



Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of a Survey on

Provision and Outcomes for Pupils with **Special Educational Needs** in **Post-Primary Schools**

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A number of qualitative terms are used throughout the report to present the findings. These terms should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of provision, the Inspectorate relates its evaluations to four performance levels which may be interpreted as follows:

GRADE

1	Significant strengths	good (ranging to outstanding)
2	Strengths outweigh weaknesses	satisfactory (ranging to good)
3	Weaknesses outweigh strengths	fair (ranging to satisfactory)
4	Significant weaknesses	poor



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) has undertaken a series of inspections in a sample of post-primary schools to evaluate the nature and quality of provision and outcomes in the area of special educational needs (SEN).
- 1.2 In recent years, concern has been expressed about the standards of literacy and numeracy achieved by pupils in Northern Ireland, and in relation to SEN provision in general. This survey took account of the full spectrum of special needs in the post-primary sector but particular attention was given in non-selective schools to provision and outcomes in literacy and numeracy.
- 1.3 The survey involved visits to 21 schools (see Table 1) which are listed in the Appendix). Inspectors observed 367 lessons across key stages (KS) 3 and 4, evaluated relevant documentation, held discussions with 209 pupils, and (in a few schools) with parents. Discussions were also held with some 184 staff, including principals, members of senior management teams, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), and with other teachers.

Table 1: number and type of schools visited

Board	Controlled	Maintained	Integrated	Grammar
BELB	-	-	-	2
NEELB	3	1	1	-
SEELB	2	-	1	1
SELB	1	2	1	-
WELB	2	4	-	-
Totals	8	7	3	3

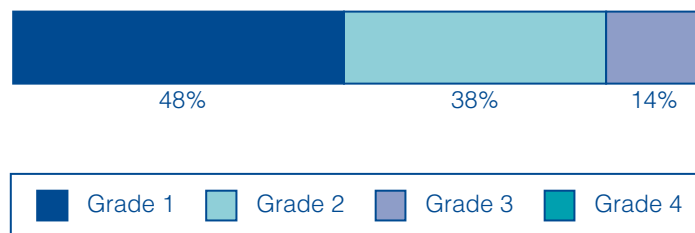
2. IDENTIFICATION OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

- 2.1 In the schools visited, the percentage of pupils with SEN varies considerably and ranges from 66% to 8%, with an average of 22%. Three of the schools have identified between 30% and 40% of their pupils as requiring additional help with their learning; only one school has more than 40% of its pupils on its SEN register.



2.2 Some 60% of the schools surveyed use a variety of ways to identify pupils with special needs; in most instances, a combination of methods is employed comprising the use of statistical data relating to standardised scores in literacy and numeracy, or differences in chronological age and reading/mathematical age, together with other information from a wide range of other sources including that gained from observation by teachers. The evidence from this survey indicates that the schools use different standardised scores to determine the point at which intervention is required. Some 25% of the schools visited place pupils on the special needs register when their standardised score falls below 90; some 58% determine the need for additional assistance when the standardised score is below 85; some 17% place a pupil on the register only when a standardised score falls below 80. In part, these variations are a response to the level of additional support each school is able to provide, but the differences across the schools are considerable and indicate that pupils identified in some schools as requiring additional help are not considered in others as requiring such assistance. In several of the schools, insufficient account is taken of statistical data indicating levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy, and the determination of need is established only through observation by the teachers and/or from information obtained from other sources, including evidence from the pupils' primary schools.

Identification of SEN



2.3 In most of the schools visited, the identification of pupils with special needs has many strengths, or more strengths than weaknesses. For those pupils with particularly obvious difficulties, or with statements, identification is effective.

2.4 For those young people with less evident needs, notably in terms of their literacy and numeracy competences, identification and support are less certain, especially when the point at which additional support is provided may not include all those who would benefit from such assistance. In such

circumstances, schools look to subject-specialist teachers to respond appropriately by ensuring that individual assistance is provided through the specialist subjects. Despite this, the provision of such support is not secure, or may come in a form that will not result in improvements in the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, subject teachers do not always receive information - for example, in relation to the pupils' standardised scores for literacy or numeracy - which allows them to identify suitably those pupils who need additional support; or, if they do, subject teachers are not always clear enough on how to respond by adjusting subject-specific content to focus on improving the pupils' literacy, numeracy, or other, difficulties.

2.5 The main strengths are:

- in most schools, the good links with and transfer of information from the primary schools;
- the comprehensive and effective systems to identify a range of special needs, including academic, behavioural, medical, and emotional conditions;
- the effective use of standardised and diagnostic tests to identify needs;
- the good lines of communication, and the effective dissemination of information and data, to highlight the pupils' needs.

