

The Report of the Special Schools Working Group

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Foreword

Special schools in the maintained, non-maintained and independent sectors form a key and important part of the overall provision available for children with special educational needs. Many of them have done an outstanding job working with and nurturing the talents of some of the most disabled and disadvantaged children and young people in our society. The Government is strongly committed to the sector and wants to work in partnership with them to ensure they have a secure long-term future.

With greater numbers of children with special educational needs and disabilities being included in mainstream schools than ever before, many professionals working in the special schools sector feel uncertain about their future role. It is for that reason that I set up a working group last summer with a remit to look at the future role of special schools within the overarching framework of inclusion.

'The Report of the Special Schools Working Group' maps out a future programme of change for the special schools sector. The report proposes that special schools should increasingly cater for the growing population of children with severe and complex special educational needs; that they should be outward-looking centres of expertise and work more collaboratively with mainstream schools; and that the sector should go through a process of change in terms of leadership, teaching and learning, funding and structures and in the way in which they work with health, social services and other agencies with provide support beyond the classroom.

In order to inform its thinking on the report, the Working Group ran a number of focus groups for professionals working in the field, and for parents, children and young people. The reports from these focus groups are annexed to the main report. It is particularly

important that parents of children with special educational needs, and more especially the children themselves, should have a say in their education. The focus group report gives them a voice. I found many of the quotations and anecdotes in the report illuminating.

I strongly welcome this report. It has helped to focus on the unique and important contribution of special schools, and to inform our thinking on how they might contribute to the wider inclusion agenda. However, the report is the beginning rather than the end of the story.

We want to move this programme forward in partnership with all those individuals and institutions in education, health and social services who have a role in helping to educate children with special educational needs. I would therefore welcome your comments on the detailed proposals and recommendations in the report.

The special schools sector enjoys the Government's full support. In taking forward this programme of work, our aim will be to ensure that the unique contribution of the sector is valued, the achievements of special schools and their pupils are recognised and celebrated, and that the provision made available for children and young people with special educational needs is a paradigm of best practice wherever it exists.



Catherine Ashton



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Executive Summary

VISION

1. Special schools in the maintained, non-maintained and independent sectors form an important part of our education system. Many of them have done an excellent job in providing education and maximising the potential of children with special educational needs (SEN). However, the advent of greater inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools has meant that many special schools have felt unclear about their future role. This report sets out a vision for the future role of special schools within the overarching framework of inclusion, and maps out a programme for change.

Key Principles

The Special Schools Working Group believes that, in articulating a future role for special schools, the following key principles should underpin future developments:

- To provide high quality education and care for pupils – in maintained, non-maintained or independent schools – and demonstrate expertise in working with pupils with complex learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties and with sensory or physical impairments;
- To ensure effective partnership working between special and mainstream schools, the wider community, and health and social services, to meet the needs of children and young people and their families in a holistic way;
- To innovate in curricular development, and develop different ways of providing effectively for pupils with a range of SEN, and facilitating their inclusion into the mainstream;
- To have high expectations of all pupils with SEN, to raise levels of attainment and achievement;

- To provide resource bases for teaching methods, resources, and ideas, for both special and mainstream schools;
- To be outward looking, seamlessly integrating specialist staff and SEN pupils into the wider community of schools;
- To include special schools in the full range of new policy initiatives coming from the Department. Policy initiatives will be specifically tailored for special schools – they should not be an ‘add-on’.

2. We are committed to ensuring that all children with SEN receive a high quality education which enables them to be confident and effective learners. It is important for the quality of teaching and for the whole school environment to bring down barriers to learning for all pupils, and to enable children to have access to the curriculum. Children with SEN have vast potential: some of them are among the most academically able, and all have much to contribute to our schools and communities. It is important that our schools nurture and foster the talents of all pupils in a way which allows their achievements to be recognised and which celebrates diversity.
3. We want all pupils with SEN to develop to the maximum of their potential which in this context includes both academic achievement and a wider range of life and social skills. We can achieve this by:
 - a. Having high expectations;
 - b. Celebrating the full range of their achievements and valuing the pupils;
 - c. Developing opportunities to interact with and contribute to the wider community, thus preparing them for adult life.
 - d. Breaking down barriers between pupils educated in mainstream and special schools, and between schools and further education (FE);

- e. Supporting their families and recognising their understanding and knowledge of their children;
 - f. Joining up of the services provided by education, health and social services in a holistic way that meets the needs of the child and family.
4. The Working Group believes that all special schools – in the maintained, non-maintained and independent sectors – need to deliver a high quality of education for their pupils. It is important, however, that they carry out this role within the wider framework of inclusion. And inclusion in this context is not just about the type and place of school, but about the wider inclusion experiences which **all** children with SEN are entitled to expect.
5. Children with SEN comprise a significant proportion of all children in our schools. Around 20% of children have some kind of special educational need at some point in their school career, and currently around 3% of children nationally have needs which are such as to warrant a statement (this figure varies between LEAs). There is evidence to suggest that the population of pupils with SEN is changing: on one hand, advances in medicine are allowing more children with complex health needs to survive well beyond school age; more children are being diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD); and there is a growing number of children with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Set against this the screening of newborn children for visual impairment (VI) and hearing impairment (HI) has allowed earlier intervention in these cases, which has reduced the impact of these disabilities.
6. We recognise that special schools are part of a spectrum of provision for children with SEN, and that they cannot change in isolation. Mainstream schools will have a growing role in providing education for children with SEN. It is important for all mainstream schools to work more closely in partnership and collaboration with special schools, including non-maintained and independent special schools. The Government's diversity agenda offers an important opportunity and we want special schools at the heart of new federations and clusters of schools. Special schools have a

vast wealth of knowledge, skills and experience which, if harnessed, unlocked and effectively utilised by mainstream schools, can help ensure that inclusion is a success.

7. We want to see effective partnerships between health, social care and education in order to deliver integrated care and education in a holistic way for children and their families. Specialist services, including SEN support and advisory services, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and therapy services, play a key role. We believe that both the Department of Health's (DH) National Service Framework (NSF) for children and the pilots of Children's Trusts planned to begin later this year can make an important contribution in strengthening health and social services support for children with SEN and disability, particularly through special schools.
8. We want to see special schools take a leading role in helping mainstream schools develop more inclusive learning environments. We would like to see more use made of the expertise of special schools in developing innovative methods of curriculum delivery to meet the needs of pupils with a wide range of needs, as was highlighted by their adoption of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

9. The Special Schools Working Group has looked at what specific measures might be introduced in terms of leadership, teaching and learning, funding and structures and support beyond the classroom to allow both special and mainstream schools to develop their role further.

10. With regard to **leadership**, we recommend that:

- The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) considers how to revise the standards for the National Professional Qualification on Headship (NPQH) to ensure they reflect the emerging new role of both special and mainstream schools and the wider inclusion agenda;
- The NCSL introduces an additional module in the HEADLAMP training programme to equip special and mainstream head teachers with a range of skills which will help them to move forward in their new role;
- Networks, including virtual networks, be developed in order that special school head teachers can mutually support each other and share best practice.

11. With regard to **teaching and learning**, we recommend that:

- The use and understanding of P-scales should be promoted, especially in mainstream schools, through tapping into the expertise that already exists in many special schools;
- Special school teachers take a leading role in the 'Time for Standards' agenda which updates the policy framework in England on school workforce remodelling, and sets out a proposed new role for support staff;
- A range of incentives be introduced to encourage more young teachers to enter the special schools sector;
- A range of teacher training initiatives be introduced to equip teachers with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to teach children with SEN more effectively in both special and mainstream schools.

12. With regard to **funding and structures**, we recommend that the Department:

- In consultation with the SEN Regional Partnerships, carries out an audit of provision and services across regions to identify needs which are not being met, and any associated gaps in provision;
- Encourages LEAs to engage in a process of regional and sub-regional planning to determine and ensure the establishment of a range of provision that will meet the needs of children with low incidence and complex SEN;
- In the light of the audit promotes the establishment of regional centres of expertise which would aim to extend and improve educational practice for children with SEN across a particular area;
- Introduces inclusion indicators and inclusion marks for both mainstream and special schools;
- Promotes collaborative working between special and mainstream schools, through participating in twinning arrangements, federations and clusters;
- Introduces a new category of specialism within the Specialist Schools Programme for special schools;
- Promotes the use of more resourced provision in mainstream classes and SEN units on mainstream sites in a way that will encourage LEAs to consider introducing such provision when they come to reorganise their schools;
- Takes steps to encourage staff and pupil movement between special and mainstream schools, and greater partnership, outreach and dual placements;
- Ensures that Schools Forums have a role in the development of a market for SEN services by looking at the various providers –including non-maintained and independent special schools – the quality and consistency of provision and value for money considerations;
- Encourages LEAs to take advantage of the flexibilities in the current recurrent funding models to help facilitate greater staff and pupil movement between special and mainstream schools;
- Looks at how the current system of recurrent funding might be refined and reconfigured to facilitate greater regional planning.

13. With regard to **support beyond the classroom**, we recommend:

- That the Disabled Children's External Working Group within the NSF considers a range of measures to link special schools to initiatives flowing from the National Service Framework;
- That the Children's Trust pilots test out models of multi-agency working which will benefit special schools and their pupils;
- That special schools should be encouraged to participate in the Extended Schools Programme;
- That the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) and the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) be asked to consider how they might join up to work more effectively to monitor and evaluate multi-agency working in a special schools context;
- That the Department monitors the service provided by the Connexions Service to young people with SEN in special schools, in liaison with the Learning and Skills Council.

14. The Working Group is clear that many of the proposals and recommendations in the report will have significant financial implications. The Working Group therefore recommends that disabled pupils and their providers should be a focus of the Spending Review 2004.

15. Finally, in drawing up these proposals and recommendations the Working Group thought it appropriate to consult focus groups comprised of other professionals working in the respective fields of education, health and social services together with parents, children and young people. The focus group reports are at Annexes C and D; the reports from parents, children and young people's groups contain some memorable quotations. There were strong messages from the groups about seeing special schools and their pupils as part of a wider community and the need to have outreach activities; the role of learning support assistants; how the extended schools programme might be used to benefit children and young people in special schools; and some frustrations associated with the delivery of non-educational provision.

Many of the messages from these groups are consistent with the broad thrust of this report.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

16. A number of schools are already working in innovative ways which foreshadow many of the Working Group's proposals and recommendations. The case studies in chapter 7 of the report describe the activities in which some of these schools are currently engaged.
17. In the coming years we see special schools as being, along with others, at the leading edge of the Government's wider education agenda. We see them participating in the full range of Government initiatives and at the forefront of the wider education agenda. We see all types of special school – maintained, non-maintained and independent – working as equal partners with LEAs, mainstream schools, and other individuals and providers within health and social services. We see more head teachers and teachers choosing to join the sector because of the opportunities that are on offer, and because the sector is one with a secure and long-term future. Special schools have much to offer the wider education, health and social services communities, and it is time for their unique contribution to be recognised and valued.



Chapter 1: Introduction

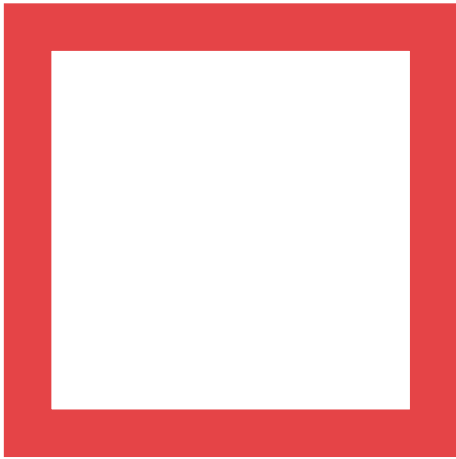
1. The Special Schools Working Group (list of members at **Annex A**) was set up at the request of Cathy Ashton, as a sub-group of the Ministerial Special Educational Needs Working Group (SEN WG), and was remitted to look at **the future role of special schools within the wider framework of the Government's strategy on inclusion**. The Working Group has met 7 times and has considered all the issues listed in the attached terms of reference (**Annex B**). The Working Group has asked officials to run a number of focus groups for professionals working in the field, and the Council for Disabled Children to run focus groups for parents, children and young people. The main findings from the focus groups are at **Annexes C and D**.
2. The purpose of this report is to outline the Working Group's findings and recommendations on how special schools might develop their role further within the wider context of inclusion.
3. The Government believes that many special schools already provide an invaluable contribution to the education of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) within the wider continuum of provision. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching across the full range of special schools, and standards have improved as a result. Special schools have made considerable progress in their partnership and outreach activities with mainstream schools and in supporting the Government's wider inclusion agenda. Special schools that are providing a high quality education – maintained, non-maintained and independent – will continue to have an important part to play in making available appropriate provision for children and young people with SEN.

4. The Working Group believes that special schools should have an important continuing role in supporting children and young people with the most severe and complex SEN, and working in partnership with mainstream schools to assist them to deliver the wider inclusion agenda. To do this effectively the Group thinks that special schools will need to change in a number of key respects over the next few years. This report looks at how special schools need to change in the coming years in terms of leadership, teaching and learning strategies, and their work with other agencies. The report also looks at recruitment, retention, training and development of staff within the sector, and changes to the funding and structural arrangements which might help to facilitate more joined up working with mainstream schools.
5. It is important to note that special schools are one element of the continuum of provision for children and young people with SEN. The growing role of mainstream schools, and the contribution of health and social care to meeting the wider needs of children and young people and their families, all have a significant impact on the future role of special schools and demand for places. The Working Group has therefore considered this wider multi-agency context with a view to ensuring that special schools are successfully integrated into the ongoing policy developments related to health and social services.
6. Finally, the Working Group has looked at the whole continuum of provision for children and young people with SEN including resourced provision in mainstream schools, the education of children and young people with SEN within mainstream classrooms, and the relationship with LEAs' support and ancillary services. This report considers how to strike the right balance between special, mainstream and other provision in a way that will ensure all children and young people with SEN receive an education that meets their needs appropriately. In doing so the key consideration guiding the Group's work has been how best to meet the needs of the individual child.
7. Before any detailed discussion of these wide-ranging issues, this report first looks at how the pattern of special school provision has changed in response to the wider inclusion agenda. We are restricting the definition of 'inclusion' in this sense to the Government policy which places emphasis on children and young people with SEN being educated in mainstream schools, rather than the wider definition of broader social inclusion.

8. The nature of special school provision has been changing as the inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools has gathered pace. Children whose SEN would, 10 years ago, have resulted in a special school placement, are often today being supported in mainstream schools; at the same time the number of children with severe disabilities is increasing. The number of children educated in special schools has declined slightly over recent years to about 1% of the school population, as an increasing proportion of children with statements are supported in mainstream schools. Many special schools for children and young people with severe or moderate learning difficulties have experienced alterations in their pupil population, taking more pupils with complex difficulties or disabilities, while some schools for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) have closed in favour of units attached to mainstream schools. Other special schools have transformed from a conventional school to an inclusion support service, or have been closed in favour of mainstream education for virtually all their former pupils.
9. Like most countries in the world the United Kingdom supports the Salamanca Statement. The statement – drawn up by a UNESCO world conference held in Salamanca in 1994 – called upon all Governments to “adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise”.
10. The Green Paper ‘Excellence for all Children’, which the Government published in 1997, underlined the fact that there were strong educational, as well as social and moral grounds for educating children and young people with SEN with their peers; and made clear that the Government aimed to increase the level and quality of inclusion within mainstream schools, while protecting and enhancing specialist provision for those who needed it. The Green Paper flagged up that there was a need to redefine the role of special schools to bring out their contribution in working with mainstream schools to support greater inclusion

11. Recent legislative changes in the UK have strengthened the right of children and young people with SEN to a mainstream education. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 delivered a strengthened right to a mainstream education for children and young people with special educational needs. The Act amended the Education Act 1996 and transformed the statutory framework for inclusion into a positive endorsement for inclusion. The 2001 Act seeks to enable more children and young people who have special educational needs to be included successfully within mainstream education. In November 2001 the Department published 'Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs' which provides guidance on the practical operation of the new statutory framework for inclusion. The guidance makes clear that where parents want a mainstream education for their child, then all reasonable steps should be taken to provide it, where this is compatible with the efficient education of all pupils. However, equally where parents want a special school place for their child, then their wishes need to be listened to and taken into account. In certain circumstances where parents are not able to come to an agreement with the LEA, they may appeal to the SEN and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST).

12. The Tribunal considers parents' appeals against local education authorities' decisions in relation to statutory assessment and statements for children and young people with SEN. Since September 2002 the Tribunal assumed responsibility for parents' claims of disability discrimination in schools.



Chapter 2: Background and Issues Affecting the Sector

13. The Group has examined the numbers and types of special schools (including the legislative underpinning), the way in which these schools have evolved over time, and the pattern of special school provision. **Annex E** looks at each of these things in turn. It looks at the legal definitions of maintained, non-maintained and independent special schools, shows current numbers of special schools and their pupils, and looks at those factors which have led to the small decline in special school numbers.
14. Residential special schools form an important part of the spectrum of provision. The number of children and young people with special educational needs currently educated in maintained residential special schools is 6,856, and a further 4,500 are educated in non-maintained and independent residential special schools. This is significantly greater than the number of children and young people with SEN currently being accommodated in children's homes.
15. The Working Group commissioned a literature review from the University of Birmingham on the changing role of special schools with the greater inclusion of children and young people with SEN, and the issues facing both the special and mainstream sectors in teaching children and young people with SEN. The next four sections of the report covering leadership, teaching and learning, funding and structures and support beyond the classroom draw on the evidence in the literature review, as well as other sources of evidence in Ofsted reports.

LEADERSHIP ISSUES

16. The evidence shows that stronger leadership is needed at national, local and school level if special schools are to engage more effectively with their mainstream counterparts and with the Government's wider strategy of inclusion. While Government has given a lead on inclusion, there is a widespread perception that more thought must be given to the practical mechanisms which need to be put in place to support inclusion, and to the specific role of special schools in relation to the wider inclusion agenda. Many working in the SEN sector feel that special schools have been neglected in the past, and are looking to the Government to set out a clear vision for the future. The sector would like the Government to give more thought to how special schools might be included in a more integrated way within mainstream policy initiatives, rather than being tacked on as an afterthought.
17. There is considerable variation in the way LEAs view the role of special schools and the wider inclusion agenda:
 - a. An increasing number of LEAs have a policy of educating as many of their children and young people with SEN as possible in mainstream schools;
 - b. Many LEAs are moving towards incorporating specialist provision in mainstream schools;
 - c. Other LEAs retain large numbers of special schools and there is resistance to mainstream schools admitting greater numbers of children and young people with SEN.
18. While it is clearly not possible to move to a 'one size fits all' model, the Working Group believes there is a need for greater consistency across LEAs. There is also a greater need for Government, LEAs and local health and social services to engage more effectively and pro-actively with non-maintained and independent special schools within their boundaries.

19. At school level, there is evidence to suggest that **some** special school head teachers:
- a. Feel marginalised and misunderstood by their mainstream colleagues. Equally other head teachers do not feel this way, and are leading schools which are playing a pivotal role in the advancement of the Government's inclusion agenda;
 - b. Feel they have been through considerable reform over the past few years in terms of accepting and adapting to new policies, improving links with mainstream schools and units on mainstream sites, encouraging pupil independence and projecting a positive image to parents, carers and the wider community;
 - c. Are generally in favour of special schools being seen as on a continuum with mainstream schools to facilitate inclusion and links with mainstream.
 - d. Feel that current performance tables do not accurately reflect their achievements.
20. There is evidence to suggest that **some** head teachers of mainstream schools:
- a. Are in favour of inclusion in principle, but feel some aspects are difficult to implement in practice;
 - b. Are concerned that staff in mainstream schools are not always trained to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN; children and young people with BESD can cause significant disruption to mainstream classrooms; there is a need for better co-ordinated multi-agency work and suitably qualified health staff to meet the health needs of children and young people with SEN in mainstream;
 - c. Have said there is a basic educational dilemma in terms of educating all the pupils in a class in a common way, while at the same time having to differentiate teaching sufficiently in order to allow pupils with SEN to access the curriculum.

- d. Have concerns that their efforts towards including more pupils with SEN are not recognised in school performance tables.

TEACHING AND LEARNING ISSUES

Raising Attainments and Achievements

- 21. The most recent annual reports from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) paint a positive picture of special schools. Key findings are:
 - a. Standards continue to rise in most special schools and are good or better in eight out of ten. Schools are meeting a wider range of types of special needs than ever and the continued improvement reflects positively on the responsiveness and expertise of their staff. (2001)
 - b. The quality of care in residential special schools is very good. The recent publication of national minimum standards for residential provision has encouraged schools to review their policies and practice. (2001)
 - c. Schools have responded enthusiastically to the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and are continuing to refine the match of activities to pupils' needs, especially those of the least able. (2000)
 - d. Training in information and communication technology, provided through New Opportunity Funding, is increasing the amount and quality of computer use (2000)
- 22. However, the 2001-02 report also found some areas for improvement:
 - a. Only half the special schools inspected have set the required targets for whole-school performance, but strong evidence of the value of the process is emerging among schools which have done so.

- b. A survey of independent special schools found that they are generally successful in improving pupils' attitudes to education and their attendance. However, the leadership, management and quality of teaching are unsatisfactory in nearly one-third of the schools, and there are significant weaknesses in the curriculum in over one-third.
 - c. Teachers in many special schools still struggle to write clear targets for pupils' education plans, but are becoming more proficient in setting targets for lessons.
23. For the last three years, OFSTED have drawn on information from the annual schools census and the Register of Educational Establishments to produce Performance Assessment and National Contextual Data (PANDA) reports to provide individual school data and national data for special schools. Due to very low rates of participation in National Curriculum assessments by pupils in special schools, these data have not been a reliable indicator of overall levels of progress or attainment.
24. Arguably, it is more difficult to assess pupil attainment in special schools than in mainstream schools because generally they are operating at or below the lower levels of the National Curriculum. The progress these pupils make from year to year, or even from Key Stage to Key Stage, is often quite small in comparison to mainstream pupils, although in its own terms it can be very substantial. Many pupils will make lateral progress as opposed to the more easily quantifiable vertical progress. In the case of pupils with degenerative conditions, progress may need to be measured in terms of slowing down the process of regression.

Teacher Supply and Training

25. The available evidence shows an increasing shortfall in the training of teachers for children and young people with severe and complex needs. There is an ageing workforce in special schools, many of whom have gained their specialist qualifications through routes which are no longer available. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of staff in special schools enrolling on SEN courses have declined over the past 5-10 years, and that staff who are applying to work in special schools for pupils with SLD and PMLD are rarely qualified for that specialism. Head teachers in special

schools across the board report shortages in applications from suitably qualified staff, and in some cases, shortages of any applications. In some cases head teachers have to employ overseas teachers to fill vacancies, and anecdotal evidence suggests that these are not properly qualified for the job. These issues were identified in the Audit Commission report, 'Special Educational Needs – A Mainstream Issue'. While recognising these issues, the Working Group believes it is also important to recognise that not all staff in special schools need to have specialist qualifications, and that staff from other special or mainstream backgrounds will bring in a different and valuable set of skills.

26. The Working Group recognises the positive role that Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) play in reducing teacher workload, and providing individual support, but has a number of concerns in respect of their effective use:
 - a. There needs to be a much clearer role and career structure for LSAs which acknowledges the range of roles they can play, both in meeting the teaching and learning needs of children and young people, and their health care needs as Primary Care Assistants.
 - b. Where a pupil with SEN has support from a Learning Support Assistant in a mainstream setting, research has shown that the child may have less involvement with his or her teacher, with the bulk of the curriculum being delivered through the Learning Support Assistant. Members of the focus groups for children and young people also felt that over-dependence on the Learning Support Assistant, and reduced interaction with their peers could occur.
 - c. There is a need for to equip teachers with the necessary skills to deploy LSAs more effectively.

