

THE NATIONAL NUMERACY STRATEGY IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS: An evaluation of the first year

Contents

EVIDENCE BASE	1
Main findings	1
Key issues and points for action	3
STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS	5
THE QUALITY OF TEACHING	6
Oral and mental work	6
The main teaching activity	7
The plenary	7
Aspects of teaching	8
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	10
The role of the headteacher	10
The role of the mathematics co-ordinator	10
Leading mathematics teachers	11
SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS: Training, Numeracy Consultants and the role of the LEA	12
The training courses	12
The role of numeracy consultants	12
The role of other LEA personnel	13
CONCLUSION	14
APPENDIX: List of Schools visited	15

THE NATIONAL NUMERACY STRATEGY IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS: An evaluation of the first year

EVIDENCE BASE

1. As part of the monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) of the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS), HMI from the special educational needs (SEN) team visited 42 special schools from 15 local educational authorities (LEAs) during the autumn term of 1999 and the early months of the spring term of 2000. Seventy-two mathematics lessons were seen. All except two of the special schools were maintained by LEAs. About one-third of the special schools were selected because there was an expectation that sound practice would be seen. The other two-thirds were selected at random to ensure that there was full coverage of the range of different disabilities and the different combination of disabilities in many of the special schools. The majority of special schools were for pupils with either moderate or severe learning difficulties or both, but schools for the physically disabled, the visually impaired, pupils with autism and the hearing impaired were also included. Almost all of the special schools had pupils from at least two disability groups and most had an age-range covering more than two key stages. Special schools began to implement the Strategy in September 1999 at the same time as primary schools.
2. In the majority of the schools, two mathematics lessons were observed and interviews were held with the headteacher and the mathematics co-ordinator. In two schools, governors who had attended the numeracy training were interviewed. One HMI was able to observe one LEA's three-day Strategy training for all of their primary and special schools and then to inspect the implementation of the Strategy in all of the LEA's six special schools.

3. In some special schools mathematics is being taught at the same time in all classes and, therefore, it was considered inappropriate to request these to amend their timetables for the HMI's visit as it would be too disrupting for some very challenging pupils.
4. Only two schools had received intensive support from the numeracy consultants and the consequent additional training days. Inspections took place before the NNS regional training conferences which were held for teachers from schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and before schools received additional guidance on the use of differential performance criteria for pupils working towards level one of the National Curriculum for mathematics, which are generally referred to as P-scales. This report should be read alongside *The National Numeracy Strategy: the first year*¹ which was HMIs' evaluation of the first year of the NNS Strategy in primary schools.

Main findings

5. All of the special schools, including those with pupils who have the severest learning and behaviour needs, welcomed their involvement in the Strategy. They considered it important for all special schools, whatever the nature of the pupils' disability, to be participating fully in both the NNS and the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). Teachers have welcomed the Framework for teaching but they are having difficulty in dovetailing the planning arrangements for mathematics with other parts of the curriculum. This is particularly evident in the schools where pupils have the severest learning needs or where the

¹ *The National Numeracy Strategy: the first year* (OFSTED 2000) - reference HMI 239 is available from OFSTED Publications or may be downloaded from the OFSTED website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

behaviour of the pupils is very challenging and unpredictable.

6. About three-quarters of the schools have been successful in adopting the three-part mathematics lesson each day, but often they are struggling to establish effective teaching and learning strategies for the plenary session. Mathematics now has a clearly identified and guaranteed slot on the timetable; it is no longer seen as just part of a general lesson that also includes English and work from other subjects.
7. All of the LEA special schools have introduced the Strategy, although sometimes in an adapted form, for pupils at Key Stage 2, and an increasing number of schools have done so for pupils at Key Stage 3. Special schools for pupils of secondary age were also visited where the NNS is being implemented, usually most successfully, for pupils at Key Stage 3.
8. The special schools' greatest concern is their need to make appropriate adaptations to the Framework for those pupils with significant special needs, particularly those with severe learning difficulties, those presenting challenging behaviour and those on the autistic spectrum. Nevertheless, some innovative strategies are being developed in the schools with such pupils.
9. The quality of the teaching was satisfactory or better in three-quarters of the lessons seen and good or very good in over half of the lessons. Where teaching was less than satisfactory, the contributing factors were usually a poor grasp of the Framework, limited subject knowledge by teachers and poor lesson planning. Sometimes there was significant variation in the quality of lessons in the same school.
10. A difficulty for many special schools is having to combine several year groups within one class. Occasionally, class groupings cross key stages; in classes for

pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties they can include more than two key stages. In a few schools there were parallel classes for pupils with different disabilities and arrangements for teaching the mathematics lesson were different as a consequence.

