstream school they are doing stuff which just makes them unhappy and stressed out. Gavin comes home in a state and it takes hours to wind him down.

In many cases children with special needs have to travel a considerable distance to find the most appropriate school. In small towns and villages these children could often find themselves as the outsiders. Even in apparently well integrated schools teachers admitted that there tended to be little spontaneous traffic between children with special needs and their peers, even if living within the same community or the same street. They could be observed as distinctive playground groups, patterns that were mirrored in community life outside school.

#### **6.5 The long road to statementing**

It was common in all local authorities for parents to describe a long wait for to get a child statemented, often put down to the reluctance of their local authority to spend

the money. In some instances this could involve a wait of a couple of years for a child to be seen and assessed by the educational psychologist. In two local authorities in particular this was acute. Very often children had been turned down through lack of 'evidence' even though it was obvious to all that the child was unable to cope in the mainstream classroom.

They says to me "Sorry Matthew hasn't been statemented, there's not a lot we can do for him" so we moved to another authority who has a different statementing policy. (Primary school parent)

Parents described it as a 'long road' and 'struggle to get a child with special needs everything it needs to be fully included'. One parent talked about a fight for four years in order to get five hours a week support for her son. It proved difficult to find a teacher prepared to come in to do an hour a day and she was offered instead 10 hours a week with an LSA.

In schools with a large percentage of children with special needs it presented a dilemma of having to prioritise the children with most need because the psychologist would only see one child at a time. One headteacher reported spending an hour talking to the psychologist trying to decide which one of the many children she should see. She added, 'There are lots of children who slip through the net.'

It was further evidence of an arcane system that penalises children in differing proportion and urgently requires a fresh a more imaginative approach to funding of resources and support.

## **Notes and References**

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<sup>22</sup> Dobson, B., Middleton, S. and Beardsworth, A. (2000) The impact of childhood disability on family life, Centre for Research in Social Policy

## Chapter 7

### Key issues and recommendations from the inclusion study

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#### 7.1 Key Issues

- 7.1.1 Inclusion is a wide ranging concept and used to cover a whole range of groups who have often been marginalised or excluded from the 'main stream' of schools. Our study focused specifically on children and young people who would be categorised as having 'special needs,' some of whom may previously have been in special schools. These include physical disabilities, medical conditions, behavioural issues, and learning difficulties. These do not fall into discrete categories as learning, behaviour and physiological needs are inter-related in complex ways and, in their manifestation, not only challenge the skills of teachers and parents but in many cases puzzle the 'experts' as well.
- 7.1.2 While there is overall a declining population there is a growing number within that population of children with special needs who have been helped to survive through advances in medical knowledge and technology. Among this group are children born very prematurely who encounter a range of health and psychological challenges as they mature.
- 7.1.3 In general teachers are positive towards the principle of inclusion. They believe it is not only good for many children who would previously have been in special schools but also for their classmates who learn important lessons about diversity and tolerance. Where they tend to express concern is about the ability of schools to provide a suitable education for children with complex emotional and behavioural needs. Although teachers described many of the advantages to pupils in general, they also questioned whether alternative, or more differentiated, forms of provision would better serve children with complex special needs.
- 7.1.4 While there are children and young people who thrive in the mainstream environment there are others for whom it can be difficult or even threatening, and whose needs are not met by the conventions and strictures of mainstream school. This is more likely to be the case in secondary schools where the structures – of the school day, of the curriculum, of a multiplicity of teachers – militates against the kind of emotional support and climate for learning that some young people need. Frustrations over learning difficulties expressing themselves in 'bad' behaviour may then result in inappropriate sanctions.
- 7.1.5 School exclusion statistics (2002-2003) indicated that statemented SEN children were nine times more likely to be excluded than children without statements. A permanent exclusion often results in the social exclusion of the child and further limits his/her life chances. This is disproportionate in its effects on children in care and children from certain minority ethnic groups. The rate of exclusion for Black Afro-Caribbean pupils, for example, is twenty times higher than for Chinese or Indian pupils. School exclusion is often the result of a lack of proper support for a child or for teaching staff, inappropriate placement, curricular and/or assessment.

