Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties

General guidelines

Foreword

This government is committed to excellence in education for all our children. This includes children with special educational needs. I know that schools share this vision. They too wish to see all their children succeed. I believe these guidelines will be a major step forward in helping teachers ensure that all pupils reach their full potential.

Most schools work with children across the full range of ability. They need to be able to set suitable learning challenges for all their pupils, including those with learning difficulties. However, there has not been the same range of materials available for these pupils as there is for pupils without learning difficulties. These guidelines will help remedy this situation. They do not stand alone but are supported by subject materials for each of the National Curriculum subjects and for religious education and personal, social and health education.

The guidelines have been developed through extensive consultation with teachers of pupils with learning difficulties. They include a framework to help teachers recognise achievement below level 1 of the National Curriculum. They draw on effective practice across a range of schools and can be used in mainstream and special primary and secondary schools, specialised units and independent schools. They also provide support to the range of services that work with these schools. The guidelines can be used with the school's own material, the National Curriculum and the frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics.

The guidelines build on earlier guidance and performance criteria published by DfEE and QCA, *Supporting the target setting process*, which introduced performance criteria with a common structure and language for schools to use when judging pupil performance. An updated version of that publication complements these guidelines.

My thanks go to all who helped in the development of these materials. I am convinced that they will be a welcome and valuable resource for schools and others involved in the education of children with learning difficulties.

Jacqui Smith
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for School Standards

Contents

Introduction

What are the purposes of these guidelines?

These guidelines support the planning, development and implementation of the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. They draw on effective practice across a range of schools and can be used in mainstream and special primary and secondary schools, specialised units and independent schools. They also provide support to the range of services that work with these schools.

The guidelines can be used with the school's own material, the National Curriculum and the frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics to:
- confirm the statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils and build on the principles of inclusion set out in the National Curriculum
- help schools develop an inclusive curriculum by:
  – setting suitable learning challenges
  – responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
  – including all learners by overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment
- provide a stimulus to revisit and revise existing schemes of work or a basis to develop new ones.

Who are the pupils?

The guidelines relate to all pupils aged between five and 16 who have learning difficulties, regardless of factors such as their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background or gender, or the extent of their other difficulties. This includes pupils who are unlikely to achieve above level 2 at key stage 4. (These pupils are usually described as having severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.) This also includes pupils with learning difficulties who may be working at age-related expectations in some subjects but are well below this in others. (These pupils, along with those with other significant difficulties, are often described as having moderate learning difficulties.)

Who are the guidelines for?

The guidelines support the work of a range of adults who are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. This includes class teachers, subject coordinators, special educational needs coordinators (SENCos), senior managers, teaching assistants, parents, carers, governors, therapists, Local Education Authority (LEA) and advisory support services, and professionals from health, social services and the voluntary sector. Throughout these materials, the term 'staff' is used to refer to all those concerned with the education of these pupils.

What is in the guidelines?

The guidelines contain:
- support on developing and planning the curriculum
- support on developing skills across the curriculum
- subject materials on planning and teaching and assessing each National Curriculum subject, religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. These include descriptions of pupils' attainment showing progress up to level 1 of the National Curriculum, which can be used to recognise attainment and structure teaching.

Determining the curriculum for your school

Determining a school curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties

This section explores the possibilities for schools to develop their school curriculum in ways which match their aims, meet the varied needs of their pupils and fulfil statutory requirements.

The curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties will provide for:

- the needs of all pupils that become priorities as they approach adulthood, *for example, aspects of PSHE, the key skills and thinking skills*
- the needs of particular groups of pupils, *for example, developing communication skills for pupils who have difficulties with conventional speaking and listening*
- the particular needs of individual pupils, *for example, physiotherapy or a specific programme in physical education*.[1]

Establishing the school's aims for the curriculum

The curriculum in all schools should be balanced, broadly based and aim to:

- provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve
- promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

These two aims are interdependent and reinforce each other. The personal development of pupils plays a significant part in their ability to learn and to achieve.

Each school is responsible for determining the curriculum so that provision carefully matches local and individual circumstances. Curriculum aims need to be agreed and shared by all members of the school staff, governors, parents, carers, other professionals and the pupils themselves. The aims and values in the revised National Curriculum provide a starting point for discussion. School communities will develop aims that build on the strengths of their pupils and reflect their specific needs. They should be involved in ongoing discussions, decision-making processes and review procedures so the school's curriculum aims respond to changing priorities.

For pupils with learning difficulties the school curriculum might aim to:

- enable pupils to interact and communicate with a wide range of people
- enable pupils to express preferences, communicate needs, make choices, make decisions and choose options that other people act on and respect
- promote self-advocacy or the use of a range of systems of supported advocacy
- prepare pupils for an adult life in which they have the greatest possible degree of autonomy and support them in having relationships with mutual respect and dependence on each other
- increase pupils' awareness and understanding of their environment and of the world

- encourage pupils to explore, to question and to challenge
- provide a wide range of learning experiences for pupils in each key stage suitable for their age.

Once agreed, the school aims will inform the development of curriculum plans, provide a focus for the work of the school and establish an essential reference point when reviewing curriculum provision.

Determining curriculum entitlements and priorities for learning

The following elements, which form shared entitlements for all pupils in various age groups, need to be represented in the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties:
- *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* for pupils in the first years of their education
- the general requirements in the revised National Curriculum and, in particular, the statement on inclusion which sets out requirements under three broad principles
- the full range of subjects of the National Curriculum, including citizenship at key stages 3 and 4 from 2002, religious education, sex and relationship education, other aspects of PSHE, and careers education, according to the relevant key stage
- provision which prepares pupils for adult life, with access to suitably accredited courses as they grow older.

In addition, all pupils should be provided with opportunities to acquire, develop, practise, apply and extend their skills in a range of contexts across the curriculum. These skills will also be relevant to life and learning outside and beyond the school. Such skills include:
- the key skills of communication (including literacy), application of number, information technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving
- thinking skills (including information processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking and evaluation).

The development of these skills is an important part of any curriculum. Opportunities for, and examples of, the development of these skills should be highlighted in curriculum planning across the whole range of subjects.

There are other important skills which individual pupils with learning difficulties may also need to develop. Guidance on these skills and their development across the curriculum can be found in the accompanying support material, *Developing skills*.

Providing for pupils' personal priority needs: the place of therapy

Many pupils with learning difficulties will have personal priority needs which are central to their learning and quality of life. Some pupils will have therapeutic needs or require paramedical care. The range of therapeutic needs and paramedical care is wide. Provision for these needs is a legitimate and essential element of the curriculum and should be planned for. This provision enhances individual pupils' readiness to learn in many ways, for example by:
- supporting the accurate identification and assessment of individual needs in language and communication

- positioning pupils so that they learn effectively
- helping pupils to maintain good posture, appropriate muscle tone and ease of movement, and encouraging the development, refinement or maintenance of skills in independent mobility
- helping pupils to manage eating and drinking
- promoting relaxation and support to help pupils manage stress and anxiety
- providing palliative treatments for painful or degenerative conditions to ensure pupils' health and well-being
- promoting pupils' autonomy and independence through the use of specialist aids and equipment
- developing pupils' self-esteem
- allowing pupils' behaviour and alternative ways of communicating to be acknowledged and understood.