2.6 The main areas for improvement include the need for:

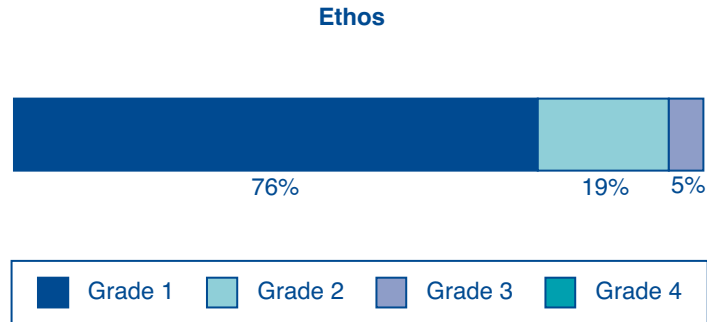
- in a minority of schools, better communication with and more effective use of information from the primary sector;
- the better identification of all of the pupils who would benefit from additional support;
- the more effective dissemination (especially to subject teachers) of standardised scores, and other information, to assist those pupils who would benefit from additional help.

3. ETHOS

3.1 In almost all of the schools visited, it is clear that provision for special needs is developed in a most supportive and positive manner. Teachers, special needs support staff, and those with senior management responsibilities almost always place a strong emphasis on responding appropriately to the



needs of those pupils who require additional help. In the very few schools where this is not the case, the teachers' knowledge and awareness of the pupils with special needs are poor, or provision for special needs is provided in a poor and unattractive learning environment.



3.2 The main strengths are:

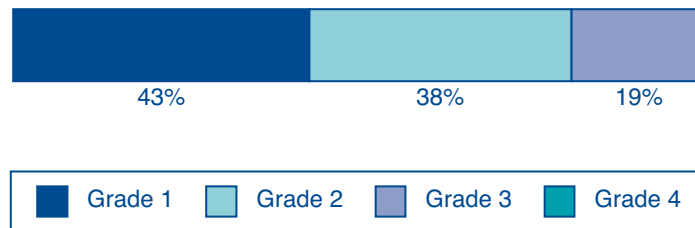
- the supportive, caring and positive atmosphere which underpins learning;
- the strong and appropriate emphasis on inclusion and integration;
- the strong emphasis on promoting the pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence;
- the celebration of the achievements of those pupils with special needs;
- the good relationships and high expectations of teaching and support staff;
- the well-defined, well-understood and well-disseminated policies and action plans developed to help improve the teaching of special needs.

4. STAFFING AND RESOURCES

4.1 In most of the schools visited, staffing and resources in relation to provision for special needs are sound or better. Despite demographic and other constraints on funding, schools are increasingly inventive in developing and deploying their staffing and other resources to good effect to improve their arrangements to respond to SEN. In many of the schools visited, special needs support staff provide help through arrangements which, while broadly similar in function, have a variety of names and forms including Pupil

Improvement Centres, Learning Support Centres, Nurture Units, and “base” classes where a small number of staff teach a range of subjects and, for example, take the opportunity to promote literacy and numeracy through specialist subject teaching, or take advantage of the typically small number of pupils in these classes to respond to their other needs.

Staffing and Resources



4.2 The main strengths are:

- the effective classroom support arrangements developed to respond to the needs of those pupils who need additional support with their learning;
- the effective and committed SENCOs;
- the classroom assistants, and the regular access to Outreach, peripatetic, and other professional support staff;
- the adaptation of subject specialist schemes of work, and the availability of other resources, to meet the needs of those pupils who require additional help.

4.3 The main areas for improvement include the need for:

- a more adequate time allowance for SENCOs to allow them to respond more effectively to the needs of the pupils who require additional help, and to assist them to liaise more appropriately with other teachers and support staff;
- a more focused use of special needs funding instead of its absorption into the school’s general budget;
- more effective subject involvement in addressing the literacy and numeracy needs of those pupils who require additional help with their



learning, and a more systematic response to young people with other special needs;

- the more effective use of support materials provided by the Department of Education, and by others, in relation especially to dyslexia and autism.