ISSUES RELATING TO FUNDING AND STRUCTURES

Planning and Structures

27. The Working Group believes more effective planning is needed at regional and local level. LEAs can at the moment, through naming a school in a statement, place pupils

in schools maintained by another LEA, although there is often limited capacity for this. This is a pragmatic approach to supply and demand designed to meet the needs of particular pupils. While there are numerous instances where this arrangement has worked well in practice, there is some evidence of problems relating to the long-term planning of school places particularly for those children and young people with low incidence SEN. This is because LEAs do not always have sufficient information at their disposal about current and future levels of need and associated provision within and immediately outside the authority area.

28. In terms of planning special school places within the LEA, OFSTED reports have highlighted a number of examples where MLD and SLD schools were merged without sufficient thought being given to how the resultant schools for children with 'complex' learning difficulties would meet the needs of their pupils. There is also evidence to suggest that some children with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties stay longer than they might do at Pupil Referral Units instead of moving on to EBD (emotional and behavioural difficulties) special school provision.
29. Where special schools develop outreach services to support children and young people across a number of mainstream schools, or where support at School Action Plus is provided by LEA advisory support services, funding levels and mechanisms must be adequate to support the planning and delivery of effective services for scattered populations of pupils with particular kinds of SEN. LEAs will need to consider how best to support those with responsibility for managing support services of schools in delivering a flexible service of high quality that is responsive to the identified needs of pupils.
30. There have been difficulties associated with education, health and social services sharing information. The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to maintain a register of disabled children to help with planning services. Guidance makes clear that education, health and social services should work together on the operation of the register, for example by agreeing definitions, to ensure that the register is up to date and an effective planning tool. However, in practice the sharing of information has not been as effective as it might be.

Recurrent Funding

31. Following the publication of a report from the Education Funding Strategy Group in May 2002, the Department agreed to introduce a new recurrent funding system to replace the current system of having five sub-blocks. From April 2003 a new system will be introduced which consists of two main funding blocks for LEAs and schools. For the first time, there is a distinct sub-block for high cost pupils, many of whom have SEN. Delegation targets will no longer operate in the new funding system; instead decisions on delegation will be taken locally with advice from the Schools Forum. The new funding arrangements are open and transparent and have the support of stakeholders.
32. However, the current funding arrangements do not lend themselves to regional planning as the arrangements for handling LEA recoupment are unnecessarily complex. Although the regulations themselves are written in simple terms, they have been implemented in ways which have led to increased bureaucracy for LEAs, and there are often lengthy delays in LEAs recouping costs. There are problems associated with the charging methods used by LEAs.
33. The funding arrangements for non-maintained special schools (NMSS) and independent schools also need to be looked at. Where an LEA names a particular school on a statement – whether this be a maintained, non-maintained or independent school – they are obliged to meet the costs of the placement. Most placements in NMSS and approved independent schools are taken up by pupils placed there by LEAs, so these schools are primarily funded by the public purse. Under the current system, these schools are dependent on pupils with statements being placed there in order to remain financially viable. There is evidence to suggest that LEAs are increasingly opting to place their pupils in mainstream rather than NMSS and independent schools. There can be a range of factors influencing the LEA's decision including philosophical reasons relating to inclusion, family links, as well as broader budgetary constraints. Some parents appeal against these decisions because they prefer a special school education for their child. There are therefore several conflicts in the system. The Working Group believes that there is a need to look again at the funding arrangements for NMSS and approved independent schools with a view to introducing an alternative system which will minimise the level of financial vulnerability for these schools to help maintain quality in the sector, and reduce the level of conflict in the system.

Capital Funding

34. Devolved formula capital for schools was introduced in 2000-01, and allocations have been announced from 2001-02 to 2005-06. This grant is allocated to all maintained schools by formula which has a per school and per pupil element. With regard to pupils with statements, the per pupil element is three times the amount for a primary school pupil and double the amount for a secondary school pupil.
35. Maintained special schools have access to all LEA formulaic funding. LEAs prioritise the investment in all their schools through the Asset Management Planning process. This prioritises investment in a rigorous, consultative and transparent process based on a full survey of all the needs of their schools reflecting Government policy.
36. NMSS were not included in the direct capital allocations to schools when Devolved formula capital funding was introduced and allocations made over the period to 2003-04. However, when additional funding was subsequently allocated from Pre Budget and Budget statements, NMSS were allocated the increases to baseline funding that other maintained schools received.
37. The Working Group believes more thought needs to be given to providing capital funding for maintained special schools which take pupils from across a particular region. The current system makes it possible for LEAs to allocate their available capital funds to those schools which take pupils solely from within the LEA, rather than to these schools. It will be important for any future system of capital funding to take account of the particular needs of special schools which take pupils from across a region or from across the country.

Multi-agency Issues

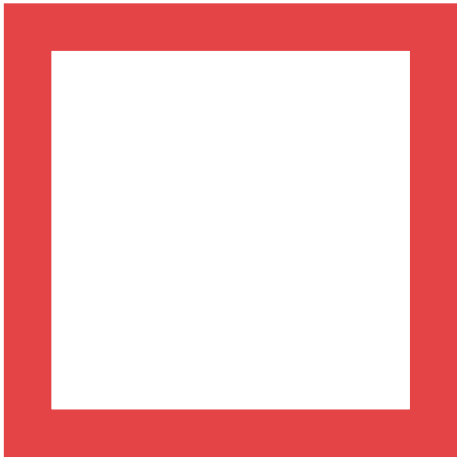
38. Advances in medicine are enabling children and young people with increasingly complex health needs to survive well beyond school age. There is also evidence to suggest that a growing number of children are being diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Set against this, the screening of newborn children for visual impairment and hearing impairment has allowed earlier intervention to occur, which has reduced the impact of these disabilities. Given these changes, and the fact that more children and young

people with SEN are being included in mainstream schools, the range of needs of children and young people in special schools is changing with a higher proportion having severe and complex needs. This raises questions about the staffing mix in schools which work with children and young people with ASD, SLD (severe learning difficulties), PMLD (profound and multiple learning difficulties) and BESD, in particular, and whether there is a need for greater input from health and social services.

39. A proportion of children and young people in residential special schools are looked after. Once a local authority has taken the decision to look after a child, short-term or long-term, it is the duty of the whole local authority as corporate parent to safeguard and promote the child's interests. The 'whole authority' includes the education department as well as social services, and schools also have a role to play. Lack of co-ordination can dramatically impair the outcomes for children and young people in public care.
40. There is a need to put better systems in place to ensure health and social services join up more effectively with education to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN. Education, health and social care often have different sets of priorities; there can be problems with communication because they use different terminology and language; and the performance reporting arrangements can be complicated as health and social workers are working in a school, but in most cases will not normally be reporting to the head teacher. The funding arrangements can often cause problems as it is sometimes unclear which of the three service blocks should pay for particular aspects of provision. In some areas there are insufficient numbers of health and social workers available to meet the needs of children with SEN in both special and mainstream schools, and health and social services have sometimes been slow to adjust their patterns of service provision in response to growing numbers of children and young people with SEN in mainstream schools in particular. The focus groups for parents, children and young people (see Annex D) identified significant difficulties around the administration of medication and other non-educational provision as a key barrier to inclusion. There are currently a number of initiatives being taken forward which will attempt to address these issues, and these are discussed in chapter 6.

41. The Department's network of 11 SEN Regional Partnerships are characterised by genuine collaboration between colleagues from LEAs, social services and health departments and increasingly with the voluntary and independent sectors. The focus of their work includes:
 - a. Developing more inclusive policies and practice;
 - b. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of SEN processes and services;
 - c. Responding to, and engaging effectively with, Government initiatives;
 - d. Improving inter-agency working.

42. Five case studies have been completed to date which highlight some of the work of the Partnerships:
 - a. Developing Services for Children and Young People with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) (West Midlands);
 - b. Developing a Regional Strategy for Promoting Inclusive Education (North East);
 - c. Developing a Regional Consultancy Partnership (Yorkshire and Humberside);
 - d. The Use of Out-County and Out-City Provision (Eastern Region);
 - e. Improving Educational Arrangements for Children and Young People in Public Care (East Midlands).



Future role of Special Schools: Proposed Way Forward

Chapter 3: Leadership

43. The Working Group believes there is a need for strong leadership in the special and mainstream school sectors, and other forms of educational provision, to help take the special school community through the envisaged programme of change, and to ensure mainstream schools are properly geared up for the inclusion of more children and young people with SEN. We believe there is scope to offer more incentives for experienced teachers to apply to become special school head teachers, particularly in the EBD sector, and for greater interchange of head teachers between mainstream and special schools. Although special schools sometimes have less flexibility in their budgets than mainstream schools due to high staffing costs, it is nevertheless possible for them to apply a school group up to two groups higher than that determined by pupil numbers and other factors if they consider that the recruitment and retention issues justify this approach. They can also apply the recruitment and retention incentives to support Heads with travel, housing and other expenses, where appropriate.

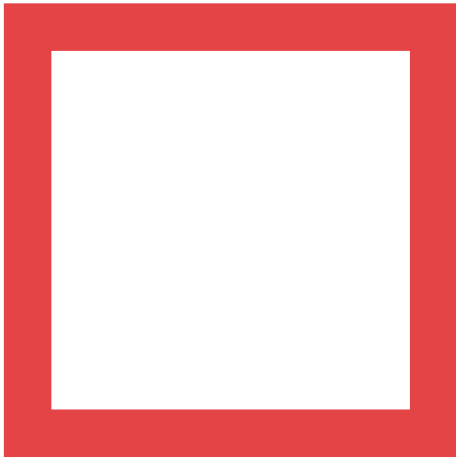
44. The Working Group believes that new heads, in both the mainstream and special schools sectors, need to be equipped with the necessary skills to address the learning needs of all the pupils in their schools, to run the school effectively, and to engage in partnership and outreach activities. The standards governing the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) need to reflect these wider inclusion and partnership considerations. ***We therefore recommend that the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) considers revising the standards for the NPQH to ensure***

they reflect the wider inclusion agenda, and the need for greater collaborative working between special and mainstream schools.

45. The Working Group notes that the NCSL is currently reviewing the HEADLAMP programme. It is important that this programme, as part of the process of review, reflects the new role which we envisage for special and mainstream head teachers. **The Working Group therefore recommends asking the NCSL, as part of the process of review, to introduce an additional module in the HEADLAMP training programme.** The aim of this module would be to equip special and mainstream head teachers with the necessary skills to:
- a. Effectively manage the inclusion of more children and young people with SEN in mainstream schools and to ensure that all of them have a range of inclusive experiences;
 - b. Develop a greater partnership role for special and mainstream heads to facilitate movement between the two sectors; and
 - c. Develop a consultancy role for special school head teachers.
46. The Working Group notes that a significant proportion of the special schools sector is residential, and that head teachers need a wide set of skills to manage residential provision appropriately. It believes there is merit in developing a training programme for new and existing head teachers to address the management of residential provision. **The Working Group therefore recommends asking the NCSL to develop a training course on the management of residential provision.**
47. The Working Group believes it is important for head teachers to be given support during any process of change for the sector. While there are specialist SEN organisations e.g. for BESD, SLD, ASD, HI (hearing impairment), VI (visual impairment) schools, there are few national, regional or local networks representing special schools. **The Working Group therefore recommends that networks – including**

virtual networks – be developed in order that special school head teachers can mutually support each other and share best practice. Networks could provide:

- a. Electronic and real time networking via regional meeting and national meetings and on-line communities;
- b. Professional development for all staff working in special schools;
- c. Representation for the sector;
- d. Opportunities to share good practice in curriculum, assessment etc, and to share resources;
- e. Opportunities to market the skills of special schools to mainstream schools and local authorities in order to support inclusion;
- f. Conferences where head teachers could discuss issues facing the sector either locally, regionally or nationally;
- g. Support for special schools to develop a greater role in supporting mainstream schools and the wider inclusion agenda;
- h. A web site or community within the National Grid for Learning.



Chapter 4: Teaching and Learning

TEACHING PUPILS WITH SEN

48. Teachers in both special and mainstream schools face the challenge of adapting and fashioning their teaching skills to enable children and young people to learn effectively, overcoming barriers resulting from their cognitive, sensory, physical or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The more successful the teaching, the less significant are the child's difficulties as a barrier to learning. The best teaching reflects a whole school approach to SEN and is tailored to the needs of the individual.
49. A central purpose of a special school is to develop the curriculum (and its organisation) to meet a range of diverse needs and promote inclusion. Many special schools have worked hard to implement the programmes of study of the National Curriculum, and set them within a wider curriculum to ensure entitlement and relevance. There is opportunity to be creative and visionary in designing the curriculum to meet statutory requirements while ensuring the needs of all teachers are met.
50. Effective special schools help pupils to become confident learners with enduring values, able to contribute to society in accordance with their ability to do so. They should offer experiences that are rich and stimulating, contributing to the personal development of all individuals thereby helping them prepare for life as adults and to be as independent as possible. The best schools will ensure the quality and range of opportunities for learning covers all the key aspects of personal development, with an emphasis on the whole child and all-round development.

51. Links with the community, including mainstream schools, will remove the current isolation of some special schools, and be focused on ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. Extra-curricular provision, including support for learning, should contribute to the pupils' learning experiences. All pupils irrespective of their learning difficulty or disability, can be provided with the knowledge and insights into values and beliefs to help them reflect and learn from experiences given to them which can develop self-knowledge.
52. The special school has a significant and important role to play in developing its expertise, and in working with mainstream schools, to ensure a rigorous, balanced flexible and relevant curriculum is provided ensuring continuity and progression throughout the key stages.
53. The Working Group considers that the teaching of skills and subject matter needs to be fully informed by a detailed understanding of the pupil's learning difficulties. The best teaching is knowledgeable, stimulating and exciting, uses resources imaginatively, and makes intellectual and creative demands on all pupils (from those who are academically able to those who have profound and multiple learning difficulties). Good planning ensures that learning outcomes for individuals are clear and directly linked to challenging targets. Teachers need to relate to pupils in a way which is consistently encouraging and which promotes their confidence, achievement and self-sufficiency through constant feedback. Questioning and explaining are used well to consolidate, extend and verify what pupils know, understand and can do. The methods chosen are well matched to pupils' needs and the demands of the curriculum, making the most productive use of other needs and subject expertise and time available.
54. The Working Group believes that special schools can make a distinct contribution towards teaching and learning, by virtue of their low pupil:teacher ratios, range of specialist teachers and support staff with relevant knowledge and experience, and by providing a community of adults who use and understand the pupils' preferred language or communication system. They can also provide expertise in differentiating

and adapting the curriculum for pupils with a wide range of needs, and in developing innovative methods of curriculum delivery.

55. It is important for the contributions of children and young people with SEN to be valued and respected; for pupils to be motivated to learn independently and to think further for themselves. Many pupils with SEN work well for extended periods and, as a result, gains in knowledge and understanding, and engagement and participation in activities, are very high. The following case studies, which are used in OFSTED's Handbook for Inspection, show examples of excellent and very good teaching in special schools.

Extract from a report on a school for children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)

Teaching in the nursery is excellent. Creative, imaginative, innovative methodology is a strong feature. Learning is exciting and fun. Children spend their day responding to a rich and exciting curriculum where well-established routines give them security yet are enlivened with new stimuli. Children are constantly praised and encouraged throughout the day. The very effective teaching is carefully planned; learning objectives are clearly set out, and a range of inspirational and compelling resources is used as objects of reference which engross the children. Behaviour management is excellent and teachers show a sensitive regard for children's individual needs and care. Total communication strategies are used alongside song and rhyme, and teachers have an acute awareness of each child's developing language patterns, skillfully responding to them to ensure repetition and consistency of response. These teachers know their children very well and show tremendous enthusiasm and commitment, which strongly promotes learning.

Extract from a report on a school with resourced provision for Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

Staff have comprehensive knowledge of the range of ASD within their teaching group, in particular, the educational implications of autism. They have strong relationships with external professionals, including educational psychologists, health visitors and speech therapists, working in partnership to provide the children with appropriate educational provision. These relationships, together with the high level of knowledge staff have about managing specific programmes in group activities, ensure that teaching meets the needs of all children most of the time.

ASSESSMENT MECHANISMS

56. It is important to have robust assessment mechanisms in place to allow all schools to monitor the progress made by pupils with SEN. The P-scales already provide benchmarks of school performance at 8 main and 3 sub-levels preceding the National Curriculum at Levels 1 and 2, and there are a number of alternative assessment systems in place that are calibrated to the P-scales, such as PIVATS and EQUALS. However, these and other systems are not universally adopted. The overarching aim should be to provide a common language to describe the attainment and progress of pupils who are currently working towards level 1 of the National Curriculum, to facilitate a more effective and meaningful means of communication between mainstream and special schools, and foster a greater understanding of the needs of these pupils. **The Working Group recommends that action is taken to ensure that the P-scales are used more widely and consistently.** Notably:
- further promotion and guidance is needed to ensure that all special and mainstream schools make effective use of the P-scales type data; all schools should be encouraged to use systems that are calibrated to the P-scales;
 - special schools that have developed expertise in the use of P-scales should be encouraged (and offered incentives) to share that expertise in support of mainstream schools;

- it is important to find ways of tracking the emotional and creative development of pupils with BESD in order to assess when they are ready to move from a special to a mainstream school setting.

Case Study: The Bridge School, Telford

The Bridge School, Telford, is a special school catering for pupils with SLD and PMLD aged from 3-19. Class groups contain pupils with a mix of SEN, including those with a range of additional complex and sometimes challenging needs.

The school has developed its own schemes of work in which the 'P' scales are an integral component for assessment. Assessments are followed through all levels of planning – for both the medium and short term.

At the end of the lesson unit, teachers complete a unit specific attainment comment (Pupil Attainment Record). The comments are transferred by an administrator and are rolled into the pupil report, reducing teacher workload. Each unit has differentiated objectives to cater for the least and most able, which are transferred into short-term planning.

A database has been constructed with data currently being collated to provide a graphed year-on-year improvement using a subject mean (P scale) of the component assessments in order to demonstrate overall progress, and individual graphed profiles for each pupil (for each unit in every subject). This provides the basis for review and evaluation.

This procedure clearly links assessment to planning, providing a systematic means of both tracking hierarchical progress and clearly demonstrating lateral progress. It ensures that curriculum delivery is age-appropriate at each 'P' scale across the key stages. Parental feedback has been excellent as pupil reports now contain more meaningful information about the progress of their child. Planning, assessment and recording is now an integral and coherent process which supports both school self-review and whole school target setting to inform the School Improvement Plan.

RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENTS

57. The Working Group believes that, if special schools are to be encouraged to do more partnership work and outreach work, then these activities need to be embedded in the OFSTED inspection framework. OFSTED have indicated that there will be scope in the new inspection framework for outreach to be inspected, although this will only be in cases where the school makes a direct request for this to happen. The Working Group would like to see this framework strengthened to make it a requirement for OFSTED to inspect the outreach activities of schools. There were strong messages from parents and young people about the importance of special as well as mainstream schools seeing themselves as part of the wider community and developing a wider range of afterschool and outreach activities.

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOLS

58. Residential special schools (RSS) form an important part of the of the SEN continuum of provision, but there are a number of issues relating to the quality of the educational and care provision within this sector which need to be addressed. The Working Group welcomes the following initiatives which are designed to address these issues:

- a. The National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) standards offer an important opportunity to make progress towards raising the quality of provision within residential schools. However, there are concerns amongst schools about how rigorous the standards are, since they are relatively new;
- b. RSS schools need to take account of the lessons drawn from NCSC inspections. These lessons also need to be properly integrated into learning programmes for RSS staff;
- c. Self-evaluation of quality needs to be more widely encouraged within RSS. The introduction of self-assessment in the inspection process should assist here;

- d. The National Children's Bureau (NCB) is currently working on a project, due to report in 2004, entitled *Children's Residential Standards Implementation project*. The project will aid the practical implementation of the new national minimum standards by working with providers and commissioners of services as they begin to translate the standards and legislation into daily practice.
59. The DfES and NCSC possess powers to intervene in residential special schools and special schools which are additionally registered as children's homes where there are serious welfare or educational concerns. Anecdotal evidence exists of occasions where it has been difficult to use existing powers in circumstances where there has been evidence of some real concern, particularly within the independent sector. The Department has taken the following steps to address these concerns:
- a. Provisions were introduced in the Education Act 2002 to give the Department greater powers to take swift action to de-register independent schools where there are very serious concerns for child welfare. These powers will come into force in September 2003;
 - b. Improved liaison between officials at the DfES and NCSC will help to identify when and how respective powers can be most effectively used.
60. In taking forward these initiatives, it will be important to ensure all this work is properly aligned with the wider set of initiatives being taken forward by the Working Group.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

61. In October 2002 the Department published 'Time for Standards: Reforming the School Workforce'. This was in response to the School Teachers Review Body's (STRB) report of May 2002 'Special Review of Approaches to Reducing Teacher Workload'. The 'Time for Standards' document updates the policy framework in England on school workforce remodelling, and sets out a proposed new role for support staff.

62. Special schools teachers have considerable expertise in deploying learning support assistants (LSAs), and LSAs generally take on a much wider range of responsibilities than their mainstream counterparts. Special school teachers necessarily have to plan and prepare lessons in a way that meets the needs of their pupils in an individualised way, and they closely assess the progress of their pupils on an ongoing basis. They are well versed in the process of curriculum differentiation as all the pupils in the school have different needs, and are progressing at different rates. The Working Group believes that special school teachers have a considerable amount to offer mainstream teachers in terms of their LSA deployment and curriculum differentiation skills, while LSAs are setting a lead in terms of taking on a wide range of responsibilities. **The Working Group therefore recommends that special school teachers and learning support assistants should in future take a leading role in taking forward this programme of reform.**
63. The critical and developing role of LSAs was emphasised in both parents' and young people's focus groups. However, both parents and young people stressed the importance of both appropriate initial and on-going training and support for LSAs, who are increasingly working with children with complex SEN and health needs. Some parents expressed reluctance to move their children into mainstream settings because of lack of confidence in the skills of, and support for, the teaching assistant. They suggested that the expertise of special schools could be better utilised to provide not only training, but also exchanges of LSAs between special and mainstream provision to encourage shared learning.
64. The following case study shows how Learning Support Assistants can be effectively deployed within a school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex health needs.

Case Study: St Margaret's School, Tadworth

St Margaret's School, Tadworth Surrey has a population of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex health needs. It is an approved independent residential school open for 48 weeks of the year.

Teachers at the school are responsible for the care of six pupils, and LSAs play a vital role in supporting them. Their duties include assisting the teacher in delivering the curriculum, and as part of the school's inter-disciplinary team, the delivery of the IEP and all relevant programmes. LSAs ensure the class is prepared to the teacher's specification for each session, keeping the room organised, including the supply of disposable and dry goods. When the teacher leaves the room or has an unplanned absence the LSA takes charge. When a cover teacher is in charge it is the LSA's responsibility to ensure that the teacher is aware of all the relevant paperwork and procedures. LSAs are responsible for maintaining records of one or two pupils' progress against targets in each session. They contribute to session planning, and organisation of buses, food and pupil drugs for outings.

