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Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?

Provision and outcomes in different settings for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities

**Better
education
and care**

This report examines the factors that promote good outcomes across a range of different provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. It found effective provision was distributed equally between mainstream and special schools when certain factors were securely in place. However, more good or outstanding provision existed in resourced mainstream schools.

Of particular interest to:

Schools, local authorities, Department for Education and Skills and all organisations interested in children with special educational needs

Age group
All

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Executive summary

The most important factor in determining the best outcomes for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is not the type but the quality of the provision. Effective provision was distributed equally in the mainstream and special schools visited, but there was more good and outstanding provision in resourced mainstream schools than elsewhere. Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) were the least successful of all settings visited.

The co-location of special schools on mainstream sites provided good opportunities for LDD pupils to mix with their peers in mainstream schools, but no more so than in resourced schools. There was more aspiration towards collaboration between the special and mainstream sectors but good joint working was rarely observed.

The survey also found serious weaknesses in schools and local authorities' (LAs) interpretation and operation of the graduated approach set out in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice.¹

First, the provision of additional resources to pupils – such as support from teaching assistants – did not ensure good quality intervention or adequate progress by pupils. There was a misconception that provision of additional resources was the key requirement for individual pupils, whereas the survey findings showed that key factors for good progress were: the involvement of a specialist teacher; good assessment; work tailored to challenge pupils sufficiently; and commitment from school leaders to ensure good progress for all pupils.²

Second, pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) were disadvantaged in that they were the least likely to receive effective support and the most likely to receive support too late.

Third, there was no agreement about what constituted good progress for pupils with LDD. This prevented vital analysis of data at all levels. Schools rarely questioned themselves as rigorously about the rate of progress for LDD pupils as they did for pupils who did not have LDD; LAs were unable to make secure judgements about the effectiveness of different schools; and national trends were difficult to determine.

¹ SEN Code of Practice: the revised code of practice, implemented in January 2002, reflects the duties in Part 4 of the Education Act, as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA) 2001. The Code gives guidance on how schools and LEAs must meet their duties under this Act and the various SEN Regulations. This Act, the SEN regulations and the Code of Practice are commonly referred to as the SEN framework.

² Specialist teacher in the context of this report refers to one who has experience and qualifications across a range of LDD.

There is no generally used definition of low attainment, but a recent Department for Education and Skills (DfES) statistical bulletin defined low attainment as the bottom quartile (25%) of pupils in terms of average points at each Key Stage.³ Too little is done nationally to focus schools' attention on improving the achievement of pupils in the lowest quartile.

Recent legislation for developing integrated children's services, prompted by the Every Child Matters agenda, has obliged LAs to take a more holistic view of services for all children. However, the work was still at a strategic level and had yet to become a reality in the schools visited in this survey. There was little collaborative work to establish joint accountability of the various services to improve the outcomes for pupils with LDD.

Over the past five years, many LAs have reorganised their provision for pupils with LDD. However, the survey found minimal analysis of the effectiveness of different types of provision. LAs had rarely rigorously determined which provision provided the best outcomes for pupils with different types of need.

Key findings

There was little difference in the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils across primary and secondary mainstream schools and special schools. However, mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision were particularly successful in achieving high outcomes for pupils academically, socially and personally. PRUs were the least successful.

Pupils with even the most severe and complex needs were able to make outstanding progress in all types of settings. High quality, specialist teachers and a commitment by leaders to create opportunities to include all pupils were the keys to success.

Pupils in mainstream schools where support from teaching assistants was the main type of provision were less likely to make good academic progress than those who had access to specialist teaching in those schools.

Fewer pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) or those with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and challenging behaviour were placed in mainstream schools than other groups, even when specialist facilities were available. Those included in such provision were as likely to do well as those taught in special schools, when they had access to teaching from experienced and qualified specialists.

³ *DfES National Statistics Bulletin Statistics of Education: the characteristics of low attaining pupils*, June 2005.

Schools were improving their analysis of data about their pupils' learning. Over half of the 74 schools visited did this effectively. However, only 11 of them understood clearly what was meant by 'good' progress for pupils with LDD.

The process of obtaining a statement of SEN disadvantaged pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and favoured those with a diagnosis of medical need(s).

A statement of SEN usually generated additional resources, but even if this guaranteed the quantity of provision, it did nothing to determine the quality of provision or outcomes for the pupil in any type of setting.

Mainstream and special schools continued to struggle to establish an equal partnership. Good collaboration was rare. Special schools that shared a site with mainstream schools provided good opportunities for all pupils to socialise with each other.

The Every Child Matters agenda has required LAs to review their structures and provision for pupils with LDD. However, only two of the LAs visited were basing their changes on a rigorous analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of their current provision and outcomes for children and young people.

Recommendations

The following recommendations arise from this survey.

The DfES should:

- work more closely with other government departments to ensure common assessments focused on outcomes are used to identify individual needs, in line with the developments for the range of children's services
- clarify what is meant by 'good' progress for pupils with LDD, taking into account their age and starting point, focusing more on improving progress for those in the lowest performing quartile.