11. Teachers consider that the introduction of the NNS is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and in their view the attitudes of pupils to mathematics and their behaviour in lessons have also improved significantly. Schools consider that the introduction of familiar routines and of an agreed structure for each lesson has been particularly beneficial.
12. Headteachers are very positive about the way that the Strategy has improved the quality of teaching. However, they observed lessons very rarely and their deputies did so only occasionally, so their evidence is often limited.
13. The oral and mental work at the beginning of each lesson was usually the most effective part of that lesson and the time that pupils enjoyed most. In a school for pupils with physical disabilities who in general cannot have direct experience except with adult support, the Strategy has increased the amount of mental work that those pupils now undertake.
14. The main teaching activity was satisfactory in over half of the lessons, and in about one-quarter of lessons it was good or very good. But often there were difficulties in the grouping of the pupils and teachers found it hard to provide appropriate levels of work, differentiated for the individual needs of pupils within those groups.
15. The plenary sessions were often proving to be difficult even in lessons where the first two parts had been successful.

Many schools have yet to introduce the plenary part and consider it to be very difficult to manage effectively. This session was judged to be satisfactory in a half of lessons and good in one-quarter of lessons.

16. Special schools are not consistent in how they utilise assessment data and establish curricular and numeracy targets. They have all developed individual education plans (IEPs) for their pupils which take account of their disabilities, but these do not always link easily with the medium- and long-term planning required in the Framework. Too many of the schools are struggling with this in isolation and there is insufficient regular help from experienced and knowledgeable professionals who have a sound knowledge of both the Strategy and the particular needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour.
17. The majority of schools considered the training provided by LEA numeracy consultants to be valuable but they regretted the limited attention given to the needs of special schools. All teachers in special schools who teach mathematics would benefit from specific training from the numeracy consultants, in conjunction with SEN advisers, that focuses on the needs of their pupils.
18. Standards of teaching and learning were consistently higher in the two schools for pupils with visual impairment (VI) and the two schools for pupils with hearing impairment (HI) than in the other special schools. The schools for pupils with HI or VI were the only special schools where the overall grades for both lessons and for overall leadership and management were consistently good or very good. While there was some difficulty with the action plan and the audit in one school, there was a consistent pattern across all four schools of very good practice.
19. There are particular aspects to the implementation of the NNS for both VI and HI pupils that have to be addressed. Additional funding needs to be provided to release skilful practitioners from the schools to prepare materials and additional guidance for other teachers in both special schools for these disabilities and for mainstream schools (both designated provision and other) where there are pupils with visual or hearing impairment.

Key issues and points for action

20. Special schools have commented favourably on the improvements that have taken place in pupils' learning and teaching as a result of the introduction of the Strategy. It is, therefore, important that the hard work and commitment in these schools are sustained. Thus, there are some important key issues that need to be addressed:

- ❖ *at present too many mathematics teachers in special schools have limited subject knowledge. This needs to be remedied through specific training;*
- ❖ *there is confusion over the purpose and function of IEPs for pupils with statements of SEN now that both NNS and NLS are in place in special schools; authoritative guidance is urgently required;*
- ❖ *special schools require more coherent guidance on how to formulate numeracy targets and on how the recording of pupils' progress can be clearer and easier to understand by parents and pupils;*
- ❖ *headteachers and other senior staff should become more involved in classroom observation;*
- ❖ *there should be more leading mathematics teachers from special schools and more regional collaboration on their use;*
- ❖ *funding and training presently available to LEA and maintained schools for both NNS and NLS should be offered also to non-maintained special schools;*