LSAs have a career path within the school, that enables them to progress to Senior LSA, a role that requires proven competency in all of the above areas for at least a twelve month period. Senior LSAs work across the whole school on a supply basis to the teacher when their LSA is absent. This role requires the staff member to have an adaptable approach and to be able to act on their own initiative in line with school policy and procedures.

65. Against the backdrop of the wider debate about the role of teaching assistants, **the Working Group recommends that the Department should promote greater involvement of learning support assistants in particular areas of SEN**, which includes delivering language programmes to children with speech, language and communications needs, providing support to pupils with sensory impairments and meeting the health needs of pupils with complex SEN.

66. The Working Group believes that more needs to be done to encourage young teachers to enter the special schools sector, particularly the EBD sector. **We therefore recommend that the Department considers how the supply of appropriately trained and experienced teachers might be increased and in particular, what incentives might be introduced to encourage more teachers to enter the sector and undertake continuing professional development and/or accredited training. These issues to be considered with a view to putting forward a bid at the next Spending Review.**
67. The Working Group notes that there is a strong theme of inclusion running through all sections of the Standards governing initial teacher training (ITT). However, the Working Group believes that more might be done to introduce more SEN-related elements on ITT courses. **The Working Group therefore recommends that the Department asks the ITT providers to consider how to make more of the flexibilities offered in the QTS standards to introduce more SEN-related elements in initial teacher training (ITT) courses.** The foreword to the Standards makes clear that it is open to ITT providers to include additional modules of training on SEN in their courses. There are a number of providers who have been particularly innovative.

Case study: Manchester Metropolitan University Initial Teacher Training (ITT)

Being one of the largest teacher training establishments, MMU are making an important contribution to SEN and inclusion training in ITT. They have around 1,500 students currently undertaking a variety of courses that have a strong emphasis on SEN and inclusion.

These courses cover a number of areas of knowledge required by the 'Qualifying to Teach' standards with emphasis on the revised SEN Code of Practice and inclusion. Sessions on the Special Educational Needs Discrimination Act (SENDA), parent-teacher partnerships, and identification and assessment of pupils with SEN, range and diversity of SEN, differentiation, behaviour and self esteem, the role of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), and inclusive schooling form part of their teacher training provision.

There is a programme of study to prepare teachers to help pupils with SEN develop their language competence, enabling them to become powerful and independent users of all language modes. There is an emphasis in this course on additional expertise in the areas of identification and effective interventions to meet the special educational needs of pupils in the areas of language and literacy, together with an enhanced understanding of SEN issues. They also have a thirteen week programme for issues relating to literacy, numeracy and SEN.

Case study: Newcastle University

Newcastle is a major provider of initial teacher training (via the PGCE) and continuing professional development. All the PGCE courses are delivered in partnership with schools. Students address SEN issues as they arise in their placements and in the University-based Professional Studies components of their courses. In addition, the Primary and Key Stage 2/3 courses include a school placement which is focused on SEN and three days of university-based SEN training, together with the option of an additional one-week SEN-focused placement. In Secondary PGCE, all students follow compulsory inputs on SEN and classroom management; additionally, a great many follow six-session options in special needs education. Alongside this general provision, all curriculum tutors address the issue of working with pupils of all ability ranges in their specialist subjects. This university-based training is greatly augmented by work in placement schools.

In terms of continuing professional development, Newcastle provides three levels of course in special needs and inclusive education. It offers certificate courses for SENCOs and specialist SEN teachers throughout its region. These are based on the TTA standards, delivered in LEA centres and co-taught with educational psychologists, learning support service members and other LEA staff. The courses have a strong applied element and participants are expected to undertake development work in their own schools as an integral part of the course. The certificate courses form part of a wider programme leading to awards at MEd and EdD (taught doctorate) level. Students can take modules in inclusive education, social inclusion and in managing pupil behaviour and can undertake their own research studies in these fields.

Newcastle is also home to the Special Needs Research Centre which undertakes a wide range of research in the fields of special needs education, inclusive education and social inclusion. The Centre has undertaken studies funded by DfES and other government departments across the UK and by LEAs as well as by sponsors such as the Economic and Social research Council and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The work of the Centre directly informs teaching in these fields at Newcastle and students working for MPhil and PhD degrees undertake their own research alongside the experienced researchers in the Centre.

68. The Working Group believes it is important for all teachers to receive training in teaching pupils with SEN throughout their professional careers. The TTA is currently reviewing the Induction Standards for newly qualified teachers at the request of Ministers, and the Working Group hopes that they will take account of the wider inclusion agenda and proposed new role of special schools when they come to offer their advice to Ministers. This would help to address some of the issues raised in the recent Audit Commission Report, 'SEN – A Mainstream Issue' which made the following recommendation: "Developing NQTs' skills and confidence in identifying SEN and making appropriate responses should be a key element of the induction year".
69. The Working Group believes that continuing professional development (CPD) provides teachers – working in both special and mainstream schools – with significant opportunities to enhance their skills for teaching pupils with SEN. **Given that the Department is currently reviewing the way Award Bearing INSET funding operates, the Working Group recommends placing greater emphasis on SEN training – both specialist training for those going into the special school sector and SEN training for teachers working in mainstream schools – as part of the process of review.**
70. The NCSL is currently taking forward the networked learning communities (NLC) programme, and are running a pilot of 48 communities involving 500 schools, several of which include one or more special schools. **As future cohorts of NLCs bid for support from NCSL, the Working Group recommends asking the NCSL to give high priority to networks which include special schools, and which are designed to address the professional learning of those working with children and young people with SEN.** The Department has also introduced a range of CPD initiatives – including Best Practice Research Scholarships, Bursaries, and sabbaticals – which are open to special schools and their teachers, or for mainstream school teachers who wish to focus on SEN. The Working Group believes that there is considerable scope for teachers to use these existing initiatives to extend their skills further.

71. The Working Group believes there is a need for an overarching CPD strategy which supports inclusion. The General Teaching Council remit includes the provision of advice to the Secretary of State on CPD, and the Group believes it would be well placed to advise on inclusion and SEN issues. **The Working Group therefore recommends that the Department asks the GTC to provide advice on the development of such a strategy.**
72. Looking more widely at longer term career development, the Working Group believes that the Fast Track teaching programme provides an excellent way of encouraging potential leaders in the field to undertake placements within the special schools sector. This programme is designed to attract and retain some of the best new graduates, career changers and serving teachers, and give them additional professional development and a structured career route to enable them to progress rapidly to leadership positions. Teachers on the programme will typically spend 2 or 3 years in each post, in a variety of schools, in order to gain the broad range of experience necessarily to become an effective leader. The programme lasts for up to 5 years of full support (plus the ITT year for external applicants), after which time teachers are expected to be ready to apply for a leadership position. Both maintained and non-maintained special schools are eligible to apply to create Fast Track posts, and all additional costs involved in the creation of the post are met by the Department through a Standards Fund grant. **The Working Group recommends that the Department should encourage participants on the Fast Track programme to take up placements in special schools.** Posts in special schools are likely to provide excellent opportunities to develop skills in facilitating inclusion, working in partnership with a range of organisations, and managing challenging behaviour.
73. The Working Group believes that the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) grade offers excellent teachers the opportunity to move on to a higher pay scale without having to take on management responsibilities. There are already ASTs based in special schools many of whom are doing valuable partnership and outreach work with mainstream schools, including specific input related to SEN and working with teachers on more generic skills such as behaviour management. Other ASTs based in mainstream schools have SEN as their specialism. The Government is committed to

expanding the AST grade year on year. **The Working Group recommends that this expansion should include an increase in the number of ASTs working in special schools.**

74. The Working Group believes that in order for inclusion to work, and for special schools – maintained, non-maintained and independent – to be properly integrated into the wider community of schools, there needs to be more teacher movement between mainstream and special schools. Both mainstream and special schools could benefit from such exchanges as the skills, knowledge and expertise of teachers in both sectors could be exploited by receiving schools. Mainstream schools would benefit in terms of the special SEN knowledge and strategies that special school teachers could bring to their schools. Mainstream teachers working in special schools would also be in a position to acquire a greater range of skills which they could bring back with them when they return to mainstream. Special schools might also benefit from specialist curriculum knowledge provided by mainstream teachers. **The Working Group recommends that the Department takes steps to encourage teacher exchange in this way.**

Case study: Valley School, Stockport

Valley School, an LEA maintained special school for pupils with SLD/PLMD in Stockport was receiving an increasing number of pupils with ASD. The Principal of Inscape House School, Cheadle, an independent special school for pupils with ASD, offered advice in relation to individual pupils and provided training for staff including the opportunity for Valley staff to spend some time in classes in the ASD special school. Similarly, LSAs from mainstream schools spend time in Inscape school's classes

When the LEA decided to establish a class for pupils with ASD and SLD at Valley School, the Principal of Inscape House School again provided advice and staff training, and when new classrooms were built so the school could accommodate both a Key Stage 1 and a Key Stage 2 group, the Principal advised on classroom layout and facilities.

75. The Audit Commission report, 'SEN – A Mainstream Issue' recommended that: "LEAs should seek to develop the training role of special schools where they have expertise – both in terms of outreach work and on-site training – and foster learning opportunities between mainstream and special schools". The Working Group concurs and believes there is considerable scope for special schools and their teachers to provide services to mainstream schools through partnership and outreach working. **It recommends that special schools, depending on their expertise could provide:**
- a. Advice on teaching styles and access strategies for particular children and young people with SEN;
 - b. Advice on assessment, learning objectives and programme planning;
 - c. Modelling of specialist teaching approaches and the use of specialist resources;
 - d. Advice on provision of differentiated teaching materials and resources;
 - e. Advice on adapting the curriculum;
 - f. Moderation of P Scale assessments undertaken in mainstream schools;
 - g. Training for learning support assistants/teaching assistants;
 - h. Training in behaviour management at a range of levels;
 - i. Deployment and management of learning support and teaching assistants in the classroom.

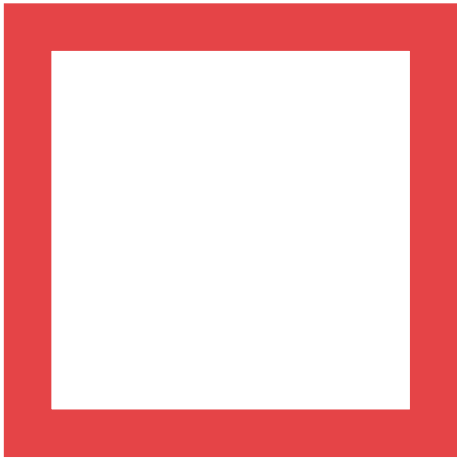
Case Study: Leading Teachers

As part of their local capacity-building agenda, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have provided funding and support to LEAs in identifying 'leading teachers' with excellent practice in teaching literacy or mathematics who can be observed at work by visiting teachers from other schools. This has enabled special schools to learn from one another's good practice, but is increasingly also enabling teachers from mainstream settings to watch at first hand some of the specialist teaching strategies they might need to use for individual children with complex SEN in their own classes.

Observations might, for example, focus on the way in which children with physical impairment are able to access the curriculum through the use of alternatives to written recording, specialist ICT software, or communication books. They might demonstrate how the teacher works on phonics with children who have speech and language impairments, or on 'sensory maths' with children who have profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Observations are structured: visiting teachers identify in advance the focus for the observation, and there is a pre-meeting in which the leading teacher sets the context for the lesson and highlights points to look out for. After the observation, there is another meeting to discuss the lesson and draw out the learning which the visiting teacher will take back and share with colleagues in their own school.

Leading teachers are increasingly developing their role and working in a range of ways over and above basic lesson observation. They are involved, for example, in providing training, supporting mainstream schools in moderating 'P' scale assessments, and providing telephone help lines ('Dial a teacher') for mainstream colleagues. In the best LEAs, their work is closely tied in to that of specialist peripatetic SEN support teachers, with a single point of contact for mainstream schools seeking advice, offering a seamless service in support of inclusion.



Chapter 5: Funding and Structures

76. The Audit Commission report, 'SEN – A Mainstream Issue' recommended that: "LEA inclusion strategies should.....set out clearly the future role of special schools; be underpinned by realistic financial planning; and be consistent with all other aspects of strategic and financial planning." This chapter looks at how LEAs should go about organising their special school provision to support inclusion; at the planning of special school places at regional level to provide for children and young people with low incidence SEN; and at the role of the SEN Regional Partnerships. It also looks at how special schools might collaborate more effectively with mainstream schools, and participate more fully in the Government's wider Diversity agenda. Finally, the chapter looks at how the underpinning capital and recurrent funding streams might be reconfigured in order to support these proposed initiatives.

PLANNING OF SPECIAL SCHOOL PLACES

77. LEAs are required to review their provision and future needs for children with SEN when drafting their School Organisation Plan. The Plan looks forward 5 years, and sets out their approach for meeting different types of SEN including the balance between mainstream and special schools and its strategy for providing places and support for all children, including those with disabilities, with SEN and in the local authority's care. The following paragraphs look at the broader considerations which LEAs might look at when reviewing special and mainstream provision for children and young people with SEN.
78. The Working Group believes more thought needs to be given to the type of provision given to pupils with SEN. Recent research has identified certain areas of need, such as very challenging behaviour (including BESD, ASD and mental health needs), SLD, PMLD

and various forms of sensory impairment as being more difficult to meet in a mainstream environment, and therefore the most likely to require specialist provision. The corollary to this is that more and more children and young people with MLD, less severe forms of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, and with physical impairments should be able to have their needs met effectively in a mainstream environment.

79. Notwithstanding this, the Working Group recognises that not all pupils with SEN will be able to move into mainstream immediately, and that there may need to be a period of preparation and planned transition before these pupils are ready to move into a mainstream school. Those EBD and MLD schools with high standards and with an inclusive and outward-looking focus will have an important role in preparing these pupils for mainstream classes, by providing early intervention where necessary, and continuing support for them after they have moved into mainstream. **The Working Group recommends that the Department promotes these planning assumptions for use by LEAs when rationalising school places.**
80. The Working Group notes that Ofsted have highlighted numerous instances in their inspection reports where LEAs have reconfigured SLD and MLD schools to create generic schools, and that this process of rationalisation has not always been carried out with sufficient forethought or planning. In any reorganisation proposals, the Working Group believes it will be important for LEAs to look at the establishment of co-locations, resourced provision and special school units attached to mainstream schools, as this is consistent with the Government's overarching policy of inclusion. Where LEAs do publish proposals to merge MLD and SLD schools, it will be important for them to give due consideration to the process of transition to enable schools to ensure the necessary provision is in place to meet the full range of pupils' needs. Consultation with parents found a high degree of anxiety about transitional arrangements related to any reorganisation proposals. This anxiety was lessened if parents felt fully consulted and involved in the change process and they were confident that re-allocated resources would be safeguarded and specialist expertise protected. The Working Group believes there may also be scope for LEAs to organise and structure special school provision in a more differentiated way, so that particular schools specifically cater for children and young people with a particular mix of

needs. This would allow special schools to tailor and target provision to meet each and every one of the child's needs. It would also allow staff working in special schools to develop more expertise and greater specialist knowledge of the area in which they are working.

81. The Working Group is aware of instances where LEAs have not used EBD special schools as effectively as they might in respect of meeting the needs of children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. This has led to these pupils being placed in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) for long periods of time, which in turn has led to shortages of PRU places. In considering what provision to make for children and young people with BESD, it is important for LEAs to make strategic use of EBD special schools to ensure that places at PRUs remain free. LEAs should also consider earlier referrals to EBD special schools for those pupils with severe BESD so that these schools can make an effective contribution to meeting their needs at an early stage, and, where appropriate, help children and young people with BESD make an effective transition back into a mainstream setting.

Case Study: Bristol LEA

Rather than a wholesale re-organisation of its SEN provision, Bristol LEA chose to work developmentally with its special schools to consider together different models for their future, expecting each school to then determine its own path towards supporting inclusion. The LEA invited headteachers from other areas to present the routes they had chosen, which included relocation to mainstream sites, providing a support service to a local cluster of schools, operating 'revolving door' and re-integration models. Visits were also made to different types of provision across the country.

There was already much local good practice upon which to build. One special school for children with severe learning difficulties had worked with a local nursery school to relocate its Foundation Stage and some Key Stage 1 children to the nursery site. The primary special school for children with physical impairment had an excellent record of re-integrating children to their local schools after a period of intensive support.

Bristol's two SLD schools chose to pursue the model of relocation, whilst recognising the specialist facilities (sensory rooms, hydrotherapy, healthcare) which were needed. Using a combination of local capital funds and Access funding, the LEA was able to support one school in re-locating its Key Stage 3 and 4 and post-16 to a purpose-built facility within a local secondary school, and another in a similar partnership for its primary children. PFI funding should enable the remaining children to relocate in the future – at which point this SLD school will be the city's first 'included special school'.

Meanwhile, the two schools for children with moderate/complex learning difficulties have been working with nearby primary schools to establish 'satellites'. Staff and a group of pupils transfer to the mainstream setting, allowing the mainstream school to develop inclusive teaching strategies which benefit all their pupils.

This work has not just been about locational integration. It has taken place against a background of a strong inclusive education policy, developed by the LEA after extensive consultation with stakeholders, and with the support of a full-time LEA Inclusion Coordinator. Her role is to work with each special school and its partners to develop the inclusive cultures and practices that enable children not just to be present, but also to participate.

COLLECTION AND USE OF DATA: MATCHING NEEDS TO PROVISION

82. The Working Group believes there is a need for more systematic data collection both on pupil needs and associated provision to meet those needs in order to inform regional and local planning. The Department has set data collection systems in place to help with this process. From January 2002 the pupil level annual schools census (PLASC) replaced Form 7. This form captures a range of data relating to individual pupils, including whether they have a statement and types of SEN provision. From January 2004 the Department intends to add a number of codes to the form, based on OFSTED categories, which will capture types of SEN. The Department is consulting a sample of schools, LEAs and voluntary organisations on a set of short definitions for each type of SEN with the aim of helping LEAs to allocate pupils to schools more reliably.

83. There is also a need to collect more reliable data relating to residential placements. The White Paper, *'Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century (2001)'* set out a commitment to raise standards and improve the quality of life for people with learning disabilities. As part of this wider commitment, a small group comprising officials from DfES and DH have been working to find out more about the numbers, outcomes and characteristics of disabled children and young people in residential placements. The Group reported to Ministers in December 2002 and has highlighted the need for improved data collection. Concurrent work being carried out by the SEN Regional Partnerships has informed the work of the Group and together these initiatives should help to transform the amount and quality of available data relating to residential provision. Inspections carried out by the NCSC in residential settings should also serve to improve the information that is currently available.
84. The Working Group recognises that it will be some time before a robust dataset will be available to help LEAs to provide a better match of needs to provision. However, there are a number of mechanisms which are open to LEAs to help with their regional planning. The Regional Partnerships have useful information on levels of need and provision within particular areas. The Working Group believes there may be scope for LEAs to work with the Partnerships to bring into place more effective systems of regional planning. Health and social services also hold important data on children and young people with SEN, and there may be scope for LEAs to obtain and exploit these data for regional planning purposes. There may be scope in time to introduce a single, universal, cross-agency child record which will help cross-agency planning. The Working Group welcomes these data collection initiatives.

ROLE OF THE SEN REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

85. Last year the SEN Regional Partnerships began to collaborate on the collection of information about the numbers and needs of children and young people attending out of authority special schools, including non-maintained and independent special schools. This analysis should be completed by July 2003 and will be used to inform Best Value Reviews.

86. A number of Partnerships have completed work that focuses on pupils with low incidence SEN. The West Midlands Partnership have developed services for children and young people with ASD, and are now in a position to plan for children with ASD both at the individual LEA and regional level. Other initiatives linked to Partnerships include the work of Kent LEA and the Royal London Society for the Blind who have developed proposals to support pupils with visual impairment within the context of the SE region SEN Partnership. Yorkshire and Humberside SEN Regional Partnership & NASS have completed research into schools used by that region. The London Partnership have completed 'Away From Home – the price paid' in March 2001 – which had a focus on the EBD provision used by LEAs in the North East of London as well as developing a database of info on non-maintained and independent schools used by London authorities.
87. **In order to support the proposals outlined in this paper the Working Group recommends that the Department, in consultation with the SEN Regional Partnerships, takes forward the an audit of SEN and specialist provision in order to:**
- a) Identify where there are needs which are not being met and any associated gaps in provision and services;
 - b) Share effective preventative practice and most particularly the ways in which the special school sector and specialist support services have been used to support developments in mainstream;
 - c) Explicitly explore provision for children and young people with 'low incidence' SEN in order to determine the need, or otherwise, for the development of specialist regional services;
 - d) Explore and examine the financial issues associated with the development of any specialist regional provision (in the widest sense);
 - e) Explore whether some specialist provision might be developed for use sub-regionally or nationally.

REGIONAL CENTRES OF EXPERTISE

88. In the light of the findings of the audit, the Working Group wishes to see steps taken by the Department to fill identified gaps in provision and services within and across regions. It will be of benefit to the sector as a whole, for those special schools who are leaders in the field to disseminate their knowledge, skills and expertise to other schools in the area, both special and mainstream. This would help to drive up standards across the sector, and support the greater inclusion of children and young people with SEN in mainstream schools. The Working Group believes that there may be scope for LEAs to use the information outlined above to set up regional centres of expertise to carry out this work. These centres could be based in a school or they could form part of an LEA's SEN Support Services. Their aim would be to extend and improve educational practice for children and young people with SEN across a particular area in both mainstream and special school settings. It will be important for LEAs to establish centres which specialise in teaching children and young people across the range of SEN, and in a way that will allow the expertise that is currently locked in special schools to be spread across the whole country. **In the light of the findings of the audit of needs and gaps in provision and services, the Working Group recommends that the Department should promote the establishment of regional centres of expertise.**
89. **The Working Group recommends that the Government should provide funding for this particular scheme.** Regional centres could be funded in one of two possible ways: Government could provide them with funding 'over and above' their normal budget, subject to them carrying out their designated role, and then monitor and evaluate what they do with the money; alternatively, Government could set up a new fund for which schools would be invited to submit bids in order to develop into regional centres of expertise. Further work would be needed to develop criteria for assessing suitability to become a regional centre.
90. The Working Group is firmly of the view that there needs to be a more effective way of funding NMSS and independent schools in order to reduce potential conflict in the system between parents, schools and LEAs. One possibility might be to open up the regional centres of expertise model to NMSS (or approved independent schools who

wish to apply for NMSS status and who adopt the necessary accreditation standards). This could be done by agreement with LEAs, and their representative bodies, including the Confederation of Education Service Managers (CONFED), who might undertake to jointly fund, and make full use of such centres, on a regional basis in order to make them cost-effective. LEAs would, on the basis of their planning projections, need to make commitments to funding a certain number of placements at these schools. The Working Group would welcome views on this proposition.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING ACROSS LEAS

91. In some cases, particularly where there is a low incidence of a particular need, or where several small LEAs think it beneficial both financially and in terms of pupil numbers, the Working Group believes it would make sense for LEAs to work in partnership to establish schools covering neighbouring LEAs. These could also be operated in partnership with a charity or an existing non-maintained or independent special school. These schools would need to be established in a way that would take account of transport factors – both in terms of the time involved travelling and costs. In cases where it is not possible to establish a viable regional day school, given pupil numbers and the distances involved, the Working Group believes LEAs should review the availability of residential provision and, where necessary, consider establishing regional residential provision. However, LEAs should ensure that a variety of alternative solutions are considered, and that residential provision is used only in extreme cases where it is, on balance, the most appropriate option for the child.
92. It may be appropriate for LEAs to develop different regional models depending on whether they are looking at provision across rural regions or in inner city communities. In looking at regional planning, LEAs might define a region in terms of what kind of area would be necessary to support the full continuum of SEN, including low incidence SEN. When considering options, LEAs may find it helpful to learn from the experience of some non-maintained and independent special schools that already serve populations from across a wide area.