The Training and Development Agency should:

- improve the initial training and continuing professional development in the field of LDD for all teachers
- provide more opportunities for specialist training in teaching pupils with learning difficulties in general and for particularly complex disabilities.

LAs should:

- evaluate and take full account of the impact of provision and services on the outcomes for children and young people before any strategic reorganisation of services

- ensure children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties have full access to thorough assessments and the full range of services
- ensure that all pupils have opportunities to work alongside their peers in mainstream provision.

Schools of all types should:

- improve the progress of pupils with LDD by using pupil level data that is relevant to their age and starting point to ensure they are suitably challenged

Mainstream schools should:

- analyse critically their use and deployment of teaching assistants
- increase the amount of specialist teaching provided for a range of LDD within a broad and balanced curriculum, developing knowledge and skills relating to LDD across the school workforce.

Special schools should:

- collaborate and share expertise more effectively to develop specialist teaching in mainstream schools, with the support of the LA and in line with other services.

Provision and placements

Types of provision

1. There was little difference in the quality of provision and the outcomes achieved by pupils with LDD across all types of schools. There were schools of all types represented in each of the Ofsted categories for overall effectiveness. In this survey, the only type of provision that was found to be proportionately more effective than others was mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision. PRUs were proportionately less effective than schools.
2. Pupils aged 3–19 with LDD are taught in a wide range of different settings (Table 1). Of all pupils with statements of SEN, almost 60% are taught in mainstream schools. They commonly receive additional support from teaching assistants and, sometimes, from specialist teachers.
3. Pupils can also be placed in an additionally resourced school, in which the LDD provision is sometimes called 'a unit' or 'specialist facility' or 'designated special provision'. In such settings, pupils typically spend some of their time taught by specialist teachers and some time in mainstream classes with their peers. This report refers to this provision as 'resourced mainstream schools'.

Table 1. Placement of children with a statement maintained by local authorities.⁴

	Percentage of children for whom the authority maintains a statement placed in:				
	mainstream schools	resourced provision, & special classes in mainstream schools	maintained special schools	non-maintained & ind. special schools	other*(see note below table)
England	51.9	7.7	32.8	4.6	3.0

* Other categories include; early years settings; hospital schools; pupil referral units; education otherwise out of school and; awaiting provision

4. Pupils can be placed in special schools located on the same site as a mainstream school. These are described in this report as 'co-located schools'. It is also possible for pupils placed in special schools to attend a local school on a part-time placement. Most special schools, however, found difficulty in making effective links with mainstream schools. Pupils

⁴ Source: *Special Education Needs in England, January 2005* (SFR 24/2005), DfES, 2005.

usually attend special schools full-time, often travelling out of their home community.

Influences on the placement of pupils

5. The population of pupils with LDD is changing: advances in medicine enable children with complex health needs to survive well beyond school age and more children are being assessed as having autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). Set against this, the screening of newborn children for visual and hearing impairment has allowed the relevant professionals to intervene earlier, which has reduced the impact of these disabilities. In this changing context there are a number of factors that determine where a pupil is placed.
6. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 strengthened parents' rights to seek a mainstream school for their child and preserved their right to ask for a place in a special school. From September 2002, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 was extended to cover education, obliging schools to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled pupils are not disadvantaged in any area of school life. Admissions, exclusions and access to the full and extended curriculum are all governed by this amendment. The law is intended to support pupils with LDD in entering a school of their parents' preference and to promote the fair and equal treatment of those pupils while attending it.
7. There were factors specific to each local authority in the survey that affected the placement of pupils, for example:
 - the number, type and location of special and resourced mainstream schools
 - the number of places available
 - other strategic and financial pressures.
8. In LAs promoting inclusion, parents often had more choice of mainstream schools and resourced mainstream schools. However, in a few cases parents were not given opportunities to find out about any special schools that might have been available. In the case studies examined as part of this survey, there were more difficulties faced by pupils with BESD in accessing suitable provision than by any other group. These pupils often had no choice of placement due to the reluctance of mainstream schools to work with pupils with this type of difficulty, especially if it was undefined by any form of assessment. There were also particular difficulties when there was no local resourced mainstream school. Parents of pupils with BESD reported a slow response from professionals in acknowledging a young person's difficulties.

9. Many pupils with BESD were placed successfully in mainstream schools, either with support or in resourced mainstream schools. Nevertheless, those with exceptionally difficult behaviour tended to be in special schools or PRUs. Mainstream schools found these pupils the most challenging as they affected the learning of other pupils. Special schools also found them challenging: in 2005, the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector reported that schools for pupils with BESD continued to be less effective than other special schools.
10. Overall in the survey, pupils with all types of LDD were found in all types of settings. Pupils with PMLD and those with extremely challenging behaviour were less often placed in mainstream schools unless parents chose this. Nevertheless, given specialist resources and teaching in a well run and resourced mainstream school, they were able to make outstanding progress.
11. The categories that still define some special schools no longer accurately describe the more diverse needs of the school population. For example, schools designated as providing for moderate learning difficulties (MLD) usually have pupils with a variety of other needs as well, including severe language delay, ASD and BESD. Head teachers reported that schools for pupils with SLD and PMLD now have a larger PMLD population and a substantial number of pupils with extremely challenging behaviour. This substantiates comments from staff in special schools that they deal with a greater number of pupils with complex needs.