Some forms of therapy, *for example, speech and language, occupational or physiotherapy*, may be necessary to maintain physical well-being or the development of basic learning, health or emotional needs. The nature and extent of the support required for individual pupils and the best ways of providing it need to be considered carefully. Some pupils may need regular and continuing help from a specialist, while for others it may be appropriate for the school to deliver a discrete programme under the guidance and supervision of a specialist. Support from health services is generally set out as non-educational provision in a pupil's statement. However, speech and language therapy may be regarded as either educational or non-educational provision. Further information on this is given in *SEN code of practice on the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs*.

The planned provision of paramedical care and therapies may be delivered by therapists working with schools or by school staff, pupils and their families. Therapists should be qualified and professionally accredited, belong to a professional association and work within an agreed and recognised code of practice or formal professional guidelines. Where all, or parts, of therapeutic programmes are carried out by non-therapists, therapists should:
- provide advice and training for staff, pupils and families on the techniques and approaches to be used
- monitor the quality of the work and provide appropriate and effective support
- ensure that time is set aside for these elements
- ensure programmes are supported by clearly documented policies.

Music, art, drama or movement therapy may play a complementary role in the curriculum for individual pupils and will need to be planned as part of the whole curriculum. Use of specialist environments, *such as warm water pools or light and sound stimulation rooms*, may also be written into the school timetable as group lessons shared by a number of pupils with similar needs. These programmes must include objectives to determine the focus of therapy for individual pupils.

Schools should be cautious about the possibility of their pupils being put at risk through the incorrect application of unproven therapeutic methods. Some staff may be trained in therapeutic approaches *such as relaxation techniques or aromatic massage* and may use them to improve individual pupils' readiness to learn. Although such activities are intended to be therapeutic and can play an important role in the curriculum for some pupils, they are not therapies in the same way as those which have been validated through qualifications and empirical evidence. All procedures should be non-invasive and negotiated with pupils although, under some circumstances, they may not enjoy procedures which may be in their long-term interests.

Making the most of others when determining the curriculum

Visiting professionals, support staff, parents, carers and the family, and specialists from other schools, all have a significant part to play in determining the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. To make the most of their contribution, they need to be involved when establishing the curriculum aims and determining the key curriculum components.

The contribution of visiting professionals

Schools may work with visiting professionals, such as therapists, advisory teachers of the visually impaired and hearing impaired, social workers and educational psychologists. Many schools have planned effective joint working practices which are helped and encouraged by:

- active support from members of the senior management team
- time for regular, formal and informal discussions
- joint planning, problem solving and decision making
- an understanding of, and respect for, the roles and goals of other professionals
- the use of a common, easily understood language
- in-service training in team work.[2]

The role of support staff

All support staff can add to, and support, the curriculum so long as joint working practices help the exchange of information and the discussion of learning opportunities and provide ways to review pupils' progress.

Staff training

One special school shows the importance of a consistency of approach for all members of staff by providing several hours of training for midday supervisors and volunteers throughout the year. During these sessions, staff are trained in eating programmes, playground games, first aid, signing, child protection issues and handling and lifting techniques.

Teaching assistants may be employed on a full-time, part-time or sessional basis. They may work with individual pupils, several pupils or a whole class or department. Teaching assistants in all settings can work with the teacher to help pupils' learning by having:

- a clearly defined role in the classroom
- time to share the planning of lessons and to report afterwards
- adequate resources (including relevant training and information)
- the importance of their role in the staff team recognised.[3]

These case studies from mainstream schools show the importance of recognising teaching assistants' in-depth knowledge of the needs of their pupils. The teaching assistants in these case studies see their role as providing individual support but also as helping interaction between pupils and between pupils and staff.

Sam

Sam is in year 6. His severe difficulties in learning and his physical disabilities mean that he requires help in most areas of the curriculum from a teaching assistant who works with his teachers. In some subjects, the teaching assistant works with a group of children, including Sam. In PE, Sam needs specific support. He uses a rolator to help him to stand with the other pupils while the aims of the PE lesson, using large apparatus, are explained to the class. The teaching assistant stands away from the group and, as the pupils begin to work on the apparatus, she approaches Sam. Together they discuss where, how and what he would like to work on. They reach an agreement and the teaching assistant helps him to position himself on the edge of the apparatus. With encouragement and physical support, Sam pulls himself over the stand and on to a bench, and edges along on his front. The teaching assistant decides that he needs her to be close to him and constantly reassures him until he has completed the task. Sam and his peers then discuss different ways of approaching the task.

Olive

Olive attends a special school and spends one day a week in a mainstream school. One of her integrated lessons is in art and design, where she works with a class of pupils, most of whom are on the key stage 3 programme of study. The class is making a study of the Surrealists and each pupil has chosen a painting as a starting point for the work. Olive has selected a painting by René Magritte, of a room with clouds coming through the door. The teaching assistant is concerned that Olive does not understand why these images, which do not seem to fit together, are placed beside each other in the painting. The teaching assistant collects a tray of objects that Olive is able to match or pair in some way, and then encourages her to mismatch them in a way she finds amusing. The teaching assistant then helps Olive to make a flip-book of images that are cut in half, then reassembled in an unusual way. Later the teaching assistant helps Olive to talk to the class about her finished work and to display it. At the end of the lesson, the teaching assistant records what has happened and shares the information with the teacher.

The contribution of the family

The views of the families of pupils with learning difficulties should be taken into account in all aspects of the curriculum, including assessment and reporting, in line with the DfEE *SEN code of practice*. QCA's *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* outlines features of effective practice of working with families in the early years. These apply to every stage of the education of all pupils. Examples are:

- all parents and carers are made to feel welcome, valued and necessary by being able to work jointly with other parents, carers and staff
- the knowledge and expertise of parents, carers and other family members are used to support learning opportunities

- parents, carers and practitioners talk about and record information about the pupil's progress and achievements, for example, through meetings or making a book about the pupil.

Individual education plans (IEPs) should be devised, wherever possible, with the involvement of parents, carers and pupils. Some parents and carers support schools by working on the development of skills at home. The families of pupils with learning difficulties, in particular, may require consistent emotional and practical support from schools.

Working with staff in other schools

Curriculum development and planning for pupils with learning difficulties can be greatly improved when colleagues working in special and mainstream settings work together. Staff in both settings have particular skills, understanding and expertise which should be valued and shared. Many schools have developed ways of:

- encouraging staff to talk about curriculum issues, *for example, sharing ideas about good practice, resources and ways of delivering particular subjects*
- promoting new ways of allowing staff to work together, *for example, joint planning*
- ensuring pupils and staff work together, *for example, team teaching, peer coaching, critical friendships*
- helping staff to support, advise, guide and provide opportunities for training in all settings and to develop approaches for individual pupils.