SUPPORTING INCLUSION

93. Many special and mainstream schools have responded positively to the Government's inclusion agenda. However, the Working Group believes there is scope for more to be done in a way that will give children and young people with SEN greater access to a range of inclusive experiences, while better integrating special schools into the wider community of schools.

94. The Working Group proposes that inclusion indicators for SEN should be introduced to monitor how effectively both special and mainstream schools are contributing to the Government's overall inclusion agenda. The indicators would look at how well pupils with SEN were being included or reintegrated into mainstream schools, but also at the range of work undertaken by special schools in partnership with mainstream schools to overcome barriers to learning and inclusion within mainstream settings. They should take account of work already undertaken on this issue in a number of LEAs. The process for setting indicators and monitoring progress against them would be as follows:
 - a. Each school would be responsible for setting inclusion indicators at the start of the school year. They would be set out in the school's SEN policy statement, and the school would outline how it intended to meet them;
 - b. The approach would be tailored to the specific needs of mainstream schools in the area (or beyond, for special schools acting as regional centres of expertise) and of individual pupils;
 - c. Schools would report their progress in the prospectus and annual report;
 - d. OFSTED would monitor and evaluate how well schools were implementing their inclusion strategies, and on their performance against the indicators.

95. **The Working Group recommends that those schools with a good track record of achieving against their inclusion indicators would be eligible to receive an inclusion mark.** It would not be appropriate to introduce a uniform inclusion mark across the country as circumstances would necessarily differ between LEAs and different types of special school. However, we envisage the following key principles underpinning the inclusion mark:
- a. It would need to be developed in partnership with a local authority;
 - b. It would need to be trialled and developed by mainstream primary and secondary schools in partnership with special schools;
 - c. It would need to be developed for teachers by teachers in order to ensure it has a practical application;
 - d. It would need to be established as a whole authority scheme;
 - e. It would need to be accredited by an HEI;
 - f. It would be recognised by OFSTED as a “quality mark”.

Case study: The Leeds Inclusion Project

The Leeds Inclusion Project developed a supported self review and Charter Mark strategy in 1999, to promote good quality inclusive practice in its mainstream schools, and to recognise that practice alongside the recognition schools get for high academic achievement.

This development involved a critical appraisal of all publications and developments in the area and the production of a framework in partnership with teachers from a wide variety of Leeds schools. The framework contained a number of statements judged to reflect good inclusive practice under the four broad headings of ethos, curriculum, behaviour and resources. An important feature of the framework was its writing by local teachers, which resulted in a greater sense of local ownership.

Schools review their practices against these statements and plan any developments necessary to improve those practices. If a school wishes to have their good practice recognised, a validation team, comprising of education psychologists and SEN support teachers, undertake a validation visit to substantiate the school's judgements and evidence. A successful outcome results in a celebration of the school's achievement by awarding a Chartermark certificate and plaque.

The Chartermark framework and validation strategy is constantly being reviewed and updated as the idea of what constitutes effective inclusion is further developed. The clear message from schools, however, is that this aspect of their ethos and climate needs to be recognised, since it promotes higher achievement for all. Almost 40% of Leeds schools have become involved in the past two years since the Chartermark has become available.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND DIVERSITY

96. The Working Group believes that special schools have an important contribution to make to the Government's diversity strategy. Many special schools are strong in their own ethos and character and unique in what they provide for their pupils. Consultation with parents and young people demonstrated strong support for such specialist provision. Families and young people commented on several occasions that

high quality and specialist support in a special school context could offer “the least restrictive environment” for some pupils, and could also support a planned return back into mainstream. Many special schools are currently working with mainstream schools in a way that will help raise standards for all pupils.

97. **The Working Group recommends that special schools in future should work in the following ways.**
- a. Twinning model: Special schools twinning with mainstream schools with both schools exchanging knowledge, skills and expertise to the benefit of all the pupils;
 - b. Federations: special schools working within a cluster of mainstream schools, with all of the schools with a formal agreement to work together to raise attainment for all the pupils. This would allow the special school to work closely with all the mainstream schools in the federation. The Government is keen to support schools, including special schools, to federate and to develop joint structural approaches to raising standards of teaching and learning;
 - c. Clusters: Special schools working in a joined up way with other schools within the cluster. The Government is keen for mainstream and special schools to work together in this way sharing resources and expertise;
98. A number of interesting diversity projects are currently underway which might help inform how special schools contribute to the wider diversity agenda. For example, the collegiate academies project in Birmingham involves several clusters of secondary schools that have agreed to work together to create a ‘commonwealth’ for the benefit of staff and pupils. At least two of the collegiates includes a special school, and each is developing structures to enable special schools to work in a more collaborative way with a view to raising standards for all pupils. In Portsmouth 11 head teachers, including 3 from special schools, have taken joint responsibility for raising standards for all the pupils, including pupils with SEN. **The Working Group recommends that the Department monitors and evaluates these projects to look at how the lessons learned might be applied to special schools more widely.**

Case Study: Birmingham Collegiate

Selly Oak Special School was invited by the DfES to co-found the Oaks Collegiate Academy in June 2002. Selly Oak is a highly successful secondary special school. It is a Beacon School for Continuing Professional Development and holder of the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Investors in People status.

The immediate effect of being a founder member of the Oaks Diversity Pathfinder Collegiate has been very positive. Curricular links have been established between Selly Oak School and its mainstream Collegiate colleagues. All subject leaders and SENCO's from the six schools have already met and shared strengths, needs and aspirations and several departments have made strong curricular links. Plans are well advanced for Selly Oak School's bank of teaching resources to be made available to their mainstream colleagues via a dedicated Collegiate website. Selly Oak school's well established Professional Development Centre is already being used by the Collegiate to extend staff expertise through the training Selly Oak offers.

Selly Oak has a long tradition of voluntary twilight teaching for mainstream students with literacy difficulties. However, the use of video conferencing will enable Selly Oak School to offer the same twilight INSET sessions and master classes to our Collegiate colleagues and their students without the need for travel.

Selly Oak is now able to link with the City Learning Centre at Frankley Community High School which has given the school the opportunity to access areas of Technology and Citizenship not otherwise available. Other curricular areas will be using this excellent facility next term. The English department is currently planning to use the facility to produce a film version of Macbeth.

A major benefit will be the alignment of the school day in collegiate schools to enable students to be taught in collegiate schools other than their own. This will allow their more able students to access lessons in mainstream school whilst students in the mainstream schools experiencing difficulties will be able to benefit from their expertise. Selly Oak students are keen gain mainstream experience in subjects which are their strengths whilst retaining the support for their areas of weakness.

Staff are delighted that the school is now in a situation where students have access to even broader, planned, inclusive education in settings, which are welcoming, and with staff who are aware of their particular needs. This is also advantageous for students in the mainstream school who need the support and expertise available at Selly Oak School.

Case Study: Sefton LEA

As part of a reorganisation of special schools in Sefton LEA, a new “partnership” role has been defined for supporting the development of special schools into centres of advice and expertise for other schools. Each special school is entering into a more formal “partnership” with at least one mainstream school, and arrangements for staff and pupils to begin working together, visiting and participating in activities in each school are being developed. Mainstream schools were invited to become involved in this twinning exercise, and as more schools wanted to be involved than was possible, criteria were developed to make decisions about who could be included. This has not meant that all joint activity between the special school and other schools has ceased, but that a closer relationship will be encouraged at all times.

An ambitious building programme has begun to put more specialist health support facilities into all but one of the special schools. This includes therapy rooms and a hydrotherapy pool, and will allow each of the schools to be used as a base for offering support to children and young people from other schools, and also other adults from within the local community.

99. Specialist schools bring about school improvement through rigorous planning; 'excellence in teaching and learning' and the development of strengths in particular areas of the curriculum. They allow the school system to respond better to the individual talents and needs of pupils. There is a strong community element to the programme and specialist schools work within a named 'family of schools' for the benefit of pupils beyond their own school boundaries and other groups of people in the wider community. There are currently 10 special schools within the programme, and several of these are part of a joint designation with a mainstream primary school.
100. The Department is currently evaluating the impact of the Specialist Schools Programme on those special schools that are already specialist. **The Working Group recommends that the Department scrutinises the evaluation with a view to exploring which new category of specialism within the Specialist Schools Programme could be created specifically for SEN provision.**
101. There are a range of other programmes under the diversity agenda for which special schools are eligible to apply including:
- a. **Advanced Schools.** Advanced schools will be actively involved in collaborative partnerships and developing innovative ideas to push the boundaries of current teaching practice. Special schools which cater for pupils in the 11-18 range will be encouraged to apply where there is strong evidence to support a proven track record in the areas of innovation and professional collaboration.
 - b. **Training Schools.** The aim of Training Schools is to build up and share good and developing ITT practice with other schools and their training providers both within their existing partnership networks and beyond. Current projects include: the creation of teaching observatories so that trainees can observe lessons in 'real time'; the provision of training in the field of special educational needs; and training in innovative classroom management.
102. The Working Group believes that special schools can and should make a unique contribution to each of these programmes. **The Working Group recommends that**

the Department should encourage more applications from special schools for each of these programmes, and that officials should review the programme criteria at the next available opportunity to ensure they fully reflect the wider SEN agenda.

RESOURCED PROVISION AND SEN UNITS

103. SEN units have the advantage of offering provision that may be similar to a special school, both in terms of curriculum and pupil benefits, whilst providing opportunities to socialise with mainstream peers in a carefully planned way. They allow a greater amount of specialist input to be provided than may be possible in a mainstream class, and open up the possibility of sharing equipment and resources, including staff. The physical separation of the pupils in units means that they may have limited opportunities to be educated with their peers, and there may also be capacity issues with their eventual reintegration into the mainstream school, because they may be registered on a separate roll and not therefore part of the school's agreed admission number. Careful planning, with clear objectives and targets, is therefore essential to ensure that all pupils have a controlled sequence of inclusive experiences that lead to a gradual integration into the mainstream. Resourced provision in a mainstream school does not present the same difficulties with reintegration, because the pupils are already on the mainstream roll and mostly educated in mainstream classes. It may however, be more difficult to provide for pupils that require a significant amount of specialist input, such as health input, in this way.
104. Working Group members would like to see greater use of resourced provision in mainstream classes, and SEN units within mainstream sites, as part of a range of local provision to meet the needs of pupils with SEN. Both types of provision have the potential to support the further inclusion of pupils with a range of needs into the mainstream. However, members have noted that in some cases, schools may not be willing to incorporate SEN units or resourced provision within their sites, because of a lack of incentives for them to do so. **The Working Group recommends that the Department makes clear its support for LEAs to increase the availability of resourced provision and SEN units located within mainstream sites, develops incentives to encourage this, and monitors trends.**

Case Study: Stockport LEA

Stockport LEA has systematically developed resourced provision for pupils with severe learning difficulties/profound and multiple learning difficulties ranging from a resourced nursery class in a mainstream primary school, to five resourced primary schools, each with 8 places, and two resourced secondary schools, each taking up to 15 pupils with SLD/PMLD. Funding is fully delegated to the school.

The resourced schools all operate on the basis that pupils are part of the main school and belong to class groups in the usual way. Each school has a resource base, and although the amount of time spent in the resource base varies according to need, pupils spend the majority of their time supported in mainstream classes. Where pupils with SLD are working in the resource base it is often with mainstream pupils.

All schools involved have had good OfSTED reports and the inspectors have praised the resourced provision and the outcomes for pupils.

Case Study: The Ravensbourne School, Resourced Provision for pupils with specific learning difficulties.

Ravensbourne is an 11-18 co-educational foundation mainstream secondary school. Since September 1993, the Ravensbourne School has provided specialist provision for pupils in the Borough of Bromley who have statements for their specific learning difficulties. The school has 1300 pupils, 186 have special educational needs and there are 70 pupils with statements including those with specific learning difficulties.

Eight places were available initially in year 7. Each year the provision has grown by eight places and there are now 40 places covering years 7-11, supported by a team of 7.5 qualified teachers. This is in addition to mainstream Curriculum Support Staff supporting pupils with a range of SEN across the school. The Provision has a specially equipped base within the school. This consists of two teaching rooms, two rooms for assessments, interviews and administration and one room for teachers to prepare resources.

The provision is funded by the Borough of Bromley. However, the specialist teachers in the Provision are full members of staff at The Ravensbourne School. They have other responsibilities for all pupils such as Form Tutors, Heads of Year and Literacy Co-ordinator . The Provision is a source of expertise and is used as a resource by the rest of the school. The SpeLD Provision teachers offer regular in-service training to the mainstream teachers.

Each year group of 8 pupils is supported by 1.5 teachers from the specialist team. Their responsibility is to ensure access to the national curriculum and to provide specialist teaching programmes in response to the needs described in each child's statement of special educational needs.

Each child is first and foremost an ordinary member of an ordinary class within the school community. At present, Year 7 pupils are disapplied from a foreign language and spend three hours a week in the SpeLD department, where they receive extra literacy and numeracy tuition. They have the chance to take up a foreign language in year 8, after consultation with their named specialist teacher, the Modern Foreign Language department and parents.

On average the pupils spend one hour a week with their named specialist teacher on a one-to-one basis, to follow an individual, structured multi-sensory programme to meet their needs. The rest of the time is spent in the classroom following the national curriculum alongside other pupils. The specialist teachers support the SpeLD pupils in the classroom across the curriculum range. The amount of in-class support depends on individual needs and timetable constraints.

The SpeLD provision therefore provides the benefits of specialist expertise and individual tuition when needed alongside full inclusion in a mainstream school.

PARTNERSHIP, OUTREACH AND DUAL PLACEMENTS

105. Many special schools already engage in a wide range of outreach and partnership working but have noted that some barriers need to be removed to promote this. These include the perception that outreach is always provided by special schools to mainstream schools and other partners, and not the other way around. Also, in cases where staff are out of special schools delivering outreach, there is a danger that the school will be left under-staffed. The Working Group thinks it important to consider more of a partnership than an outreach model whereby special schools provide their blend of expertise to mainstream schools, and mainstream schools are able to offer special schools in return, for example specialist curriculum knowledge. It will also be important to consider other models of outreach that are not staff-driven, such as special schools delivering outreach support through the medium of written materials. The Working Group is strongly of the view that the real cost of funding partnership and outreach work needs to be included in LEA funding formulae, drawing for example on the opportunities arising from the increasing number of vacant places in many special schools, and from the potential for many pupils to be dually registered attracting funding for both the special and mainstream school they attend.
106. The Working Group has emphasised that partnership and outreach work should not be confined to maintained schools. It is also important to consider the role that NMSS and independent schools can play since many are offering outreach beyond their local area, for example, Sunfield School in Clent.

Case Study: Sunfield School

Sunfield Special School in Clent, Worcestershire is an approved independent special school that caters for students with autistic spectrum disorders. It has recently set up a pilot project to implement and evaluate an innovative model of outreach support to children with autistic spectrum disorders in the West Midlands. Sunfield Outreach Service is based on a model of trans-disciplinary practice in which a specialist team will promote a 24-hour curriculum by working in the child's home and school settings.

The aim of the project is to promote inclusion and to provide evidence that will inform future thinking on the role of special schools. The project will target children who are at risk of requiring residential placements, and will offer intensive and specialised support where needed, transferring into the community the principles and practices already proven to be successful with children at the school.

To roll out the project, Sunfield school is working in partnership with the West Midlands SEN regional partnership. They will commission an independent evaluation of the model, and data from this will feed into future policy and practice for inclusion and special school reorganisation.

Case Study: Riverside School

Riverside School is a Hampshire LEA primary special school for children with a range of complex needs relating to learning difficulties which has been able, through beacon school funding, to establish partnership working with four mainstream schools and an early years centre in the locality.

The work has focused on literacy, personal & social development/behaviour management and supporting children with autism, and has operated at a range of levels. These have included direct work with children, assessment and planning of learning programmes, advice on adapted approaches and resources, strategies and resources to support the learning of children with autism and training for support staff, teachers and parents.

The advice and support on adapted approaches to literacy teaching is based on a highly structured approach to teaching and learning in literacy linked to the National Literacy Strategy and supported through ICT and practical and highly motivating learning materials. This is delivered through an innovative “teaching reading through writing” approach which has been very successful in raising standards in reading and writing for children with significant learning needs.

The work with the partner schools has been based on a written agreement drawn up by the key people involved and signed by both head teachers. The agreement gives a brief description of the activity, identifies what each school will do and defines the key objectives and success criteria. As an outcome of the outreach work undertaken, the school has been involved in developing training materials to support the development of consultancy skills for special school staff undertaking, or planning to become involved in, outreach activities with mainstream schools.

107. The Working Group is of the view that it is important to find a way for schools to overcome any barriers – financial, legal or otherwise – relating to the current use of dual placements, and to encourage special and mainstream schools to make more use of them. These barriers include a lack of clear guidance about the function and use of dual placements, and concern from mainstream schools that having additional pupils with SEN might have a negative impact on their position in the school performance tables. Parents and young people participating in the focus groups were specifically asked for their views on dual placements. They were generally enthusiastic because such placements in most cases offered access to a wider curriculum whilst retaining the expertise of the special school. However, some parents were concerned that the purpose and timing of dual placements were not necessarily well planned, and that young people could experience disruption rather than greater inclusion without greater specificity about the placement in question.
108. The Working Group thinks it may be necessary to issue clearer guidance on the use of dual placements and preparation for their usage e.g. agreeing student support in advance of the placement and ensuring proper mechanisms are in place for monitoring their effectiveness. We have a number of examples where pupils have been able to attend both special and mainstream schools without the formal use of the dual placement mechanism. There is a need to explore the effective use of dual placements more thoroughly and to circulate and promote good practice in this area. One option might be to offer mainstream schools financial incentives to take more pupils on dual placements.

Case Study: Riverside School

Following discussions with parents and the key agencies involved, a Year 4 boy in Hampshire LEA with significant learning needs and associated behavioural difficulties attended Riverside school, the local primary special school, on a short-term intervention basis. He remained on the roll of the mainstream school and on the attendance register of the special school. The focus was on undertaking an assessment of the pupil's core needs, setting up and implementing an individual learning programme, and building up his self-confidence and self-esteem. During his time in the special school the pupil was accompanied by the LSA who worked with him in the mainstream school. This enabled her to develop her understanding of his learning needs and her own skills and strategies in managing the pupil's learning programme and social/emotional development.

The pupils attended the special school full-time for a period of 4 weeks. This was followed by a phased return to the mainstream school over 2 weeks and backed up by outreach support and advice from the special school.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND LEA SUPPORT SERVICES

109. Given the outreach role which the Group are advocating for special schools, there is a need to consider how this should relate to LEA support services. The Group believes that it will be important for special schools to work in collaboration with LEA support services in a way that will make best use of the resources of each, and that will fit market forces. The role of the LEA will necessarily change from that of universal provider to that of facilitator or broker, creating, if necessary, markets for services to schools. **In order to make LEAs responsive to the new role envisaged, the Working Group recommends that the Schools Forum should have a role in the development of a market for SEN services by looking at the various providers, the quality and consistency of provision and value for money considerations.**

110. There are various ways in which special schools and LEA support services might work together to create a mixed economy of SEN services. One possible approach might be

for special schools, support services and the LEA to reach an agreement about respective 'spheres of influence'. For example:

- a. The LEA might broker an agreement around a tiered service with the support service providing a universal service, and special schools providing a second tier service to pupils with more complex needs;
- b. Where a support service is well established, special schools might focus on including their own pupils, and supporting pupils at risk in mainstream through short term placements, while the support service provides a buy back service to schools for pupils with statements and at School Action Plus;
- c. If a support service has a successful network for teachers and support staff, special schools might focus on developing support networks for parents.

111. Any model of collaboration between special schools and SEN Support Services would necessarily need to be underpinned by strategic planning at regional or sub-regional level to ensure there are no gaps in provision. Greater collaboration between LEA support services and non-maintained and independent schools could both help to plug any gaps in provision, and lead to more communication and joined up working between the maintained, non-maintained and independent sectors. The active support of involvement of NASS and the SEN Regional Partnerships should ensure that innovative practice is widely known, and successful collaborations replicated in other areas. **The Working Group recommends that LEA Support Services should be developed on this basis in close consultation with maintained, non-maintained and independent special schools.**

112. **Where more than one LEA has demonstrated the competence and capacity to provide support services of an appropriate level and quality, the Working Group recommends that Schools Forums should play a role in the development of a market for SEN services to encourage positive attitudes towards a changing role for special schools.** In managing a developing market for services to schools and LEAs, Schools Forums will need to consider the record of different providers in

promoting learning, and their ability to manage the deployment of staff across a number of different locations cost effectively.

LEA RECURRENT FUNDING MODELS

113. The Working Group believes that it is important for LEAs to make more use of existing flexible funding systems to facilitate dual placements and to allow greater teacher and pupil movement between special and mainstream schools. The freedom given by the Pupil Registration Regulations to register a pupil concurrently at both a maintained school and a special school has existed for some years. In terms of funding these placements, the Financing of Maintained Schools Regulations provide that when a pupil is dual registered, both schools receive funding as if he or she were a full time pupil, unless the LEA's funding formula specifies otherwise. This is designed to ensure LEAs undertake a proper assessment of what each school needs by way of funding for the pupil, and that the default situation is complete funding at both schools.

114. **The Working Group recommends that the Department should promote the flexibilities laid down in the School Budget Shares (Prescribed Purposes)(England) Regulations 2002 in order to encourage movement between special and mainstream schools.** The effect of the regulations is to allow the governing body of a maintained school to spend its budget share on teaching, learning materials and other education-related services for pupils registered at other maintained schools. A special school, for example, can now provide outreach for pupils in other maintained, mainstream schools from within its own budget share, and vice-versa. It is for LEAs to decide how much funding should be provided for these purposes.

115. The Working Group notes that the newly created Schools Forums will have a role in this field from 2003 onwards. LEAs are obliged to consult Schools Forums annually, in the overall context of the management of the Schools Budget, on their arrangements for the funding of pupils with SEN. **The Working Group recommends that this should include issues of partnership working, outreach and dual placements.** Schools Forums should in future encourage collaborative arrangements such as the use of a special school, or a mainstream school with an SEN unit, as an LEA-wide

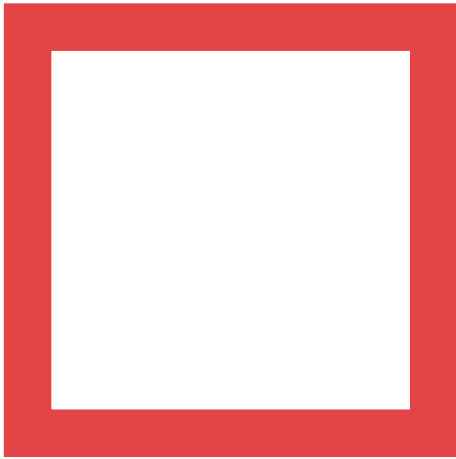
resource for other schools. **The Working Group further recommends that Schools Forums should be encouraged to seek regular contact with NMSS.**

116. The Working Group believes it is essential, if regional planning is to work effectively, for local authorities to come to a common understanding on the system of inter-authority recoupment. It is for authorities to agree recoupment charges between themselves but, from April, the Secretary of State will no longer act as an arbiter in disputes. In order to avoid future protracted disputes, authorities will need to have clear, accepted guidance on charging methods. **The Working Group recommends that the Department should work with the LEA sector, and representatives from the non-maintained and independent sectors, in drawing up the necessary guidance.**

CAPITAL FUNDING

117. The Working Group is of the view that the Department's system of capital funding should support special schools in their new role. The Department is still considering details over the 2002 Spending Review period up to 2005-06, but the particular needs of special schools, and the development of SEN units and resourced provision in mainstream schools, will be taken into account in this process.
118. The Department recently announced that NMSS would now be allocated devolved formula capital on the same basis as other schools. The Working Group welcomes this move to treat the NMSS equally with other sectors. NMSS will receive £0.589/0.667/0.686 million on top of their existing allocation over the next three financial years. This will be subject to the Department introducing suitable procedures for the recovery of capital funding should capital assets funded by the public purse be sold.
119. The Department does not provide capital funding to independent special schools. However, it is open to independent special schools to apply for non-maintained status, subject to them meeting the necessary accreditation standards. The allocation of formula funding is based on the school and pupil count of the previous year, so any expansion in the NMSS sector could therefore be mirrored in devolved formula capital allocations, albeit with the same time lag as for other maintained schools.