- 7.1.6 Continuity of care, particularly from the critical reception stage, can help a child, and teaching staff, to create a relevant curriculum. This is, however, disrupted by a move to secondary school or from one school to another, often accompanied by insecurity and distress. Despite investment of time in primary-secondary liaison, children who have been well integrated in the primary school often end up, within a few weeks of secondary stage being excluded or moving school once again.
- 7.1.7 The primary-secondary liaison task for pupils with special needs is typically the remit of SENCOs. Their support often hinges around learning needs and co-ordination of support at secondary level. While paved with good intentions this appears to rarely prepare secondary staff for the complexity of learning and behavioural needs that surface in their classrooms. The number of different teachers and different subject expectations that children encounter at secondary stage may also exacerbate this. Where some form of special provision is provided, often staff are placed in on-site units or chosen to run initiatives simply on the basis of funding (for example, the choice of a TA rather than a teacher) or because they have space on their timetable.
- 7.1.8 Curriculum and testing pressures, particularly at key stages can leave special needs children marginalised. In Year 6, for example, a 'Key Stage' in many respects, a tactical approach to ensuring the highest 'value added,' focuses teachers' attention on the demonstrable results, and special needs pupils may be 'disapplied' either in a formal or informal sense. The curriculum demands are often completely inappropriate for children with complex learning or behavioural needs.
- 7.1.9 The current system for comparing schools, whether by 'raw' attainment scores or value-added fails to take account of the many children whose achievement is below level 1, and who are further marginalized by schools trying to compete on an uneven playing field.
- 7.1.10 Mental health remains an area where some children's needs are not currently being met due to a lack of diagnosis and recognition that children too can suffer from anxiety and depression, even from an early age.
- 7.1.11 It is widespread practice for teachers (particularly in secondary school where teachers might see pupils as little as twice a week) to give special needs pupils almost entirely into the care of Teaching Assistants who are often regarded as the 'experts', although very few TAs have any qualification or background in special needs
- 7.1.12 In the absence of relevant training TAs tend to play a 'mothering' role (there are very few men), developing a close and caring relationship which can easily become one of dependency. Without expert support they lean more to a nurturing than a learning role and find it difficult to extend challenge and risk taking. There can also be a tendency for TAs to 'isolate' 'their' child from group or whole-class learning contexts.
- 7.1.13 Differentiation of the curriculum is typically left to the discretion of TAs. Their care and concern in assuming these responsibilities (very often in their

own time) is not matched by the expertise needed to make a classroom lesson relevant or accessible to a child with special needs.

- 7.1.14 When teachers do devote time to work with a group of SEN pupils their recourse can be to request a TA to teach the rest of the class. Other cases where a TA could take charge of the whole class are where a teacher is called away to deal with an incident, or where the teacher is also a SENCO and has other commitments.
- 7.1.15 Deployment of TAs takes varying forms. In some secondary schools, rather than being attached to a specific child they may be attached to subject departments and tutored in the relevant subject matter, so extending their ability to assume more of a teaching role if required. In some other schools TAs assume teaching responsibility for small classes.
- 7.1.16 Increasing the range of needs and abilities within the 'mainstream' classroom has had a major impact on the nature and balance of teachers' work. The presence of even one child with complex needs without relevant support and resourcing could be enough to upset the balance and flow of teaching and learning for all. Where a teacher rather than a TA takes responsibility for differentiation the demands of such pupils can sometimes mean that teachers spend a disproportionate amount of time planning or adapting materials, arguably at the expense of time that could be spent planning for the whole.
- 7.1.17 Outward expression of unmet needs often takes the form of extreme forms of behaviour. These can be particularly disruptive, not only disturbing to other children but also causing teachers to worry about children putting themselves at risk. This risk can exist for children of all ages but assumes different forms as the child gets older.
- 7.1.18 When teachers express concerns about inclusion these are mainly discussed in terms of behavioural issues. Focusing attention on outward behaviour and attempting to simply contain disturbed and disturbing children clouds the learning issues which may then remain unaddressed.
- 7.1.19 There is a significant lack of expertise and professional development in meeting a wide spectrum of needs. School staff are too often left to fall back on common sense or 'instinct' as there is very little specialist training.
- 7.1.20 Inability to meet the range of need leaves many teachers with a sense of guilt, worrying that they are letting down both the children with special needs, who they feel inadequately skilled to deal with as well as the rest of the class whom they are denying attention.
- 7.1.21 Access to specialist help is difficult. Growing demand far exceeds diminishing supply. The resources of psychological and social services are stretched and decisions about referral are hard to prioritise and often with little result so that with immense goodwill and effort staff are left to 'muddle through'.
- 7.1.22 In some cases teachers are asked to deal with acute medical conditions, for example 'sucking out' tracheotomy tubes at regular intervals, coping with incontinence and frequent nappy changing or clearing up after accidents.