5. CURRICULAR PROVISION AND INTERNAL SUPPORT

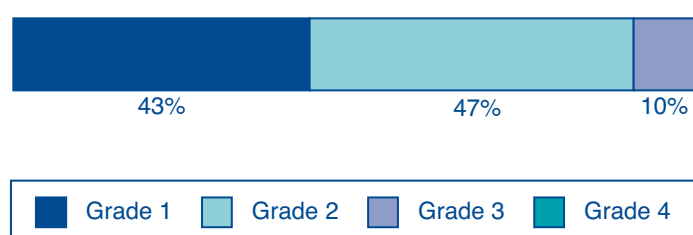
- 5.1 Increasingly, in most of the schools visited, and especially in KS3, curricular support for literacy and numeracy is provided through Learning Support Units, “base” classes, through paired reading and mentoring arrangements, or through similar support systems. In two of the schools visited, for example, helpful and effective programmes involving “emotional help” and “motivational interviews” are provided on a regular basis to assist the pupils respond more positively to their experiences of schooling. In those schools where “base” classes have been introduced, the teachers involved teach a range of subjects, and focus on literacy, numeracy and behavioural support, to enable lower-attaining pupils to adjust more readily to the demands of post-primary schooling and to improve their basic skills. Withdrawal arrangements, to facilitate the release of pupils from class several times a week to improve their literacy and numeracy skills with a special needs tutor, are often the mainstay of special needs provision in the post-primary sector. For those young people who need support over and above that provided through a withdrawal system, Outreach and peripatetic staff provide valuable support.
- 5.2 Since 2000, and under the auspices of the Department of Education’s KS4 Flexibility initiative, most non-selective schools have introduced successfully a significant measure of vocational education at KS4. In practice, most of the pupils involved are those with special needs, those who see limited merit in a wholly GCSE programme, or those whose needs are not well met by conventional arrangements. Typically, the KS4 Flexibility Initiative, sometimes developed alongside the Prince’s Trust and the XL programmes, provides three days of school-based work, a day with a College of Further Education or a Training Organisation, and a day of work placement with a local employer. In addition, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has provided, through its Occupational Studies courses, the opportunity for the young people to gain accreditation for the vocational courses they undertake. In large measure, the KS4 initiative has proved to be extremely successful in providing schools and young people, especially those for whom more conventional arrangements at KS4 have

proved to be unsuitable, with a valuable alternative programme. Despite this success, the Inspectorate, in a report in 2005 on the KS4 Flexibility Initiative in Colleges of Further Education, has drawn attention to the need to ensure that pupils involved in link programmes with further education have the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to succeed at that level. The report of 2005 noted that, for the majority of the pupils involved with the KS4 Flexibility initiative, their standards of literacy and numeracy are low, and the standard of their written communication is particularly weak. These weaknesses will work to the future detriment of the young people who have such literacy and numeracy problems and will create difficulties should they attempt to take up other vocational programmes in further education or training, and also later when they seek to enter employment. It will be particularly important that schools give more systematic attention to developing their pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as integral elements within their vocational and other programmes in KS4.

5.3 Even where there is the ready availability of withdrawal support and other arrangements, pupils who need additional help also require systematic support from the specialist subject teachers. There is evidence from many of the schools visited that improved subject-specific planning and practice is focused more systematically on promoting the development of literacy and numeracy through subject work. Nevertheless, much still remains to be done to make the targeted support of pupils with SEN a stronger and more explicit part of the work of specialist teachers.

5.4 Education Plans (EPs) are central to ensuring that the needs of those pupils who require additional help with their learning are addressed in an appropriate and effective manner. In a minority of the schools visited, there is evidence that the EPs are developed and implemented well. In a majority, the EPs are less effective in addressing the pupils' needs; typically, they are over-generalised, address an unduly narrow set of short-term targets, or, within specialist subject teaching, do not influence sufficiently the day-to-day planning and practice of the teachers.

**Curricular Provision and
Internal Support: KS3 and KS4**





5.5 The main strengths are:

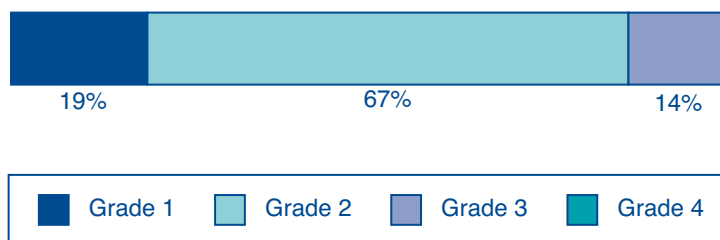
- the strong emphasis on devising and implementing appropriate and effective arrangements at KS3 and KS4, including vocational programmes at KS4;
- the strong focus on meeting the particular needs of individual pupils, including pupils with challenging and significant behaviours;
- in a minority of the schools, the effective EPs and their use by subject departments to meet subject requirements and the needs of the pupils;
- the generally effective provision made for statemented pupils.

5.6 The main areas for improvement include the need for:

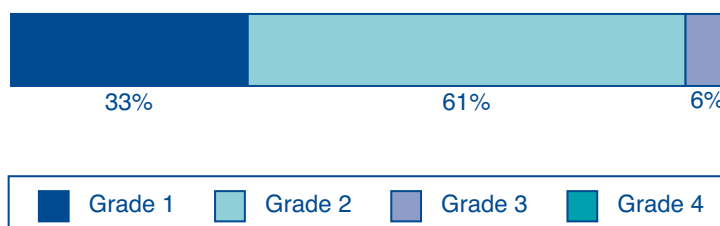
- a better balance, within subject-specific planning and practice, between the teaching of the subject and addressing more systematically the literacy, numeracy and other requirements of the pupils;
- the more effective use and development of the EPs.