120. The Department encourages LEAs to collaborate to develop investment projects for the provision of cross border or regional facilities for children and young people with SEN. Guidance to LEAs on applying for Targeted Capital Funding for 2003-04, for projects which support Government educational priorities which might otherwise not be funded, included an invitation for LEAs to apply for funding for collaborative SEN projects.



Chapter 6: Support Beyond the Classroom

MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

121. The Working Group believes that, if special schools are in future to cater for children and young people with more severe and complex needs, it is important they work effectively in partnership with health and social services as well as the voluntary sector. Existing structures can make it difficult for professionals to communicate properly, especially when they find themselves at the receiving end of conflicting priorities. There are also particular concerns about shortages of therapy professionals, in particular speech and language therapists, and about pressures on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The parents' and young people's focus groups highlighted major concerns about the delivery of non-educational provision. Parents referred to their frustrations at the different priorities and definitions of need between agencies and the duplication of assessment and record keeping. **The Working Group recommends that DfES works with DH to develop a shared language between agencies and more integrated record and data collection systems.**
122. The Department of Health is currently developing a National Service Framework (NSF) for children, and the disabled children's module is one of seven on which the NSF will be based. One of the issues facing the development of the NSF is how to enable education, health and social services to work together to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN being educated in both special and mainstream schools.

123. The NSF provides an important opportunity for the first time to set national standards for health and social services and to focus for the first time on key areas of interface with schools and education. **The Working Group recommends that DH is asked to consider:**
- a. **Providing health and social care services for disabled children and young people and their families based around schools, where this is the best way of meeting the needs and wishes of the child and family;**
 - b. **Increasing the supply of key professionals, in particular, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists;**
 - c. **Supplying appropriate equipment to meet the full needs of disabled children and young people and their families, and which can be used both at home and in school;**
 - d. **Developing family support based in schools in order to relieve the pressure on families and reduce the need for residential placements.**
124. Educational psychologists (EPs) will continue to have a key role to play in the identification, assessment and statementing process, and in ensuring that children and young people with SEN in both special and mainstream schools have access to appropriate levels of support from all the agencies. Much work has already been carried out to define the role of EPs. The report *'Educational Psychology Service (England): Current Role, Good Practice and Future Directions*, published by the DfES in July 2000, considered the scope and balance of EP services in England, how future priorities and directions for the service might be affected by the changing context of SEN and key Government initiatives, and the role of the EP in multi-agency working. A key issue was how to balance more traditional work on assessment and statementing with the developing role of EPs in earlier intervention and provision of services. A further consultation paper was issued by the Department in December 2000 on the training and professional development of EPs. The Working Group considers that any further work on the training and professional development of

EPs should take account of the wider ongoing initiative on the future role of special schools.

125. Links with CAMHS are especially important for children and young people with BESD. Additional resources come on stream in April 2003 to work towards the establishment of a comprehensive CAMHS service in every area. The range of services should recognise the specific learning needs of disabled children. Protocols should be agreed between education, health and social services effectively to meet the needs of children with persistent, severe and complex behavioural disorders, some of whom will attend residential schools.
126. In the Spending Review White Paper, the Government announced that DfES and DH would be piloting a number of Children's Trusts. The trusts will be new organisational models, based within a local authority framework, which test out integrated approaches to planning, commissioning and funding children's services across education, health and social care. They will enable local partners to jointly plan, commission, finance and deliver services for children in order to provide integrated delivery of services to benefit children, their families and schools. **The first wave of pilots is planned to begin from April 2003, and we recommend that at least one pilot should test out approaches to integrated delivery of services based around a special school.**
127. The Home Secretary announced last summer that there would be a Green Paper on Children at Risk, and the Prime Minister formally announced the Green Paper on 30 October 2002. The Working Group hopes that the Green Paper will look at, inter alia, some of the barriers to achievement for children and young people with SEN and disabilities, as well as those in public care referred to at paragraph 27 above, and the role of social services.
128. The Working Group notes that it is open to the governing bodies of schools, or federations of schools, to employ health and social services professionals directly. There are advantages to such an approach from a school's perspective and we understand that Children's Trusts pilots are likely to be looking at federations as one

model for integrated delivery. However, the group also recognises the advantage of having some form of LEA brokerage as a means of ensuring equitable distribution of scarce health resources. For example, the school could enter into a service level agreement (SLA) with the local health authority or trust which would specify the work carried out at the school by designated professionals. With such an arrangement, the relevant professional might report to the head teacher in the first instance, but be monitored and line managed by another professional in the same field.

129. It is important to build on successful initiatives to develop new ways of working and promote common core skills across professional groups. The Working Group would encourage teachers, learning support and teaching assistants to develop a range of skills that might assist health and social workers in carrying out their functions. This will enhance the educational opportunities of the children and young people, and advance the specialist knowledge and skills of the schools workforce.

130. The Working Group is of the view that there may be scope, through the use of the Government's extended schools programme, to facilitate the better use of special school premises as a community resource, and to examine their role in providing support, information and advice to parents/carers and the wider community. This particular proposal will need some further exploration and preparation, in particular ensure there is community support for the development and that only child protection issues are fully considered. Many special schools are already making their facilities accessible, such as Birkdale School in Southport who make their sports facilities available to the wider community. **The Working Group recommends that the DfES should encourage the participation of special schools in the extended schools programme.**

131. The Working Group believes there is scope for special schools to utilise the extended schools programme in a way that enhances multi-agency working. Special schools could use the programme to work in partnership with health and social services to provide after school, holiday and family support services based at the school; information for families; and therapy and counselling for children and young people who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The on-site provision of such services could lead to closer working between education, health and social services professionals, and lead to the needs of individual children and young people being addressed more effectively. For example, there are a number of examples of Behaviour Education Support Teams, which are multi-agency teams that support teachers and provide early intervention for pupils with BESD, being based on the site of an EBD school, from which they support clusters of schools, and engage with the local community. **The Working Group recommends that the Government encourages special schools to look at how the extended schools programme can be used to promote multi-agency working.**
132. It was clear from discussions with parents, children and young people that the positive development of school premises as a community resource was widely welcomed. Parents in particular felt that accessible premises for a comprehensive range of after-school activities were in short supply in most LEAs. They saw special schools as under-used but potentially valuable and usually with accessible resources for community development projects. They were also strongly in favour of the use of schools as one-stop shops for the delivery of health and social care feeling that shared physical location would improve the delivery of multi-agency services and reduce duplication of assessments. A number of parents recommended that special schools might become key players in the extended schools programme.

Case Study: Chailey Heritage School

Chailey Heritage School is a non-maintained residential special school in East Sussex which shares a site with Chailey Heritage Clinical Services, South Downs NHS Trust. Children and young people attend the school via referral from the local education authority. The school caters for children and young people aged 2 to 19 who have a range of complex physical and learning special needs. These needs require the support of physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, rehabilitation engineering services and clinical and medical staff. The pupils' physical disabilities also require a high-level of postural management, mobility equipment and technology. All of these services are provided on-site by Chailey Heritage Clinical Services.

Whereas in some special education settings the support services are either directly employed by the school or accessed from a community service, Chailey Heritage benefits from having a true multidisciplinary on-site approach to meeting pupil's special educational needs. Such proximity enables and encourages cohesive planning and delivery of a range of educational, therapeutic and clinical and care services to children and young people and their families.

RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOLS

133. There is evidence to suggest that more effective joined-up working and greater consistency are needed in respect of the assessment and placement of children and young people with SEN in residential special schools. A number of initiatives have been introduced to help address these issues:
 - a. The Department has recently written to local authorities offering advice on the question of which local authority should pay for which service when a child is moved to a residential placement out of their home authority;

- b. The joint NASS/LGA/ADSS *Contract for the Placement of Children and Young People in Day and Residential Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools* between the National Association of Non-Maintained and Independent Special Schools (NASS), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS) sets out minimum standards that should be met for the placement of a child by an LEA in an independent or NMSS. The contract incorporates many helpful comments made by schools, maintaining organisations, LEAs, Social Services Departments and other regional groups. The contract is being supported by NASS, LGA, ADSS, DfES and DH and will be launched in January 2003. Use of the contract is voluntary, but the supporting organisations are encouraging its usage and suggesting that it could be introduced at the annual review of a child's placement. Use of the contract will be reviewed regularly.

- c. The White Paper *Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century (2001)* looks to the development of arrangements to create better linkages between children and young people living in residential placements and their families, with a view to ensuring they are properly supported and protected by key agencies.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 134. The Working Group notes that the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating inter-agency working are not as robust as they might be. There is scope for more joined up working between OFTSED, Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) and Social Services Inspectorate (SSI). **The Working Group recommends that OFTSED, CHI and SSI be asked to consider how they might join up more effectively to monitor and evaluate inter-agency working.**

ROLE OF CONNEXIONS SERVICE

- 135. The Connexions Service has been set up to provide all young people between the ages of 13 and 19 with access to the support they need to make a successful transition to adulthood. The Connexions Personal Adviser (PA) has a key role in the transition of young people with SEN. The PA must attend the review in year 9 for

young people with a statement of SEN, and contribute to drawing up and monitoring the implementation of the transition plan (formal responsibility lies with the head teacher but in practice this may be devolved to the PA). The Working Group is aware that, in practice, this process of preparing young people for adult life has not been as strong as it might; and that there is a need for better co-ordination between special schools, adult health and social care services and the Connexions Service to ensure a smoother transition into adult life. The Working Group recognises that the Connexions Partnerships have only been coming on line over this past year, and that special schools may have experienced different levels of service. **The Working Group recommends that the Department monitors the service provided by the Connexions Service to young people with SEN in special schools, in liaison with the Learning and Skills Council.**

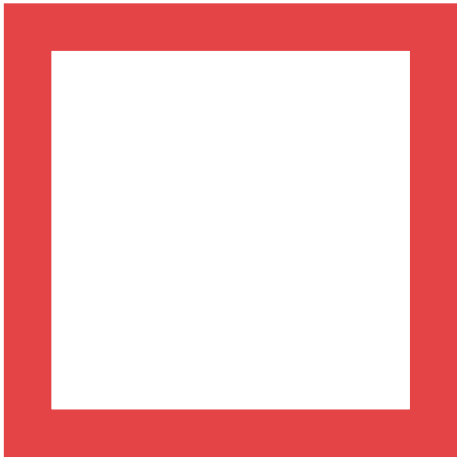
Case Study: Birtenshaw Hall School

Birtenshaw Hall School is a day and residential non-maintained special school for young people with physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties. Post school planning involves working closely with the Connexions Service and Specialist Social Workers for disabled school leavers. During the 3 year 16+ programme, all students meet and work with a Connexions officer and specialist social worker. These people work closely with staff and run regular post school preparation sessions in school. The sessions are aimed at helping pupils to prepare for post school opportunities.

The Connexions and social service staff also accompany students on college visits as part of the general widening of experience and when students are considering specific college placements. This close liaison between school staff, the students and their families and the outside agencies enable fully informed discussions to take place when review meetings are held. The review meetings are attended by Connexions and social service staff who know the students well and can help make informed choices about future placements. The staff from the outside agencies are also fully involved in funding applications to the Learning Skills Council.

The close liaison and regular contact between Connexions staff, students, their families and the school means that appropriate decisions about future placements are made in good time. This means that introduction and transfer arrangements can be carefully arranged to suit individual need.

The success of their close working partnership has meant that in the last four years an average of 78% of 16+ leavers has gone on to specialist further education placements.



Chapter 7: Looking to the future

136. A number of special schools are already working in ways which foreshadow many of the proposals outlined above. There are schools which are providing knowledge and expertise to other schools in a particular region, schools which are preparing their pupils to enter mainstream, schools which are working in collaborative and innovative ways with mainstream schools and other institutions within a particular area, and with professionals in the fields of health and social services. The Government believes that these schools, leaders in the field, are illustrating how we see special schools working in future.
137. The following case studies are examples of how the Government would like to see special schools working in future.

BEAUMONT HILL SCHOOL: OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

138. Beaumont Hill School in Darlington is a very successful generic school which caters for pupils with a wide range of needs. The school has an excellent outreach service and is committed to inclusion. The school is a technology college and has opened up these facilities to the wider community.

Case Study: Beaumont Hill School

Beaumont Hill Technology College, Primary School and ICT Centre is a large 225 place 2-19 generic specialist school based in Darlington. The school caters for pupils with a very wide range of needs, and has appropriate provision in place to cater for those needs. In 1997 the school was placed at the centre of the LEA's Education Development plans in order to support its development as a centre of excellence in support of the authority's inclusion strategy, in partnership with the LEA. The school has provided outreach services to mainstream primary and secondary schools for pupils with ASD and SLD. An Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) supports inclusion for 2 days a week, one day working in her AST capacity for pupils with statements in mainstream, and the other day as part of the LEA's Learning Support 'Patch Team' arrangements and as an advisory & support teacher. A senior member of staff regularly supports the statementing, banding and moderation panels, and well as working as part of an assessment team on the LEA's 'inclusive schools' award.

The school has 2 offsite provisions in mainstream primary and secondary schools where Beaumont Hill staff are based full time, providing inclusion and integration opportunities for up to 40 pupils, some of whom are on dual placements. Close links with the local college ensure that 14-19 students access college courses for vocational accreditation, particularly in catering, as well as bridging courses for SLD pupils who spend part of their week at the college in preparation for future placements.

A small number of pupils access the expertise at the school via in-reach arrangements. The school runs a Communications Aids Project and is also a learn direct centre.

In order to support and strengthen the LEA's inclusion policy, the school has developed provision for pupils with severe BESD and ASD. This has led to a significant reduction in out of borough placements, and enabled pupils to remain in their local communities.

The school has developed a training role, working with mainstream schools on a wide range of issues such as training in physical intervention, managing ASD pupils, lifting and moving and the use and moderation of P Scales. It has also employed a number of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who have successfully completed their induction and training at the school.

The school is a technology college and in this role has developed a community programme which has facilitated a great deal of joint working with partner schools on curriculum projects. The school also opens its ICT facilities to the public for one day a week in partnership with the local college, where courses are run for both parents and community partners.

The school is now planning for a major new build with a Primary and Secondary school for 2005. It is envisaged that all these establishments will be amalgamated under one roof, embracing inclusive practices and structures as well as addressing Borough wide strategy for increased inclusion.

THE NEW RUSH HALL GROUP: WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

139. The New Rush Hall Group comprises an EBD special school, an outreach service, two pupil referral units and an adolescent psychiatric unit. The Group have taken a leading role in providing for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties within the London Borough of Redbridge. This has helped to reduce the number of exclusions, and has led to most of the children with BESD being educated within the Borough.

Case Study: The New Rush Hall Group

The New Rush Hall Group is an educational organisation that works within a range of settings with children who are experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It comprises a day EBD school, a behaviour support Outreach Team, two pupil referral units and the education provision at Brookside, which is an adolescent psychiatric unit. The group is also currently involved in developing a PRU at KS3 and a multi-disciplinary early years' provision. In reorganising resources and services in this way in 1999, the London Borough of Redbridge is paying recognition to the continuum of need for children and young people, ranging from mild behavioural difficulties to more severe mental health problems and providing a 'joined up' strategic management approach to meeting such needs.

The Governors of The New Rush Hall School, with the agreement of the LEA, manage and oversee all the resources and services.

The New Rush Hall School, which opened in September 1991, offers education, support and guidance to youngsters who have experienced, or are experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. We do this in a number of ways, by being able to offer a wide range of provision to students and pupils from in-class support in mainstream school, to a full- or part-time place in this school which is specially designed to meet the individual needs of youngsters who attend.

In the school we work with youngsters who are either being assessed, with a view to making recommendations on how best to meet their needs, or with those whose needs it is felt can be met best by the school. The school offers a structured and orderly environment in which we run smaller classes than is usual in mainstream schools (1:8). Many classes and some individual pupils are supported by a Learning Support Assistant. We also work with a number of other services and agencies.

We recognise that many of the students and pupils with whom we work have difficulties with their behaviour, but we believe that every youngster has a right to achievement, and that every parent or carer has the right to expect that the school does its very best for their child. To achieve this we must work together in partnership. We also believe that youngsters must learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour and that self-discipline is a skill which has to be, and can be learnt. Because at times this is difficult, we operate within a structure in which everybody is clear about the rules, regulations and expectations.

The Outreach Service works in mainstream schools, offering support to either the school or the student. All teachers are skilled at working with youngsters who can present difficult behaviour and are able to offer both curriculum and counselling support. Their range of interventions include consultation, observation, joint planning, giving feedback and advice to staff, individual work, small group work, in-class support, team teaching and delivering INSET. As well as working with students individually, in small groups or whole classes, outreach teachers offer support to schools in the development and implementation of whole school policies. In addition a small number of pupils are supported at the New Rush Hall School on a part-time basis.

The New Rush Hall Senior Annexe consists of two Pupil Referral Units on separate sites where teaching and support staff offer an alternative and compensatory educational experience to 46 students in their last two years of school, through a combination of traditional subjects and life skills. Where appropriate, students can continue their studies for examinations started in their mainstream schools.

The newest member of the New Rush Hall Group is the Education Department of Brookside, which is a specialist adolescent psychiatric service for up to 35 teenagers providing residential, day and outpatient assessment, as well as on site education and consultation to the wider professional network.

The essence of our work throughout the service is a commitment to facilitate personal growth and development for the youngsters with whom we work. Therefore, we strive to find individual solutions to individual problems, within a framework that is needs driven, rather than resource driven. We aim therefore to help in developing youngsters so that they get on with themselves, get on with others, and can stand on their own two feet and cope with life's ups and downs. To work effectively within the organisation you will need to be good in your specialist area, flexible, energetic, versatile, and able to work effectively when under pressure within a multi-disciplinary team.

HORTON LODGE SCHOOL: PREPARING PUPILS WITH SEN FOR MAINSTREAM

140. Horton Lodge School in Staffordshire is at the forefront of inclusive practice. It has successfully managed to facilitate the inclusion of a significant proportion of its pupils into mainstream schools. The school has also developed a number of innovative practices in terms of staff training and development, outreach work and research.

Case Study: Horton Lodge School

Background

Horton Lodge School is a mixed community special primary school, catering for residential and day pupils aged 2-11 with physical disabilities. The school provides Conductive Education, which is a holistic educational and integrated approach ensuring that all aspects of a child's development are considered at all times. The school encourages and facilitates the inclusion of many pupils into mainstream education, and has a high success rate of pupils successfully being included and retained in mainstream school. The school runs an effective 'School for Parents' and "Baby Group" which provides crucial early intervention to enable greater opportunity for later independence and inclusion as well as support and learning opportunities for parents.

The school provides midweek residential provision for up to 16 pupils with structured after school clubs and activities with an emphasis on integration into the community.

The Changing Role

Over the past six years Horton Lodge School has undertaken a planned programme to develop the skill level of its staff to be effective and collaborative practitioners working in partnership with mainstream schools.

Through a "link school scheme" staff have had opportunities to work in, support and advise mainstream schools, and in turn have learnt from their mainstream colleagues. The school has developed an innovative staffing model which has developed the role of non-teaching assistants into Professional Support Workers who hold specialist responsibility areas such as ICT or sensory impairment. The Professional Support Workers are part of an effective team working in partnership with teachers.

The school has targeted staff development and skills acquisition to ensure it becomes a regional, whole authority and national training resource. All training is accredited in

partnership with appropriate university partners. Research is seen to be vital by the school and school based research, with publishing in the education sector, as a vital part of professional development and support to the sector.

The school only perceives itself to exist and operate within a partnership setting with its cluster schools and accepting its regional resource role

An indication of some of the key developments;

Training

The school designed a course for Learning Support Assistants in mainstream schools, (Certificate in Learning Support.) This is a one year course which has been running for three years. This course is accredited by University College Northampton at Level 1 with 40 CAT points.

The school also ran a one year course for teachers in mainstream schools, (Certificate in Education Support for Pupils with Physical Disabilities in Mainstream Schools.) This course was accredited by University College Northampton with 60 CAT points at M. level.

The school also runs five specific 1 day courses each year on issues that are of concern to mainstream schools, these range from topics such as PE and access for children with physical disabilities to subjects such as effective working with parents.

Servicing the Region

A Service Level Agreement as been developed with Staffordshire LEA for Horton Lodge School to provide outreach support for pupils with disabilities in mainstream schools.

In addition the head teacher supports the LEA's Inclusion strategy with the development and delivery of an Inclusion Programme outlining clear standards for mainstream schools to develop their practice.

The head teacher has developed an Inclusion Quality Mark to support and encourage all schools to improve their inclusive practice and gain recognition for their work. The IQM is accredited for individual staff, schools or whole authorities.

MARY HARE GRAMMAR SCHOOL: HIGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEN

141. Mary Hare Grammar School is a non-maintained special school, that has achieved one of the highest value-added academic results in the country. With other non-maintained special schools, the school teaches the TTA approved mandatory qualification for teachers of the deaf, with great majority of professionals on this course being mainstream teachers supporting pupils in mainstream settings.

Case Study: Mary Hare School

Mary Hare is a non-maintained special school for secondary age pupils with hearing impairment near Newbury. The school also has a primary section.

Since 1996 the school has had a partnership with Oxford Brookes University, ranked in every year the best of the newly developing universities, to train teachers of the deaf both for the mandatory qualification which is partially funded by the TTA, for an MA in Education (Hearing Impairment), and the MSc in Educational Audiology. The school takes the full responsibility for the delivery of these courses but has extensive partnerships with deafness professionals working in the mainstream and in other school settings. This development has been extremely positive and to date the school has successfully completed the training of 76 teachers from 25 local education authorities. Currently, 34 teachers are in training. The MSc in Educational Audiology started in 1999 and the first cohort of students have successfully graduated and can now support those working with deaf children both in special schools and in the mainstream with their audiological needs. With a vibrant student body undertaking initial training, it is anticipated that the growing MA by research group based at Mary Hare will undertake research projects through the education sector.