This puts huge strains on teachers and teaching assistants, and although performed out of necessity and goodwill is well outside of a teacher's or LSA's remit.

- 7.1.23 In the absence of professional development teachers are sometimes 'trained' by parents, placing reliance on parental knowledge and expertise. This may place teachers themselves at risk of complaint or litigation.
- 7.1.24 While choice of school placement may be critical for children with particular needs, for many parents this is not a realistic option. The availability of suitable transport, lack of information and lack of access to good advice disadvantages certain groups of parents whose children are then often badly placed and end up moving from school to school.
- 7.1.25 Decisions on admission are critical to school effectiveness and improvement. Schools that admit pupils whose needs are beyond their capacity to cope rarely involve class teachers in the decision-making process. When such decisions are taken without strategic planning on the part of senior leaders, the repercussions, sometimes serious, are mainly borne by teaching and support staff.
- 7.1.26 Some schools often have clearly articulated admissions policies and do not accept children whose needs they cannot meet. They try to maintain the balance of children with complex needs but also find themselves under pressure (from parents and the local authority) to accept more children, often because other academically 'successful' schools do not take their share of children with SEN and/or because those schools have, in the past, failed to provide adequately for such pupils.
- 7.1.27 Strategic planning is often accompanied by 'serendipity', that is, an available combination of the right people, with the requisite expertise, willing to commit to the school on a long term sustainable basis. In schools with a precarious balance of expertise, recruitment and retention issues can undermine continuity of care when key staff leave.
- 7.1.28 In disadvantaged areas where a school may have over half its pupils classified as 'special needs' and five or more per cent of children statemented, strategies which may work in more stable situations do not apply. Here the critical 'balance' shifts so as to make effective teaching nigh on impossible. It is only with exceptional dedication and resilience that teachers cope with the turbulence and unpredictability of day-to-day life. It is in these circumstances that lack of resources and insufficient expertise hit hardest.
- 7.1.29 Parents frequently described 'the long road to statementing'. It can take years to get a child statemented due in part to bottlenecks in psychological services and the perceived desire of local authorities to save money. For schools it means accommodating children with complex needs but without commensurate advice or support. Even when statemented the child may not receive extra support or funding if the view is taken that the school is already meeting his/her needs. When extra support and funding is made available it is rarely full-time even if the need is for full-time support.