- ❖ *arrangements to fund the release of specialist teachers in special schools for pupils with visual and hearing impairment should be made so that they can improve on the preparation of materials related to their specific needs;*
- ❖ *SEN advisers should work in collaboration with numeracy consultants to provide special schools with more effective support;*
- ❖ *LEAs should improve the quality of their specialist advice to special schools, especially those schools where recent reorganisation has meant that the schools now have an all-age multi-disability population;*
- ❖ *schools would find it valuable to receive further guidance about the expectations of registered inspectors in relation to the NNS.*

STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS

21. There has been no analysis yet by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) of National Curriculum test results of pupils in special schools, of the type now available for pupils in primary schools.
22. The view of all schools was that pupils enjoyed the mathematics lessons, were better motivated as a result and participated in lessons to a greater extent than previously. Schools felt that there was an increasing understanding of what mathematics, in particular numeracy, was all about and that there were cross-curricular benefits in areas such as information & communication technology (ICT) and geography. Pupils are making better use of the language of mathematics and of mathematical terms.
23. The pupils' positive attitudes to the subject and their ability to sustain work over a long period of time are extremely encouraging. Some schools are beginning to make use of the P-scales to plan lessons and set appropriate targets.

THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

24. The National Numeracy Strategy is now being implemented in special schools for almost all pupils at Key Stage 2 and in many of the schools for pupils at both Key Stages 2 and 3. Almost all schools have introduced a three-part daily mathematics lesson that follows closely the guidance in the Framework. The lesson usually takes place in the morning, and most of the schools have also introduced a daily literacy or language hour, again in the morning. Therefore, in most special schools at Key Stage 2 the morning is programmed for literacy and numeracy, with little opportunity to teach other subjects. Some schools have been unable to arrange this every day because of the timetabling of individual or group therapy sessions and swimming lessons or the use of external providers for physical education (PE) and games or because the pupils attend lessons in mainstream schools as part of their inclusion programme.
25. The majority of the teachers who are teaching mathematics in special schools are not mathematics specialists and many have not been trained to teach pupils of primary age. These teachers have found both the Framework and the structure of the three-part lesson particularly helpful to them as non-specialists. They have found that the Framework has brought about cohesiveness not previously evident when they had only the National Curriculum documents and the schools' scheme of work for guidance.
26. Initial concerns over the length, content and format of the numeracy lesson have been dispelled. Often pupils with severe learning difficulties have been participating for a full hour, and in some schools adaptations have been made to ensure that the structure of the numeracy lesson is maintained, even though the lesson is only perhaps half an hour long. Often in these shorter lessons it is the plenary part that is omitted.
27. The schools where teaching was weakest were generally those catering for a wide age-range, often in the same class, and with a mixture of pupils covering a range of disabilities and individual needs. Practice was most successful in schools with a clear designation and identification. This applied not just to the schools for pupils with sensory impairment but to other special schools.
28. In the successful lessons teachers were able to minimise the amount of written instruction, enable pupils to return to work at an earlier level and ensure they did not remain completing tasks that they had already mastered. Some of the teachers felt that the Strategy was enabling many of their pupils to work at a higher level of mathematical understanding than they had previously thought possible. The Strategy has led to displays around the school with an increasing mathematical focus.
- Oral and mental work**
29. The most effective element of the daily mathematics lesson has been the oral and mental starter. This was well taught in over three-quarters of lessons and the time allocation in the Framework was often extended to enhance pupils' confidence or pleasure in what they were doing and as a means of reinforcing other basic skills. Sometimes this part of the lesson was combined with the welcoming of the pupils into the class and often it had a significant musical and signing component that worked well. The positioning of pupils was particularly important, as many of them required some form of augmented

communication. The use of counting songs, rhymes and interactive games was often very effective. Where pupils had the necessary language skills, they enjoyed the quick-fire interaction with the adults, and often there was a physical component to this part of the lesson that was beneficial to pupils with limited expressive language, or for those who needed to have some physical participation to sustain their interest and involvement. There was good pace in the lessons, with staff keen to challenge the pupils and expecting them to respond quickly.

30. In those few schools where this element was weak, contributory factors included poor lesson planning, inappropriate use of supporting adults and too much disruption, for example from the late arrival of pupils at the beginning of the day or from poorly-timed toilet breaks. Sometimes the attempt to allow all pupils to make an individual contribution slowed down the session considerably and many pupils too often just sat passively or became disruptive and bored.