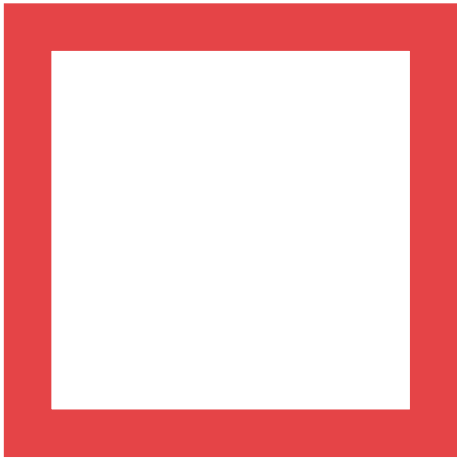
The school has Investors in People status, and as part of their developments in this year, has developed outreach to other special schools to support their training of care staff to NVQ level 3 and 4 in line with the new National Care Standards.

Mary Hare school offers an extremely broad curriculum, with 20 GCSEs, 10 A-levels, 6 AVCEs and 4 NVQs. The results in the school have improved for more than the last five years and in 2002 the year group cohort achieved 86% passes at A* – C, three pupils achieving 20 A*s between them. In the recently published value added measures which have been reported nationally by the Government, the school came equal top in the country at 11-14 measures and top in the country on the 14-16 value added measures.

The school is developing a partnership with West Berkshire LEA, providing a telephone support line and dedicated e-mail address. This was expanded in 2001 with the school's music therapy department outreaching to West Berkshire special schools for children not only who are deaf but who have other disabilities. It is hoped that this service will be expanded during 2003. The school also offers advice on acoustic environments likely to support the inclusion of deaf children in the mainstream and will carry out surveys if requested.

NEXT STEPS

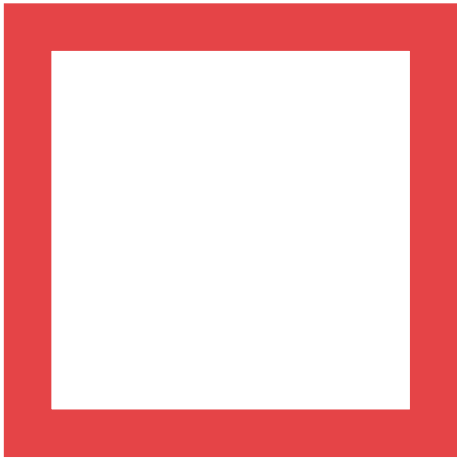
142. This report represents the first part of a consultation process on the future role of special schools. We would welcome views on the proposals and recommendations outlined in the report, using the attached pro forma. Subject to the views we receive, the Department will carefully consider the Working Group's proposals, and how to respond, as part of our SEN Action Programme to be launched in the summer.



Abbreviations

ADSS	Association of Directors of Social Services
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
AST	Advanced Skills Teachers
BESD	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CHI	Commission for Health Improvement
CONFED	Confederation of Education Service Managers
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DH	Department of Health
EBD	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
HI	Hearing Impairment
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
KS3	Key Stage Three

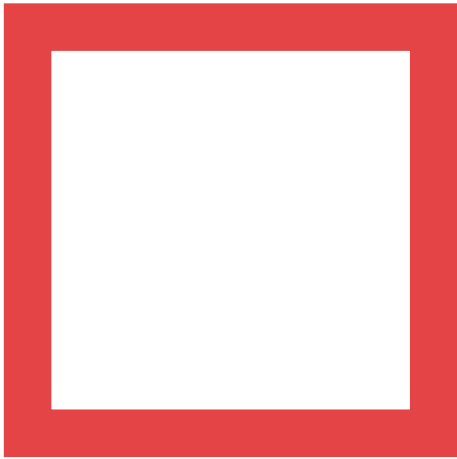
LGA	Local Government Association
NASS	National Association of Non Maintained and Independent Special Schools
NCSC	National Care Standards Council
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NLC	Networked Learning Community
NMSS	Non Maintained Special School
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual School Census
PMLD	Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
QTS	Qualified Teacher Standards
SLD	Severe Learning Difficulties
SpeLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
SSD	Social Services Department
SSI	Social Services Inspectorate
VI	Visual Impairment



Annex A: Members of the Future Role of Special Schools Working Group

- Virginia Bovell – Parents' Autism Campaign for Education
- David Braybrook – CEO, Ewing Foundation
- Caroline Coles – Head teacher, Horton Lodge School, Staffs
- Helen Denton – Assistant Director of Education, Sefton LEA
- Paul Ennals – Chief Executive, NCB
- Barbara Evans – Assistant Director, Children & Families, Telford & Wrekin
- Gill Henderson – SEN Advisor, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin
- Helen Hewiit – Director of Education Services, Boys and Girls Welfare Society
- David Jones – Head teacher, Riverside School, Havant
- Sally Jones – Director of Children's Services, Greenwich Primary Care Trust

- Brian Lamb – Chair, Special Educational Needs Consortium; Director of Communications, RNID
- Simon Lenton – Department of Health
- Meg Mayhew – Head teacher, Novers Lane Infants School, Bristol
- Sandy Paterson – Head teacher, High Close School, High Wycombe, Bucks
- Geoff Price – Head teacher, Warwick Road School
- Rowie Shaw – Chief Executive, NASS
- Dela Smith – Head teacher, Beaumont Hill School, Darlington
- Dianne Vincent – Head of Sensory Support Services, Bromley
- Eileen Visser – OFSTED
- Mike Wilson – Assistant Director for Pupil Services, West Sussex LEA



Annex B: Terms of Reference of the Future Role of Special Schools Working Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Special schools have made considerable progress on outreach activities and in supporting the Government's inclusion agenda. In light of that progress, the Working Group will provide advice on how to best to develop and clarify further the role of all special schools – LEA-maintained, independent and non-maintained – within the wider context of the Government's strategy of inclusion. It will focus on the practical mechanisms that will help special schools to operate more effectively. It will consider what steps might be taken to enhance the prestige of special schools and celebrate their achievements. The Group will provide specific advice to the Minister on the following issues:
 - a. The overarching structural and funding arrangements for the special schools sector;
 - b. How best to secure regional or sub-regional provision to cater for the needs of SEN pupils, including pupils with low incidence special educational needs;
 - c. Mechanisms and structures for integrating special schools and their pupils with mainstream provision, including federations, service models and other structures. Systems to enable special schools to deliver outreach support and provide national/regional sources of expertise in order to support training and inclusion, and effective use of dual placements;

- d. Tools to support special schools in setting targets, assessing their pupils and raising standards, linking to further work now at planning stage on the wider use of P Scales. Better rewards within the inspection system for schools delivering good outreach support, and scope for Beacon status, and other models for recognising achievements of special schools
 - e. Support for leadership and professional development and mentoring;
 - f. Mechanisms and structures for building multi-agency working between education, health and social services to provide effective support for children and families, including ensuring continuing access to those services to the growing dispersed population of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. The Group will look at funding flexibilities, and how best to reconcile the cultural differences between the three service blocks. This work will need to link in with the National Service Framework;
 - g. Developing the role of special schools as a community resource to that they provide, with other partners, activities and facilities for pupils, their families and the wider community. In particular, building partnerships with mainstream schools to share facilities and to provide new learning and social opportunities.
2. The Working Group will meet 7 times in total, and will submit detailed proposals and recommendations to Ministers on the above programme of work. This will culminate in a report setting out the future role of special schools which will be announced at a Ministerial seminar in March.
 3. The Group will be comprised of representatives from the mainstream, non-maintained and independent special school sectors; LEAs; interested parties from the field of health and social services; the SEN Regional Partnerships; voluntary organisations; and teachers' professional associations. Group representatives will have considerable experience of dealing with children with disabilities across the whole special educational needs spectrum. A small group of DfES, DH and OFSTED

officials will assist the Minister, and provide the secretariat for the Group. Members will be bound by a Code of confidentiality.

4. The Group will report the key points emerging from each discussion to the Minister and to the Ministerial SEN Working Group (SEN WG). It will submit detailed proposals and recommendations to the Minister in time for the seminar in March.



Annex C: Future Role of Special Schools Focus Groups for Professionals

Four focus groups have been held. Participants included LEA SEN Officers, SEN Inspectors, SEN Advisers, managers of LEA SEN support services, educational psychologists, head teachers and staff from mainstream schools and maintained, independent and non-maintained special schools and representatives from social services.

1. INCLUSION

Whilst some participants believed that semantics were irrelevant to a discussion about SEN provision others saw the debate over inclusion and integration to be fundamental in addressing the issues surrounding the education of pupils with SEN. Some believed that the term inclusion was emotive and misplaced and should be replaced with the term 'meeting needs' or simply viewed as a continuum of provision.

One group did reach a general consensus when discussing what was meant by the terms inclusion and integration. Inclusion was about recognising individualism, the concept of entitlement and the idea that an institution would adapt to meet the needs of a child. Integration was viewed as a location issue that drew attention to difference and difficulties and placed the onus on the child to adapt to the institution.

The notion of, and need for, a continuum of needs was strongly emphasised in relation to all aspects of SEN provision. It was also generally agreed that inclusion should be about a

child being included in society no matter where they go to school and about choice. Inclusion should not, therefore, mean special school closure.

Each LEA has to produce a policy on Inclusion and include the actions towards the policy within their EDP. Definitions aside, inclusion should be about Inclusive Learning rather than where the child is educated.

Inclusive learning – primary focus on learning and learners’ requirements. Need to acknowledge individual pupil differences as these can create particular requirements for the individual pupil concerned. Inclusive learning should address individual requirements within the learning environments provided:

- avoid labelling/stereotyping pupils;
- need to better understand how children learn (learning styles – multi-modal approach) in order to better help them to learn – thus raising levels of attainment and achievement;
- consider pupils with learning difficulties, disabilities or disadvantaged in any way as first and foremost learners and work to create the most appropriate educational environment for each individual.

Such an approach might lead to consideration of restructuring and reorganisation of curriculum in *all* schools, (special and mainstream) so that individual differences are recognised and accounted.

Delivering inclusive learning through an inclusive curriculum:

- allows teaching staff and pupils to respond positively to each other;
- is differentiated to meet needs;
- emphasises high expectations and quality for all.

Need to accept that pupils do not make best progress when they are treated uniformly. Curricular and teaching approaches need to be differentiated and/or tailored according to the prior learning and learning styles of all pupils and to individual needs.

Barriers to providing inclusive or integrative experiences:

- distance, perceptions particular previous 'failures' in mainstream, preciousness of special schools teachers and their attitude toward the child;
- finding places in mainstream. Also some mainstream teachers lack of experience in dealing with particular needs and curriculum;
- locality issues – residential schools can offer local community experiences but these are not always local to a child's home;
- funding and staffing – effects of releasing LSA's to support placements;
- often all the work in meeting the needs of a child is put in at the point of transfer. The type of home support available in the home LEA varies widely. If it is not good then this can seriously impact on the success of a child and undo the work that has been achieved. A possible solution is to include in the initial financial package a 6 month after care programme to provide necessary support;
- location of residential schools may make Key Stage 4 work experience placements harder to accommodate;
- placement in terms of transport and time can be a huge drain on resources;
- reluctance on the part of the student to return to mainstream. A child will sometimes intentionally fail and achievements up until that point are lost;
- curriculum clashes can hinder inclusive experiences.

2. HOLISTIC APPROACH TO MEETING NEEDS:

- about working within the community and access to the wider curriculum;
- centred around the child's needs – multi-agency delivery;
- more emphasis on outcomes for individual children rather than focusing just on their needs;
- special schools are well placed to put the child and family at the centre and deliver a multi-agency approach to effective and appropriate provision.

The strengths of a holistic approach are:

- provision can be centred around the individual child;
- pupils and their needs are central to the planning and delivery of services;
- all aspects of a pupil can be considered coherently;
- meeting educational, social, emotional and care needs.

Which schools are best placed to provide an holistic approach?

- special schools have a dedicated staff and resources that make the holistic approach easier to deliver;
- residential special schools can offer an even more 'whole child' approach through the residential (24 hour) experience – or the pupils are more segregated from 'real' life and dependent on education and care arrangements in the school may not even get a consistent approach across the 24 hours;
- divided views over whether special schools could offer a holistic approach as such schools may not necessarily provide a holistic environment due to their position in relation to the community, especially the child's home community and social aspects of community life;
- a potential weakness in a belief that holistic is the best approach – a holistic environment can be poor preparation for the 'real world' which is not holistic!

Residential issues:

- whether the young people given a residential place are there because of their needs or as a result of a pragmatic decision resulting from issues of location and travelling distance;
- there is an issue surrounding the place of residential schools within a continuum linked to the perceptions of some parents that view residential provision as a positive option;
- conversely, residential schools can sometimes be viewed as a convenient dumping ground or 'cop-out' option when there are a lack of care places;
- 14+ provision in residential schools can be a weakness;
- the location of residential schools is sometimes remote and this can serve to reduce wider curriculum opportunities and inclusion;
- there can be a lack of continuity especially at post 16;
- bereavement of family, often due to distance can make it harder for a child to then return to a family setting;
- residential schools can offer an opportunity for forming new and different relationships beyond the conventional family unit;

- there is an argument surrounding the very nature of education. One purpose of education can be considered as facilitating the development of an individual to exist in the community. A school therefore recreates a microcosm of the community in which an individual can exist. If certain aspects of residential schools work against this then what educational purpose does a residential school serve?
- one participant raised the question of whether mainstream can offer a holistic approach, going on to add that often a child ends up in residential because of being let down by mainstream.

3. MULTI-AGENCY WORKING:

Agencies that could be involved in working with pupils with SEN could include:

- Parent partnership services;
- LEA Support Services- specialist teachers of pupils with hearing, visual, speech and language impairments and autistic spectrum disorders, teachers providing more general learning and behaviour support services, counsellors, educational psychologists, and advisers with knowledge of ICT for pupils with SEN. Curriculum support and advisory services related to specific subject-related teaching techniques, and strategies and curriculum materials;
- Education Welfare Services;
- The Connexions Service has a responsibility to work with all young people between the ages of 13 and 19, including pupils with SEN and disabilities;
- Health professionals – paediatricians, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and nurses;
- Social Services – particularly for children in need and looked after children;
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services;
- Voluntary agencies and groups;
- Police;
- Youth offending teams;
- special schools and/or mainstream schools;
- planning departments (accommodation);
- ethnic minority and refugee groups;

- local businesses/employers;
- FE providers;
- transport contractors.

Issues:

- lack of staff or staff continuity;
- lack of common culture, agendas, language, processes, training;
- lack of or different funding regimes;
- different thresholds for accessing provision;
- varying priorities that can often conflict with the needs of the child;
- professionals going into school can disrupt curriculum time – so impacting negatively on teaching and learning;
- time issues – time to get action taken and moved forward and also time to understand the issues and roles of those working in different agencies.

Residential and Independent/NMSS Issues:

- when children are placed in residential schools a long way from their home, funding can often be an issue as health provision and terms of provision alter depending upon area;
- improving provision for maintained schools does not always extend to independent/NMSS;
- access to therapy is often greater but this is often because it is paid for directly from budget. (obviously then the home LEA pays rather than health providers).

Examples of 'whole school' multi-agency policies:

- the Care Standards Act has improved and brought in line care and education provision;
- there is a gradual emergence of the equal recognition of, and joint planning for, care and education. Looked after children reviews and annual reviews are increasingly being coordinated;
- it was suggested that residential school provide a more robust environment through care work outside of the classroom which then facilitates and enables the child in the classroom;

- residential schools have, or are moving towards a greater overlap and a more mixed/varied role of staff as carers and educators, e.g. carers often work in the classroom, after school clubs run by carers.

4. DUAL PLACEMENTS:

- participants' comments suggested that a variety of dual placements, formal and informal were in operation around the country. Arrangements, especially in relation to funding did not adhere to any uniform structure. Success was more often dependant upon goodwill rather than formal systems;
- dual placement was seen as a good thing for pupils and teachers. If outcomes, aspirations and funding were made clear, dual placements could offer a way of embedding SEN pupils from special schools in mainstream inclusive experiences and vice versa;
- if a child is dual registered this could mean – in order to maintain a place at both schools – and sufficient funding that both AWPU's would be necessary. It could also trigger pressures in respect of the league tables;
- concerns about schools having to keep a place available but not receiving full funding for the place.

5. ALL PUPILS ON ROLL OF A MAINSTREAM SCHOOL:

- one participant advocated for a nominal mainstream school named on all special school pupil's statements. Based on the idea that the aim of inclusion was to meet the needs of a child wherever possible in a mainstream school then the aim of this would be to facilitate the eventual integration or reintegration of the child into mainstream which can often be hampered by an inability to secure a place at a mainstream school. But issues – as with dual placement – of funding virtually empty places in schools were raised. Others felt that this would create a huge capacity issue in mainstream especially in those schools with a good inclusive reputation. And for some pupils with severe or complex needs the mainstream placement would be nominal and could be construed as 'tokenism' and patronising;

- one participant reacted against the idea that inclusion was all about one way traffic from special to mainstream and raised the idea that if a nominal mainstream place was to be named on a statement so too should a special school place for all pupils attending mainstream schools.

6. RAISING STANDARDS:

- standards should be considered in the broader sense of achievement with recognition that progress that may not always be quantifiable will still be valid;
- good teaching and access to teaching styles were keys to raising standards in both mainstream and special schools although models may be differentiated in each case. The group signalled to the ability to differentiate as being fundamental to good teaching;
- effective teaching and learning is not specific to either special or mainstream schools. The key to successful teaching is about understanding how different pupils learn and differentiating teaching styles;
- in light of the above – the groups taking this view were asked what makes special schools special? It was suggested that this centred on the ability of special schools to offer: a different learning environment, a place for a child to be the same as his/her peers rather than feeling different, the sophistication of staff skills that can engage a child in the curriculum and utilising a multi-agency approach. One participant used the analogy of the medical profession where you have GP's and specialists and the need for extra strategies and methods to deal with certain complexities of need;
- one participant disagreed arguing that special is no more special than mainstream using the idea of gifted and talented children to illustrate the fact that all children are 'special' and to look at schools in terms of special and non special is false;
- some participants felt that some special schools were not open to new ideas and others agreed that this could serve to limit the opportunities for experimentation. This was something that needed to be challenged. Participants said that special schools would welcome the idea of the special school acting as a research base;

- there was a call for more information to be gathered and disseminated regarding the changing population of need and any consequent emergence of adapted teaching models to react to such change;
- ongoing assessment was seen as a useful tool in measuring small step achievement and identifying gaps in learning but it must be partnered with good teaching;
- improved networking between teachers would allow for greater sharing of good practice and teaching styles;
- Learning Support Assistants could have a role to play in mediating the curriculum for pupils;
- there is a paucity of evidence in terms of national data/published research to highlight achievement among children with SEN;
- for some pupils vertical achievement is very limited. But the breadth of their experience is just as important. A concern is that public perception is that attainment is all about upward progression;
- measuring progress against National Curriculum levels is not always appropriate for some pupils with SEN, the progress of the individual is more important. For example progress in mobility or independence which could be measured against the targets in the IEP;
- many felt that pedagogical approaches are not always transferable, usually what works in one school, won't necessarily work in another due to differences in the range of pupil needs;
- there is not really a different way of teaching but there are alternative strategies and interventions and teaching to objectives;
- there are a number of different successful teaching strategies such as accelerated learning in Primary Schools (ALPS). Social Use of Language Programme (SULP) and Living Language. These methods should be promoted and widely disseminated;
- the affective domain must be recognised so as to enable pupils to progress – dignity, confidence and emotional well-being are crucial;

- special Schools PANDAs were not helpful in accessing levels of attainment, assumptions should not be made about individual children and comparisons can be totally invalid because of each child's individual needs or changes in the range of needs in each year group and year on year;
- problem with P Scales assessment in relation to measuring progress – if a school doesn't do well against the P Scales, is that because they under-performed or because the original assessment assumed a higher level of performance or under-estimated the level of special need?
- individual pupil records are the best way of reporting individual pupil level of performance. P Scales do not currently mean anything to parents;
- there is a problem in terms of whether they are a suitable method for comparing like-for-like as the range of needs of the pupils vary so much;
- unable to make year-on-year comparisons on progress, but nationally, there should be data setting out movement on P scales from one key stage to the next;
- on a more negative note – P scales were described as unhelpful as they put children into 'boxes'.

7. OUTREACH AND SUPPORT SERVICES:

- provision of Outreach services should be about sharing specialist resources and equipment, expertise, skills, specialist knowledge, experience, training, intervention strategies;
- should be a two-way process and any advice/support/information must be needed, wanted, listened to and affordable;
- should be a two-way model with resources and expertise coming from mainstream to special also. and the links between establishments should be welcomed;
- Outreach needs to be funded through an additional funding stream as it is often the first thing to go when money is tight;
- Although maintained, independent and NMSS can provide Outreach, NMSS have access to additional funding routes through charitable status;
- schools could be more inventive by recognising that sometimes Outreach can be resourced on a 'quid pro quo' basis;

- LEA can be both service provider and broker of services;
- LEA SEN support services and Outreach from special schools must be complementary not in competition;
- Outreach and support services must be quality assured;
- role of special schools in Outreach depends on the direction the LEA is going. It should be part of a menu considered by LEAs – but not the only option;
- concern that Outreach services would demand too much from teachers – who might be expected to act as classroom teachers for 4 days, then advisory teachers for the 5th day, with the risk that they do both jobs badly;
- Outreach has complex funding implications;
- time constraints on teachers could restrict the work that could be done in this area.
- Outreach would need to be an integral part of a teacher’s role rather than an additional rather than commitment;
- the diversity agenda could facilitate enhanced Outreach;
- recognition that there are expert SEN teachers in both special schools and LEA SEN support services often with a similar core of experience and expertise, but the roles require different application of skills. They could learn from each other and then deliver a coordinated and consistent approach. LEA would need to make sure services from special schools and support services are complimentary not competitive. Neither can substitute for the other;
- data and research should be used to inform more collective planning regarding Outreach and should form part of the LEA strategy in key strategic documents.

Residential schools:

- participants believed that residential schools can and are offering Outreach services to mainstream schools;
- financial incentives, in some cases, encouraged these initiatives;
- Outreach could also result in a dilution of staff and the quality of provision as a result could decrease thereby impacting on one of the very factors that makes special schools special;
- Outreach cannot come at the detriment of the special school pupils or core business;

- if special schools are working to train teachers in mainstream they may find that their own client base becomes one of more complex needs. If the job is done too well it could restrict the flow of clients altogether;
- one NMSS participant said his school as a matter of policy did not provide Outreach or training as they wanted to protect their client base whilst another said that all independent and NMSS should be obliged to offer Outreach etc otherwise they should be forced to close!

8. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT:

- strategic planning is required along with predictive research into the future population of needs in order to identify training needs. As inclusion hits there will be a marked increase of pupils with complex needs in the classroom, training will need to improve;
- there is presently limited access for Independent and non-maintained schools to mainstream training and networking opportunities. Training places are offered at a cost and usually only if there are places to fill;
- teachers in residential schools require similar training opportunities as other teachers by and large, however, due to particular needs being dealt with, more targeted intensive training is sometimes required;
- independent and NMSS may be better placed to offer regional training for low-incidence needs;
- LEAs should be responsible for identifying and disseminating expertise and good practice and ensuring that special school staff are included;
- vital that LEAs include special schools in school clusters – to ensure they are included in all training, dissemination of information etc;
- in mainstream: working with young people with SEN is a steep learning curve for teachers who often have to learn ‘on the job’ to keep up with complexities of needs;
- generally ITT students do not go into special schools, yet it ought to be part of ITT experience.

9. SPECIAL SCHOOLS AS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE:

- schools provide adult education courses in basic numeracy and literacy to families;
- school as a one stop shop to provides access to social services, healthcare etc and community services such as sports facilities, hydrotherapy services, libraries etc;
- although the location of some residential special schools may make it harder to fulfil a function as a community resource participants were able to give examples of this being done.