The sharing of expertise in such ways allows schools to work together on the development of an inclusive curriculum that fully supports pupils with learning difficulties working in a range of settings.[4]

Planning the curriculum

The three principles in the National Curriculum inclusion statement provide a starting point when planning the school curriculum. These set out the opportunities and requirements schools need to consider when deciding the different components, resources and support necessary to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties.

Allocating time and curriculum components

There are no nationally specified times for particular subjects. It is for schools to determine, and justify, the amount of time allocated to different parts of their curriculum over the course of a week, a term, a year or a key stage. When doing so, they should take account of:

- their own school aims
- the needs of the pupils attending the school (which will change as they progress and grow older)
- the requirement to provide a broad and balanced curriculum (which includes the subjects of the National Curriculum and RE)
- the national frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics (which include the expectation of a daily dedicated literacy hour and daily mathematics lessons of 45 to 60 minutes)
- the needs of the local community.

Although the National Curriculum is specified in subjects, schools are not necessarily required to teach them separately. They can organise their curriculum in ways which provide opportunities for appropriate and relevant learning, have meaning for pupils, parents, carers and staff, and use resources to maximum effect.

Schools can build on their strengths to meet the needs of their pupils by emphasising particular parts of the curriculum or particular approaches for pupils at different stages of their education. It is essential, especially in all-age schools, to consider how the curriculum should be appropriately balanced for pupils working in each age group. At key stage 4, in line with the expectation that pupils will have more opportunities to determine some of their own learning, new areas of the curriculum may be introduced.

Schools need to be able to explain the thinking behind their curriculum and to demonstrate how they are meeting statutory requirements for all learners, taking account of variations to meet individual pupils' needs. The subject materials in these guidelines support schools in this process. Decisions and explanations about time allocations and the different components can be specified in:

- policy statements for the whole curriculum and for each subject or part of the curriculum
- statements about breadth and balance which show the characteristic profile of the curriculum in each key stage
- curriculum plans and schemes of work for pupils in each key stage
- class or group timetables
- IEPs.

Schools use a range of effective strategies for managing time and components. These include:

■ giving significant time to those parts of the curriculum which are priorities for their pupils, *for example, communication, physical development or PSHE*

■ varying the frequency of parts of the curriculum, *for example, schools allocate daily lessons to core aspects of the curriculum including the literacy hour and mathematics lesson, but allocate a weekly session to other important activities and a fortnightly class to foundation subjects*

■ teaching some foundation subjects in alternating blocks, *for example, history appears on the timetable in one term and geography in the following term*

■ teaching some parts of a subject in depth and treating other material with a lighter touch, *for example, schools emphasise personal, family and local history for pupils with complex needs in key stage 3, while introducing them to some of the contrasts between their own lives and those of people in medieval times*

■ emphasising aspects of the programmes of study that are essential for the needs of their pupils

■ identifying skills, *such as those developed in music and PE*, which require regular and frequent practice and teaching

■ recognising out-of-class time as contributing to aspects of learning that are important for pupils with learning difficulties, *for example, schools plan, record and monitor pupils' progress at mealtimes as part of the development of pupils' personal skills or to meet health needs*

■ integrating key parts of pupils' personal development in plans for subject-focused lessons, *for example, schools give time at the beginning and end of PE sessions to toileting, personal hygiene or dressing and undressing skills*

■ linking parts of some subjects in themes, *for example, schools can create a unit of work on transport that brings together science, history and design and technology*

■ providing periods of intensive study in some areas as an alternative to regular timetabled lessons, *for example, schools offer rich and varied experiences of another language and culture during a French or a Spanish week to pupils in key stages 3 or 4.*

Decisions about breadth, balance and time given to different components in the curriculum in each key stage need to be continually reviewed and revised. The decisions will be influenced by pupils' individual needs, drawing on their statements of special educational needs, the outcomes of their annual reviews and the priorities identified in their IEPs. Alterations need to be monitored regularly and adjusted to ensure each pupil's entitlement to receive a broad and balanced curriculum over time.

Curriculum plans

The subject materials in these guidelines support staff in drawing up curriculum plans for pupils with learning difficulties. When developing these plans, staff need to address aspects of the curriculum which are entitlements for all pupils and provide opportunities to learn which reflect the range of needs, interests and the past achievements of pupils in each age group.

Outcomes from curriculum planning include:

- policy statements which bring together strategic planning decisions for each area of the curriculum and show the balance between different parts of the curriculum in each key stage
- guidelines and practical advice for staff which help them teach each subject, offer notes about resources, management and the use of equipment and stress important points to consider when teaching
- long-term plans which indicate how content and skills in each key stage and programme of study are covered, identify when it is appropriate to use blocked units and continuing units, show links between subjects and build in progression, consolidation and diversification for pupils across units
- medium-term plans which define intended learning outcomes for units of work, provide information on teaching activities and resources and identify assessment and recording opportunities
- short-term plans which set out the detailed intentions of teaching and learning in the classroom, on a weekly basis.

Staff working with pupils with learning difficulties can develop and refine their own curriculum plans or use or adapt published schemes of work in relation to the full range of National Curriculum subjects. Not all published schemes are suitable and many need to be modified for work with pupils with learning difficulties. Where appropriate, reference is made to units in the DfEE/QCA schemes of work in the accompanying subject materials.

Planning for progression

Effective planning involves the careful and deliberate sequencing of curriculum content and experiences which build on previous learning and achievements to promote future learning. Long- and medium-term curriculum plans should provide for, and show progression from, age group to age group and within each of the four key stages. These plans will enable teachers to design and implement learning opportunities in their short-term planning which promote progress and achievement for all learners.

For pupils with learning difficulties, progression is not necessarily only movement up a hierarchical ladder of skills and knowledge. Lateral progression is also important.

Planning for progression for individuals or groups might focus on:	
skill development	where pupils are encouraged to gain new skills; to practise, maintain, combine, develop, refine, transfer or generalise existing skills; to reactivate skills gained previously, *for example, a pupil who has learned to work with numbers up to 10 by the end of key stage 3 may be taught to develop those skills in vocational activities in key stage 4 and post-16*
breadth of curricular content	in order that pupils' access to new knowledge and understanding is extended, *for example, teaching all pupils about the biological aspects of adolescence and adulthood at key stage 3*
a range of contexts for learning	in which pupils are offered a variety of activities, resources and environments appropriate to their age, interests and prior achievements, *for example, encouraging pupils to use their senses to explore events and environments beyond the specialist sensory room*
a variety of support equipment	to enable pupils to take control of their environment; to increase mobility; to develop and practise communication skills, *for example, pupils who have learned to make choices using a computer program might be offered greater autonomy by using a communication device to say what they want to do or to initiate interactions with others at key points in the school day*
a range of teaching methods	determined by pupils' individual strengths and learning styles at different stages of development, *for example, promoting increasing cooperation between pupils and a reduction in the need for staff support*
negotiated learning	where pupils are encouraged to take a greater part in the learning process, and in planning or measuring success, *for example, pupils help to make their record of achievement or progress file and select work they consider their best, as well as set personal goals*
application of skills, knowledge and understanding in new settings	where pupils are offered learning opportunities in specialist, mainstream and community environments, *for example, encouraging older pupils to apply their developing numeracy skills in community rather than classroom settings*
strategies for independence	where pupils are helped to move away from adult support and class-based activities towards autonomy and self-advocacy in the community to prepare for life beyond school, *for example, pupils in key stage 4 or post-16 provision might use arts or food technology facilities at the local sixth form or further education college and work with their fellow students in a vocational setting.*

In practice, all these will be linked. Planning can ensure that different forms of progression relate to and support one another, *for example, providing learning opportunities outside the pupils' familiar environments can help pupils apply skills in a range of contexts*.

