

The SEN Code of Practice: three years on

The contribution
of individual
education plans to
the raising of
standards for
pupils with special
educational needs

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Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

Telephone: 020 7421 6800

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1 Introduction

- 1 OFSTED has published two reports on the implementation of the Code of Practice and on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN).¹ In both reports reference was made to the importance of Individual Educational Plans (IEPs), but also to some of the difficulties that teachers find in producing and monitoring them.
- 2 This third survey by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) considers the effectiveness of the Code of Practice with particular reference to the development of IEPs as they contribute both to the assessment of pupils and to their educational progress.
- 3 Between April 1997 and March 1998, HMI visited 43 schools and opportunity playgroups where arrangements for IEPs were considered, by either the Local Education Authority (LEA) or in OFSTED reports, to be effective. A wide range of schools was selected, and in most cases the initial judgement that the schools had effective practice was confirmed.
- 4 The schools had responded in very different ways to both the development and use of IEPs. This report acknowledges that there can be more than one approach to the implementation of IEPs. The way a school "has regard" to the SEN Code of Practice will reflect the arrangements and approach to assessment and planning for all pupils in the school, whether they have special educational needs or not. The IEP, however, should focus on the particular special needs of these pupils, highlighting specific targets, the achievement of which will demonstrate significant progress. Some schools had decided to have a separate plan setting out behaviour targets. This was similar to the IEP but was specifically referred to as an Individual Behaviour Plan (IBP) and related only to those pupils whose behaviour was particularly problematic. This was a development of the guidance given in the SEN Code of Practice.

¹ *The Implementation of the Code of Practice for Pupils with Special Educational Needs*, OFSTED, HMSO, 1996.
The SEN Code of Practice: two years on, OFSTED 1997.

2 The Purpose of Individual Action Plans

5 The Code of Practice recommended that pupils who are at either Stage 2 or 3 of the SEN register should have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The Code of Practice gave some indication as to what an IEP should contain and how it could be reviewed, but it did not state an overall specific purpose for the IEP. This survey has shown that in most schools IEPs are seen as individual teacher plans detailing what, why and how often skills or items of knowledge should be taught to the pupil through 'additional' or 'extra' activities. Thus, the IEP is seen as a tool to help adults plan for and teach the child. This emphasis on planning tends to limit the contribution made by the pupils themselves, and to some extent their parents. This tendency is more likely to occur where the IEPs are literacy based rather than behaviour based.

6 Although the Code of Practice suggests that the pupil should be involved in the preparation of an IEP

it is not entirely clear as to whether this involvement should be in formulating the targets or in participating in the process. Usually the IEP is prepared for the pupil arising from the teachers' and/or parents' concerns. It is often focused on a small number of specific skills most frequently concerned with the improvement of reading, spelling or writing, and sometimes also on numeracy. In one school, pupils were encouraged to set their own targets which were then written into the IEP.

7 Schools have concentrated more on how IEPs are to be written and presented than on their purpose and function. The need to produce an IEP is determined by the school's criteria for placing a child at Stage 2 or 3 of the SEN Code of Practice. The placement on the SEN register is the trigger – not whether an IEP is thought to be useful or will be particularly relevant in any individual case.

3 The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and Individual Educational Plans

- 8 The concept of an IEP is first introduced in the SEN Code of Practice in connection with the placement of a child at either Stages 2 (2.66) or 3 (2.67).² It suggests that the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) should ensure that an IEP is drawn up. The essential characteristics of an IEP identified in the Code of Practice are that:-
- it should focus on the specific learning difficulties of the child;
 - it should take account of what the child has already achieved, building on the curriculum the child is following;
 - there should be clear targets to be achieved over a specific period of time;
 - both the child, and where possible the parent, should be involved in its preparation and review;
 - the advice of outside specialists should be sought (Stage 3).
- 9 The 1996/7 HMI Survey (paragraph 24) reported that, "in some LEAs there is little or no specialist support at Stage 3", and as a result the distinctive features of Stage 3 in respect of schools did not exist in those LEAs. Those findings were confirmed in the 1997/8 Survey. Specialist help was regularly provided where the pupils had visual or auditory difficulties, and the specialists produced reports that contributed to the pupils' IEPs. For pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties there was usually an initial assessment by either a specialist teacher for pupils with specific learning difficulties or moderate learning difficulties, or an educational psychologist, with perhaps a subsequent contribution of some brief monitoring. It was rare, other than for pupils with visual or auditory difficulties, for teachers or educational psychologists from the LEA support services to be present for IEP reviews.
- 10 Although the Code of Practice does not specify that pupils on statements should have an IEP, most schools have assumed that it is good practice to produce one. Usually, schools followed the same format at Stage 5 as for Stages 2 and 3.
- 11 The findings from this survey confirmed that schools were following the Code of Practice's general guidance in respect of IEPs. In addition, the findings also suggested that IEPs should:-
- be seen as working documents;
 - use a simple format;
 - specify only provision and targets which are extra and additional to those generally available for, or expected to be achieved by, all pupils;
 - avoid jargon;
 - be comprehensible to all staff and parents;
 - be distributed to all staff as necessary;
 - promote effective planning by teachers;
 - help pupils understand what progress they are making;
 - link assessments of the progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to the school;
 - result in sound preparation and action by the staff, and the achievement of specific learning goals for the pupil.
- 12 The main findings of the 1996/7 HMI survey relating to IEPs are repeated in this present 1997/8 HMI Survey. These are:-
- appropriate procedures for preparing and reviewing IEPs are generally in place;
 - individual planning and provision for pupils with special educational needs often do not link to a school's literacy policy;
 - the writing and reviewing of IEPs is giving the greatest cause for concern to SENCOs in both primary and secondary schools;
 - the views of the pupils themselves are rarely sought in the preparation of IEPs or in the review process.