6. THE QUALITY OF THE TEACHING

Quality of Teaching: KS3



Quality of Teaching: KS4



6.1 In most of the schools visited, the overall quality of teaching of the pupils with SEN is sound or better. The teaching has many strengths in a significant minority of the schools visited. However, the grades also indicate that there are significant strengths in only a minority of the lessons observed in KS3, where problems in literacy and numeracy require early and effective attention. Furthermore, it will be important that the standard of teaching for special needs is improved in that minority of lessons in KS3 where weaknesses outweigh strengths.

6.2 The main strengths are:

- in those schools where the needs of the pupils are identified and addressed effectively, the teachers' high expectations, and the quality of their teaching which is mostly of a sound or better standard;
- the sound or better quality of classroom management;
- the effective focus on improving the pupils' literacy, numeracy and other needs;
- the relevant and helpful nature of the programmes taught in KS4, especially those which enable the pupils to combine in-school courses with external vocational courses and appropriate work placement opportunities.

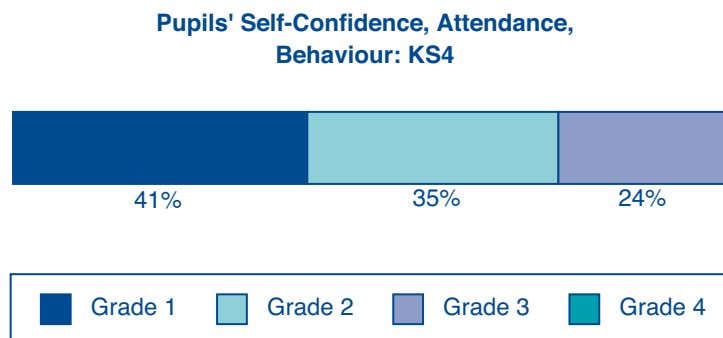
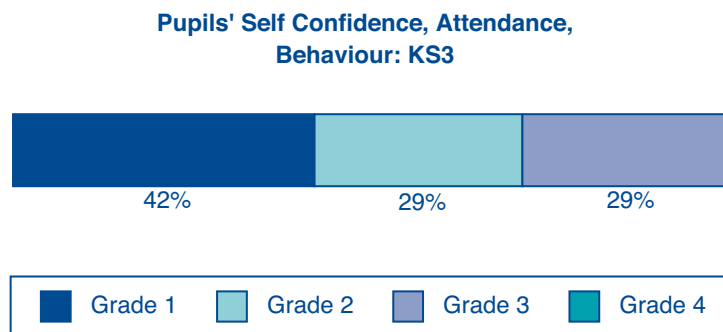
6.3 The main areas for improvement include the need for:

- the more effective translation of planning into classroom practice through better attention to individual pupils by way of more effective teaching strategies, the better use of relevant data, and greater attention to marking for improvement;
- a reduction in undifferentiated whole-class teaching, and in inappropriate worksheet tasks, which do not address effectively enough the pupils' weaknesses in literacy and numeracy;
- a greater focus on identifying the progress, or lack of it, made by those pupils who require additional help with their learning, and on the issues arising.



7. OUTCOMES

7.1 In KS3, in a majority of the schools visited, and in KS4, in most of the schools visited, there is evidence that the provision made for pupils with special needs is impinging positively on their self-confidence, attendance and behaviour. The teachers, and those with particular responsibility for special needs, are also strongly of the view that most of the pupils show evidence of progress in these areas.



7.2 In some 25% to 30% of the schools visited, greater efforts need to be made to engage more positively and systematically with those pupils who require special help with their learning. Furthermore, greater explicit attention needs to be given, in relation to curricular provision generally, and to teaching and learning strategies in particular, to bring about observable improvement in the pupils' behaviour, attendance, self-esteem and self-confidence. Without these gains, it will be especially difficult to improve these pupils' literacy, numeracy and other competences.