Long- and medium-term planning

Long- and medium-term curriculum plans and the goals established at pupils' annual review meetings set out intentions for learning in terms of the key stage, a particular year and school terms. Long- and medium-term plans help to secure pupils' shared entitlement to breadth of experience. Staff may decide to adjust the balance in the curriculum and to focus on priority areas of learning by ensuring their planning accommodates group or individual plans.

Long- and medium-term plans may be developed for particular National Curriculum subjects and RE. They may also be needed for other areas of the curriculum which are important for all pupils, including:

- literacy, numeracy and communication skills (through time set aside for these important aspects of the curriculum as well as through cross-curricular applications)
- pupils' personal and social development (through courses of PSHE, sex and relationship education, citizenship, careers education and work-related learning).

Plans also need to make provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They should recognise that this takes place through acts of collective worship as well as through the ethos and the day-to-day life of the school community.

Individual education plans

Within the school curriculum, teachers will differentiate their approaches to meet the needs of different pupils. Strategies employed over and above this to enable individual pupils with special educational needs to make progress should be set out in IEPs. IEPs should include information about:

- the short-term targets for the pupil
- the teaching strategies to be used
- the provision to be put in place
- when the plan is to be reviewed
- the outcome of action taken.

IEPs should focus on three or four individual targets in key areas such as communication, literacy, numeracy and behaviour and social skills.

Individual support programmes

Schools will need to strike a balance between flexibility and consistency in their approach to time allocation to ensure that all the needs of pupils are met. In order to provide this time, some schools develop individual support programmes which take into account:

- pupils' support needs in terms of staffing, resources and equipment, *for example, mobility and communication aids*
- the management of medical and paramedical issues and personal care routines, *for example, epilepsy or difficulties with eating and drinking*
- ways of minimising the impact of sensory and physical impairments, *for example, the use of specialised lighting, positioning equipment appropriately*
- individual counselling and the management of difficult emotions and behaviour, *for example, helping pupils recognise what triggers outbursts and how to respond*
- continuing use of therapeutic treatments, *for example, intensive interaction*,[5] *hydrotherapy, horse riding*.

Effective individual support programmes build on pupils' understanding of their own support needs and the views and contributions of parents, carers, families and others. They will draw on, as appropriate, the expertise and involvement of a range of professionals from different agencies, including therapists, nursing staff, social workers and voluntary sector representatives. Individual support programmes can make a significant contribution to an effective curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties by ensuring that parts of therapeutic programmes are successfully integrated in classroom activities.

Jamie

Jamie, who is five, can sit on the floor unsupported and can move by shuffling on his bottom. He is nervous and lacks confidence in movement, a situation compounded by poor eyesight and a brittle bone condition. The physiotherapist has set priorities for Jamie's mobility which staff carry out in their daily teaching. He is being encouraged to stand with adult support. The physiotherapist has advised that, whenever possible, Jamie should be offered the opportunity to develop his standing skills.

The class is involved in a music lesson. Selecting each child's name in turn, the staff sing 'What shall we do with…' to the tune of 'The Drunken Sailor'. The pupils are encouraged to take part, for example, when the chorus is sung standing or moving round the room, by vocalising 'up' or raising their hands in the air. Jamie, who enjoys music, is sitting on a small wooden chair and taps the rhythm of the song on its arms. He observes each pupil's response in turn and, when his teacher kneels on the floor opposite him, he smiles in anticipation and is quite happy to have his arms supported. The group sing 'hooray and UP he rises' and Jamie is prompted to stand with adult support. He stands briefly without protest and then he lowers himself to a sitting position at the end of the chorus.

Other pupils, however, may also need ongoing, intensive work on aspects of their individual support programmes in timetabled sessions outside the classroom and in dedicated therapeutic environments.

Thomas

In contrast to Jamie, Thomas has some timetabled lessons in a distraction-free environment. Thomas is a year 4 pupil who has a hearing impairment. He uses some signing, mainly single words. He wears hearing aids and he is working to extend the amount of time he can concentrate on a task. The speech and language therapist, in consultation with his class teacher and the teacher for the hearing impaired, is working with Thomas for short regular sessions on a one-to-one basis in her therapy room. The aim is for Thomas to respond to a single sound over a wide range of frequencies. He needs to work in a quiet, distraction-free environment with favourable acoustics to ensure the best opportunity for success.

The therapist is encouraging Thomas to locate various sounds in her room. She uses a favourite activity, a helter skelter, in which he listens to the phrase 'ready, steady, go' and attempts to release a ball on hearing the word 'go'. She varies the volume and tone of her voice to establish the range. After several weeks, Thomas lets the ball go at the end of the phrase. His teacher encourages Thomas to use the skill in work in the classroom, using the same equipment.

Every three to four weeks, Thomas has a joint session with the therapist and the visiting teacher for the hearing impaired, in which they review his progress and set new targets. The therapist discusses Thomas's progress with the class teacher and staff, and advises them on the frequencies that Thomas can hear and on ways of maximising his attention to the task.

Short-term planning

The process of short-term planning supports teaching and learning on a week-by-week, day-by-day, lesson-by-lesson basis. Good-quality, medium-term curriculum plans, the short-term targets set in pupils' IEPs and the management plans detailed in individual support programmes will provide most of the information that staff need in order to prepare short-term plans for teaching.

To plan activities which include pupils with learning difficulties, staff need to:
- identify objectives, drawn from schemes of work, that promote access, participation and achievement for all pupils
- include targets from IEPs, probably set in terms of specific skills, in plans for subject-focused group activities
- take account of pupils' individual support needs
- share information and views about how pupils' interests, aptitudes and prior achievements should influence the content and progress of lessons.

Staff need to build on the inclusion statement in the National Curriculum handbooks to select, organise and use available environments and resources, and to match them carefully to lesson content and to priorities for learning for individual pupils. This enables staff and pupils to prepare efficiently and effectively for each session of the day and to provide for:
- changes of venue and movement to and from different locations for learning in and beyond the school
- the use of an appropriate range of equipment relating both to the purposes of subject-focused activity and the personal and learning needs of individual pupils
- consistency of support, where appropriate.