² References are to DfEE (1994) Code of Practice. *On the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs*, London: HMSO.

13 The major notable improvements since the early years following the introduction of the SEN Code of Practice are:-

- improved liaison between primary and secondary schools. In particular, there has been an increase in the transfer of IEPs, copies of reviews of IEPs, annual reviews of statements and other data, but the associated documentation has not always been effectively linked to National Curriculum (NC) assessments;
- increased evidence that many pupils have achieved their targets and, following a review, have had new targets set which have provided greater challenges;
- an increased understanding by all staff of their responsibility for all pupils, including pupils with

special educational needs. There was a noticeable improvement in most schools' attitudes towards these pupils;

- much of the guidance contained in the SEN Code of Practice was increasingly embedded in schools' planning. This has had a direct effect on the content of school development plans.

Nevertheless:-

- the schools in this survey, many identified for their effective practice in using IEPs, continued to have difficulties in meeting every child's special needs. However, many schools had become more effective in managing their paperwork, with the consequential benefit that they had a small amount of additional time to give to parents and pupils.

4 Commentary on Findings

Format of IEPs

14 The majority of schools used the same format for IEPs at both Stages 2 and 3. Those with pupils at Stage 5 (ie, on a statement) used a similar format but usually linked the IEP to the annual review and any longer-term targets detailed in the statement. While there were differences, most schools used similar formats. Establishing an agreed school format did not generally prove to be a problem.

took place during parent consultation evenings. Parents sometimes reported that such reviews were rather rushed. For pupils with a statement, however, in both primary and secondary schools, the IEPs were always reviewed in a formal annual review meeting.

17 Schools presented information on pupils in different ways (in IEPs, reports to parents, NC Key Stage assessments, tests, etc), and had different means of

A simple model for an IEP

The first side to include:-

Name:

Start date:

Date of birth:

Review date:

Year group:

Class/tutor group:

Teacher's initials:

Nature of special need (this varies in length and detail, but need not be repeated on subsequent sheets if no change has taken place).

WHAT
(specific targets)

HOW
(method
and materials)

WHO

WHEN

The second side to include:- Outcomes/targets:
Review of IEP:
List of names of people:

15 Some form of baseline assessment may have contributed to the decision to identify a pupil as having special educational needs but the results of NC assessments were rarely used to alter the IEP. Changes in performance on reading tests, however, were frequently used, perhaps because progress in reading scores had been an identified target and it was simple to assess.

conveying this information to parents, (parents' evenings, reports, annual reviews and IEP review meetings). They had to collate the information appropriately and planned how it was to be reported. All this had to be timetabled across the school year.

Reviewing IEPs

16 Most schools were able to informally review all IEPs "within a term", and formally once a year. For the majority of schools a review meant a formal meeting that included parents, teachers and often Learning Support Assistants (LSAs). However, reviewing the IEP within a term for some schools proved impossible, especially if it was to involve parents and outside specialists. In a small number of cases, therefore, school staff had reviewed the IEPs with no parents present. In many secondary schools the reviews of IEPs (for pupils at both Stages 2 and 3)

Sacred Heart Girls' Secondary School, Hammersmith, London.

At this school there was an arrangement in place for individual pupil monitoring for all pupils. Each pupil had a termly meeting with her tutor to review progress and set individual targets. Each pupil had this recorded in her own record, which she held and which was discussed with parents termly. This culminated in a Careers Action Plan. For pupils with special educational needs the IEP was an extension by degree and intensity of the target setting and monitoring already in place for all pupils. The school also had detailed systems for value-added data analysis for all pupils, including those not on the SEN register.

- 18 In a small number of schools where targets were being set for pupils with behavioural difficulties the Individual Behaviour Plans (IBPs) usually involved pupils, both in the planning and the review. These were often linked to the possibility of subsequent exclusion, or were part of a behaviour contract.
- 19 In respect of pupils with special educational needs some schools had found the major contribution of educational psychologists to be in assisting staff devise clear, measurable learning targets. These were often linked to ways of recording changes in pupils' behaviour.
- 20 Most secondary schools had set up some kind of SEN forum or working group which had representations from each faculty or department, as well as SEN staff. Such a group was usually seen, where their meetings were focused, as the key to increasing understanding and improvements in SEN. In the more effective schools this was the forum for discussing, and sometimes formulating, IEPs.
- 21 In nursery schools, termly reviews were usually the norm. A list of specific targets for SEN pupils was used in some nurseries, especially where there was a large number of adults, including parents and volunteers.
- 22 Because it was not always possible for parents to visit the school, or for staff to be available when they did, some reviews of progress had been conducted on the telephone. It was not as effective as a specific meeting or attendance at parents' evenings but it was a strategy increasingly being used – more often in secondary schools.

External monitoring

- 23 Governors were generally aware of the roles of SENCOs and also what the school considered the purpose/function of IEPs to be. In preparing their annual report to parents, governors' reports made little or no reference to the part IEPs played in the school's implementation of their SEN policy. The poor quality of these annual reports to parents on the progress and success of the school's SEN policy, noted in the previous HMI reports, continued to be the norm in almost all schools. Most SEN contributions were produced by the school, often by the SENCO, for inclusion by the governors in their report.
- 24 External perceptions of the purpose and function of IEPs had had a negative impact on a school's arrangements in some instances. For example, some SENCOs were concerned about their OFSTED inspection and the perceived demands that inspectors might make. Some schools had found the inspectors were more interested in the listing, production and number of IEPs than how they related to pupils' achievements and progress.