- 7.1.30 Provision of appropriate resources could go a long way to meeting needs but in almost all primary and secondary schools increasing demands are not matched by resources, in term of staffing as well as classroom materials and equipment.
- 7.1.31 Often procedures in neighbouring authorities are different and children may not be fully supported if they live in one authority and go to school in another. Parents often bear the brunt of these geographical and administrative inconsistencies.
- 7.1.32 Headteachers often experience a lot of pressure to raise standards whilst taking forward the inclusion agenda. 'Bending the rules' or 'doing what is best for the children', however, requires confidence and determination to take initiatives that may challenge national or local authority policy
- 7.1.33 In the present circumstances it is not clear how teachers can build up their expertise on special needs. Input on most initial training courses is minimal and few new teachers now have any background in psychology or other relevant disciplinary knowledge that would enable them to play a leading role in developing and implementing strategies for meeting the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. Much training is developed 'in-house' or 'on the job' and so is often inadequate and inadequately grounded in theory, emerging knowledge and breakthrough practice.
- 7.1.34 Good provision is characterised by flexibility, pragmatism, continuous monitoring and optimum creative use of local and national expertise. With well embedded and evidence-based self evaluation, schools are in a much stronger position to identify and plan for differentiated forms of provision.
- 7.1.35 In some areas of the country strategic provision is a step towards a more joined-up policy, establishing centres or clusters of excellence which concentrate resources and expertise in selected mainstream schools. Geographical location and accessibility to these centres does, however, remain an issue. In particular, the issues around placement facing authorities in largely rural locations are very different from those in dense urban areas. The current intention to reduce the role of the local authority in the matter of school placements and admissions can only exacerbate the present difficult situation.
- 7.1.36 Special schools have a continuing and developing role to play in full and part time provision. They can offer a valuable resource for other schools and existing good practice illustrates how information exchange, close collaboration and flexibility in provision can pay dividends.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

- 7.2.1 Inclusion should not rely on individual schools struggling to contain children with special needs but should be conceived as a collaborative effort, sharing resources in a spirit of mutual support. Special schools should have a significant role to play as an expert resource for mainstream schools while they in turn have a supporting role to play in partnership with special schools.
- 7.2.2 Future policy should serve to enhance collaboration among schools to ensure the best service to all children. Currently collaborative initiatives are undermined by fragmentation of schools types (specialist schools, academies, selective schools), competition for pupils and reluctance to accept children seen as detrimental to the school's attainment profile. Advocacy of network learning communities, joined-up child and family services and co-operative multi-agency work will be futile and counter productive if policy fails to address these systemic issues.
- 7.2.3 Effective and targeted professional development for school staff - for teachers, TAs, administrative staff and senior leaders – is an urgent priority. This should include elements of joint workshops, focusing on modes of collaboration and whole school policies as well as addressing learning needs and strategies for dealing with behavioural issues. Local Authorities have a responsibility for ensuring that there are opportunities for such professional development.
- 7.2.4 There is an urgent need to reappraise systems of funding and in particular statementing, the rationale of which is less and less obvious. In addition the process can lose the goodwill of parents and teachers who become frustrated by what they see as a stalling and penny pinching policy. It consumes time in individual advocacy which often emanates in a sense of defeat. For their part schools and local authorities should not rely on statementing but take the initiative in seeking relevant provision and forms of funding.
- 7.2.5 If inclusion means anything it is the right to be taught by a suitably qualified teacher. Currently that principle is frequently breached. School policies should therefore ensure that TAs do not carry responsibility for differentiating the curriculum but rather work under the supervision of teachers to plan whole class strategies of support. This is, however, dependent on teachers being relieved of the pressure which leads to TAs taking 'difficult' children off their hands.
- 7.2.6 Additional and strategically targeted resources for professional development are of the highest priority, together with realistic levels of staffing and ongoing expert support for teachers. This is most at issue in disadvantaged communities where there is often a critical mass of unmet needs that overwhelms school staff and creates a downward spiral of achievement.
- 7.2.7 SENCOs should in all cases be qualified teachers. Training and support for SENCOs is vital in ensuring the effectiveness of their strategic role in provision. Their influence will be enhanced if they have senior status and are enabled to play a substantive role in planning and policy development. This implies involvement in admissions, transitions, financial management

and curricular decision making. Their liaison with class teachers and TAs should also be a cardinal feature of their role. This range of responsibilities, however, requires strong support at school and LA level.