Staff also need to achieve an appropriate balance between the provision of familiar experiences and activities and the presentation of new challenges. Individual pupils or groups of pupils may, at different times, need to be motivated and stimulated by a wide range of experiences in a variety of contexts. For some pupils it may be necessary to provide frequent repetitions of the same experience in the same setting so that they begin to notice events and start to learn. Others may need to revisit and repeat similar experiences over an extended period to stimulate learning. A particular learning opportunity may remain relevant and important for pupils for many months or years, but its context may be modified according to the curriculum experiences provided and the motivation, current interest and age of the pupils.

Pupils learn at different rates and prefer experiences, activities and materials to be presented in different ways. Many pupils with learning difficulties may need to learn through specific sensory experiences, *for example, through visual, auditory or tactile stimuli*. Teaching needs to be responsive to these needs. As they make progress, some pupils may be encouraged to become aware of the ways in which they best learn.

For all pupils, the social, interpersonal and communicative aspects of working with others can enhance learning. Short-term planning can help staff to group pupils in a variety of ways matched to different purposes, and ensure that, over time, there is teaching:

- to the whole class
- to large cross-class groups
- in uniform sets
- in small mixed-ability or 'jigsaw' groups [6]
- in pairs
- in one-to-one staff–pupil settings.

Pupils can be introduced to the benefits of working together and of social interaction if experiences are carefully and progressively structured. So, for example, they might progress from working with a preferred and trusted member of staff to working alongside other pupils (in pairs and in small groups with other pupils with learning difficulties) to working with mainstream peers and in independent and cooperative groups.

Working with others

A mixed-ability class of pupils working at key stage 2 has just completed a series of literacy activities based on a favourite book. They now decide that they would like to make a wall frieze to illustrate part of the story. With staff support, they agree on the subject and the tasks they will do. These include preparing the background, painting, printing and using collage effects to make the animals, and writing the captions which form part of the story. The group decides that James, Bradley and Gemma should prepare the background and it is suggested that, with help, they will use their hands to mix and spread the paint. Keeva, Ryan, Jabir and Daniel will prepare the animals, trees and coconuts. This will involve printing with textured materials and 'found' objects such as the ends of cotton reels. They will mix paint together with oats and glue and use the result to create the elephant's skin. They will cut and stick crêpe paper to assemble the palm fronds. Abigail and Hang Wai can write their names unaided, so they will write the captions using symbols and including the ideas of the rest of the group.

Short-term planning also involves decisions about the most appropriate and effective teaching methods. Staff may decide to teach particular knowledge, skills and understanding to an individual pupil or a group of pupils in a variety of ways to provide effective learning opportunities for all pupils, as required by the inclusion statement in the National Curriculum. They may draw on a range of teaching approaches including:

- broad perspectives, *for example, behavioural or interactive*
- particular techniques, *for example, prompting, shaping or questioning*
- specific ways of working in the classroom, *for example, investigation, exploration, working together as a group or role play.*

In choosing specific and effective teaching methods, staff use their professional judgement to take into account:

- individual and group aptitudes, needs and characteristics
- the make-up of groups of pupils, *for example, age and number*
- how individual pupils prefer to learn, *for example, passive listening before a new experience*
- the intended outcomes of the planned learning experiences and activities, *for example, carrying out active investigations in science*
- the resources available, *for example, the physical environment, materials and staffing*
- the approaches which, in their experience, will best help them to relate and communicate with pupils.

Some aspects of certain subjects lend themselves to particular ways of working, *for example, scientific activities are often investigative, and design and technology often requires a problem-solving approach*. Most subjects may be approached in a variety of ways, *for example, storytelling can be used in science and discussion can support PE*.

Staff will find that particular teaching methods may be effective for certain pupils or groups of pupils. For some learners, consistency may be important. Generally, however, pupils should experience a variety of teaching methods and staff need to ensure balance across the range by providing experience of:

- recognisable contexts and interactions
- active, investigative learning
- watching and listening opportunities
- problem-solving challenges
- working with other pupils
- relevant use of information and communication technology (ICT).[7]

Recognising progress and achievement

Identifying pupils' needs

All staff, including therapists and educational psychologists, use a variety of assessment tools to identify the learning and support needs of pupils with learning difficulties. These may range from standardised tests to the use of equipment such as video which can be used, for example, to pinpoint subtle and specific events, or to find regular communicative behaviour or ways in which pupils control their environment.[8] Other devices, such as developmental checklists, suggest an order of skills that pupils might follow to make progress toward further stages of development. Although such checklists cannot accommodate each pupil's specific learning route for all curriculum areas, they can be a useful reference when used with detailed observation and assessment opportunities in the classroom. A variety of published frameworks for assessing pupils with more profound and complex learning difficulties is available. These indicate the current performance of an individual pupil and how progress may be made.[9]

Ways of identifying the starting points for learning from which progress can be measured are an essential feature of any assessment system. Conducted effectively, they involve and inform parents, carers and families, a range of professionals and the pupils themselves. Through such assessment, staff can gather information which helps to clarify pupils':

- existing levels of development, knowledge, skills and understanding, as well as their achievements, strengths and needs, in order to determine future priorities and targets
- priorities for learning which may be dealt with through IEP targets
- responses to teaching methods and plans, and how they prefer to learn
- use of resources including staff, situations, rooms and materials
- individual responses, including those that may indicate progress is taking place, whether planned and targeted or unexpected
- personal interests and motivation
- support needs to access and/or complete tasks
- therapeutic needs.

For pupils with a statement of special educational need, assessment is part of a continuous cycle, driving the annual review process and providing information to support the development and ongoing review of IEP targets.

Recognising progress

For all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, progress is about change and development. For most pupils with learning difficulties, achievements can be predicted and planned for and progress can be demonstrated in terms of increased knowledge, skills and understanding. Some may follow the same developmental pattern as their fellow pupils, but not necessarily at the same age or rate. Progress may be made in some areas of the curriculum but not in others. For some pupils, progress may be difficult to predict or idiosyncratic and may only be demonstrated in a certain environment with a specific person or materials.

Progress may be recognised when pupils with learning difficulties:

- develop ways to communicate from the use of concrete ways (body language and objects of reference) toward the abstract (pictures, symbols, print, signs, ICT and the spoken word)
- develop a range of responses to social interactions from defensiveness through resistance (for some pupils, a positive response) to tolerance; and from passive cooperation toward active participation with individuals, in groups and in wider social circumstances
- develop a range of responses to actions, events or experiences even if there is no clear progress in acquiring knowledge and skills
- demonstrate the same achievement on more than one occasion and under changing circumstances
- demonstrate an increase in knowledge and understanding about a subject
- demonstrate an ability to maintain, refine, generalise or combine skills over time and in a range of circumstances, situations and settings
- move from a dependence on secure and predictable routines toward a greater degree of autonomy shown by risk-taking and increased confidence
- demonstrate a reduced need for support, *for example, from another person, from technology, from individualised equipment*, in carrying out particular tasks
- develop a wider regular use of learning positions and learning environments, reducing the need to present activities in consistent and personalised ways
- show a reduction in the frequency or severity of behaviour that inhibits learning through more appropriate behaviour
- demonstrate an increased ability to cope, *for example, with frustration and failure, with new or challenging learning opportunities or situations*
- decide not to participate or to respond.