The main teaching activity

31. The main teaching activity was satisfactory in over half of the lessons, and in about one-quarter of lessons it was good or very good. The most important factor in this part of the lesson was the teacher's ability to explain clearly to the class what was required of each group, and for the pupils to see how it related to work completed in previous lessons. All materials and equipment were in place and the additional adults in the classroom knew what was expected of them and how they would be working with their group to enhance their mathematical skills.
32. For some schools, bringing pupils together as a class group rather than constant individual working was a new feature.

33. In some of the more effective lessons, the main teaching activity was a planned continuation of work started in the oral and mental section but continued in small groups, with opportunities to reinforce knowledge already demonstrated or to apply it in different mathematical situations. More time has been given to the mastering of mental strategies than to the recording of this knowledge through standard written methods. This emphasis was proving beneficial.
34. Many teachers commented on the fact that now they were better able to maintain an appropriate balance between whole-class direct teaching and individual or small group work. There was less reliance on worksheets or inappropriate published textbooks and pupils were no longer being presented with meaningless rows of addition or subtraction sums. Teachers were using a wider range of practical equipment such as number lines, hundred squares and symbol cards. These they had often seen in use during the training days.

The plenary

35. Many special schools providing for pupils with a range of different disabilities find the plenary session to be the most challenging part of the three-part mathematics lesson. In some schools, including some of those where the other two parts of the lesson have been very successful, the plenary has not yet been introduced. This is either because teachers feel that it will be too disruptive to bring pupils back together when they have been working well in their small groups or because they are uncertain how to organise the plenary. Sometimes the plenary takes place only 'if time allows' and can become just an occasion for putting away books and equipment before the next lesson or preparing for playtime or the lunch break. Too often teachers have interpreted this session as being an

occasion when their pupils will have to describe or explain in turn what they have been doing in the main part of the lesson. When this happens it usually takes too long because of the need for augmented communication to assist and so may appear repetitive. The schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) or where the majority of the pupils have no expressive language have found this session particularly hard.

36. The more experienced special school teachers have been able to adapt this part of the lesson successfully. Some introduce it rather later in the day; others link it to the presentation of work at the end of the day or as a preparation for homework.
37. Where the plenary took place it was satisfactory in nine out of ten lessons and good or very good in four out of ten. However, many of the teachers still lacked confidence that the plenary could be made to work well for their pupils.

Aspects of teaching

38. In many schools the implementation of the Strategy has helped the teachers to agree a common format across all class groups. They have welcomed the clarity of the objectives in the Framework and have found planning individual lessons to be fairly straightforward. There is a clear structure to the Framework that enables the teachers, especially the non-specialists, to see how individual parts relate to the whole. The difficulties encountered relate to the medium-term and long-term planning and the way in which this planning links to that for other subjects and across the whole school. In many schools it has proved very time-consuming, repetitive and cumbersome. Without clear guidance either from their headteacher or the LEA advisers many teachers find it an irksome and often unproductive chore.

39. In about half of the schools, planning and co-ordination were only satisfactory. In some schools it was too complicated and laborious, while in others it was often too piecemeal. Special schools are finding it particularly difficult to link the planning for both mathematics and literacy, as envisaged in the Numeracy and Literacy Strategies, with the writing of IEPs and of curricular and other targets. Even in schools where practice was good in the mathematics lessons, planning was proving quite difficult to manage. This was sometimes due to internal school factors or to particular teachers' lack of subject expertise, or it occurred where there were difficulties in formulating a whole-school approach to planning. In many other cases, confused messages were given from different external sources or from panic at the prospect of external inspection. Many schools perceive that they are receiving different advice from their LEA link advisers, their SEN advisers, Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) documentation, OFSTED guidance for inspection and the views of LEA numeracy consultants.
40. In the majority of special schools most of the adults in the classroom are learning support assistants (LSAs). Their contribution is essential in order to give individual attention to all pupils, not just to manage disruptive behaviour and the taking of pupils to the toilet but to assist those who, without adult intervention, cannot have access to the curriculum and learning opportunities.
41. In about half of the schools, the LSAs were present for the in-school staff training days, but very few had received any additional training. Their deployment in the mathematics lessons was not always effective, especially during the oral and mental starter and plenary sessions. As experience grows, the mathematics co-ordinators will need to give more specific

guidance about the effective deployment of these adults in classes.