Effectiveness of different settings

12. The survey considered whether pupils with particular needs were best placed in certain types of settings. Overall, pupils were as likely to make good progress with their academic, personal and social development in primary and secondary mainstream schools or special schools.
13. Most schools provided good quality education in one or more aspects of learning, but pupils had the best chance of making good progress in all three areas in resourced mainstream schools. In no case did the additional resourced provision detract from the provision for all pupils. A greater proportion of this provision was outstanding and it was seldom inadequate.
14. This finding is also substantiated by evidence from 146 school inspections of resourced mainstream schools. In most of these inspections, the effectiveness of resourced provision was good or outstanding. Only 2% of resourced provision in primary schools was inadequate.

Characteristics that make schools effective

15. This survey considered the progress made by pupils in three areas of their learning: academic and vocational achievement; personal development and social development. Personal development included pupils' increasing independence and ability to organise themselves. Social development concerned pupils' relationships and behaviour in a variety of situations. The survey found that any type of school could be highly effective in meeting the needs of pupils with LDD.
16. Schools that ensured pupils with LDD made outstanding progress in all three areas were good or outstanding in all the following: ethos; provision of specialist staff; and focused professional development for all staff.
17. These features were present and more easily put in place in resourced mainstream schools than any other. They were present least often in PRUs.

Ethos

18. In the best provision, schools were acutely aware of their responsibility to ensure all pupils made good or better progress academically as well as in their personal and social development. They challenged themselves and recognised the importance of scrutinising data in order to drive improvement. Moreover, relationships between staff and pupils were of the highest order.
19. Resourced mainstream schools were characterised by high expectations of pupils' progress, whereas other mainstream schools – particularly those without much experience of LDD – could, unthinkingly, prioritise pupils' social integration at the expense of their learning. Of those inspected, LAs usually placed their resourced provision in those mainstream schools which had been judged, historically, to have good provision for pupils with LDD. These schools already had an inclusive ethos and had often been approached to volunteer to host such provision.
20. In the best examples, resourced mainstream provision was used as a vehicle for improvement throughout the school. Therefore, all pupils benefited from the additional expertise and resources available.

Specialist staff

21. Pupils who worked with specialist teachers made greater academic progress than when they had to rely on other types of support, including teaching assistants. Specialist teachers gave a high level of skilled support, both academically and socially to individual pupils. They also liaised closely with other professionals and parents, and carefully monitored the work of teaching assistants.

22. The qualities that contributed to good or weak teaching for pupils with LDD were exactly the same as those that contributed to good or weak teaching generally. The difference was that teachers needed greater knowledge and skill in assessing and planning when the needs of the pupils were more complex. Nevertheless, it was often the case that schools that provided well for pupils with LDD were characterised by good or better teaching for all pupils.
23. In the good lessons seen in the survey, teachers had thorough subject knowledge, understood what they were teaching and were skilled in identifying and explaining exactly what the pupil needed to do next to make good progress. These teachers demonstrated care and concern for individual pupils and ensured they learned as much as they could. The best teachers were confident and motivated to take risks in making the lessons innovative and exciting for the pupils. They ensured that support was effective and that all staff were clear about the purpose of their intervention. Thorough evaluation of the pupils' learning was used to identify the success or otherwise of specific interventions.
24. Specialist teachers most often provided the best teaching for the most complex needs. Their understanding of the implications of the pupils' LDD enabled a greater sophistication in assessing and planning. These teachers had higher expectations for pupils over the longer term. They applied their knowledge of the pupils' difficulties successfully to ensure that their barriers to learning were reduced. They were more confident in managing the various support strategies, such as in-class support, and adapted curricula to meet the pupils' changing needs. They actively encouraged pupils' independence. Involvement in the curriculum was enabled through careful consideration of teaching strategies, appropriate resources and focused support. These factors helped pupils without making them dependent. Good subject knowledge and specialist knowledge about teaching pupils with LDD resulted in high expectations and more effective teaching.
25. Special schools had a particular strength in carefully matching the skills and interests of staff to the needs of groups of pupils. But teachers in mainstream schools had better knowledge of individual subjects in the National Curriculum.

Focused professional development for all staff

26. Training and developing staff expertise was variable across all types of schools visited. Good, continuing, practical training for mainstream staff enabled some very good teaching and support. Specific training from specialist teachers and professionals from other agencies was particularly effective, but it needed to be regular. Staff required ready, informal access to their specialist colleagues to discuss questions as they arose between sessions.