Many of these aspects of progress can be identified in the following examples of pupils developing their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Nadia

Nadia is a year 6 pupil whose learning difficulties are profound and compounded by visual impairment and physical disabilities. She is able to see very bright objects and those set against a contrasting background. She likes to explore materials and preferred items, using all her senses. She quickly falls asleep if she is not interested or bored. Nadia is learning to respond in two distinct ways: with laughter and hand-waving when she is enjoying the activity or the experience, with passivity or turning away when she is not.

She is encouraged to extend her range of responses and to develop clear, predictable signals for showing that she wants an activity to continue or to end. In this way it is hoped to further extend her regular use of responses and her ability to communicate.

Ailsa

Ailsa is a year 2 pupil in a mixed-ability class in a special school. She is learning in different contexts to show she wants an activity to start again or that she would like more. Staff observe that she is beginning to use these skills in a general way. At drinks time, for example, the pupils have a biscuit, and Ailsa is given a small piece of biscuit, which she eats. Initially, members of staff encouraged and shaped her request for 'more' by physically prompting her to tap the table. In response, she was immediately offered more. Recently, she has shown her understanding of the process by tapping the table (without being prompted) as soon as she has finished the biscuit. In addition, she has used this method in the soft play room to ask for an activity to be repeated. After a particular movement activity, a teaching assistant holds out a hand. With a smile and direct eye contact, Ailsa immediately taps it and the teaching assistant resumes the activity.

Wesley

Wesley is a year 11 pupil who is very sociable and eager to please. As a result, he enjoys the praise he receives when giving the appropriate answers. Wesley has no difficulty with predictable and familiar routines. He anticipates the correct response and receives praise. In less familiar activities, he will not accept that he can make a mistake so does not take part. During an English and communication lesson, the teacher introduced a quiz based on the television programme 'Who wants to be a millionaire?' Although it was a new activity, Wesley selected answers confidently from a selection of three. The staff agreed that using a game helped Wesley to relax and feel more confident in taking the risks that, in the past, he had feared. Following this, the teacher introduced games into a variety of activities, especially during plenary sessions. Wesley began to gain confidence in his own abilities and became more willing to volunteer a reply.

Govinda

Govinda is in a year 2, small, mixed-ability group of pupils with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. As part of the term's music project, the class is exploring and making sounds. Govinda is learning to work lying on his side on a resonance board which reinforces sound and vibrations. He is able to locate objects and to make sounds by pushing and banging percussion instruments and he shows a preference for certain instruments and sounds. For some of his time in school he sits in a specially adapted chair that supports his upper body and enables him to practise holding up his head. He is placed in the chair for part of the music lessons and his favourite sound maker, a switch-activated drum, is placed on a stand on his tray. As a result, he is motivated to keep his head up while playing the drum.

Adam

Adam is in year 9. He has severe difficulties in learning and complex communication problems as a result of an autistic spectrum disorder. He needs the support of clearly defined routines and becomes extremely distressed if they are not in place. To reduce his stress levels and to help him to arrive at school better prepared for learning, he is involved in the preparation of his daily timetable. He is motivated by ICT and at the end of each day, he accesses the computer, where he types in and prints out the following day's timetable. He places one copy in his bag to take home and the other on the wall in his timetable space. He is then aware of and prepared for what is to come and he can also play a computer game before he goes home.

Not all pupils will make progress, however. Staff will recognise that, because of their learning difficulties, some pupils may reach a plateau in their achievements, or regress. This is usually temporary, but sometimes can be lengthy or permanent. In such cases, pupils' recorded attainments, or achievements previously predicted by staff, may decline. A slowing of the rate of regression, shown by skills or capabilities being maintained or reactivated, is then a form of progress.

Assessment for learning and record keeping

Effective assessment and record keeping can be supported by:

- specifying time for observation in a unit of work
- targeting specific pupils for observation and recording in particular lessons, ensuring that all learners are assessed in all subjects over time
- giving responsibility for observation and record keeping to named members of staff in specified lessons
- involving pupils in assessment and recording processes.[10]

Working like this means that assessment, record keeping and acknowledging progress and achievement become an integral part of teaching and learning for all pupils. Some pupils may monitor and analyse their own strengths and weaknesses; others may indicate their preferences within and between activities, some with help from advocates.

As with all pupils, where possible, pupils with learning difficulties should be involved in monitoring their own progress.

Involving pupils in assessment and recording

It is Friday afternoon and pupils with a range of learning difficulties discuss the week's activities in pastoral groups. Each pupil discusses the past week with a member of the staff team. Together they review the pupil's progress toward the week's targets, discuss individual lesson 'likes and dislikes' and record comments in an individual planner, which the pupil takes to subject-focused lessons throughout the week. These comments usually build on previous work and always relate to the targets described in the pupil's 'annual review abstract' at the front of their planner. After these discussions, adjustments to targets are entered into the 'This week I will…' section of the 'My week' recording sheet. The pupil is reminded of these agreed targets during the pastoral time on Monday morning before going to lessons.

Recording the context for learning helps to build up the profiles of individual pupils. Regular monitoring and recording of pupils' responses and progress across the curriculum identifies areas where pupils are making steady progress and where progress is not being maintained. The responses of some pupils may change from lesson to lesson and subject to subject and may be dependent on factors such as:

- preferences for certain members of staff
- proximity to certain pupils
- different environments
- the time of day
- access to favourite items of equipment
- particular sorts of sensory experience
- subject contexts
- preferences for subject-specific experiences
- emerging talents in particular subject areas.

Recording such information and keeping up-to-date records can help staff build on what they know pupils can do, and make decisions about the need to adjust teaching methods, provide additional support or look into factors that may affect performance, *such as a deterioration in health or a change in home circumstances*.

For pupils with learning difficulties, records of experiences, progress and achievements in relation to targets in their IEPs and curriculum plans should focus on significant responses or ways of learning. A system should be flexible enough to include unexpected or unusual responses, however these occur. The needs of individual pupils may determine the type of record, and it may be necessary to draw up individual standards. For pupils with more profound and complex difficulties, comments on the quality of learning are important, to describe, interpret and explain the complexities and subtle differences of individual responses.

It is up to staff to decide the kinds of records they keep. Their decision will be based on how useful they and other staff find the records. Records may include:

- extracts from curriculum plans (as records of experience)
- comments about pupil responses
- annotated samples of work
- photographs, or tape or video sequences
- pupil self-assessment and peer recordings
- a pupil's record of achievement or progress file
- assessments related to external accreditation.