42. As a first step, it is essential that all LSAs have a sound understanding of the Framework and the expected outcomes for each lesson. It is good practice for them to be involved in the lesson planning and to know what specifically is expected of them. Some LSAs observed were making a valuable contribution, recording what pupils had achieved and teaching a group in the main teaching part of the lesson; however, in many cases they were not as well occupied.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The role of the headteacher

43. In all of the schools the headteachers identified the implementation of NNS as having been generally successful and resulting in improved teaching, better behaviour by pupils and more effective patterns of learning. The Strategy is seen as having improved the mathematical knowledge, interest and confidence of their teachers. Headteachers were usually satisfied with the way mathematics was co-ordinated in their school, but other than generally providing encouragement and support or making adaptations to timetabling, only a few were observing individual lessons on a regular basis. They were more likely to monitor the planning both for individual lessons or for medium- and long-term plans, but their ability to assess the success of the NNS was often restricted by the lack of classroom observation.
44. In about one-fifth of the schools there was either a newly appointed headteacher in her or his first term or the post was being held by an acting headteacher or a headteacher seconded from another school. Several of the schools had either recently been amalgamated or were in the process of significant change; some had uncertain futures. Some schools were under pressure to include their pupils in mainstream school lessons. This was, however, proving difficult to manage successfully and was leading to a fragmented curriculum for the child. Very often the people in senior positions in the schools were not those who had participated in the NNS training.
45. Headteachers were often unclear over the analysis and use of data and the setting of curricular targets. They could see how these processes were effective for individual pupils, but were finding it very hard to achieve targets for the whole school when

their school had pupils with a wide range of disabilities, some of whom attended part-time, or where there were unequal numbers in year groups and key stages. Often there were limited advice and guidance from their LEAs about how to proceed in these areas. They were more likely to be approaching other special schools (often in other LEAs), or to ask colleagues encountered through networks within their professional associations, or even through chance meetings with other senior teachers on SEN training days, for guidance. These arrangements are far from satisfactory.

The role of the mathematics co-ordinator

46. The role of the mathematics co-ordinator in the special schools has been significantly enhanced by the introduction of the Strategy. Most of the co-ordinators had attended the three-day training and in the majority of the schools they were having a positive impact on the implementation of the Strategy. Other teachers often commented favourably on their contribution. In some small schools the mathematics co-ordinator was also the only teacher of mathematics and often held a portfolio of curriculum and management responsibilities as well as being a class teacher. In a few large schools the role was divided according to key stages with either a co-ordinator for Key Stage 1 and another for Key Stage 2 or a mathematics co-ordinator for Key Stages 1 and 2 and another for Key Stage 3 and 4. In some all-age schools the co-ordinator for secondary-aged pupils was often responsible for those aspects of mathematics that were leading to external accreditation, while the co-ordinator for the primary years concentrated on implementing the Framework.
47. The co-ordinators have worked very hard to make a success of the Strategy and they are

been for it to work for pupils with a wide range of disabilities. Many teachers claim that it has given them 'a spring in their step' and they value the responsibility. The co-ordinators have been expected to have both a training role and monitoring responsibility. It is more likely for mathematics co-ordinators to be observing other teachers' mathematics lessons than for their head or deputy headteachers to be doing so.

48. The co-ordinators are of key importance in completing the school's audit and in many of the schools there is now a more rational basis to the purchasing and storage of resources. While finding the numeracy audit a daunting task, many co-ordinators nevertheless saw it as an important learning opportunity for them, particularly if the other class groupings in the school are for pupils whose age and disabilities are different from those in the co-ordinator's class.
49. The co-ordinators have been involved in the in-service training of other teachers, often in conjunction with the head or deputy headteacher and sometimes with the help of the numeracy consultants. Several schools copied the pattern introduced for the NLS, but a few used a less formal approach where it had become common practice for them to discuss the Strategy with teachers at the end of the school day. Finding time to disseminate good practice or discuss practical details has been hard to achieve: some schools are seeking to adapt their existing schemes of work, while others have discarded these and see the Framework now as providing their school's mathematics curriculum.
50. There were problems where the mathematics co-ordinator had not been in post at the time of the three-day training or for other reasons had not attended the training. The fact that the three-day training was available only on one occasion

presented a problem, given the significant turnover of co-ordinators.