27. The best training was based on analysing the needs of staff which, consequently, promoted consistency. For example, identifying patterns of pupils' progress through accurate data analysis – made available to or discussed by all staff – made training fit for purpose and focused on school improvement. In-school support, such as coaching, team teaching, mentoring, focused support and management interventions, was particularly effective in building the capacity to provide for pupils with BESD. However, analysis of the effectiveness of training was often limited.

Training includes raising expectations

In a resourced mainstream school, the induction for all staff was outstanding. The encouragement of mutual respect between staff and pupils was key to the excellent outcomes of professional development, never belittling the pupils and having high expectations of them. Clear and specific written guidance was given about the likely needs of pupils in the school. The guidance was practical: it told staff how to analyse issues and what to do to follow school policy. New members of staff were assigned an experienced mentor, well versed in the school's approach and ethos. Staff deployment ensured pupils with the most complex needs received the most expert teaching.

28. Teaching assistants who provided good support had often received high quality training and had relevant qualifications. Teaching assistants provided valuable support, and many were undertaking difficult roles, but this was not a substitute for focused, highly skilled teaching.
29. In the most effective schools training was disseminated to good effect to all staff to ensure that the school capitalised on professional development and promoted consistency of practice. This occurred in too few schools.

Flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs

30. Resourced mainstream schools were the most successful in balancing pupils' needs to learn alongside pupils without LDD while, at the same time, ensuring that pupils were able to learn at a different pace and often in a different way. The pupils were able to join lessons with their peers where it was appropriate and yet benefit from small group teaching when this was judged by the teacher to be most suitable. When they worked in mainstream classes they were supported either by a specialist teacher or by a teaching assistant whose work had been carefully planned together by the specialist teacher, the mainstream teacher and the teaching assistant. These staff were concerned with the pupils joining in; they ensured they learned and that the next steps of learning were achieved.
31. Over half the parents with children in special provision interviewed had reservations about the size of mainstream schools in terms of the value

placed on their child as an individual. However, the survey found it was often larger schools, with carefully designed internal support structures, that helped all pupils to feel significant and safe.

Changing the traditional model

A large community comprehensive school was concerned about the effect that moving around a big campus had on Year 7 pupils with LDD. Two classes remained in their base for English, mathematics and humanities. Sixteen pupils, working well below the levels of most pupils in their year group, benefited from a consistent approach to improving their literacy and numeracy skills. The stable classroom ethos enabled them to feel part of a small group that was more manageable for their levels of development. A system of learning teams rather than the traditional tutor group meant all staff took responsibility for a learning team based on friendship groups, often with no more than four pupils. A pupil commented: 'My Mum was worried how I would get on in such a large school, but it has been fine because I belong to a smaller group and I don't have to move round the whole school.'

Pupils' involvement

32. Most of the schools visited had school councils. However, their quality and effectiveness were variable and rarely ensured that pupils with a wide range of abilities were represented. The decision-making process in school councils was often focused on peripheral issues and, while these issues were important to the pupils, they seldom centred on the quality of teaching and learning.
33. In the most effective schools, in addition to the usual practice of using questionnaires for pupils and class discussion to provide views, detailed interviews were carried out with a sample of pupils, including those with LDD. The schools used this information to help improve provision.
34. In schools where pupils' involvement was high, they were also involved in decisions about their own individual learning and behaviour. In these schools, pupils were usually involved in setting their own targets and were active in reviewing their progress against these. However, too often this was done superficially: pupils did not understand the purpose of the target-setting and could not read the final outcome. This was a significant problem, since pupils' understanding of their next steps in learning was crucial to their rate of progress and to developing their independence and self-esteem. Overall, the involvement of pupils with LDD in making decisions about their own learning and behaviour was too variable across all types of provision.
35. Pupils' involvement in meetings, such as annual reviews to discuss their progress and inform future provision, was usually limited. Insufficient emphasis was placed on ensuring pupils were well prepared to make

decisions and to have a realistic view of themselves and their possible future. However, practice was exemplary in three schools visited in the survey. For instance, when pupils had access to independent advocates they were given sufficient time to develop relationships with the pupils and become familiar with the ways they communicated.

Being part of a wider community

36. Special schools near or co-located on local mainstream school sites provided the social advantages of resourced mainstream schools; they rarely provided academic or vocational advantages. Those schools further away from a special school had to spend too long transporting pupils. This often diminished the value of wider opportunities as too much curriculum time was lost. This was not a problem in mainstream resourced schools.
37. Pupils in co-located special schools benefited from the increased opportunities to work alongside their peers. Nevertheless, it was still not always easy for the special school to establish equal partnerships, particularly if the mainstream school was facing particular challenges. This did not arise in resourced schools as the senior leadership team took responsibility for all pupils.