Self-assessment

As part of a key stage 2 curriculum unit on personal and social development, pupils must do tasks for other classes and members of staff. They have to remember where they need to go, the equipment they need and the nature of their task. The stages of the tasks are shown by symbols on a self-assessment chart. Having completed the task, the pupils fill in their charts (helped by a member of staff) and show, by using a smiley face and a stamp, if they have completed each stage satisfactorily. Lexine, a year 6 pupil, is helping to tidy the staffroom and, as part of the sequence of tasks, she must remember to go to the caretaker's cupboard and ask for polish and a duster. At first she forgot and went straight to the staffroom. When filling in the self-assessment chart, she recorded that she had not fully completed the task. In later weeks she remembered and recorded her success.

Recognising attainment

The framework below can help teachers recognise attainment below level 1 of the National Curriculum.[11] It describes possible changes in individual pupils' responses and behaviour as their early perceptions of experiences and their increasing involvement in the learning process develop into areas of knowledge, skills and understanding. The development of internal learning processes, *for example, thinking skills*, is shown by degrees of attention, discrimination and participation in experiences and activities.

A framework for recognising attainment	
Encounter	Pupils are present during an experience or activity without any obvious learning outcome, although for some pupils, *for example, those who withhold their attention or their presence from many situations*, their willingness to tolerate a shared activity may, in itself, be significant.
Awareness	Pupils appear to show awareness that something has happened and notice, fleetingly focus on or attend to an object, event or person, *for example, by briefly interrupting a pattern of self-absorbed movement or vocalisation*.
Attention and response	Pupils attend and begin to respond, often not consistently, to what is happening, *for example, by showing signs of surprise, enjoyment, frustration or dissatisfaction*, demonstrating the beginning of an ability to distinguish between different people, objects, events and places.
Engagement	Pupils show more consistent attention to, and can tell the difference between, specific events in their surroundings, *for example, by focused looking or listening; turning to locate objects, events or people; following moving objects and events through movements of their eyes, head or other body parts*.
Participation	Pupils engage in sharing, taking turns and the anticipation of familiar sequences of events, *for example, by smiling, vocalising or showing other signs of excitement*, although these responses may be supported by staff or other pupils.
Involvement	Pupils actively strive to reach out, join in or comment in some way on the activity itself or on the actions or responses of the other pupils, *for example, by making exploratory hand and arm movements, seeking eye contact with staff or other pupils, or by speaking, signing or gesturing*.
Gaining skills and understanding	Pupils gain, strengthen or make general use of their skills, knowledge, concepts or understanding that relate to their experience of the curriculum, *for example, they can recognise the features of an object and understand its relevance, significance and use*.

This framework should not be used as a tool to measure hierarchical and linear progress mechanistically from encounter to attainment. It is possible, for example, that pupils' responses may change from day to day and from experience to experience. The pupil who used to be an active participant may, for a range of complex and (hopefully) temporary reasons, show little response in a new setting. Later, the same pupil may give responses showing that new skills, understanding or areas of knowledge have been strengthened. The framework may give staff a greater understanding of how pupils move through a learning process. Schools may wish to use this framework to develop their own assessment tools so they take into account the differing needs of their pupils across the curriculum.

Using performance descriptions to recognise attainment

Performance descriptions are set out in the accompanying subject materials. These have been developed using the framework set out above. They also build on and refine, in response to requests and involvement of teachers, the P scales for English and mathematics set out in the DfEE/QCA booklet, *Supporting the target setting process.*

These descriptions outline early learning and attainment for each subject in the National Curriculum, including citizenship, RE and PSHE. They chart progress up to level 1 through eight steps – P1 to P3, which show general attainment, and P4 to P8, which show subject-specific attainment.

The performance descriptions for P1 to P3 are common across all subjects. They outline the types and range of general performance that some pupils with learning difficulties might characteristically demonstrate. Subject-focused examples are included to illustrate some of the ways in which staff might identify attainment in different subject contexts.

From level P4, many believe it is possible to describe performance in a way that indicates the emergence of subject-focused skills, knowledge and understanding. The descriptions provide an example of how this can be done.

The descriptions in the subject materials can be used by staff in the same way as the National Curriculum level descriptions to:
- develop or support more focused day-to-day approaches to ongoing teacher assessment by using the descriptions to refine and develop long-, medium- and short-term planning
- track linear progress towards subject-specific attainment at National Curriculum level 1
- identify lateral progress by looking for related skills at similar levels across subjects
- record pupils' overall development and achievement, for example, at the end of a year or a key stage
- decide which description best fits a pupil's performance over a period of time and in different contexts, using their professional judgement.

A number of schools have also found the English and mathematics P scales useful as one of several mechanisms for setting school improvement targets.

The following examples show how both the general descriptions of attainment at levels P1 to P3 and the subject-focused descriptions at P4 to P8 can be used in curriculum plans to structure learning. Using plans like these, staff and pupils can anticipate pupil responses, note and record them, and then build on them to promote learning.

Planning to teach electricity

The science coordinator in a school for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties works with her colleagues to establish likely attainment, from the earliest responses drawn from the P scales to level 2 of the National Curriculum, in a medium-term plan for a module of work on electricity in key stage 1. The staff decide that the following behaviour will show that pupils are making progress in this unit of work by showing meaningful achievements.

Pupils may:
- react to sensory experiences, *for example, light from bulbs, sounds from buzzers, movement*
- attend to experiences of the senses in a focused way, *for example, looking, listening, tracking*
- join in to control events, *for example, operating switches (with and without support)*
- anticipate results, *for example, responding before, during and after experiences of the senses*
- actively join in with circuit making, *for example, joining components (with and without support)*
- communicate a response to changes in circuits, *for example, indicating an awareness of bulbs, lights, batteries, buzzers* (toward level 1)
- compare parts in a working circuit with those in an incomplete circuit (toward level 2).

Planning to teach weather and changes in climate

In geography sessions in key stage 3, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are included with mainstream pupils of their own age in activities around a unit of work on the weather and changes in climate. The geography teacher prepares the following set of notes to help assess the importance of the responses that these pupils might make.

Pupils may:

- experience changes in environments, *for example, hot/cold, still/windy, wet/dry*
- show some awareness of environmental changes, *for example, being startled at the change from indoor to outdoor*
- react to simulated weather conditions, *for example, fans, water sprays*, by facial expressions showing pleasure or dissatisfaction
- begin to show consistent reactions to different conditions, *for example, offering different vocalisations or gestures in response to simulated weather*, and to cooperate with supported explorations of contrasts
- actively take part in explorations using their senses, *for example, exploring a box containing different objects associated with different weather conditions*, and begin to demonstrate consistent likes and dislikes, *for example, smiling or looking at swimwear*
- communicate that they prefer different environmental conditions and anticipate environmental changes they have experienced previously, *for example, by showing excitement by vocalising and moving limbs on the way to the 'winter' room in a series of simulated seasons.*

Recognising attainment at key stage 4

By key stage 4, and possibly earlier, it will be suitable for some pupils to be working towards national qualifications. Qualifications approved for use with pre-16 pupils are listed in DfEE guidance and include entry-level qualifications in general and vocational areas, designed for those who are not yet ready for GCSE and GNVQ. Entry-level qualifications are available at levels 1, 2 and 3 and are broadly equivalent to the same National Curriculum levels. Many more pupils will work towards certificated schemes, internal to the school or partner institutions.