Leading mathematics teachers

51. Special schools have so far made limited use of the leading mathematics teacher initiative: there are only a small number of leading mathematics teachers in special schools, even though the quality of teaching displayed by some teachers indicates that this is not due to a lack of talent. Many special school teachers have usually found visits to primary school teachers of little value and they have preferred visiting other special schools that educate pupils with similar disabilities, in order to see comparative practice. Arranging supply cover for such visits has proved difficult in some small LEAs where these would have to take place outside their LEA. Other teachers, particularly those who are new mathematics co-ordinators, have found visiting primary specialists an invaluable way of setting norms, seeing different practice and establishing specialist subject contacts that had not existed before. The different practice often reflects the differing patterns of teacher confidence and willingness to explore new ways.
52. Where mathematics lessons were taken by leading mathematics teachers in the special schools inspected they were consistently of a high standard.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS: Training, Numeracy Consultants and the role of the LEA

The training courses

53. Special schools welcomed the fact that they were involved in the three-day training. In the majority of schools either the head or the deputy headteacher was present with the mathematics co-ordinator for most of the three days. Governors were present in only a very few cases. In those schools where headteachers attended the training, the implementation of the Strategy in the school was usually more successful.
54. The training focused on the needs of the majority of primary pupils and most special schools felt that insufficient attention had been given to their specific requirements, either in the Framework or in the three-day training.
55. However, the special school teachers acknowledged that more attention had been given both to special needs and to special schools in the training for the Numeracy Strategy than had previously occurred in the training for literacy that several of the same teachers had also attended in the previous year. Some LEAs and their numeracy consultants had anticipated the problems for the special schools, and they either arranged on the third day for the special schools to work together on the planning aspects of the Strategy or for the staff of the special schools to return to their own school to work on these. Too often the special schools felt that they were seen as being awkward when they asked how different aspects applied to them; they were frequently told to follow the Framework 'in their own way', on the grounds that they were 'the experts on their own pupils'. Only a few special schools had been receiving intensive support and consequently had co-ordinators who had received additional training days. These

schools were far more confident in implementing the Strategy.

56. Other teachers acknowledged the difficulty for the trainers to take sufficient account of their specific special school or disability needs, and considered it was good professional development to look at the training from the point of view of all or the majority of primary pupils. They felt, however, that there should also be specific training in all LEAs afterwards. Some were intending to attend the forthcoming regional training days for the implementation of the Strategy for pupils with SLD and PMLD.

The role of the numeracy consultants

57. The extent of the involvement of the numeracy consultant has varied between special schools even within the same LEA and the reason for this has not always been clear to the schools. In some special schools either the headteacher or the mathematics co-ordinator has made direct approaches. As a consequence, the numeracy consultant has been involved in either observing lessons and attending the staff training or, in some cases, providing individual training sessions for school staff. Where this has happened it has been much valued and a useful network has been established as a result.
58. One consequence of the limited amount of visiting by numeracy consultants has been that many special schools, particularly where the quality of the teaching practice is not strong, have been left on their own without any external assistance from either the consultant or a LEA adviser. Schools that have been identified as having serious weaknesses or that have been in special

measures have usually received specific contributions from the numeracy consultant. There are many special schools, however, which are not in this situation but which, nevertheless, need specific help and guidance, particularly with target-setting, medium-term planning, curricular targets and IEPs. Although LEAs were invited to identify special schools for intensive support, only very few did and the special schools were unaware of this procedure. Headteachers and mathematics consultants are often not clear about the division of responsibilities between the LEAs and the consultants in providing specialist advice to special schools.

59. Very often the LEAs have not explained to the special schools where the numeracy consultants have had to give their highest priority and at what point in the cycle they might receive help.