10. WHAT RANGE OF NEEDS CAN BE ACCOMMODATED IN ONE SPECIAL SCHOOL?

- participants felt that schools needed to be clear about the kinds of needs for which they could adequately provide;
- concerns regarding the mixing of pupils with particular needs i.e. severe autism with PMLD pupils. The co-education of children with severe behavioural difficulties raises difficulties in both the teaching and learning;
- the needs and rights of the vulnerable child must be considered;
- parents will often believe that a school labelled with a specific need will be more beneficial regardless of the quality of provision. It should, therefore, be a case of making clear what the school can do in terms of training and resources etc;
- the key is not type of school but its ability to offer curriculum access arrangements, pupil management and support arrangements.

11. SPECIAL SCHOOLS OR RESOURCED PROVISION IN MAINSTREAM

Special schools need to take on a wider and more flexible role than they have a present. There may be for some groups of pupils a pragmatic approach that resourced provision can cater for particular needs as effectively as special schools or more effectively than a mainstream school (providing expert staff, equipment and resources and a more cost effective way of arranging access to scarce resources such as therapy services) but also providing it in a manner that means the pupils are included and educated with their peers.

Resourced provision also enables the mainstream host school to access expert support and advice easily on a daily and ad hoc basis:

- the ability and individual needs of the child are paramount;
- effectiveness depends on organisation, the individual pupil and their parents;
- 'horses for courses' – every child is different and has different needs.

All participants agreed that there was definitely a place for mainstream resourced provision but warned we must guard against segregated units.

Special schools and resourced provision could offer:

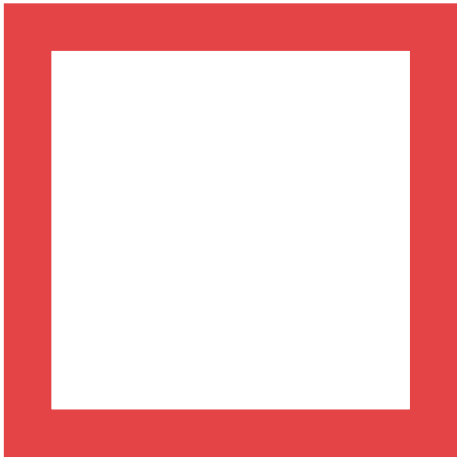
- advice and support for individual or groups of pupils on an Outreach basis;
- specialist facilities for individual pupils;
- professional development opportunities for mainstream teachers and professionals from other agencies;
- a focus for advice and support to parents;
- shared placement of pupils.

12. REGIONAL PROVISION:

- joint planning and a pooling of resources can work when LEAs work closely together and a clear intention is evident;
- there are certain types of need that certain authorities are unlikely to be able to provide for including; girls BESD, severely challenging behaviour, severe autism, sensory and complex additional needs, sexual abusers, children coming out of secure units, those excluded from independent sector;
- lack of foster care is often a contributing factor to placement out of authority;
- regional and sub-regional planning is dependant upon the numbers of pupils within a particular region;
- engaging health can make regional planning difficult especially where geographic boundaries vary between agencies;
- there is a willingness to plan regionally/sub-regionally but the mechanisms are not necessarily in place.

13. NATIONAL CARE STANDARDS:

- an abundance of extra, unnecessary, repetitive, paper work to be completed in the initial stages;
- inspectors do not appear to be clear on what they are evaluating. There have been difficulties regarding CRB checks that have impeded the inspectors access to files;
- the agenda of the work appears to keep changing;
- strange obscurities e.g. 32 week placement has to carry out 2 night fire drills, 38 week placement has to carry out substantially more;
- inspectors asked inappropriate questions in front of children;
- concerns over the administration of the inspections;
- better than Social Services Inspections. To have a full inspection was welcomed.



Annex D: The Future Role of Special Schools: Report of the Consultations with Parents' and Young People's Focus Groups – Executive Summary

Our dream is for an education for all our children which is ambitious, accessible and values them as future citizens. Schools are at the heart of all our communities – but not all truly value diversity. Our main concern is for our children to have high quality well-resourced education which will lead to a valued adult life – not problem orientated but supportive and confident. Some of us have found such educational opportunities – in mainstream and in special schools. Others are less fortunate. We need to look at equal opportunities for all our children.'

[Parents' focus group]

BACKGROUND:

1. In 2002, the Council for Disabled Children was asked by the Special Schools Working Group to run four focus groups for parents and for children and young people in order to inform their discussions about the future role of special schools within the wider framework of the Government's strategy on inclusion. The Council supports the National Network of Parent Partnership Services and works with a wide range of professional and voluntary agencies which regularly involve parents and young people in consultations on service development and review.

2. The focus groups drew upon the views and aspirations of a very diverse group of parents and of children and young people. All were committed to the development of a more inclusive education system. All were equally committed to a positive focus on access and achievement for all pupils across the education system. However, as the focus group reports demonstrate, there was also strong recognition of the need to plan progressively and over time and to ensure the availability of appropriate specialist support within a more inclusive education system.
3. The participants in the focus groups were enthusiastic about the opportunity to contribute to an important debate. They saw special schools as providing critical advice and practical support for many children with complex disabilities and SEN. They were enthusiastic about the development of the extended schools programme and of the role of schools as centres for wider community activities and development. A significant number of contributors highlighted the importance of including special schools within the extended schools programme and of encouraging active partnerships, more dual placements and the creation of 'federations' or clusters to create 'inclusion alliances' within LEAs.
4. Parents and young people have stressed the importance of valuing and progressing the potential and achievements of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. They were eager for schools to be seen not only as agents for *educational* inclusion but also as the focus for greater *social* inclusion in local communities. Some parents drew our attention to the Green Paper, '*Excellence for all Children*', emphasising the strong educational, social and moral grounds for educating children and young people with SEN alongside their peers.
5. They stressed the importance of redefining the role of special schools and specialist services in supporting the mainstream sector and in encouraging greater inclusion within the education system. Parents and young people were concerned that inclusion was properly supported and that specialist provision should be available as required. They welcomed the opportunity to share in an important debate about the future shape of services for pupils with SEN or disabilities and all participants had important information, views and experiences to share with us.

SOME KEY ISSUES FOR PARENTS:

1. Concerns about the pressure of performance and league tables on mainstream schools' willingness to address the wider needs of pupils with SEN
2. Anxieties about the implications of delegated budgets and 'ring fencing' of resources for pupils with SEN
3. Dissatisfaction with arrangements for personal assistance and health needs in some mainstream schools
4. The need to develop and support the role of the Learning Support Assistant
5. Provision of specialist advice and support for children with low incidence disabilities (in particular Autistic Spectrum Disorders, ADHD and multiple disabilities)
6. But positive messages about high quality inclusion from some families, with examples of partnership between special and mainstream schools and considerable enthusiasm for the development of 'cluster' or 'federal' arrangements.
7. Parents were enthusiastic about the development of the extended schools programme, with mainstream and special schools providing the base for a range of play, leisure and child care services and for the provision of integrated health, education and social care.
8. A developing concept of educational and *social* inclusion with parents ambitious and optimistic about their children's adult life – some parents saw special schools as part of a new 'inclusion community' and were hopeful of a developing outreach role.

9. Physical access was seen as an issue by some parents, who felt that many mainstream schools offered limited access to disabled pupils. Parents were keen to be part of local accessibility planning arrangements.
10. Managing transitions – a key cause for concern was the balancing of resources during a time of transition. Parents were anxious that closure of special schools did not necessarily relocate resources in other special provision and were worried about loss of expertise.
11. An over-arching theme in all discussions was a common desire for all pupils with disabilities and SEN to be seen as valued citizens and for their achievements to be recognised. Special schools and their expertise around low incidence disabilities and SEN were seen as having an ongoing role on the inclusion agenda.

SOME KEY ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. The children and young people saw school and high quality education as essential in 'getting a life'.
2. They wanted access to the full life of the school and to have their potential and achievements valued. There was sensitivity around the absence of examinations and homework for some pupils. The pupils would have valued more school-based activities such as after school clubs and the opportunities which they brought for learning new skills and making friends.
3. Friends were very important to pupils in mainstream and special schools. Some young people thought that special schools could be opened up to the local community because of their accessibility, facilities and to avoid difficult transport to other locations for play, leisure and other activities.

4. All pupils, regardless of their placement in mainstream or special schools, wanted staff they respected and trusted and to feel listened to and respected. Some pupils felt that mainstream schools had too little time – there was support for more special school staff coming into mainstream schools and for special units where additional help was available.
5. The management of personal assistance and health needs was seen as problematic in many mainstream schools.
6. There were mixed feelings about the role of LSAs if the young people had not been involved in their recruitment and deployment.
7. Information was a key issue – many of the young people did not fully understand their assessments or the purpose of any special provision. However, most were involved positively in their own review and were positive about being listened to in both sectors.
8. There was no specific concern about attending a mainstream or a special school. The pupils were clear that they wanted friendly schools, which valued their contribution, provided any necessary support and *was ambitious for them*.

IN CONCLUSION

Parents and the young people had clear and positive views about what constituted high quality education. Both wished to see greater educational and social inclusion but recognised that some pupils would require very specialist support. There was widespread endorsement for the extended schools programme and for seeing schools as the hub of their local communities. Both parents and young people raised issues about how special and mainstream schools could work better together and were positive about wishing to be part of the change process. However, they were also very explicit about the emotional and personal cost of rapid change and the importance of reassurance for parents and children currently using services.

We are grateful to all those who contributed to the focus groups and who wrote or spoke to us separately about their personal experiences. They were courageous, honest and positive about the future but saw the inclusion agenda as a long-term challenge for the whole education sector. They are also ready to contribute to wider discussions with the DfES and others in the future.

Annex D: The Future Role of Special Schools Report of the Focus Group Consultations with Parents And Young People

Philippa Russell
Council for Disabled Children

The Future Role of Special Schools:

Key messages from the Parents' Focus Groups

INTRODUCTION:

1. In 2002, the Council for Disabled Children was asked by the Special Schools Working Group to run four focus groups for parents and for children and young people in order to inform their discussions about the future role of special schools within the wider framework of the Government's strategy on inclusion. The Council supports the National Network of Parent Partnership Services and works with a wide range of professional and voluntary agencies which regularly involve parents and young people in consultations on service development and review.
2. The focus groups drew upon the views and aspirations of a very diverse group of parents and of children and young people. All were committed to the development of a more inclusive education system. All were equally committed to a positive focus on access and achievement for all pupils across the education system. However, as the focus group reports demonstrate, there was also strong recognition of the need to plan progressively and over time and to ensure the availability of appropriate specialist support within a more inclusive education system.
3. The participants in the focus groups were enthusiastic about the opportunity to contribute to an important debate. They saw special schools as providing critical advice and practical support for many children with complex disabilities and SEN. They were enthusiastic about the development of the extended schools programme and of the role of schools as centres for wider community activities and development. A significant number of contributors highlighted the importance of including special schools within the extended schools programme and of encouraging active partnerships, more dual placements and the creation of 'federations' or clusters to create 'inclusion alliances' within LEAs.

4. Parents and young people have stressed the importance of valuing and progressing the potential and achievements of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. They were eager for schools to be seen not only as agents for *educational* inclusion but also as the focus for greater *social* inclusion in local communities. Some parents drew our attention to the Green Paper, '*Excellence for all Children*', emphasising the strong educational, social and moral grounds for educating children and young people with SEN alongside their peers. They stressed the importance of redefining the role of special schools and specialist services in supporting the mainstream sector and in encouraging greater inclusion within the education system. Parents and young people were concerned that inclusion was properly supported and that specialist provision should be available as required. They welcomed the opportunity to share in an important debate about the future shape of services for pupils with SEN or disabilities and all participants had important information, views and experiences to share with us.
5. We are very grateful to the parents and young people (and their supporters) who contributed to this report. They have shared their positive and negative experiences very openly and have also offered positive suggestions for the future.

1. THE PARENT FOCUS GROUPS: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The two parent focus groups and consultations took place in London and in York. The parent participants in London were drawn from the Regional Co-ordinators for Contact a Family.

Contact a Family is a national parent organisation, providing a range of services to support parents of children with disabilities or SEN. The organisation has a network of Regional Co-ordinators (usually parents themselves) who co-ordinate a range of services at local level. The Co-ordinators meet regularly to review local issues and developments and to share positive practice.

In addition to its regional networks, Contact a Family runs a national Helpline, which is funded by the Department of Health. The Contact a Family Website is also widely used by parents and those working with them.

The organisation regularly receives queries from parents on education queries and has recently produced its own parent information pack on the new DDA Part 4 duties (funded through the DfES Small Grants programme).

Although the meeting took place in London, participants came from 15 local authorities across England and 2 local authorities in Wales. Their children had a wide range of disabilities and SEN, including dyslexia; ADHD; Autistic Spectrum Disorders; EBD; Learning Disabilities and Moderate Learning Difficulties; physical and sensory disabilities. Four children had complex disabilities and a number of the other children were described by their parents as having more than one disability or SEN.

The majority of children attended mainstream schools, but others either currently attended special schools or had done so in the past. Two children attended residential special schools. Seven of the parents had experienced more than one type of provision. One parent had withdrawn her child from a mainstream school pending the outcome of an appeal. Her son was now attending a residential special school for children with autistic spectrum disorders.

All the parents, in their role of Regional Co-ordinators, had discussed local arrangements for SEN with other parents. In most cases they had also discussed local arrangements with the LEA and with local schools. All were familiar with the role of the Parent Partnership Services and worked with them, for example around recruitment and training of Independent Parental Supporters; provision of information and support for parents and wider discussions with the LEA.

The parent participants in the Yorkshire focus group were co-ordinated by York Special Families (a parent organisation with a special interest in education and including families with children with a broad spectrum of disabilities and special educational needs). A number of other York based parent organisations covering ADHD, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Dyslexia and Learning Disabilities were also represented in the consultation process.

The York parents had already contributed to a range of discussions about the provision of child care for disabled children; play and leisure facilities and the development of early years provision in York. Most recently, they had been engaged in consultations on the proposed re-organisation of SEN provision in York (including the possible closure of two special schools). Hence the parents and their support groups had already been thinking about the current and future role of specialist support and provision and the optimum approach to promoting and increasing high quality inclusive education in the area.

In addition to the focus group consultations, we received a large number of individual comments and views from a wide range of parents, who had heard about the consultation and wished to contribute to it. We are also grateful for their views and proposals for action.

2. THE FORMAT FOR THE FOCUS GROUPS

The participants had been given a short questionnaire in advance of the meeting, setting out the key aims of the consultation and asking them to reflect on their personal experience and on the experiences of other parents in their locality. Because the majority of parents were members of a local support group of voluntary organisation, they were encouraged to discuss the issues with other parents and to bring these wider perspectives to the focus groups.

3. KEY MESSAGES FROM THE PARENTS

'Our dream is for an education for all our children which is ambitious, accessible and values them as future citizens. Schools are at the heart of all our communities – but not all truly value diversity. Our main concern is for our children to have high quality well-resourced education which will lead to a valued adult life – not problem orientated but supportive and confident. Some of us have found such educational opportunities – in mainstream and in special schools. Others are less fortunate. We need to look at equal opportunities for all our children.'

[Contact a Family focus group parents]

There was broad similarity between both groups (both of which included a broad mix of parents of different ages, backgrounds and ethnic origins). All parents were anxious and enthusiastic about taking forward the inclusion agenda. They had ambitions for their children in terms of educational achievement; social inclusion and what one parent described as:

‘active citizenship, being part of and contributing to the community, all the ordinary important things which other people expect as of right.’

Most of the parents were aware of the DfES’s guidance on inclusion and the ‘presumption of inclusion’, with strengthened rights for parents who wished their children to attend a mainstream school. However, a number of specific concerns were raised in terms of taking the inclusion agenda forward, in particular:

- **The pressure of performance and league tables upon mainstream schools’ attitudes towards any pupils with additional needs;** parents felt that pupils with SEN or disabilities were too often seen as time-consuming and distracting from the needs of the wider school population. There were strong feelings about the need for

‘indicators, hall marks for inclusion so that inclusive schools feel and are seen to be valued – we need more Beacon schools which are truly inclusive.’

- **A growing reluctance on the part of many mainstream schools to accept pupils without a statement** – the statement being seen as *‘dowry of additional resources’*. Several parents said they had been pressurised by their children’s schools to request a statutory assessment.
- **Parents’ widespread perceptions that the assessment system was still cumbersome, frightening and sometimes unfair** – with the statement, once achieved, not necessarily guaranteeing the actual *delivery* of special support in mainstream schools.

- **The increased delegation of budgets to schools** was seen as threatening – the parents felt strongly that the budget element for SEN was not necessarily safeguarded and wanted more ‘ring fencing’ in the future.

- **Special schools were generally seen as part of a ‘*progression towards inclusion*’.** Four parents had experienced dual placements between mainstream and special schools and felt that the experience had been mutually beneficial – for pupils and the respective schools. However, parents were concerned that placements in special schools were not sufficiently flexible, with some pupils ready to return to mainstream having difficulty in making the return journey. Two parents talked of the changing role of special schools as outward looking resource centres. One referred to the ‘*ring of confidence*’ which ready access to specialist staff and resources could create in mainstream schools hesitant about accepting a pupil with a disability or SEN.

- **Concerns were expressed about the size and potential isolation of some special schools,** which were seen as unable to offer a broad curriculum and in some cases offering limited access to a wider range of community activities. However, the majority of parents saw special schools as having a developing and positive role, both sharing expertise and increasingly working in direct partnership with mainstream schools (perhaps on a campus basis) to avoid limitations in the range of teaching and learning opportunities.

- **There was a widespread perception that the provision of any non-educational services in mainstream schools was becoming increasingly difficult.** Some parents felt strongly that special schools could offer a much less restrictive environment for pupils with health or intimate personal care needs. They noted the growing numbers of children with special health care needs in schools (eg diabetes, severe asthma, children recovering from childhood cancers or other medical conditions or at risk of anencephalic shock). There was a widespread perception that mainstream schools were becoming increasingly

reluctant to administer any medication or to provide any personal care. This was in part attributed to what one parent described as *'the litigation culture'*. Others attributed it in part to major changes in the provision of school nursing services in some parts of the country. Three parents described incidents where family members were asked to come into school to provide such care.

- **Mainstream schools were seen as generally increasingly intolerant of any behaviour difficulties:** parents of children with ADHD, EBD or Autism Spectrum Disorders described very variable practice and support. One parent, describing the proposed closure of a local EBD school, referred to the parents as

'desperate, their children were excluded before they got to the special school, they found a 'safe place' and now they will be on the move again. Other parents are not sympathetic either and that makes it very difficult....'

The parents of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders were particularly concerned at the very variable provision of specialist support in mainstream schools and at *'parents' battles to get high quality provision'* in residential special schools for children with very challenging behaviour.

- **Parents were very conscious of the changing population of special schools** – with SLD schools in particular now meeting the needs of a majority of pupils with very complex disabilities and special needs. Parents of children with ADHD or Autistic Spectrum disorders thought that placement in a special school at least for a planned period of time could help resolve the behaviour difficulties which had made mainstream difficult. Two parents described their relief – and the relief of their child – when they finally achieved residential placements for children with autistic spectrum disorders. They saw the specialist learning environment, with appropriate support in out of school activities and daily living, as contributing to their children's eventual return to mainstream and hopefully a successful adult life.

- **The role of learning support assistants was seen as crucial:** high quality and individualised support was universally regarded as key to successful inclusion. Parent experience was variable – ranging from outstanding support and *'whole school policies'* on the recruitment, training and deployment of learning support assistants through to disquiet at the appointment and deployment of such support. There was particular concern when parents (and young people) were not part of the recruitment process or when it was unclear what the relationship was between LSA and classroom teacher. Some parents felt that mainstream schools did not always understand how best to use learning support staff or greatly over-estimated the number of contact hours which they needed with individual children. Several parents felt strongly that LSAs needed a career structure and that there could be formal links between local specialist services (including special schools) and LSAs working in isolated mainstream settings.
- **The school as part of wider social inclusion:** a key objective for all parents was the inclusion of their children within the full life of the school, with access to out of school as well as 'in school' activities. **The possibility of 'wrap around' after-school play, leisure, clubs and sporting activities was seen as a key asset of a mainstream education.** However, parents also encountered barriers to such additional activities, often because LSAs would leave at the end of the school day and transport arrangements were inflexible. Some parents were aware of the Extended Schools Programme and were optimistic that there would be enhanced opportunities for children and young people with disabilities or SEN. There was considerable interest in the potential of special schools to offer inclusive opportunities to other local schools, perhaps on a cluster basis, to make best use of their accessible facilities for the wider school population in the area.

Most parents felt generally satisfied with their child's current school – but there were widespread concerns about the process by which they arrived there. A number of parents described statutory assessment as a *'battleground'*; *'endless'*; *'stressful'*; *'hurtful'* and *'unfair'*. However, others felt that schools, the LEA and others had worked hard to reach reasonable decisions about placement and support.

A particular concern was that of understanding the decision-making process. One parent described families opting for special schools as:

‘truly pro-inclusion but refugees from a mainstream sector which offers reluctant and inadequate support.’

A particular parental concern was around LEA policies for supporting mainstream provision and for proper consultation and parent involvement around any proposed change. The greatest concerns lay in safeguarding any resources released by special school closure for reinvestment in the wider school system. One parent described the closure and sale of a local MLD school. The land had considerable development potential and was sold at a high market price. However, the bulk of the money released by the closure was invested in other parts of the education system and not regarded as a protected budget element for improving local SEN arrangements.

4. PARENTS’ VIEWS OF THE INCLUSION AGENDA

As noted above, parents were strongly in favour of a more inclusive education system. However, they were concerned that any change in the nature of special schools (in particular any closures) should be subject to wide consultation with parents and relevant voluntary organisations in the area, and that any resources released by re-provisioning should be safeguarded for pupils with SEN. Several parents felt there should be:

‘transitional arrangements and funding for any major shift from special to mainstream provision. Parents need to see and experience high quality inclusion in order to feel confident that their children’s needs will be met. Closing schools is not enough – parents will see it as cost-cutting and not as a strategic planning option.’

A number of parents had strong philosophical commitments to inclusion and had fought hard for mainstream placements for their children. They regarded inclusion as part of a wider human rights debate and considered that attitudes could only change towards children and young people with SEN or disabilities if they were always

educated alongside their peers. This group of parents generally believed that inclusion could not be taken wholly forward unless either special schools were systematically closed within a clearly defined time frame or else there was 'parallel funding' to enable the inclusive education sector to develop further whilst the special school sector closed down. With the latter scenario, it was envisaged that parents would all opt for mainstream if they were confident of appropriate levels of expertise and funding. Then the separate segregated education system would naturally close down.

However, other parents were more pragmatic. For them, inclusion – social inclusion in society – was the long-term goal. In the short term, they wanted to identify the school which would offer their child the best possible education. Once their child was satisfactorily placed, then they were broadly satisfied.

All parents emphasised the importance of defining 'inclusion' broadly – there was strong endorsement of the new DDA Part 4 duties applying across the whole life of the school. One parent noted that:

'..schools are children's natural communities. If a child with a disability or SEN is not fully included in the playground and after school activities, they will not have real friends. In effect, their education may be inclusive, but they are still standing 'on the edge' and missing out on important areas of personal development. Being lonely is a special need in its own right.'