Parents and IEPs

- 25 Most SENCOs tried very hard to involve parents when they set or reviewed IEP targets. There were difficulties for some parents in arranging attendance at school, but also there was an additional disincentive for parents and an increased anxiety for teachers when the news about a child's progress was routinely discouraging. Teachers under pressure of time and other commitments usually acknowledged this as an area that needed improvement. The involvement of parents was usually more effective with younger children or at the beginning of secondary education.
- 26 Parents sometimes became more actively involved with the school through the liaison role of LSAs or Learning Support Teachers (LSTs).

Specific management issues of IEPs

- 27 Several IEP arrangements depended too much on the particular personality and qualities of the SENCO. In both primary and secondary schools there was often insufficient sharing of the responsibilities. It was rare to see other staff shadowing the SENCO, although where this occurred it was found to be particularly helpful in schools where the SENCO also wrote the IEPs.
- 28 Effective delegation of IEPs to class or subject teachers required a regular programme of SEN INSET. In almost all schools there had been some initial whole staff INSET at the time of the introduction of the Code of Practice and some sessions on differentiation, but this had rarely been maintained over the subsequent years to take account of new staff and other changes. Without a continuous programme of INSET the completion of IEPs became less effective.

Brigshaw Secondary School, Leeds

At this school there was a regular programme of termly workshops advertised to all staff to ensure they were aware of, and completed, their responsibilities to pupils with special educational needs. Their work in writing IEPs was written into their job descriptions and was taken into consideration during appraisal.

- 29 The management of IEPs was often reviewed or amended whenever a teacher left, internal promotion of the SENCO or the reassessment of the SENCO's role.
- 30 IEPs had sometimes been adapted in primary schools to include specific reading programmes, such as Reading Recovery or Corrective Reading.
- 31 IEPs were sometimes used differently when linked to work in withdrawal sessions. Thus, an objective or target to "learn the first 50 words of the key

word list" was found to be applicable to both teaching and evaluation in a withdrawal or small group session.

- 32 SENCOs found some difficulty in preparing IEPs for those pupils whom, while making some progress, continued to fall behind their peers. Teachers considered the repeating of the same targets as being negative. They were reluctant to drop or modify targets, either if they turned out to be too high, or if the pupil had made insufficient progress to achieve what was originally set.
- 33 Primary schools were more successful in setting out detailed individual plans linked to teaching strategies. Secondary schools were more at ease writing plans related to formal course accreditation.
- 34 Too often IEPs were considered in a vacuum. Schools that already had good systems for planning for pupils generally, were more effective in communicating to staff the purposes and arrangements concerned with IEPs. Thus, teachers who were used to discussing progress with pupils, setting and reviewing targets for all pupils and documenting what pupils had done, were more likely to see the IEP as a relevant part of their normal planning process.
- 35 Many schools, although still a minority, had begun to integrate IEPs successfully within their general arrangements for the assessment, recording and reporting of progress for all pupils. Some IEPs for pupils with special educational needs were not integral with educational planning for all pupils and inevitably created an additional burden on the staff.
- 36 Many SENCOs analysed the SEN registers by age and gender. Schools were increasing their use of the computerisation of data with the consequent opportunity of improving the monitoring and evaluation of many of their functions. However, analyses of information, for example in terms of pupils from ethnic minorities or where English was an additional language, were few.
- 37 Schools were sensitive to the need to ensure that pupils for whom English is a second language were not automatically placed on the SEN register, but there were very few examples of language-based IEPs for pupils who had special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language.
- 38 One SENCO said that she found IEPs to be at their best when they are, "easy to remember and use, are realistic and become part of the daily programme and need very frequent repetition". This very much represents the spirit of the Code of Practice, but was certainly not found in all schools.

External auditing of IEPs

- 39 Some LEAs included IEPs within their arrangements for auditing schools in respect of their pupils with special educational needs. This was for funding purposes within the local management of schools. It provided the LEAs with quick and easy access to data that appeared objective, but it seldom enhanced the quality of the IEPs, and in some cases had been a cause of distraction from their essential purpose as working documents which were often, rightly, transient and of short duration.
- 40 The use of IEPs within an audit lay stress upon the recording and the bureaucracy of the process (the categorising of pupils) rather than on the essential purpose of aiding assessment, planning and teaching. By linking funding to certain stages, this sometimes had a negative impact on how, why and when IEPs were written and reviewed.
- 41 Many schools and LEAs were aware that IEPs are sometimes examined at the SEN tribunal hearings. There is, therefore, an assumption that IEPs are more than working documents. Thus schools were sensitive to the fact that even though IEPs are not legally required, there was a strong expectation that they would exist and be seen as publicly available.

Bromley Primary School, Dudley **One school's way of responding to IEPs.**

The SENCO at this school, where there is also a 60-place nursery, a resource base for 10 pupils with moderate learning difficulties and a 20-place pre-school assessment unit, had become very skilful in learning how to incorporate in Stage 3 IEPs the contributions from numerous external professionals.

The school received contributions from support teachers for hearing and visually impaired children, the educational psychologist specialising in pre-school assessment and the very detailed reports from the LEA's co-ordinator for speech and language.

The SENCO brings these all together, ensures that staff and parents are informed and also that the IEPs are reviewed.

The IEP was the link between all the different and essential contributions that assist the assessment and teaching of the pupils with special educational needs.