- 7.2.8 While the provision of non-contact time for planning has been a welcome development in primary schools, workload reform has not addressed the fundamental issue of teachers' time being taken up by behavioural rather than pedagogic matters. It is clear that many teachers still carry an unsustainable workload. Reducing workload pressures which disadvantage all children, but impact most markedly on SEN pupils, will require additional non-contact time, access to high quality resources and appropriate support services.
- 7.2.9 Special provision in the form of Pupil Support Units off-site, or learning zones within schools, should be tailored to need, expertly staffed and not merely a form of containment and diversion for SEN pupils. Together with emerging policies on extended schools, *Every Child Matters*, *Youth Matters* and new imperatives for inter-agency collaboration, there is an urgent need to review the nature of school leadership and the resource implications.
- 7.2.10 Government will need to review existing policies to ensure that they are coherent and mutually reinforcing. The evidence demonstrates unequivocally that the needs, interest and potential of many children with special needs are not being met. Attempts to fit them to the targets and demands of the National Curriculum constrains at least three of the *Every Child Matters* outcomes - *enjoyment and achievement*, *contributing to the community*, and *social and economic well-being*. It is a fundamental principle that teachers should shape curriculum and assessment according to need and ability. It is difficult to see how government can, with integrity, pursue personalised learning and assessment for learning without addressing the constraints and anomalies which impede effective practice.
- 7.2.11 Governors should be fully appraised of, and kept in touch with, developments, making time to discuss issues of workload, professional support, staff deployment and resourcing with continuous feedback as issues emerge. These issues assume particular relevance with respect to inclusion.
- 7.2.12 School leadership has been shown to be as critical in this area as in any other, but it is relatively powerless without systemic reform. There is an imperative for all concerned with the development and implementation of an inclusive policy to address diminishing teacher morale, children and young people being badly served by inappropriate curriculum, and by a lack of high quality support.
- 7.2.13 The principle of natural proportion requires a more equitable approach to admission, **and retention**, of children with special needs across local authorities and across the country. This would become more feasible with a more intelligent and sensitive approach to accreditation of children for whom GCSE and other attainment benchmarks are inappropriate and counter productive.

- 7.2.14 Ofsted has a key role to play in encouraging schools to ensure that issues of inclusion are embedded in approaches to self evaluation at classroom, school, community and inter-agency levels. Otherwise these issues may continue to fester, aggravating resentment rather than being addressed proactively and with an evidence-based approach. Ofsted itself may not be able to carry out such a remit, however, without requisite professional development of HMI.
- 7.2.15 An independent review of inclusive practice is now essential. This should include a radical re-appraisal of curriculum and assessment and the contradictions inherent in interface of the standards and inclusion agendas.

**In summary:**

There is an unarguable case for more intelligent and targeted resource provision. But resources on their own will not bring about change. The issues run deeper and challenge the very nature of current policy. Inclusion can only work in a culture of collaboration in which there is sharing of resource and expertise. Competitive market driven policies impact on the most vulnerable of children and penalise the most dedicated of teachers. The most striking aspect of this study is the goodwill of teachers who believe in inclusion and try to make it work but do not find their goodwill repaid by the level of professional support they deserve. It is time for a thorough review of policy and practice.

## Appendix 1: Inclusion Questionnaire



October 2005

Dear Teacher,

We are asking for your help with a study we are carrying out exploring the impact of inclusion policies on teacher workloads.

The following questionnaire asks for your experience of teaching students with special educational needs or additional support needs. We are hoping for as many responses as possible so we can gather a good picture of how inclusion is affecting teachers' working lives.

Information gathered from the questionnaire will be treated in strictest confidence. We do code the questionnaires in order to establish the response sample. However, no school or teacher details will be disclosed.

Information from the questionnaire will be used to produce a national report to be published in early 2006. Reports will be sent to all participating schools.

We do hope you are able to complete this questionnaire and we thank you in anticipation. Please return the completed questionnaire **as soon as possible** in the freepost envelope provided.