Curriculum

38. Pupils in all phases and settings generally had good access to a broad and balanced curriculum. There was no difference between mainstream and special education in the effectiveness of the curriculum offered, although there were some differences of emphasis.
39. An increasing number of schools of all types were successfully developing innovative approaches to the curriculum. However, the quality of the curriculum was generally less important for pupils' enjoyment, engagement and progress than good individual assessment, planning well matched to needs and good teaching. This was true across all subjects and settings, except with regard to young people who required a more vocational curriculum. Here, the match of the curriculum to the pupils' interests and abilities was more important.
40. The special schools in the survey typically followed a mainstream curriculum wherever appropriate and the level of accreditation for both academic and vocational work was good. This was a marked improvement from seven years ago.⁵ Many of the special schools offered a range of extra curricular and enrichment activities, although not usually after the school day. These schools used real life experiences and well-chosen visits effectively.

⁵See *Special education 94–98: A review of special schools, secure units and PRUs in England*, 0-11-350108-0.

41. Most mainstream schools provided good access to an appropriate and interesting curriculum, tailored to the needs of pupils. This ranged from full access to available lessons, with some adaptation according to needs, to a completely individual curriculum. There were good examples of personalised learning programmes which, when combined with good teaching of subjects, moved pupils' learning on very rapidly from a low starting point.
42. A very small minority of the mainstream schools visited had innovative approaches to the curriculum. For instance, one school deliberately offered a wide range of activities within and outside school time to fill pupils' gaps in learning as a result of absence; another offered accredited British sign language courses to all pupils as an alternative to modern foreign languages.
43. Secondary schools tended to have slightly less flexible approaches to the curriculum than primary schools visited in this survey. This was particularly the case for lower attaining pupils who were expected to fit in, with some support, to the available lessons. However, there were also some good recent developments, such as a transition 'primary style' curriculum in Years 7 and 8, with a focus on personalised learning. In resourced mainstream schools, access to additional specialist staff increased the flexibility of the curriculum.

Links with parents

44. Nearly all the schools visited were successful at involving parents in the education of pupils with LDD. The case studies about the pupils at five extremely successful schools demonstrated they made the most progress. The most successful schools developed interesting solutions to the difficulties they faced when encouraging parents to become positive partners. They were willing to be flexible and respond to the needs of parents rather than adopting a 'What else can we do?' attitude. These schools had consulted parents in a range of ways and involved them very effectively in whole-school developments as well as issues related to their own child.

Internal and external challenge

Ensuring high expectations

45. Overall, this survey found there was little relationship between academic progress – basing judgement on the schools' records as well as using common inspection criteria – and the type of school or setting in which pupils were placed, except in mainstream resourced schools.
46. There is no generally used definition of low attainment, but a recent DfES statistical bulletin defined low attainment as the bottom quartile (25%) of

pupils in terms of average points at each key stage. The majority of pupils defined as low attaining in 2004 at Key Stages 1 to 3 had LLD. Of those pupils, 6% at Key Stage 1, 12% at Key Stage 2 and 14% at Key Stage 3 had statements of special educational needs. Some children and young people with LDD may never achieve higher levels of attainment; there are many who can and do make good progress. Too little had been done nationally to focus schools' attention on improving the achievement of pupils in the lowest quartile.

47. Schools and policymakers generally recognise that better use of data on achievement by schools and local authorities contributes significantly to raising expectations, setting appropriate targets and raising attainment. Much work has been done for pupils with LDD, but it is not yet implemented consistently, or coordinated across settings and between schools and local authorities. Analysis of data at school level is now being carried out more effectively than in recent years, particularly with regard to academic progress, but it is not raising the achievements of this group of pupils fast enough.
48. The priority for pupils with LDD is whether a pupil is making adequate progress. The measure of progress will be different for different pupils: it will depend on the pupils' starting points, ages and on their particular needs. Progress for different pupils with LDD could range from that which arrests or closes the attainment gap between the pupil and his or her peers, or which demonstrates an improvement in self-help, social or personal skills.
49. Over half of the schools in the survey were gathering and analysing their data effectively but guidance from schools and LAs on what was expected in terms of progress remained inadequate. Even when schools had a good idea of how much progress pupils had made, they often did not know whether this was enough, given the type and extent of the pupils' needs.
50. Over-reliance on commercial schemes that identified broad categories of need was not helpful in offering rigorous challenge to schools. Similarly, defining achievement in terms of the number of targets in an individual education plan (IEP) achieved across a given time rarely ensured rigorous evaluation of provision or pupils' progress. What made the difference to higher outcomes was effective target setting within the curriculum or personalised programme as part of a whole-school policy on assessment.
51. Only 11 schools had determined what they considered to be good progress for pupils with LDD. This was usually a gain of two National Curriculum levels or two P levels (within the P scales), dependent on a

pupil's starting point, across a key stage.⁶ Schools that had dealt with this issue offered suitable challenge for all their pupils.

Evaluating impact

A local authority had developed comparative P level data, but a school specialising in the education of pupils with ASD realised that using a broad category of need did not give good quality comparative data and took it a step further. The senior leadership team developed ways of challenging progress for different pupils, using their ages and starting point, as well as the time the pupils had been receiving specialist support. From analysing the information, the school established different, high expectations that challenged pupils with differing needs.