With 51 extensive IEPs in the school and 4 in the unit, it was a major task to be update and review each term. The SENCO chooses to use her time to produce and review the IEPs alongside the teacher because of the need to relieve hard-pressed teachers with large classes and numerous curriculum and administrative responsibilities.

Conclusion

42 To be useful, IEPs should be part of a school's assessment and recording policy and be seen as fundamental to teachers' planning. Schools that created a climate for addressing the individual learning needs of all pupils found it easiest to implement IEPs. Likewise, effective parental consultation in relation to pupils with special educational needs was most likely to occur where schools had given priority to generally developing consultation with parents of all pupils through parents' evenings and formal review opportunities.

43 The four most common weaknesses in IEPs were:-

- imprecise terminology (with the frequent use of phrases such as "improved reading", "increased confidence", "improved self-esteem", etc);

- failure to indicate which teachers and subjects would be involved;
- lack of pupil involvement;
- failure to link them with other areas of assessment and recording procedures in the school.

44 The five most frequent strengths in IEPs were that they:-

- were based on sound knowledge of the child;
- took account of the pupils' strengths and interests;
- stated realistic time scales;
- were linked to resources in school;
- involved parents at some stage (either in their setting and/or review).

5 IEPs and Nursery and Early Years Education

45 IEPs were often based on play-plans, which were a regular feature of early years provision. These were usually linked to the assessment process and the emphasis was often on the development of language and communication, social development and physical development. Pupils with IEPs were very often those where there were medical concerns and complex learning and behavioural difficulties.

46 The IEPs took account of the fact that most pupils were part-time and were likely to be implemented by a wide-range of adults; they were often delivered through a key-worker system. IEPs were seen as being particularly helpful for LSAs and volunteers as they offered a structure and a focus for such staff in their work with the children. The effective use of IEPs also contributed significantly to the assessment of pupils' progress.

47 Many of the IEP formats incorporated additional advice from external support staff, such as specialist teachers for visually and hearing impaired pupils, and speech and language therapists, as part of their recommended programme of activities. LEA formats were seldom used, as other systems were often well established prior to the introduction of the Code of Practice. Often IEP targets were displayed in the classrooms as a reminder to staff. In some cases they were made available imaginatively, such as in the nursery where needs were written on to place mats to ensure a consistent approach at lunchtime. For example, "Adam should use a spoon". In some such cases targets were being reviewed as frequently as weekly.

48 Some staff had adapted their IEPs to be linked to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's Desirable Learning Outcomes. This had been challenging as the six areas of learning did not link naturally into the IEP format and targets had to be set for relevant areas. Where staff in pre-school provision had been successful in linking IEPs to the Desirable Learning Outcomes the pupils made significant gains in their learning.

49 IEPs are assisting staff plan on a daily basis for the inclusion of pupils with severe learning difficulties alongside their peers in nursery class.

An example of a simple IEP for a child with severe learning difficulties from a nursery in Tunstall.

Three targets for one nursery pupil:

- *to maintain eye contact for 20 seconds;*
- *to sit down when asked;*
- *to concentrate on a story with adult support for two minutes.*

The targets were the focus of the teaching several times each day.

50 Keeping records in nurseries presented particular problems because of the large number of children entering and leaving the setting each year, but in most nurseries suitable strategies had been developed. Parents usually had a copy of the IEP, but because of staff concerns that some parents might over-work their child in the evening, or become over-zealous about the IEP, specific activities were often designated for parents to be carried out at home, separate from those identified for class times.

51 Nursery planning meetings and reviews were frequent. Staff often benefited from being Portage workers in addition to their role in the early years setting. The particular Portage approach and its specific training had helped them to negotiate with parents the next step in their child's development, along with the expectation that planning and training would also be required.

Park Nursery School An IEP in operation

Over a 24-month period IEPs reflected the demanding targets set for this child with profound and multiple learning difficulties and the substantial progress he had made. The pupil has a complex syndrome that at three years left him unable to sit or control his head movements.

Targets at this time were for tactile experience – touching sand or modelling clay, or to track a sound or a beam of light.

At four years the targets were becoming sharply focused on developing skills – to stand in a standing frame, to use a touch screen and to acknowledge other children.

At five years the targets were to increase vocabulary from 3 to 12 words, to walk 8 steps unaided, to use armbands in hydrotherapy without adult support, to progress to the next level of software on the touch screen.

The IEPs and reviews reflected this significant progress.

52 In voluntary pre-school groups the implementation of the Code of Practice had not been so rapid. Some did not have sufficient regard to the SEN Code of Practice; often no member of staff was identified as the SENCO and there was no effective SEN policy. In part this was due to confusion with the targets in

the desirable outcomes document. The setting of specific short-term targets for the IEP was often confused with achieving the desirable outcomes, and inappropriate targets were sometimes set. The development of IEPs had been slower in these pre-school groups than in nursery schools and classes. This is probably due to the very limited staff development opportunities generally provided.

53 Good practice in pre-school opportunity groups was most evident where there were greater numbers of children with special educational needs, and where there was multi-professional involvement.

6 IEPs and Primary Schools

- 54 In most primary schools IEPs were written following a discussion between the staff and the parents prior to the child being placed on the SEN register. Often primary schools used assembly and story-time to release teachers to review the documentation and arrangements for IEPs, either in respect of individual pupils or a whole class. In other situations teachers met with the SENCO to review and write IEPs.

Two primary schools with different arrangements

In one school (Marlbrook, Herefordshire), there was always one staff meeting per term for staff to write their IEPs together with the SENCO acting as consultant.

In contrast, in another school (Headlands, York), teachers were allocated a specific time per term for re-writing IEPs.