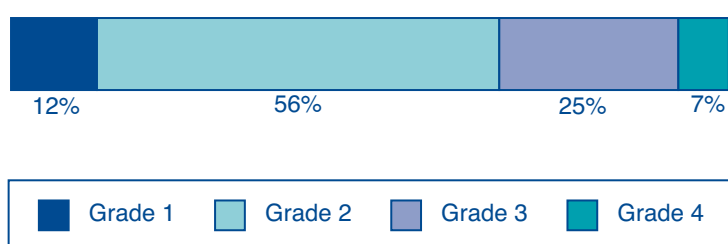
7.3 In a majority of the schools visited, in KS3 and in KS4, the provision made for pupils with special needs results in improvements in the pupils' literacy and numeracy competences. Significant strengths in bringing about such

improvements were identified in a minority of the schools visited. In the one-third of schools visited, where weaknesses outweigh strengths in relation to the standard of the pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy, or where there are significant weaknesses, it will be especially important that measures are taken to bring about improvement.

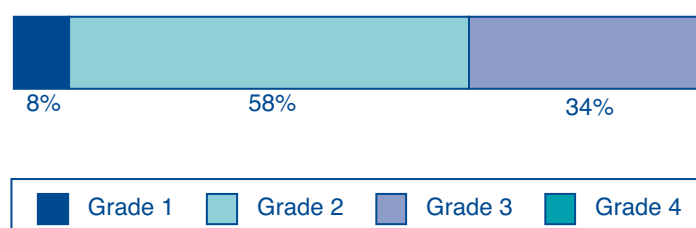
7.4 A minority of the schools visited provided sound evidence to demonstrate the progress of pupils with special needs, in terms, for example, of significant advances in standardised scores in literacy and/or numeracy. In contrast, few of the schools visited use such data on a year-on-year basis, or collectively across KS3, to track (and to demonstrate to staff) evidence of the pupils' progress (or lack of it), or to consider the implications of changing patterns in relation to the attainment of the pupils entering the school.

7.5 The use of predictive grades, derived from cognitive ability testing, is becoming increasingly common. While there are many advantages to be gained from the use of such approaches, it is important that schools do not measure their success based only on the extent to which the pupils achieve the grade predicted in the test; for example, in respect of attaining a level 3 or 4 at the end of KS3 when the target for pupils is level 5 or better. Where predictive grades are too low, it will be important that the school focuses its attention on improving that level rather than taking a position that the pupils, or some of them, have attained successfully the level predicted.

Improvements in the Pupils' Standards in Literacy and Numeracy: KS3



Improvements in the Pupils' Standards in Literacy and Numeracy: KS4





7.6 The main strengths are:

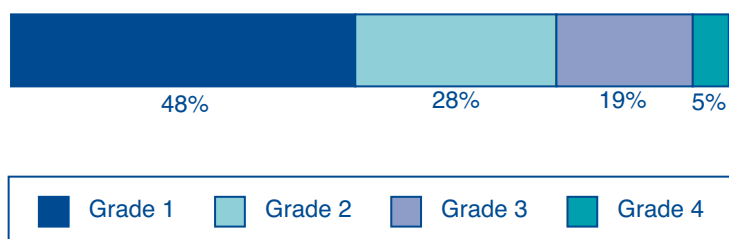
- the helpful and effective use of relevant data, and other evidence, to determine the extent to which the pupils make, and continue to make, progress, and the strong and appropriate focus on raising the standard of their work;
- in the most effective schools, the soundness of the evidence illustrating the significant improvements made in the standards of literacy and numeracy of those pupils who require additional help with their learning.

7.7 The main areas for improvement include the need for:

- the more effective identification and implementation of those learning and teaching strategies, and organisational arrangements, which have the potential to improve the attainment of the pupils;
- the more effective use of data, and other relevant information, to shape planning and teaching, and to determine the progress of those pupils who require additional support, and those pupils not included on the register for special needs but who would also benefit from support for their learning;
- improvements in assessment practices, and reductions in the over-generous grading of the pupils' work, particularly in literacy.

8. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Quality of Leadership and Management:
Principal/Senior Management Team: combined
Non-selective and selective schools**



8.1 In most of the schools visited, the quality of leadership and management of SEN has significant strengths, or more strengths than weaknesses; in just under one-half of the schools, leadership and management has significant

strengths. While these outcomes testify to the efforts of principals and senior managers, they also suggest that, in a majority of the schools visited, more attention should be given to bringing about further improvement in relation to the management and development of provision and outcomes in SEN.

8.2 In one-quarter of the schools visited, the leadership and management of special education reflect more weaknesses than strengths, or significant weaknesses. It will be especially important that, in these schools, measures are taken to improve the management of SEN.

8.3 The main strengths are:

- the strong commitment and vision demonstrated by principals and senior management to meeting the needs of those pupils who require additional help with their learning;
- in most schools, the effective curricular and other arrangements that support special needs in KS3, and the innovative partnerships created in relation to the development of vocational education in KS4;
- in most schools, the effective use of funding to respond to special needs through the creation of smaller classes, the purchase of appropriate resources, and the release of SENCOs and other support teachers;
- in most schools, the effective arrangements made to monitor and evaluate the quality and appropriateness of special educational provision and outcomes.