52. Few mainstream or special schools had clearly determined and agreed what they considered to be satisfactory and good progress for pupils with LDD. The result was insufficient academic challenge for them and a fundamental weakness in providing for pupils with LDD.
53. The majority of mainstream secondary schools, special schools and PRUs in the survey had some method of tracking pupils' personal, social and emotional development systematically. Most schools reported that their knowledge and support of pupils were good. Typically, staff knew individual pupils well, had high expectations of their personal development and invested considerable time and attention in supporting them. Consequently, staff frequently judged that pupils made very clear and rewarding progress. Very often parents agreed, and this was perceived to be a highly positive aspect of the pupil's school life. However, even where celebration was justified, there was insufficient evidence to check and question whether pupils were making the best progress they could in the areas of greatest need.
54. Systematic recording of pupils' development was generally better in special schools or schools with larger numbers of pupils with LDD. Good practice ranged from the use of well recognised schemes to highly individualised records. A high level of specialised, coordinated input by specialists in BESD resulted in a wealth of information, such as behaviour logs, reward systems, weekly monitoring of attendance and records of regular discussions. These were used effectively, in consultation with the pupil, to set and monitor personal targets.
55. Special schools tended to use commercially available materials, embedded in the curriculum, with teaching approaches that measured pupils' personal and social progress accurately. These were beginning to be used or adapted in mainstream primary schools to good effect, although this

⁶ The P scales are assessment criteria for identifying progress below Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. (QCA/01/7500, revised 2004, available at www.qca.org.uk).

was rare. The best practice in the secondary schools surveyed often arose out of whole-school initiatives to improve behaviour.

56. A number of developments nationally aim to improve the gathering and analysis of information about pupils with LDD. These are designed to be used at all levels, from school and LA to regional and national levels and across different types of settings. These initiatives include the use of SEN data in the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census and the inclusion in school Performance and Assessment reports of factors such as social deprivation, SEN, and prior attainment.
57. However, this is at an early stage and no clear patterns are yet available, so it is not possible to make valid judgements about the progress of different groups of pupils or settings nationally. The merging of the PANDA (Ofsted's tool) and the Pupil Achievement Tracker (the Government's tool) to RAISE online is one way in which the Government and Ofsted intend to provide data for reviewing the performance of all pupils in greater depth.

The impact of the SEN framework: SENDA 2001

What difference does a statement make?

58. In the survey it was clear that statements of special educational need dictated the type of provision for a pupil, but they did not ensure the quality of the provision. Statements were usually effective in identifying the educational needs of pupils and this, with subsequent documentation, provided useful information when pupils moved between settings. However, it was an overly cumbersome and bureaucratic procedure in order to ascertain where a pupil should be taught or what resources should be allocated.
59. Parent partnerships also reported a negative perception by some parents of the process of formal assessment of special educational need. The system was seen as over complex and gave insufficient account of their children's views. In two local authorities, individual parents saw improvements in the provision for pupils with LDD in mainstream schools. They were therefore more likely to opt for mainstream as opposed to special schooling and did not necessarily need to pursue a statement.
60. In over half the case studies conducted, there was no obvious causal link between formal assessment and the quality of the provision. This was particularly true for pupils with BESD, who were less likely than other groups to be assessed formally and more likely to be assessed later when difficulties had become entrenched. Pupils with BESD often experienced difficulties in having their needs recognised and, consequently, the quality of provision they received was more often inadequate. Parents of pupils

with BESD reported to inspectors that formal assessment processes were instigated too late to have the maximum impact. In case studies of pupils with ASD, SLD and pupils with physical disabilities and difficulties, the process of formal assessment had helped to determine the interventions that were required but had no impact on the outcomes for pupils.

61. Access to provision from PRUs was too reliant on exclusions and not seen sufficiently as part of the strategic service of the LA to help mainstream schools provide for pupils with behavioural difficulties. Exclusions became an alternative to using the formal assessment process effectively. PRUs that were used appropriately in preventive action were particularly effective in providing access to part-time placements with mainstream schools.

PRU helping to reduce exclusions

The dual placement programme for pupils incorporated training and in-school support for mainstream staff, prior to and during reintegration programmes. Continuing professional development for mainstream staff was also available from the PRU. A high quality assessment of staff's needs informed the design both of the pupils' personalised learning and the training programme. This analysis identified the areas of expertise required and how to avoid the need to exclude pupils.

How well does the SEN framework protect vulnerable young people?

62. It was more straightforward for pupils who had a medical diagnosis to obtain a statement of their special educational needs. Parents and carers reported the benefits of having their child's LDD diagnosed, saying it explained previously unanswered questions about their child's difficulties. But diagnosis of a medical condition was not the solution to identifying the most appropriate placement for an individual pupil. An over reliance on diagnosis was too often seen as a gateway to resources rather than as a contribution to understanding the educational implications of a pupil's disability or difficulty. There were also inequalities: some health and local authority professionals resisted the pressure to use a diagnosis as a passport to resources while others did not. Pupils with BESD were the least well protected by the SEN framework.
63. Many parents and carers regarded the formal assessment processes positively: they gained confidence that their child's needs would be met. However, emphasising the type of provision and quantity of support, for instance the number of hours of support from a teaching assistant which might be allocated, did not meet the children's needs. The key factors – the quality of the provision and outcomes for pupils – were not considered explicitly and rigorously. The absence of such considerations reduced the effectiveness of statements dramatically and was not cost effective.