Edgar Stammers Infant School, Walsall

An example of an imaginative IEP to help two boys with emotional child behavioural problems.

For two mornings each week a voluntary male outreach worker from a neighbouring church assisted the two boys in English and mathematics lessons. In the afternoon he assisted with a PSE programme planned by the boys' class teacher and the SENCO.

The most interesting aspect of the programme was how the outreach worker assisted at dinnertime (a potential troublesome time) working with four pupils including the two boys to build a model from a construction kit.

This was all linked to monitoring arrangements, targets to be achieved and a reward that the completed model would be shown to all staff and presented in assembly.

This IEP has both behaviour and learning targets.

- 55 Many schools were particularly sensitive to the fact that some of their parents had major reading difficulties themselves, or were, for a variety of reasons, not able or well placed to assist their children at home. In one primary school (Brampton, Cortonwood) all pupils had termly reviews. The emphasis on these occasions was the discussion with the parents and not the reading of a report.
- 56 Many primary schools admitted that the limited involvement of pupils in the formulation of their IEP targets was a weakness. Practice in this respect was sometimes better at the nursery and reception stage than for older pupils.

Greaseborough Primary School, Rotherham

Pupils had 15 minutes each morning to follow their own programme. For pupils with special educational needs this was a period for them to concentrate on the targets set in their IEP.

- 57 SENCOs in primary schools were more likely than those in secondary schools to participate in clusters and fora for in-service training (INSET). This was their main means of keeping in touch and reviewing their approaches. In a number of authorities it had become increasingly more valuable during the process of Local Government Reorganisation.
- 58 In best practice, primary schools identified specific areas of need within the IEPs, such as poor pencil skills, a difficulty in learning letter sounds or a pupil's inability to discuss books, and related these to particular planned outcomes.

Whale Hill Primary School, Redcar and Cleveland

At this school there were two types of IEPs in operation. One for Stage 1 (general) and one for Stage 1 (specific). Each used Code of Practice terminology in ways other than those commonly accepted. Action taken included short-term objective: aims, teacher methodology and differentiation. The teachers wrote them and followed them. They knew exactly what and why a child was doing something. These IEPs were useful and used, but they were not IEPs as described in the SEN Code of Practice.

To assist all the LEA's schools' SENCOs from primary, special and secondary schools and the SEN Inspector, Dudley LEA had pooled experiences and produced a helpful loose-leaf folder called "Individual Education Plans Revisited; managing the system and solving problem". This not only outlined the principles and purposes (as they saw them) behind IEPs, but also gave examples of labour-saving strategies and exemplars, different models, tips to help SENCOs with training school staff (including classroom assistants) and sets of problem-solving strategies. It was linked to other SEN publications by the LEA and to forthcoming teacher guides to assist teachers with reading, writing and spelling at Stage 1.

Bankside Primary School, Leeds

IEPs for Stages 1–5 were completed termly. Targets were well written and formed short-term objectives that could be clearly evaluated at the next review or earlier if necessary.

The IEP contained only one aim, which was broken-down into two/three targets within the aim.

The SENCOs met each teacher once a term for half a day (approximately one every week) to talk about all children on the register, evaluate results, and agree and write new targets. In addition there were informal meetings and reviews. Bilingual staff were involved in helping parents and teachers review progress. Targets were kept to the minimum and reflected their priority. Most pupils only had one target, but pupils at Stages 3 and 5 could have three.

The IEPs did not work in isolation. They were supported by a strong and effective behaviour policy, a social training programme and a school funded two-week holiday reading programme.

Bentley West Primary School, Walsall

This school had produced school guidelines for all staff to use when writing their IEPs. The school used more than one IEP format but all had shared criteria, ie, 'target date', 'who monitors', etc. Choice depended on the suitability for the child. Target dates could also vary, for example, some needed to be set half-termly or even weekly. Sensible advice was given about setting realistic targets and the audience for the IEPs. The SENCO was a full-time teacher with only a small amount of non-contact time every fortnight. She was able to offer suggestions and co-ordinate, but all IEPs at both stages were the responsibility of teachers. The teachers incorporated advice from external agencies (if it had been provided) and they contacted and undertook a review with parents. They also had the use of classroom support.

7 IEPs and Secondary Schools

- 59 IEP arrangements in secondary schools were very much influenced by whether setting or banding existed or whether classes were mixed ability. Organisational factors such as the department or faculty structure also had a bearing on their use. SENCOs had to operate within these structures even though they often considered that they were limiting for pupils with special educational needs.
- 60 In most secondary schools, each faculty or department nominated an SEN liaison or link person but the potential of this arrangement was often underdeveloped because of limited time for the link-person and insufficient involvement by senior staff.

In one school in East Riding, South Holderness, the responsibility for all SEN pupils was delegated to the heads of faculty. As a result, the head of faculty maintained the SEN IEP file provided by the SENCO for all pupils in the faculty office. The head of one faculty made sure all staff noted aspects of IEPs in their mark books to remind them daily.

- 61 The delegation of responsibility was very much in the spirit of the Code of Practice but this came on top of considerable subject responsibilities for most teachers. In addition, teachers often had little or no experience or INSET in a range of SEN aspects. When responsibility for IEPs was passed to a faculty or department then provision sometimes became very varied, even in a school where the IEPs were prepared centrally by the head of faculty.

The Castle Secondary School, Dudley

This school had an SEN liaison group which met every half term (the dates of which were entered on the school's calendar). The group was made up of a representative of each curriculum area and one of its purposes was to be the main communication link between the SENCO and all curriculum areas.