8.4 The main areas of improvement include the need for:

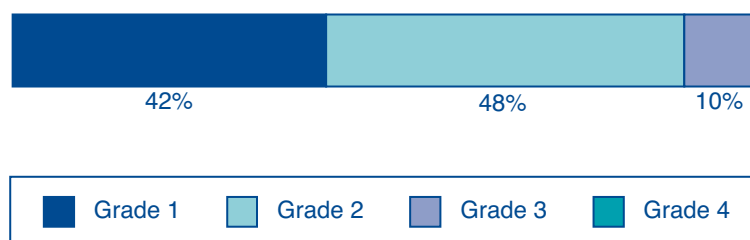
- senior management, in a quarter of the schools visited, to have a more informed knowledge and understanding of special educational provision, standards, and issues arising;
- the further development of monitoring and evaluation arrangements by senior management, including the use of benchmarking, to ensure that policy, practice and standards are appropriate;
- in a minority of the schools visited, greater clarity in the allocation of resources for special education to ensure that funding is used fully for the purpose for which it was made available.



9. THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS CO-ORDINATOR

- 9.1 In most of the schools visited, the work of the SENCOs demonstrates significant strengths, or the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. In just over 40% of the schools visited, their work shows significant strengths.
- 9.2 The influence of the SENCOs is a critical factor in ensuring that the impact of policy and practice is as strong as it should be. In most of the schools visited, there is evidence that their influence is positive and helpful, and does much to integrate effectively policy, practice and outcomes.
- 9.3 In some 83% of the schools visited, and notwithstanding the importance of special needs as an issue within the curriculum and within education generally, the SENCO is not a part of the senior management team. This does not mean that the co-ordinators do not play a central role within the schools, or do not provide senior management with regular updates on matters pertaining to special education. In many of the schools visited, for example, they participate in, and exert influence on, various high profile working groups.
- 9.4 The time available to the SENCOs to carry out their work is a significant factor in their effectiveness. Across the schools visited, this varies considerably. The time allocations range from an inadequate one hour per week to eleven hours per week; the allocation of time for most of the co-ordinators falls between 2.5 hours and some five hours each week. The adequacy of these allocations merits consideration, particularly in those schools where the co-ordinators have to make detailed representations to CCEA, and to other examining boards, requesting additional time for those pupils with special needs who are taking external examinations, or where improved liaison is required in relation to specialist teachers, Outreach officers, and with other support personnel.

Effectiveness of the Co-ordinator for
Special Educational Needs



9.5 The main strengths are:

- the hard-working, conscientious and effective manner in which most of the SENCOs discharge their responsibilities;
- the effective arrangements to monitor the special needs programme and to disseminate information to the subject teachers and to other support staff;
- the good quality of documentation, record keeping, and development planning;
- the good communication with staff, including helpful practical advice.

9.6 The main areas for improvement include the need for:

- a broader and more effective vision of policy and practice to ensure that the expertise of all specialist teachers and support staff is drawn upon in ways that address effectively the needs of those pupils who require additional help with their learning, and to bring about improvement;
- less emphasis on the administrative aspects of the post of SENCO and a greater focus on responding more effectively to the diverse needs of the pupils;
- more effective monitoring of the progress made by the pupils, coupled with the better use and dissemination of data to bring about, or to demonstrate, improvement.

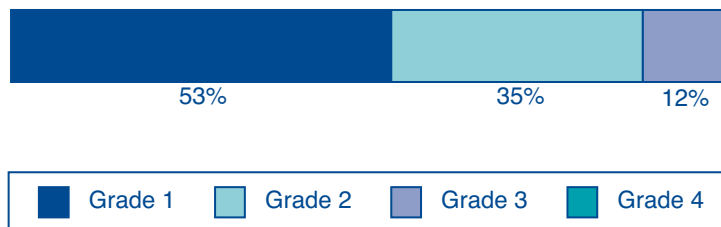
10. THE EXTENT TO WHICH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ARE A PRIORITY IN SCHOOLS' DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

10.1 In most of the schools visited, appropriate and effective attention is given in whole-school development and action planning to special education provision and to related issues. There is evidence, especially in non-selective schools, that senior management is increasingly aware of changes, demographic and otherwise, which are affecting adversely the schools' capacity to respond effectively to a steady rise in the incidence of SEN. In some of the schools, for example, this has resulted in the preparation of highly detailed and appropriate actions plans to take forward special education policy and practice; for instance, in one school, an action plan has been devised to bring about further improvement in a wide range of



areas linked to special needs including the development of linguistic phonics, resources, in-service programmes, links with subject departments, and the more effective use and dissemination of data.