Should you wish for further information, please contact Sue Steward (01223 767662) or Sally Roach (01223 767624) at the Faculty of Education, Cambridge University.

Thank you.

Professor John MacBeath  
Professor Maurice Galton  
Susan Steward  
Charlotte Page



## Section 1 - Background information:

1.0 Gender Male  Female

1.1 How many years have you been teaching? *(please tick relevant box)*

0-4	5-9	10-14	15+

1.2 How many years have you been teaching at your current school?

*(please tick relevant box)*

0-4	5-9	10-14	15+

1.3 Type of School where you currently teach *(please tick relevant box)*

<b>First /Infant School</b>	
<b>Junior/Middle School</b>	
<b>Primary School</b>	
<b>Secondary School</b>	
<b>Special School</b>	
<b>Other</b> <i>(please specify)</i>	

1.4 What is your current position? *(For primary teachers: class year and other management responsibilities. For secondary teachers: subject and other management responsibilities)*

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1.5 Full time/part time Full time  Part time

1.6 What is the age range of the students you currently teach?

*(Please tick all relevant boxes)*

<b>Foundation</b>	
<b>KS1</b>	
<b>KS2</b>	
<b>KS3</b>	
<b>KS4</b>	
<b>Sixth Form</b>	

1.7 Do you have any specific SEN/ASN qualifications?

*(If yes, please detail below)*

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## Section 2 – Teaching students with SEN/ASN

**2.0 Here is a list of special educational needs or additional support needs. Tick those you have encountered as a teacher.**

*(Only tick the needs below where formal identification has been made i.e. on school SEN register)*

Severe learning difficulties		Physical Impairment	
Moderate learning difficulties		Epilepsy	
Severe behaviour difficulties		Autistic Spectrum Disorders	
Moderate behaviour difficulties		Down Syndrome	
Sensory impairment – visual		Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)	
Sensory impairment – hearing		Other <i>(please name)</i>	
Speech & language difficulty			
SPLD/ Dyslexia			
ADHD			
Language & communication			

**2.1 With reference to the SEN/ASN types listed above, have there been any significant changes in the types of SEN or ASN you have encountered as a teacher over the last few years? If so, what changes?**

**2.2 In a typical class you teach, what proportion of students have an SEN/ASN? *(students on SEN register, School Action, School Action+ or Statement)***

none	a few	a small group	up to half	more than half

**2.3 Have there been any significant changes in the proportion of students with SEN or ASN in classes you have taught over the last few years? If so, what changes?**

### Section 3 – Student Case study

Please think of **one student** you have taught in the last few years with a special educational need or additional support need. Please pick a student whose contact with you has been quite a typical experience. **Sections 3a, 3b and 3c relate to this student.**

#### Student details

<b>Description of student's SEN/ ASN</b>	
<b>Level of student's assessed need</b> (SEN register, School Action, School Action +, Statement)	
<b>Any outside school support received by the student</b> (Please detail any sessions in off-site unit/other school)	

### Section 3a – Support when preparing to receive student

#### 3.0 When preparing to receive this student did you have.....? (please tick relevant boxes)

	Yes	No
Discussions with previous teachers?		
Discussions with specialist teachers? (e.g. SENCO)		
Discussions with previous or current LSA?		
Meetings with parents?		
Access to documents and / or records?		
Relevant Inset or CPD opportunities?		
Access to appropriate literature?		
Time to prepare special materials?		

#### 3.1 Did you have any other support before receiving this student? (please detail below)

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#### 3.2 Please detail any other preparation, if anything, you would have found useful.