The SENCO attended all curriculum team and pastoral team meetings as well as the school's strategy group, INSET committee and language-working group. Details were fed back to the learning support department meetings, which took place every two weeks for one hour.

All team members attended the SEN liaison group meetings. The group had an identified aim and specific objectives which included exploring teaching strategies and developing each curriculum area's response to the SEN Code of Practice.

Hartford High School, Cheshire

This school arranged for an annual head of department report from the learning development and support team which detailed individual pupil progress. Individual educational plans were produced for some pupils in all NC subjects and RE.

In addition, the school's senior management team had reported in detail on the department. An extensive document included judgements based on classroom observation, a review of staffing, resources and accommodation, an examination of record keeping, IEPs and liaison as well as comments on their support for other departments in the school.

- 62 Many secondary schools found it difficult to achieve a consistent approach in the construction and use of IEPs across a large staff. Some secondary school SENCOs asked all teachers who taught a particular child to record the pupil's problems. A list of potentially successful strategies was then prepared to guide the teachers' management of the pupil – the main purpose being to ensure a consistent approach by all those teaching the pupil. These sometimes proved to be too demanding for teachers, and occasionally they were simply ignored. In other schools the SENCO produced an IEP for use across the school. Although there were instances where these were very effective, they were not always successful if they were too specific for subject teachers to implement. Some subject-specific IEPs were effective in pinpointing particular pupil needs to be addressed by identified teachers. In a few schools there was an expectation that all teachers would attempt to implement one or two IEP targets for all pupils on the SEN register. Generic IEPs were more likely to be delivered when pupils were regularly taught by the SEN department (learning support) staff, whether by teachers or by LSAs. The use and effectiveness of IEPs in secondary schools were very much determined by the way the SEN department and SENCO operated.
63. Some of the schools' reports to parents were of poor quality. A few schools had addressed this issue by attempting to improve the contributions of subject teachers to pupils' annual reviews of statements or to the reviews of IEPs. Many reports, however, did not give details of a pupil's levels of attainment or provide specific information about what the pupil knew, understood and could do. The reports often gave

more information about a pupil's attitude, willingness to work and interest in the subject. Although important, these are only part of the information teachers and parents need in order to make decisions about a pupil's future education.

Park Hall Secondary School, Solihull LEA

An example of a secondary-school response to IEPs

Pupils : 11–18

Ten pupils with statements.

Pupils had been identified for Stages 1 and 2 on the basis of reading ages and test results.

IEPs were subject orientated.

The school banded for English, mathematics, science, history, and geography.

The school received funding for SEN as part of the addition to LMS formula for SEN, ie, the Learning Difficulty Factor. This funded smaller groups with SEN pupils.

Within each designated faculty there was an SEN link co-ordinator who had SEN teaching responsibility and also produced and distributed Stage 2 IEPs. These had to be reviewed every half term.

The designated faculties were English, mathematics and science. Pupils had IEPs for these subjects. Within other faculties the SEN-subject specialist had a different role.

The school (ie, the deputy headteacher, who acted as SENCO) held the formal register which was supplemented by faculty SEN registers. This indicated responsibility and acknowledged that pupils could experience learning difficulties in some subjects but not others. Pupils were placed at Stage 1 or 2 within their faculty.

The link with parents was through comments in the pupil's exercise book/folder (which was the school's main system of communication with parents).

Copies of IEPs were sent to the SENCO.

The key to this arrangement was that each faculty and individual staff took full responsibility for meeting the learning needs of identified pupils.

This was supported by the SEN Steering Group which indicated the SENCO and the SEN link co-ordinator from each of the faculties.

The IEP for Stage 3 was completed by the SENCO in collaboration with the learning support teacher funded from the LEA's additional funds (the Learning Difficulty Factor)

This was supported by an SEN Handbook and a separate policy for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

There was also a climate for whole-school and NC year targets.

The school could account for how it spent its Learning Difficulty Factor money.

Difficulties

There were in-service needs for all teachers.

Different faculties could have different expectations and criteria.

Can all of this reasonably be incorporated within a DHT's remit in a very large secondary school?

There was a need to ensure that both the school's and the faculty's SEN registers match.

Dayncourt Secondary School

SENCOs from feeder schools were working with the secondary school SENCO (all from the same family of schools) to establish a common referral form so that criteria for special educational needs were consistent across all schools. Provision in different schools dictated how pupils' needs were met at different stages.

This was planned to help Year 7 to slot into secondary school stages.

- 64 Most secondary schools had a system for obtaining information on pupils with special educational needs from their feeder primary schools. This enabled them to review such pupils early, usually in Year 7, and where appropriate to reduce numbers on the SEN register.
- 65 There were signs that liaison between phases was improving as both primary and secondary schools became more confident in their use of the SEN Code of Practice. SEN registers and IEPs were becoming part of the primary school data that were routinely transferred to secondary schools. Transfer of names and details of stages were more frequent than the actual transfer of IEPs, although some SENCOs inspected a primary school's IEPs (especially at Stage 3) when they visited the schools during the summer term.

Dayncourt Secondary School

Revised the SEN register twice a year, though IEPs held by the SENCO would be changed annually. IEPs held by subject teachers were revised every term.