Extent to which Special Educational Needs is a priority in the Schools' Development Plans



10.2 The main strengths are:

- the prominent and effective emphasis given to the development and monitoring of special educational provision and outcomes, to issues arising, and to the need for further improvement;
- the attention given to the implications of inclusion, and to the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order, 2005.

10.3 The main areas for improvement include the need for:

- in a minority of the schools visited, much greater attention, in whole-school planning and in action planning, to SEN and to issues arising;
- greater emphasis in development planning to issues related to teaching, learning, and outcomes.

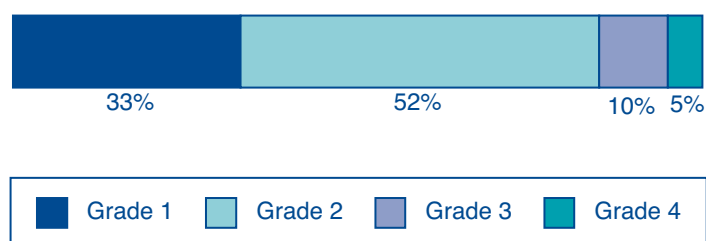
11. THE QUALITY OF ASSISTANCE RECEIVED FROM OFFICERS OF THE CURRICULUM AND SUPPORT SERVICES OF THE EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARDS, AND FROM OUTREACH SUPPORT OFFICERS

11.1 In most of the schools visited, the support provided by CASS, by Outreach support officers, and by other external support staff such as educational welfare officers, peripatetic staff from the education and library boards, educational psychologists, and by staff from the social services is helpful, effective and valued. Taken together, the wide range of external support

available to the schools is having a positive influence on improving the nature and quality of provision for SEN.

11.2 External links are less secure in relation to those centres providing Alternative Educational Provision (AEP) for young people expelled and suspended from school, or those pupils who have difficulties coping with formal and conventional school-based education. In many of the schools visited, there is much uncertainty among staff about the service AEP offers to schools in relation to suspended, expelled, or disaffected pupils; in particular, teachers often confuse AEP provision with arrangements made in respect of the KS4 Flexibility Initiative which offers vocational and work placement opportunities for (mostly) lower attaining pupils in years 11 and 12. There is evidence, in a significant minority of the schools visited, that they are in frequent contact with the AEP centres in which their pupils are placed; contact is maintained through regular written or oral reports, through termly reviews and case study conferences. In other schools visited during the survey, arrangements are much less secure and there is a lack of knowledge about the pupils and their progress; in these schools, no formal links are maintained with the AEP centres, or the nature and quality of the links are poor.

CASS and outreach Support



11.3 The main strengths are:

- the positive impact of external support in relation to consolidating and developing special educational provision in mainstream schools;
- the in-service support and advice provided to assist with the development of special educational policy, to help the work of the SENCOs, develop teaching and learning strategies, and improve methods of assessment.



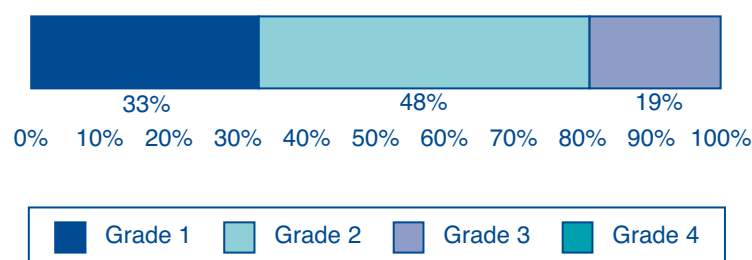
11.4 The main areas for improvement include the need for:

- the further development of the links between Outreach Support officers from special schools, other external support officers, and the staff of mainstream schools, through more systematic liaison and the better dissemination of those teaching and learning strategies that have the potential to meet the needs of those pupils who require additional support;
- more effective links between schools and the AEP centres providing support for those pupils who cannot cope successfully with more formal and conventional school-based education.

12. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROVISION AND OUTCOMES

12.1 In most of the schools visited, provision and outcomes in special needs reflect significant strengths, or the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. In almost one-fifth of the schools, the weaknesses outweigh the strengths. When overall effectiveness is considered in relation only to non-selective schools, where special education needs present a considerable challenge particularly in literacy and numeracy, those schools where weaknesses outweigh strengths rise from almost one-fifth to almost a quarter.