Pupils' achievements can be recognised and publicly acknowledged through qualifications and certificates and every pupil should have appropriate opportunities to celebrate. Qualifications and certificates, and assessments matched to the specified requirements may help pupils value their own achievements and measure their progress toward specific targets. Such qualifications also recognise pupils' achievements in the context of the national framework and in many cases may confirm a progression route.

Planning for change: monitoring, evaluation and review of the school curriculum

Systematic monitoring and evaluation help staff identify clear priorities for curriculum development and gather information for review. This process should be done with a commitment to carrying out change.

Schools monitor, evaluate and review the curriculum for a number of reasons, for example, to ensure that:

- curriculum aims are being met
- the curriculum is balanced and offers an appropriate pace of learning
- relationships between curriculum policy and practice are analysed
- the curriculum enables the targets set for individual pupils to be met
- pupils' entitlement to curriculum content is met
- the individual needs of pupils are recognised and fully provided for
- the cultural backgrounds of pupils of different ethnic origins and religions are respected and acknowledged
- attention is given to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- previous learning is built on, practised and applied, and there is provision for continuity and progression.

Governors should ensure that monitoring and evaluation are carried out. The responsibilities of school managers and staff for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing all aspects of the curriculum should be clearly set out in school policy documents. Other professionals should contribute to the process. Pupils who have been involved in setting their own targets, should also be encouraged to be active in monitoring their own progress and evaluating the curriculum.

It is important for staff to monitor the effects on pupil progress and achievement of the planning, teaching and assessment methods used, resources and the pace of lessons. The following questions may be useful to staff in reviewing the effectiveness of their teaching.

- What were the purposes and the intended learning outcomes of the programmes provided? Were they met?
- What and how were methods used to measure responses and results? Were there any learning outcomes which were not intended?
- Did the learning opportunities provided lead to progress?
- Were there any differences between the achievements of boys and girls?
- What were the pupils' thoughts and perceptions?
- What range of teaching methods were used? How were they varied for individual pupils?
- Did pupil groupings encourage interaction between members of the group?
- Did the use of staff support pupils as planned and encourage independent learning?
- Were resources suitable and helpful?
- Did the physical environment help?

Notes

1. Adapted from B Norwich, '*Special needs education or education for all: Connective specialisation and ideological impurity*' in the British Journal of Special Education.

2. These characteristics are identified by P Lacey in '*Multidisciplinary work*', in C Tilstone, L Florian and R Rose (eds), *Promoting inclusive practice*.

3. These characteristics are identified by P Farrell, M Balshaw and F Polat in *The management role and training of learning support assistants* and by Mencap in *On a wing and a prayer: Inclusion and children with severe learning difficulties*.

4. For further ways to share this expertise, see C Tilstone, P Lacey, J Porter and C Robertson, *Pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools*.

5. For further details on intensive interaction, see M Nind and D Hewett, *Access to communication*.

6. For more on jigsaw groups, see R Rose, '*A jigsaw approach to group work*' in the British Journal of Special Education.

7. For further details on ensuring balance, see C Marvin, '*Individual and whole class teaching*' in C Tilstone, L Florian and R Rose (eds), *Promoting inclusive practice*.

8. See, for example, J Ware, *Creating a responsive environment*.

9. See, for example, J Coupe O'Kane and J Goldbart, *Communication before speech: Development and assessment*.

10. For further guidance on assessment, recording and record keeping, see H Lawson, *Practical record keeping*.

11. This framework is based on the work of S Aitken and M Buultjens (1992), E Brown (1996) and J M McInness and J A Treffry (1982).

Further support

The materials listed below may provide further support for teaching pupils with learning difficulties.

DfE/Welsh Office, *Code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs*, DfE, London, 1994

DfEE, *SEN code of practice on the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs*, DfEE, London (forthcoming)

DfEE/QCA, *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*, QCA, London, 2000

DfEE/QCA, *Supporting the target setting process*, DfEE, London, 1998

DfEE/QCA, *The National Curriculum: Handbook for primary teachers in England*, HMSO, London, 1999

DfEE/QCA, *The National Curriculum: Handbook for secondary teachers in England*, HMSO, London, 1999

SCAA, *Planning the curriculum at key stages 1 and 2*, SCAA, London, 1995

SCAA, *Planning the curriculum for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties*, SCAA, London 1996

QCA, *Flexibility in the secondary curriculum*, QCA, London, 1999

QCA, *Maintaining breadth and balance at key stages 1 and 2*, QCA, London, 1998

Aitken, S & Buultjens, M, *Vision for doing*, Moray House Publications, Edinburgh, 1992

Brown, E, *Religious education for all*, David Fulton, London, 1996

Byers, R & Rose, R, *Planning the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs*, David Fulton, London, 1996

Coupe O'Kane, J & Goldbart, J, *Communication before speech: Development and assessment*, David Fulton, London, 2nd edition, 1998

Farrell, P, Balshaw, M & Polat, F, *The management role and training of learning support assistants*, DfEE, London, Research Report RR161, 1999

Lacey, P, '*Multidisciplinary work*', in C Tilstone, L Florian & R Rose (eds), *Promoting inclusive practice*, Routledge, London, 1998

Lawson, H, *Practical record keeping*, David Fulton, London, 2nd edition, 1998

Marvin, C, '*Individual and whole class teaching*', in C Tilstone, L Florian & R Rose (eds), *Promoting inclusive practice*, Routledge, London, 1998

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Nind, M & Hewett, D, *Access to communication*, David Fulton, London, 1999

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Tilstone, C, Lacey, P, Porter, J & Robertson, C, *Pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools*, David Fulton, London, 2000

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Ware, J, *Creating a responsive environment*, David Fulton, London, 1996

Acknowledgements

UNDER-FIVES

NATIONAL CURRICULUM 5–16

GCSE

GNVQ

GCE A LEVEL

NVQ

OTHER VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

About this publication

Who's it for? This handbook is for all those who work with pupils with learning difficulties. This includes pupils who are often described as having severe, profound and multiple, or moderate learning difficulties. The guidelines relate to all pupils aged five to 16 who are unlikely to achieve above level 2 at key stage 4.

What's it about? It provides guidelines on developing the school's curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties, including planning, monitoring, evaluation and review, and recognising pupil progress and achievement.

What's it for? It will be useful in developing an inclusive curriculum. It can be used in mainstream schools, special primary and secondary schools, specialised units and independent schools. It can also support the range of services that work with pupils with learning difficulties.

Related material This handbook is part of a set of guidelines on planning and teaching the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. The entire set, which includes general guidelines, guidelines on developing skills and subject-specific guidelines, can be found on the National Curriculum inclusion website at www.nc.uk.net.