Total population: 900 (11–18)

<i>SEN register: 120</i>	<i>Stage 1</i>	<i>58</i>
	<i>Stage 2</i>	<i>41</i>
	<i>Stage 3</i>	<i>19</i>
	<i>Stage 5</i>	<i>2</i>

8 Other Issues

Role of learning support assistants

- 66** There was an increasing use of Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) to support pupils at Stages 3 and 5 funded through additional LEA money, but also at Stage 2 funded by the school itself as part of its SEN policy. While the LSAs' assistance is much valued by schools, they were not always well deployed. This was sometimes related to the fact that they were employed on a temporary or short-term basis and as a result had not received appropriate in-service training.
- 67** Although LSAs had become eligible for training supported by the Standards Fund (formerly GEST) it was not always available or was not seen as a priority by some schools. Some LSAs had received an induction course within the school and were increasingly undergoing in-service training, again this was often within the school. However, many expressed the view that they would like more. Sometimes the INSET provided by outside agencies had been more suitable for residential care staff than for LSAs.
- 68** Often, of all a school's staff, LSAs had most contact with individual pupils with special educational needs across a range of subjects, in both primary and secondary schools. They also provided a conduit for information to SENCOs and vice versa. They were increasingly being involved in the IEP reviews and also in the annual reviews of statements.
- 69** LSAs appointed for Stage 5 pupils were often also used by the schools creatively to assist pupils at Stages 2 and 3. They were a valuable extra resource for a school, especially where there was little or no external input for pupils at Stage 3. In many schools the implementation of the IEPs was essentially the responsibility of the LSAs. Many had the responsibility of recording pupil progress. As a result much of the input into the review procedure was coming from the LSAs. Apart from those employed by the schools themselves, many LSAs were employed by the LEA and were part of an external support service, for example, for pupils with sensory or physical impairment.
- 70** SENCOs were generally very positive about the contribution made by LSAs but regretted that so many were on short-term contracts which sometimes resulted in disrupted experiences for pupils.

Group IEPs

- 71** Many LEAs and commentators considered group IEPs a contradiction in terminology. Necessity and reality, however, had resulted in a number of practitioners identifying the same learning targets for groups of pupils with similar educational needs and formulating these as group IEPs.
- 72** In several schools, group IEPs had been devised and were in use for some pupils. A programme of activities usually related to a common set of worksheets or textbooks had been prepared for all pupils in the group. The group had either been identified as a result of the school's setting or banding arrangement or on an informal basis within the class. Some teachers noted that, while the IEP targets might be the same, the time-span for achieving them would often vary for individual pupils. Group IEPs were more likely to occur in schools where streaming was the norm and/or in subjects where setting operated.
- 73** Most group IEPs were literacy based, although some had a numeracy focus. They had generally been prepared in response to a school's acknowledgement of poor literacy skills amongst a significant number of pupils. This was especially so for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils in primary schools and for Year 7 pupils in secondary schools.
- 74** In some cases a school or group of schools had an SEN database with a bank of IEP targets and strategies. Usually, these were in a form that could be amended easily or were linked to certain approaches to reading or a particular commercial mathematics scheme.
- 75** Group IEPs were seen by some schools to be useful. They were often, however, a Stage 1 arrangement. The issue is raised as to whether in such cases a review of the teaching of the whole class or year group should be considered. In future, a school's literacy action plan, as part of the National Literacy Strategy, will need to indicate how individual programmes will dovetail with class or group arrangements. It seems likely that the targets set for the guided group tasks within the Literacy Hour will replace or be the same as the existing group IEP targets.
- 76** If this guided group task for a group of pupils with special educational needs is recorded on the termly planning sheet as, "teacher assesses and records

current level of phonic skills; completes a reading target for each child, followed by handwriting activity closely linked to phonic work", (for example, from the Strategy's training materials), then this is likely to be reflected in both group and individual IEPs and become the major focus.

Marlbrook Primary School, Hereford

An example of use of group IEPs

Literacy was seen as the major SEN concern. Forty pupils had IEPs and they were delivered through the small group English lessons taken by the part-time SENCO.

OFSTED inspections and IEPs

77 Page 23 of the OFSTED *Handbook for Inspection* provides a list of additional information to be made available by the school during the inspection, ie, "any individual education plans".³

The specific requirements in respect of IEPs are as follows:-

- inspectors are required to judge levels of attainment and progress for pupils with special educational needs. The guidance states that, "detailed information on the prior attainment, targets for improvement and progress made, can be gained from individual education plans, statements and annual reviews" (page 57);
- in looking to see whether assessments inform teaching, "particular attention should be paid to how assessment of the work of pupils with special educational needs relates to targets set in individual education plans" (page 71);

- when examining whether the curriculum requirements are met for pupils with special educational needs inspectors need to look at, "the learning objectives in IEPs" (page 77);
- there is a reference to IEPs possibly including, "objectives relating to behaviour" (pages 89 and 106–107) under the SEN section, the monitoring of pupils' progress in relation to annual reviews and IEPs (page 89).

78 References to IEPs in the sections on Attainment and Progress (page 55) and Teaching (page 69) in the *Handbook* are based on the assumption that pupils at Stage 5 will have an IEP (but see also paragraphs 10 and 14 above). The *Proposals for a Differentiated System of School Inspection* (OFSTED, November 1998) suggested that short inspections of special schools should focus, "on the progress pupils make in relation to their annual reviews and individual education plans" (page 5).

79 It is clear, therefore, that OFSTED considers IEPs to be of considerable significance, and anticipates that they will play a strategic role in schools. This survey suggests that IEPs did not always meet this high expectation and that even schools with effective SEN practices sometimes made limited use of IEPs. The IEP is probably seen as the most important and viable component of a school's SEN policy by many inspectors. The emphasis in the *Framework for Inspection of Schools* appears to have contributed to some schools mechanically producing IEPs for the purposes of inspection with no planned reviews and no mechanism for their subsequent maintenance.