Overall Effectiveness of Special Educational Needs Provision and Outcomes in the Schools Surveyed: combined non-selective and selective schools



12.2 In the schools visited, the main strengths are:

- within an inclusive learning environment, the good quality of provision, the good experiences the pupils receive, especially those who have very particular needs, the good relationships, and the sound or better quality of the teaching;
- the commitment of staff, teaching and non-teaching, to the needs of the pupils;

- the effective identification of the pupils' needs;
- the appropriate EPs;
- the progress made by many of the pupils who require additional help, in terms, for example, of their self-confidence, self-esteem, and in relation to improvements in their literacy and numeracy skills;
- the sound or better administrative and curricular structures, including the helpful withdrawal and in-class support arrangements, and the introduction of more vocationally-oriented programmes in KS4;
- the leadership, hard work and commitment of the SENCOs, their knowledge and understanding of the needs of individual pupils, and their overall management of the programme for special needs;
- the leadership of senior management, and the attention given in development and action planning to the further improvement of provision for special needs;
- the appropriate monitoring and evaluation procedures, and use of data.

12.3 In the schools visited, the main areas for improvement include the need for:

- a stronger leadership at all levels, in a minority of the schools visited, especially in relation to the more effective management of policy, practice, and the further development of the special needs programme;
- a clearer diagnosis of the pupils' learning and other needs, as part of a more effective use of EPs, the clearer identification of the strategies to address the targets contained in the EPs, and more effective review arrangements;
- a more systematic and rigorous use of data to identify targets for individual pupils, to track the progress of the pupils, and to identify improvement;
- a more effective focus, across and within the subject departments, on improving the literacy and numeracy skills of individual pupils;
- improved liaison with the contributory primary schools, and with other agencies involved in supporting the pupils who need additional help.



13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 In many of the schools visited as part of this survey, but particularly in the non-selective schools, reference was made to the increase in the number of pupils entering year 8 in need of additional support. It was noted frequently that many pupils enter post-primary education with conditions such as dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorders, behavioural problems, and with learning difficulties, especially significantly deficient literacy and numeracy skills; teachers also point to an increase in the number of pupils with statements. In some of the schools, the level of concern is such that the teachers worry about their ability to cater effectively for such a significant rise in special needs. Reference was also made to the increasing numbers of pupils from the ethnic minorities who need additional support in English.
- 13.2 Teachers and senior managers commented frequently on the factors that underlie these changes, particularly those demographic trends that adversely affect enrolment. In addition, they noted, with concern, evidence among these pupils of an increasingly diverse range of social and educational needs. They also commented critically on those factors impinging negatively upon their ability to provide a school-based counselling service for the pupils, and to the increasingly difficult financial climate affecting adversely the support available from Social Services, from educational psychologists, and from the education and library boards generally.
- 13.3 Despite these challenging issues, the outcomes of the survey point to much evidence of substantial work, and to progress in relation to a range of key areas, including improvements in the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. There is evidence too of much commitment and professionalism on the part of teachers, SENCOs, senior management, and support staff.
- 13.4 In the main, the position in respect of provision and outcomes in relation to special needs in post-primary education indicates an improving situation, even though too many pupils continue to enter post-primary education deficient in basic skills.
- 13.5 Notwithstanding the many strengths identified in this survey, there is little room for complacency. The outcomes demonstrate that, in relation to provision and outcomes in special needs, significant strengths are evident in only 33% of the schools visited. In an additional 48%, there are more strengths than weaknesses. These weaknesses require attention to bring about a situation where provision and outcomes are characterised by

significant strengths in a greater number of schools. Furthermore, it will be especially important that provision and outcomes are improved significantly in approximately 20% of the schools visited where weaknesses outweigh strengths.

- 13.6 Special educational needs have been identified as a recurring theme and an area for improvement in previous Chief Inspector's reports. Improvement will require much commitment and significant actions. For schools, this will involve a strong focus on SEN and on inclusion, a commitment to investment in training, and the establishment of networking arrangements with other interested schools and agencies. For the education and library boards, the opportunity should be taken by CASS, and by the psychology and other support services, to develop stronger alliances of schools to help in the further raising of standards. For the Department of Education, attention should be given to developing an effective strategic overview through a working audit and a sharper focus on SEN within the context of the review of public administration and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SEND0); this should be designed to bring about, over a five-year period, improvements in standards of provision and improvement in the level of achievement of young people with SEN.
- 13.7 Much remains to be done if the needs of those pupils who require extra help with their learning are to be addressed in the most effective and efficient manner.



List of schools participating in the survey

Ballyclare Secondary School

Brownlow Integrated College, Craigavon

Campbell College, Belfast

Donaghadee High School

Dunluce School, Bushmills

Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast

Larne High School

Limavady High School

Nendrum College, Comber

Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Belfast

Shimna Integrated College, Newcastle

Slemish College, Ballymena

St Cecilia's College, Londonderry

St Eugene's College, Roslea

St Joseph's Boys' School, Londonderry

St Joseph's High School, Coalisland

St Joseph's High School, Plumbridge

St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint

St Mary's College, Portglenone

Strabane High School

Tandragee Junior High School



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