64. Almost half of the LAs had good information on pupils' progress, but they made little use of these data to evaluate the quality of the provision on outcomes for pupils. Generally, the LAs in the survey were not holding schools sufficiently to account for the progress made by pupils with LDD. Within schools, the use of tracking information for pupils achieving below National Curriculum levels was not used effectively to inform provision at LA level.
65. The SEN framework, being based on educational issues, did not help pupils to access sufficient support from other agencies, despite the recent changes to Children's Services. The survey suggested that the huge changes at LA level were yet to be reflected and realised in schools. Schools that had historically been good at multi-agency work were developing stronger partnerships, for example between special schools and resourced mainstream schools.
66. The difficulties in recruiting some professionals remained a barrier to effective partnerships, particularly speech and language therapists and those working in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Overall, there were difficulties sharing information and resources across professional boundaries. The main disadvantage of statements of SEN being provided within the domain of education was that not all services were held equally to account. This was a fundamental weakness of the process of obtaining a statement of special educational need and led to inequalities across and within local authorities visited in this survey.

Local authority planning for provision and arrangements for resourcing services

67. Providing for pupils with LDD is one of the most challenging aspects of LAs' responsibilities and has been acknowledged in reports from the Audit Commission and Ofsted.⁷ These reports note that, despite a robust statutory framework and improvements in practice and provision in recent years, there are still challenges to overcome to further improve outcomes for children with LDD.
68. Parents had a simplistic but mistaken view that LA reorganisations involving special school closures meant an inevitable loss of specialist support. They thought there were fewer good quality choices. The survey showed that, in practice, LAs visited had tried to reconfigure their special schools to meet changing needs, developed specialist provision within or attached to mainstream schools and co-located special and mainstream

⁷ See, for example, *SEN and disability: towards inclusive schools* (HMI 2276), Ofsted, 2004, *SEN – a mainstream issue*, Audit Commission, 2002.

schools. However, only two of the local authorities had used information on the outcomes for pupils to inform their reorganisation.

69. The main drivers for change had been the Every Child Matters agenda, Children's Trusts and other initiatives, such as Sure Start for early years. The DfES's strategy for SEN, *Removing Barriers to Achievement*, had little impact on the agenda for change.⁸ It had encouraged educational reorganisation for LDD, but not within the context of children's services overall.
70. Although LAs had responded to external pressures for change, they did not take sufficient account of local and regional needs, based on accurate information and data analysis of performance of pupils at individual levels. This did not help them to ensure coherent planning for change to improve services for the most vulnerable children and young people.
71. There were difficulties in sharing data across LA services. Performance targets across unrelated services, compounded by different funding streams, inhibited the progress of the LAs in the survey in ensuring effective joint working at school level.
72. The authorities in the survey were beginning to think about reducing the number of statements and redirecting their resources, but few had achieved any real change. They had very good plans for using funding more imaginatively, but little evidence of this in practice. The development of LAs' children's services was in its infancy at the time of the survey and there was insufficient time for LAs to demonstrate the impact of any changes.

⁸ *Removing barriers to achievement: the government's strategy for SEN* (DfES 0117/2004), DfES, 2004.

Notes

The survey was carried out to establish the factors that made the most significant contribution to high achievement and enjoyment for pupils with LDD. It also aimed to evaluate the impact of recent legislation, guidance and the Government's SEN strategy on provision.

Between summer 2005 and spring 2006, six HMI and five Additional Inspectors, all specialists in LDD, conducted two-day visits to 74 schools across 17 local authorities. The mainstream schools, resourced mainstream schools, special schools and pupil referral units were selected to represent a range of phases, types and size across the three Ofsted regions. The LAs were chosen to represent a range of large rural, urban or unitary, and metropolitan areas.

The term LDD is used to cross the professional boundaries between education, health and social services and to incorporate a common language for 0–19-year-olds. In the context of this report it replaces the term special educational needs (SEN).

In addition to inspecting the schools' overall provision for pupils with LDD, 70 inspections included detailed case studies, tracking pupils with a range of similar needs at the same age in different settings. Inspectors used specifically designed criteria to ensure consistent judgements about pupils' progress. This deeper analysis provided reliable information on the progress of the pupils in the absence of nationally agreed criteria. Inspectors judged their progress and the provision made for them in three areas of learning: academic and vocational achievement, personal development and social development.

HMI also met or held discussions with officers from seven local authorities and Parent Partnerships to discuss changes in provision over the last five years, and to determine any further changes planned as a result of recent legislation or government strategies.

Additional evidence was gathered from school inspections carried out between September 2005 and March 2006.

Further information

Ofsted publications: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught? Ofsted, 2006. This is a PowerPoint training pack for teachers and local authorities, produced to accompany this report.