The role of other LEA personnel

60. In many LEAs there is either no adviser or inspector for SEN, or the responsibility has been allocated to generic link advisers and inspectors. In those LEAs where there is an adviser for SEN, his or her involvement in the implementation of NNS in the special schools has been extremely limited. Most schools had no visits linked to the Strategy. Those schools where the pupils have the severest learning and behaviour difficulties feel they receive the most limited support from their SEN adviser. Advisers for SEN appear to be concentrating their support to enhancing inclusion in mainstream schools rather than being involved in the LEA's special schools, observing lessons and giving practical advice to the staff.
61. The recent local government reorganisation has also had an impact, in that more LEAs now have a reduced number of special schools (several have only one or two) and in many LEAs there is only one school for each disability. Professional development

for staff in these schools will, therefore, require far more regional and cross-LEA co-operation. The SEN advisers need to know their schools and identify specific training needs; it would be helpful if they took the lead in arranging these training days in conjunction with the numeracy consultants.

62. It is rare that an SEN adviser has both specialist knowledge of the education of pupils in special schools for pupils with severe learning or challenging behaviour and also a knowledge of the current Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. While link or patch advisers are valued in the special schools for their help with management, staff appointments and action planning, special schools observe that there are often no LEA advisers with the specialist knowledge required, especially for pupils presenting challenging behaviour, autism and severe learning difficulties. This is an acute concern in most special schools, especially when they struggle to implement key DfEE initiatives aimed at raising the standards of pupils' achievements, sometimes in situations where reorganisation has led to their having a very wide range of pupil disabilities.
63. Only a few LEAs have tried to bring their special schools together to help with planning and managing the Strategy and even these have often found it difficult because of the diversity of the schools (for example special schools for pupils with EBD or SLD may have little in common when implementing the Strategy in their schools). Usually, schools have either remained in isolation or sought through other channels to create a forum for the discussion and the sharing of ideas. The problem of an unfulfilled need for expert advice is symptomatic of the increasing isolation of the reduced number of special schools that cater for an increasing range of complex disabilities at a time when matters relating to inclusion dominate the LEA's SEN discussions and plans.

CONCLUSION

64. Special schools have made a good start in implementing the Strategy. All four key principles set out in the Framework are being addressed in most of the schools. However, special schools still need specific specialist help and guidance, particularly in the areas of target-setting, data analysis, assessment and medium-term planning. The Strategy has had a positive impact on special schools and it is expected that this will increase as teachers become more confident and knowledgeable and the pupils increasingly respond to the organised ways of the mathematics lessons.

APPENDIX ONE: Special Schools visited

School	LEA		
Thomas Wolsey	Suffolk	Summerfield	Bath & NE Somerset
Hillside	Suffolk	Fosse Way	Bath & NE Somerset
River Walk	Suffolk	Holly Bank	Kirklees (NMSS)
Priory	Suffolk	Longley	Kirklees
Heathside	Suffolk	West Hall	Wakefield
Downsview	East Sussex	The Loyne	Lancashire
Uplands	East Sussex	Lady Adrian	Cambridgeshire
Futcher	Portsmouth	Windmill	Cambridgeshire
Cliffdale	Portsmouth	Sunnyside	Bedfordshire
Bidwell Brook	Devon	Hitchmead	Bedfordshire
Oaklands Park	Devon	Beaumont Hill	Darlington
Southbrook	Devon		
St Nicholas	Kent		
St George's	Kent		
Valence	Kent		
Blackmarston	Herefordshire		
Westfields	Herefordshire		
Haywood Grove	Hertfordshire		
Larwood	Hertfordshire		
Severndale	Shropshire		
St Rose's	Gloucestershire (NMSS)		
Pens Meadow	Dudley		
Rosewood	Dudley		
Halesbury	Dudley		
Woodsetton	Dudley		
Old Park	Dudley		
Brier	Dudley		
Longwill	Birmingham		
Priestley Smith	Birmingham		
Elmfield	Bristol		
Exhall Grange	Warwickshire		

© Crown copyright 2001
Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

020 7421 6800

This report may be freely reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that any extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation, and on condition that the source and date are acknowledged.

This report may be downloaded from the OFSTED website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

An additional printed copy may be obtained, while stocks last, from **OFSTED publications**.

Telephone: **07002 637833**
Fax: **07002 693274**
E-mail: **freepublications@ofsted.gov.uk**

Reference no: **HMI 267**