³ References are to *The OFSTED Handbook – Guidance on the Inspection of nursery and primary schools*, 1995, HMSO. ISBN 0–11–3500 66–1. The *Guidance on the Inspection of Secondary Schools* is very similar but has guidance relevant for that phase of education.

9 Guidance for the Future

- 80** The proposed revision of the Code of Practice should address the question of the purpose and function of IEPs, including the link between the plan and the SEN register, and whether there is an expectation that pupils at Stage 5 will have an IEP. Greater clarification is needed on what should be the basic content of IEPs, pinpointing what staff need to know about each pupil with special educational needs and what needs to be done to help the pupil to make progress towards stated educational goals. Guidance is also needed on the relationship of the IEP to the overall plan for the pupil's curriculum. In essence, however, in order to be effective the IEP should contain a summary of a few short-term targets focused on the provision and use of any additional resources allocated to pupils with special educational needs.
- 81** Governors and senior management teams need to examine the role of IEPs within the school's overall assessment and recording arrangements. In particular, with the introduction of the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies, staff need to be clear as to how IEPs will relate to the school's literacy and numeracy action plans and the setting of literacy and numeracy targets. In primary and special schools the planning of the Literacy Hour (and its numeracy equivalent) for pupils with special educational needs will need to be dovetailed with any other remedial strategies being used, so as to ensure consistency and continuity of approaches.
- 82** The implications of implementing both the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies will need to be reflected within the proposed revision of the SEN Code of Practice.
- 83** Providers of pre-school education will need to arrange additional staff training for all adults to ensure the requirements of the Code of Practice are met.
- 84** The involvement of pupils in the planning, implementation and reviewing of their IEPs will need to be reviewed. Greater emphasis or guidance may be required in the revised Code of Practice.
- 85** A school's Learning Support (SEN) team can play an important part in disseminating good practice in secondary schools. Meetings of staff with Learning Support teams need to be better planned and opportunities created for individuals to feed back and implement ideas in their own departments or faculties.
- 86** IEPs that contain targets of work which can be frequently practised and reinforced are often the ones that are easiest for teachers to remember and therefore to implement.
- 87** Learning support assistants need to be suitably trained, supported and monitored if they are to be increasingly used to deliver IEPs. More training opportunities are needed – preferably, as far as LSAs are concerned, opportunities that offer the possibility of accreditation.
- 88** The format of the IEP should link into the school's arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting on pupil progress and not stand alone. This should be reflected in schools' policies for special educational needs and assessment. This has implications for any guidance concerned with the format of IEPs.
- 89** IEPs do not always require revision after a fixed period of time. They should be seen as needing to be "kept under review". In some schools, or for some pupils, even termly review is neither necessary nor possible.
- 90** While the inclusion of IEPs in a school's portfolio of evidence for Stage 4 formal assessment is appropriate, it is important that this does not become their main justification at Stage 3.
- 91** The DfEE has a commitment to reducing the bureaucratic burden on teachers (Circular 2/98). The evidence from this and previous HMI surveys is that the format of the IEP is only part of what teachers describe as burdensome; the number of IEPs that need to be produced and reviewed for many secondary schools and some primary schools constitutes a very significant burden for many teachers.

10 Conclusion

- 92 IEPs are most likely to be effective when they operate within a culture of effective and detailed educational planning. They are unlikely to be effective if they are not part of the school's overall arrangements for assessment and recording.
- 93 The principal purpose of an IEP is to clarify what is to be done in the immediate short-term to help the

pupil and staff to enable the pupil to make progress. Subsequently, they may be used within LEA procedures to substantiate documentation for statutory assessment at Stage 4 or for moderation and audit purposes, but their key role should be to assist staff and pupils to identify and work towards achieving key learning targets.

Appendix

Schools visited

First Steps Nursery	Bath and NE Somerset	2–5
Strong Close Nursery	Bradford	3–5
Beckfoot Grammar	Bradford	13–18
Caverstede	Cambridgeshire	3–5
Shirley	Cambridgeshire	3–7
Tunstall	Croydon	3–5
Bromley	Dudley	4–11
Castle	Dudley	11–18
South Holderness College	East Riding	11–18
Sacred Heart	Hammersmith and Fulham	11–16
High Tunstall	Hartlepool	11–16
Marden	Herefordshire	5–11
Weobley High	Herefordshire	11–16
Wigmore High	Herefordshire	11–16
Gorsley Goffs	Herefordshire	5–11
Marlbrook	Herefordshire	5–11
Bankside	Leeds	3–11
Brigshaw High	Leeds	11–18
Park End Primary	Middlesborough	4–11
Berwick Hills Primary	Middlesborough	4–11
Brampton	Newham	3–11
Woodside	Newham	11–16
Notre Dame High	Norfolk	11–18
Thorpe St Andrews	Norfolk	11–16
Marshlands High	Norfolk	11–16
Helmsley	North Yorkshire	5–11
South Craven	North Yorkshire	11–19
Eastglade	Nottinghamshire	3–11
Rise Park Infants	Nottinghamshire	3–7
Dayncourt	Nottinghamshire	11–18
Nunthorpe	Redcar and Cleveland	11–16
Whale Hill	Redcar and Cleveland	3–11
Greasborough	Rotherham	5–11
Brampton Cortonwood	Rotherham	4–7
Park Nursery	Rutland	2–5
Park Hall	Solihull	11–18
Archbishop Grimshaw	Solihull	11–18
Sir Bernard Lovell	South Gloucestershire	11–18
Glenthorne	Sutton	11–18
Edgar Stanners Infants	Walsall	4–7
Bentley West	Walsall	3–11
Headlands	York	5–11
Westfield Junior	York	7–11