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**3.3 What was your opinion of the level of preparation support you were able to access? (Please tick the relevant box)**

<b>Very poor</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>

**Section 3b – Support when teaching student**

**3.4 How many hours in a week were you responsible for teaching this student?**

hours per week
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**3.5 What forms of support IN THE CLASSROOM did you receive when teaching this student? (please tick relevant boxes)**

<b>Specialist SEN teacher or teacher support specifically for this student – one to one</b>	
<b>Full time LSA support specifically for this student – one to one</b>	
<b>Part time LSA support specifically for this student – one to one</b>	
<b>Full time LSA support but not just for this student</b>	
<b>Part time LSA support but not just for this student</b>	
<b>Other professional support in class (please give details)</b>	

**3.6 Did the student receive support outside the class during your lessons i.e. was the student withdrawn? If so, please state the type of support received by the student and the number of hours in a week they were withdrawn for.**

<b>Description of support received outside classroom</b>	<b>No. of hours in week</b>

**3.7 What was your opinion of the level of support you were given during teaching time? (Please tick the relevant box)**

<b>Very poor</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>

**3.8 What further support during teaching time, if any, do you think could have been useful?**

**Section 3c – Support during non-teaching time**

**3.9 During non-teaching time, which of the following activities did carry out in relation to this student?**

In column A please tick whether you engaged in the activity

In column B please comment on the **average amount of time** you spent on each activity in relation to the student

	<b>A Activity carried out?</b>	<b>B Time (hours)</b>
<b>Consultation with the SENCO</b>		hours/week
<b>Consultation with SEN teacher support</b>		hours/week
<b>Consultation with LSA support</b>		hours/week
<b>Time for consultation with the student's parents, in addition to set parents' evenings</b>		hours/term
<b>Time for preparing materials for the student</b>		hours/term
<b>Time for consultation with professionals from outside school</b>		hours/term
<b>Other activities concerned with the student during non-teaching time (Please detail)</b>		

**3.10 Highlight in the table below, how much of the time, outlined in question 3.9, was allocated to you.** If time was allocated it means that it did not use up your non contact time during the day that is used for general preparation and marking, or that if it did, you were compensated for it. *(Tick the appropriate box)*

	All time allocated	Some time allocated	No time allocated
<b>Time for consultation with the SENCO</b>			
<b>Time for consultation with SEN teacher support</b>			
<b>Time for consultation with LSA support</b>			
<b>Time for consultation with the student's parents, in addition to set parents' evenings</b>			
<b>Time for preparing materials for the student</b>			
<b>Time for consultation with professionals from outside school</b>			
<b>Other activities concerned with the student during non-teaching time</b>			

**3.11 What was your opinion of the level of support you were given during non-teaching time?** *(Please tick the relevant box)*

Very poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very good

**3.12 What further support during non-teaching time, if any, do you think could have been useful?**

## Section 4 – Your workload

**4.0 To what extent do students with SEN/ASN create an extra workload for you?**

*(Please tick relevant box)*

significantly	To a minor extent	not at all

**4.1 If you think there is an extra workload, please highlight the main nature of this**

**4.2 Which of the following do you think would significantly help you with the extra workload associated with SEN/ASN?**

*(Please tick the two most effective strategies for helping you with your workload associated with SEN/ASN)*

Extra classroom support		More dialogue with parents	
Increased allocated time to prepare materials		More opportunities to liaise with outside specialists	
Increased allocated time to plan with LSA/SEN teacher support		More Inset/Training in SEN/ASN	
Other (please detail)			

**4.3 To what extent does dealing with SEN/ASN create an extra stress for you?**

significantly	To a minor extent	not at all

**4.4 If you have answered that there is an extra stress associated with dealing with SEN/ASN, how could this be reduced?**

## **Section 5 – What do you think?**

**5.0 What would you perceive to be advantages of inclusion?**

**5.1 What would you consider to be disadvantages of inclusion?**

**5.2 Who, if anyone, do you think benefits from inclusive policy and why?**  
(E.g. students, teachers, parents, other children, or everyone involved.)

**5.3 Who, if anyone, do you think suffers from inclusive policy and why?**  
(E.g. students, teachers, parents, other children, or everyone involved.)

**5.4 Please make any additional comments you may have below**

[Empty box for additional comments]

**That completes the questionnaire. Thank you very much for your time and support. Please check you have completed all the questions and return it in the freepost envelope provided.**

**Thank you**