Inclusion: the impact of LEA support and outreach services (HMI 2452), Ofsted, 2005.

Healthy minds: promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools (HMI 2457), Ofsted 2005.

Special educational needs and disability: towards inclusive schools (HMI 2276) Ofsted, 2004.

Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 2004/05 (ISBN 0 10 293545 9), Ofsted, 2005.

Removing barriers: a 'can-do' attitude. A report on developing good practice for children with special needs in early years childcare and education in the private and voluntary sectors (HMI 2449), Ofsted 2005.

Other useful documents and publications:

Safeguarding children: the second joint Chief Inspectors' report on arrangements to safeguard Children, produced by the Commission for Social Care Inspection on behalf of the joint inspectorate steering group, 2005.
www.safeguardingchildren.org.uk

Removing barriers to achievement: the government's strategy for SEN (DfES/0117/2004), DfES, 2004.
www.dfes.gov.uk

Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties (QCA/01/7500), QCA, revised 2004.
www.qca.org.uk

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
www.opsi.gov.uk/acts

Explanatory Notes to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001, (ISBN 010 561 001 1), Queen's Printer of Acts of Parliament, 2001.

Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfES/581/2001) (ISBN 1 84185 5294) DfES, 2001.
www.dfes.gov.uk

Useful websites

For a wide range of SEN and disability advice and materials for teachers, parents and others working with children with SEN in England

www.teachernet.gov.uk/sen

To access the latest research carried out by the DfES

www.dfes.gov.uk/research

Guidance and advice for parents is available at

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/specialneeds

www.parentpartnership.org.uk

www.direct.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/Schools/SpecialEducationalNeeds

For the latest research and statistics, this website provides a link to the DfES gateway

www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway

Information about inclusion

www.inclusion.ngfl.gov.uk

Annex

Schools and local authorities visited for this survey

Local authorities and Parent Partnerships (in-depth discussions)

Birmingham
Brighton and Hove
Cumbria
Derbyshire
East Sussex
Manchester
Wandsworth

Schools

Name of school

Acton High School
Alfreton Park Community Special School
Allfarthing Primary School
All Saints CofE Primary School, Bexhill
Ashfield Junior School
Ashgate Croft School
Baverstock Foundation School and Specialist Sports College
Beormund Primary School
Brays School
Broadway School
Buxton PRU
Camberwell Park Community Special School
Chailey Heritage School
Charlton Manor Primary School
Charlton School
Christ The King RC Primary School Manchester
Cotmanhay Infant School
Crosthwaite CofE School
Elsley and Ronald Ross PRU
Fairlight Primary School
Falconbrook School
Francis Barber PRU
Garratt Park School
Geoffrey Field Junior School
George Green's Secondary School
George Hastwell School
Gillford Centre
Hazel Court School
Highfield School
Hillside School
Holbrook Centre for Autism

Local authority

Ealing
Derbyshire
Wandsworth
East Sussex
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Birmingham

Southwark
Birmingham
Birmingham
Derbyshire
Manchester
East Sussex
Greenwich
Greenwich
Manchester
Derbyshire
Cumbria
Wandsworth
Brighton and Hove
Wandsworth
Wandsworth
Wandsworth
Reading
Tower Hamlets
Cumbria
Cumbria
East Sussex
Knowsley
Brighton and Hove
Derbyshire

Hope Valley College	Derbyshire
Ilkeston School	Derbyshire
James Rennie School	Cumbria
Kirk Hallam PRU	Derbyshire
Lancasterian School	Manchester
Lewes Tutorial Unit	East Sussex
Lister Community School	Newham
Little Ridge Community Primary School	East Sussex
Longhill High School	Brighton and Hove
Longtown Primary School	Cumbria
Marden Lodge Primary School	Surrey
Mayfield School	Cumbria
Milford Primary School	Derbyshire
Mosscroft Primary School	Knowsley
New Horizons School	East Sussex
Paddock School	Wandsworth
Parklands Girls' High School	Leeds
Parkside Junior School	Derbyshire
Peacehaven Community School	East Sussex
Plant Hill High School	Manchester
Priestley Smith School	Birmingham
Queensbridge School	Birmingham
Queensbury School	Birmingham
Sandown Primary School	East Sussex
Settlebeck High School	Cumbria
Shirebrook School	Derbyshire
Spire Junior School	Derbyshire
St Clement's CofE Primary School	Manchester
St Leo's Catholic Primary School	Knowsley
St Matthew's RC High School	Manchester
St Michael's CofE Junior & Infants School	Birmingham
The Beacon School	Surrey
The Behaviour Support Service	Birmingham
The Buzz	Manchester
The South Downs Community Special School	East Sussex
Sycamore Centre	Surrey
Thomas Tallis School	Greenwich
Thwaites School	Cumbria
Uplands School	Brighton and Hove
Ward End Primary School	Birmingham
West Blatchington Infant School	Brighton and Hove
West Blatchington Junior School	Brighton and Hove
Willingdon Community School	East Sussex