A number of parents believed that mainstream provision might not be appropriate for some children ***'at least for part of their education and in the light of resources at the present time'***. Parents of children with EBD, ADHD, Autistic Spectrum Disorders or Moderate Learning Difficulties were most likely to query the current size, range of support and positive expectations within the mainstream sector. Although many children with this spectrum of SEN were placed in mainstream and had satisfied parents, others felt that large schools; academic pressure and negative attitudes to behaviour difficulties made mainstream placements problematic.

Several parents described their children being excluded from certain areas of the curriculum, one mother noting that her son:

'was not allowed into the science laboratories to begin with because of supposed fears about his safety. Another parent was told that her daughter would not learn a modern language because it would be too difficult and it would disrupt the class. We both felt that the school was itself pressurised by the examination system. But of course my son [who had moderate learning difficulties and a mild hearing impairment] probably wouldn't have access to a science lab if he was in a special school! However, our local moderate learning difficulties school does teach French so 'Michelle' would have done better there!'

With reference to Moderate Learning Difficulties, it should be noted that the parents of children in this broad category described their children as usually having a cluster of special educational needs, for example moderate learning difficulties with mild hearing or visual impairments; health problems or physical disabilities. Several parents of older children with identified as having Moderate Learning Difficulties noted that a decade ago, their children (for example with Down's Syndrome) would probably have been in SLD schools. Now they were usually in mainstream, where some parents felt that their needs were often marginalized or misunderstood.

Some parents of children with hearing impairments felt strongly that separate education was not segregation but a cultural and human right.

5. THE ROLE OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Those parents whose children attended special schools were generally positive. They felt that their children were being offered appropriate education and had access to high quality specialist support. Most had achieved the special school place in question after considerable argument and debate and, in two cases, appeals to the SEN and Disability Tribunal. Two parents had pupils at residential special schools and were equally satisfied.

Parents identified a number of specific issues around the role of special schools. These included:

- **Positive expectations** of the pupil and towards parents

'No frowns and meaningful looks about his behaviour, no sudden summonses to the school to hear about his difficult behaviour. I always felt that we were both on trial – and that really we were there on sufferance.'

- **No difficulties about administration of medication** or provision of therapy or personal care (see below).
- **A fully accessible physical environment**, with the provision of a range of appropriate equipment and facilities.
- **Behaviour management:** one parent described how she felt that her son (with Asperger's Syndrome) was 'picked on' in mainstream school. She described how his difficulties in standing in line at assembly or in PE were not understood. He was singled out and publicly berated for his behaviour – for which the whole class was then punished. Needless to say, his relationship with his peers was poor and he had now moved school.
- **The availability of a range of learning support and other staff** (in particular staff who were all prepared to provide any personal care or assistance with special health care needs which might be required).
- **School transport.**
- **Access to external specialists** (educational or otherwise) with special reference to specific disabilities or SEN such as Autistic Spectrum Disorders.
- **Provision and maintenance of equipment.**

However, some areas were identified around special schools included:

- **Small size** (hence limitations in curriculum access).
- **Limited academic qualifications:** Pupils could have difficulties in obtaining relevant examination qualifications because of the limited number of subject teachers and range of special educational needs.
- **Isolation** in some cases (some parents expressing concerns about difficulties in making friendships which could be sustained in the school holidays, because of journey times).
- **Sometimes over-protective** and offering too safe an environment for pupils.
- **Stigma** for some parents.
- **Uncertainty** about the special school sector's longer term survival.

A number of the parents had experienced or were aware of shared placements between mainstream and special schools. One parent was very concerned and felt that such placements were compromise and actually hindered the creation of a more inclusive education system. However, parents who had experienced dual placements were generally enthusiastic, although one parent noted that:

'I don't see any point in disrupting my child between two sites unless there is a real programme which benefits him socially and educationally. These arrangements need to be carefully planned so that everybody benefits. Otherwise it is just stressful and confusing for the child.'

Another parent felt differently:

'I saw my son's shared placement as very positive. It was carefully planned and the great thing was that he was with children from our neighbourhood so he really did have a chance to keep some local friends. He has now moved back full-time to mainstream. I am not sure that would have been possible without this phased return. His behaviour had been very challenging to the Head and other teachers and they needed support and confidence in agreeing to his return. The special school was really helpful about behaviour management and it worked. It also helped that his LSA worked across the two sites so that she really understood what was happening and was consistent with him.'

There was general support for improved co-operation between mainstream and special schools. Two parents felt that special schools should themselves become more open and bring more children in from mainstream to use their facilities.

One parent suggested locating after-school activities in the special school as one step forward. Another parent spoke positively about plans in her LEA to create a new campus style approach to locating special and mainstream schools on one site. A third parent described how she fought to have her son moved from a mainstream to a special school. At the special school, the school nurse and staff had the time – and greater confidence – to monitor the pattern of his seizures and their impact on his learning. Adjustments to his medication greatly reduced the pattern of seizures and he is now back in mainstream on new medication, with a direct phone contact between his classroom teacher and the special school. She concluded that:

'There may be arguments for developing a new role for special schools – namely offering short term intensive intervention for pupils who will eventually go back to their mainstream school. Could one have special schools with, for example, two funded 'short term places' to provide such support? Of course the mainstream teachers would need to spend some time with the pupils in such placements. But surely this would be an idea, with so many children not only with medical needs but with major behaviour difficulties? If you don't get rapid access to advice for these children, they will end up labelled and excluded in later life.'

The future role of special schools: When asked to look to the future role of special schools, a number of suggestions or forecasts were offered:

- **Special schools could become specialist resource centres**, possibly retaining some places for intensive intervention but in general operating an outreach support service across their catchment area. Some parents thought that special schools could and should have formal links with designated mainstream schools in their area.
- **Special schools could support the development of specially resourced units attached to mainstream schools** and could address issues of access to a broad and balanced curriculum as well as provision of specialist support, equipment and access to therapy.
- **Special schools could develop their own specialisms (ie become specialist schools)** or they could work in partnership with other specialist schools in the area.

- **Working in partnership: clusters and federations at local level:** There was considerable support for the role of the special school as part of a local 'cluster' or federation, where it exchanged services, including specialist advice and support, and sometimes pupils with neighbouring schools. One parent (whose son had been in a Pupil Referral Unit prior to his current special school placement) felt that PRUs should also be part any clustering arrangement. She and others felt that groupings of schools should facilitate greater flexibility in pupils moving between sectors and exchanges of staff and pupils.
- **There is still be a role for specialist residential and other services for pupils with the most complex needs** – but such specialist resources should not operate in isolation. It was suggested that the SEN Regional Partnerships could have an important role to play in monitoring the use of specialist out of area provision and in considering how such expertise might be 'fed back' to local services. Two parents felt that *'their lives and those of their children were saved by residential specialist placements'* but were angry at what they saw an unnecessary battle with health, education and social services to joint fund the placements.
- One parent felt that special schools had:

'developed a bad name because they are seen as placements of last resort. But really the problem lies with the LEA and others, like local mainstream schools, which don't manage the 'return home' very well. If they were seen as schools with a specialism – like specialist schools – then maybe they could be used more effectively and on a time limited basis.'

- **Access to non-educational provision such as health and social care, therapy and equipment** – There were some concerns that special schools had taken over functions around health and social care, which should more properly be addressed by *other* statutory services. Most parents knew other families who had actively sought residential special schools not only for the SEN provision they offered but because they also offered practical help and family support.

There was also concern that some families were pursuing special schools in order to get therapy or health input which was not available in other educational settings. Some parents believed that special schools as resource bases could co-ordinate such non-educational care and support on a locality basis.

A key message was that of planning in partnership with parents. Most parents felt that financial pressures upon LEAs could result in poor decision making. They feared that families, perceiving mainstream schools to be under-resourced, would continue to press for special provision unless they were confident as to how any special educational needs would be met in local mainstream provision.

6. THE PROVISION OF THERAPY, ANY SPECIAL HEALTH CARE OR OTHER PROVISION

Some personal stories:

'Managing personal care is a real issue. I can't think why the occasional 'accident' in a primary school should be seen as a reason for exclusion – or a telephone call to the parent to come in to sort it out. All young children have 'accidents' and schools expect to deal with them. Unfortunately, I felt I was being punished and singled out because I told the school that my son might have such an accident. They started talking about health and safety, HIV and all those things. When I asked them about their Health and Safety Policy for infection control across the school, they fell silent. Of course they had guidelines. These things happen in any school. But they didn't want to apply them to my child because he had a disability.'

'A child at my son's school has to carry an epipen in case he has a severe allergic reaction. He can't eat anything which might include nuts – that even includes nutty salad oil so it's pretty extreme. Another boy has Cystic Fibrosis and has to take enzyme supplements at mid-day. Neither child has any SEN apart from their health problems. The school was fine to begin with. Then there was an incident at another school and suddenly we heard about 'risk assessment', 'insurance risks' and all these things. The boy with Cystic Fibrosis now has a nurse come into school at lunch time to give him his tablets. Ridiculous really, because he brings the daily dose with him each day and he could easily take them himself or under supervision. The child with the epipen- well, the school got really worked up about invasive care, as they called it. In the end, reluctantly, they have accepted an offer from an LSA (not working with this child) to be trained and if necessary use the pen.

This is fine as far as it goes – but not far enough because the LSA doesn't always go on school visits etc. if the children she works with are not scheduled for that visit. I would like to know, is a school not expected to protect the best interests of children and use an epipen or something similar in an emergency? You wouldn't have time to ring the union, would you, if that child licked a peanut? This wouldn't be an issue in a special school – but these children's don't need special provision, they just need common-sense!

'My child goes to a mainstream school – I am very pleased with the school and he is happy. He has cerebral palsy and sometimes needs some help with meal times and things like that. Suddenly he was very unhappy, didn't want to go to school, said he was being teased. It turned out that one of the LSAs had seen some programme or read a leaflet about disabled children being more at risk of Hepatitis B! I think she was reading something about long stay hospitals in the USA. Anyway, all the LSAs started wearing latex gloves to do anything for our children. They even picked my son's lunch box up wearing gloves! The other kids started saying things like 'have you got AIDS'? The local Health and Safety people said it was nonsense when I rang them – but the LSAs are going full steam ahead. Mainstream schools need contacts – rapid response contacts – when they have incidents like this. Otherwise you are stuck with a bad practice'.

Parents had a number of major concerns about the management of health or personal care in mainstream settings. They felt that the numbers of children with long-term medical conditions were increasing in mainstream schools – in particular more children with eczema and asthma, with diabetes or Cystic Fibrosis and with eating disorders or wider allergies. But the loss of the school nursing service had created major problems in many areas, with many schools uncertain how to get advice and sometimes (as above) adopting very discriminatory and rigid practices. One parent noted that:

'even if the staff are willing, there are more children who will need monitoring and support. I know the new DDA duties give children like my son (with diabetes) better protection from discrimination. But to be honest, the teachers' anxieties are not only about discrimination. They are about keeping children safe. My son can usually manage his diabetes well. He is 11 years old and he can self-inject. He knows when to eat the biscuits he carries in his pocket and to be careful what he eats at lunch time. But like most young children, his diabetes is unstable. His class teacher is worried when he gets a bit under the weather – is it a cold, is he bored or fed up or is he on the way to a hypoglycaemic attack? Our school did have a school nurse – now she's gone and there is only very sporadic input from a community team. So what happens – the parent is summoned in an emergency and that is not fair to anyone.'

Another parent noted that:

'even if the LSAs are willing and sometimes eager to provide intimate personal care or administer medication, they and the school may have difficulty in getting safe training. Our LEA has problems in this area – the one next door gets a very different service. I believe that if there is a problem, then you have to look at the local child health services as well as at the school. What is not fair is pulling parents in to fill a gap. It's humiliating to the child, it is embarrassing for the staff and it's certainly unfair to the parents. I think the real problem is that school nurses seem to have disappeared!'

Most of the parents with children in special schools were satisfied with any special health care provision. Medication, intimate personal care and the management of conditions like epilepsy were not seen as problems. One mother attributed the difference in facilities to:

'the availability of regular health input into special schools. Most see a community paediatrician, therapists, school or other nurses on a regular basis. The staff know they will be able to check out any problem area and get a reasonably quick and authoritative answer. Also there are more staff (almost always a school nurse) – so there is someone to sit with a child recovering from a seizure or with another child who is just not feeling very well. There will be arrangements for safe storage of medicine in place – and trained staff who can administer any treatment if required.

Most importantly, high level needs for health care in school are not seen as frightening. The staff know when to dial 999 and when not to. When my son was in mainstream, they phoned 999 every time my son had a very minor seizure. I got told off at the local Accident and Emergency Department because my son was always there. They thought I had told the school to ring for the ambulance. The doctor said my son should be in a special school if his teachers didn't know how to look after him. Now he is in a special school, nobody even thinks of sending him to A and E all the time!"

7. THE ROLE OF THE LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANT (LSA)

The majority of parents felt that the role of the LSA was crucial to high quality access and inclusion for many pupils in mainstream schools. Parents' experiences were variable. Many described effective, well planned support. Some parents were involved in the appointment process. But others expressed significant concerns. Principal anxieties lay around:

- **The recruitment process:** two parents described how LSAs had been recruited without meeting the pupil concerned. One of these parents noted the importance of

'Pupil and the LSA getting on at a personal level. It is a very personal relationship, they spend a lot of time together. If they just don't like each other, there are problems!'

- **Training** was seen as a key issue – for parents, the pupil and the LSA. Training was seen as less of a problem in a large school. Several parents had experienced LSAs as part of a team, where regular training opportunities and peer support were possible. Where the LSA worked as part of a team, there were also arrangements for cover in case of illness or holidays. One parent was highly critical of her son's arrangements, which meant that if the only LSA in his school was ill, then he had to stay at home or she would come in to provide cover. Another parent felt that a career structure was essential to recruit and retain good people. She noted that two of her son's LSAs had left because the pay was too poor to remain.
- **The role of the LSA:** some concerns were expressed about the role of the LSA. Some parents were concerned that the LSA could become a surrogate teacher, *'protecting'* children from the wider classroom activities. There was general recognition that the LSA role could require some delicacy and that there was some ambiguity about the extent to which an LSA might support other pupils in a class to free up the classroom teacher. Parents were particularly concerned about *'sessional'* LSAs (ie where a specified number of hours was recorded in the pupil's statement). They felt that part-time support from LSAs was not necessarily targeted at the key points in the pupil's curriculum. One mother noted that her teen-age son felt that other pupils did not always understand the role of the LSA – he felt embarrassed working with her, when his friends teased him about having a 'child minder'. Another mother felt that schools generally needed to think hard about the optimum approach to different adults working together in a classroom.

- **Personal assistance:** a number of LSAs were described as having dual roles of support to learners and personal assistance. Parents of pupils with personal care needs were particularly concerned that LSAs should have proper training if they were to provide assistance with personal care, lifting and moving or administration of medication. One mother had made a video of her daughter at home, showing how she liked to be moved; sit; have assistance with eating and intimate care. Another praised her daughter's mainstream school for inviting her to help write her LSA's job description and for being part of the interview process.

- **Problem areas:** Some parents felt that LSAs had insufficient information about wider areas of policy development, such as infection control and health and safety. One parent (op cit) cited her son's school, where the LSAs suddenly adopted a policy of wearing latex gloves for any contact with any disabled child. This apparently related to a misunderstood leaflet on Hepatitis B. However, it resulted in very discriminatory behaviour and considerably upset to the pupils concerned (none of whom required any intimate or personal care apart from assistance with feeding or changing clothes for PE). The parent concerned felt that LSAs needed to fully understand all relevant school policies on, for example, infection control; lifting or moving; use of restraint and behaviour management if relevant. She also noted that even if LSAs belonged to a union (Unison in this case), they did not necessarily have or apply that union's policies in school.

- **Personal and learning support in special schools:** parents were in general satisfied with support in special schools. They noted that because schools were smaller, all staff found it easier to work in a team. It was also assumed that any support staff working in these settings would be willing to provide a wide range of practical assistance and care. However, not all parents were happy with personal support in special provision.

One parent commented that a major problem for special as well as mainstream schools was that of any kind of invasive care. Many support staff were now nervous about using invasive care procedures because of fear of litigation. Others were

unclear about the permissible use of restraint. The new DfES/DoH guidance was welcomed but, as one parent put it, ***'nobody is sure where common sense ends and 'constraint' begins.'*** Another parent described how she sometimes kept her daughter (with learning disabilities and challenging behaviour) at home for a day when her regular supporter was ill or on holiday. She feared that her daughter might be excluded without what she called a

'sympathetic ally who is not afraid of her and understands that most time her behaviour reflects fear not anger. But I don't want to risk it – if she were to be permanently excluded, we couldn't cope. It would be knock-knock on the door of social services, asking for a residential placement.'

- **Residential special schools:** those parents with children at residential special schools felt that the placement had usually been won only after heated debates. They felt that their children's schools provided well integrated care and education programmes and that personal and learning assistance worked well. One parent noted that:

'it is probably easier for a residential special school to work as a team – there is a very close 24 hour relationship between pupils and staff at every level.'

However, another parent observed that residential special schools could have 'very private lives' and she felt that

'while the best are very good, very good indeed, making a huge difference to everyone's lives, others may really offer some very poor services. And how do we know that children are safe when they are living miles away from anyone they really know? If residential special schools are offering home as well as school, then the quality of the non-teaching staff will be absolutely critical.'

8. ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION: THE NEW DDA PART 4 DUTIES

Because of their regional roles, all the parents were aware of both the guidance on inclusion and the Part 4 duties. However, they shared a range of views and experiences on schools' responses to the new duties.

- Many mainstream schools are currently inaccessible in certain areas for pupils with a range of disabilities and special needs. Lack of access may lead to caution on the part of the school about the admission of a child with a disability or special health care need. Parents talked of the disappearance of medical rooms (essential for children needing to inject for diabetes; recover from a seizure or have therapy) and a lack of priority for disability access in refurbishment plans. However, parents spoke positively of some specially resourced units and the additional facilities which these brought. One parent described them as a

'positive influence on the access arrangements in the rest of the school – the staff could give practical advice and often point out that there were low cost options. Many schools fear greater accessibility as yet another 'raid on school budgets.'

- Not all special schools were regarded as truly accessible. Parents commented on the growing complexity of some children's special needs. They reported family complaints about lack of refurbishment (in particular where this necessitated outside journeys between different parts of the school campus); school toilets which were no longer accessible for the new larger power wheelchairs and delays in installing equipment specific to particular children such as standing frames, special hoists or other provision crucial to the child's education.
- One parent unable to attend the focus group wrote subsequently to say that disabled children (or children with SEN and challenging behaviours) could be discriminated against even in a special school. She noted examples of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders excluded from some school social activities and, in some instances, children with the most complex needs

'corralled within one part of the school, not mixing with the more mobile or capable children and hence having little stimulation.'

- However, there was high praise for those mainstream (and special) schools which had put the new DDA duties firmly on their agenda. One parent described the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors already beginning work on an Accessibility Plan and, in her words,

'marketing the idea of the inclusive school as good for everyone – including disabled parents; older people and of course mothers with buggies!'

Another school had responded positively to a request from a parent of a deaf child and as part of a new **'total communication'** policy, was arranging for pupils and teachers to learn BSL. Parents spoke particularly positively of schools which accepted the challenge and were willing to be flexible – flexibility ranging from allowing physically disabled children to use a staff toilet through to re-arranging classes and other activities to make best use of any accessible accommodation.

- **Attitudes** were seen as key. Some parents had experience of schools where disability equality training was already on the staff agenda and there was what one mother described as a **'can do'** attitude. Others felt that they had to **'demand, plead sometimes brazen it out'** in seeking a mainstream place. There was strong support for local parent groups or networks acting as change agents and being willing to work with the LEA and schools to change policy and practice. One parent commented that schools were often themselves confused about their new duties and about what constituted safe inclusion. She had heard of one school where an independent access consultant estimated a cost of £15,000 in order to improve physical access to the school. A second consultant, himself a disabled man, produced estimates for short, medium and longer term change which would enable basic accessibility for under £2,500 within the current year's budget, with incremental steps planned over time to make the school totally barrier free.

- Some parents talked about ***'complicity in supporting negative attitudes just to keep the situation going.'*** One example was the parent of a son, happily included in mainstream provision, whom she was asked to keep at home on SATS days and when OFSTED came to the school. She said that nobody was happy with the decision, which she saw as ***'involuntary exclusion'***, but she co-operated with the Head and Chair of Governors who were frightened that her son's behaviour might disrupt or reflect badly on the school on these special days.
- ***Attitudes*** were also seen as particularly hurtful when they humiliated individual children. One mother described how a pupil with a severe allergic problem had to eat specially prepared food at lunch time. The school agreed to the mother bringing in special meals to be heated in the school canteen but the staff were constantly neglectful, failed to heat the food properly, on one time 'laced' it with pepper and described the preparation of any special diet as unreasonable. A formal complaint and a proposal to go to the DRC resulted in the school demanding that the school meals supervisor delivered the food as specified. The woman in question left the school voluntarily and the problem was resolved. The parent considered that her son had been humiliated and teased and made to ***'stand out'*** because of the negative attitudes of the staff.

Several parents felt that pupils with SEN or disabilities were often omitted from public functions at the school. One mother described her visually impaired daughter being refused a place in the school orchestra. Although she had passed Grade 5 piano and Grade 4 violin examinations, it was judged that ***'she would be unable to read the music and see the conductor.'*** Although the girl's external music teacher had intervened and the orchestra's leader had apologised and changed his mind, the girl felt singled out and was now reluctant to play with her fellow pupils.

However, notwithstanding problems, many parents had very positive experiences of mainstream schools ***'problem solving'*** and seeing disabled pupils as valued members of the school community. One parent with a daughter with complex disabilities described how she felt ***'moved to tears'*** by the positive attitudes of other

pupils and by the teachers' determination that her daughter would be included in every aspect of school life. She felt that the 'outreach' role of a well resourced and positive unit within the school contributed to a positive attitude to access and inclusion. In particular, the unit could and did provide any training for teaching staff and LSAs and saw itself as an integral part of mainstream culture.

There was widespread support for the introduction of accessibility plans and the wider LEA strategies. However, parents were equally concerned that the planning duties should also apply to special schools and units and that social services departments and local child health services should also have over-arching duties similar to the residual duty placed on the LEA under DDA Part IV. A number of parents emphasised the challenges experienced by LEAs when their health and social services counterparts refused to deliver essential therapy, equipment or family support.

9. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

All the parents recognised that education services were changing. There was considerable interest in contributing more to such change, with a number of parents citing parent organisations such as Contact a Family or the Parent Partnership Services as playing an active role in their areas. Three parents came from LEAs with high numbers of appeals to the SEN and Disability Tribunal. One parent noted that:

'the numbers of appeals are going up and up, not necessarily because parents don't like and couldn't live with the provision on offer. The real reason is that there is a lack of understand and trust in how the 'system' works. Parents see some children getting very generous packages of support – but their child seems to get almost nothing. In particular, if we want to take inclusion forward, we must help parents to understand how the budget is delegated to their child's school; what they can reasonably expect – and how expenditure on SEN is monitored. Otherwise there will be a move back to special schools.'

Some parents think that mainstream schools are like pirates, plundering funding delegated for statements, in order to buy new computers and extra maths and things for other pupils. It is probably all misunderstanding – but the appeals will rise unless we can really get parents to understand. Then, if cuts are needed, we can surely sit round the table together and work out what to do for the best.'

10. IN CONCLUSION

The parent focus groups identified broadly similar issues about the future development of special schools within a national agenda for inclusion. Key issues in the discussion were:

- positive attitudes and expectations for all pupils (including those with disabilities or SEN). Parents were very concerned at what they regarded as 'competition and league tables' dominating mainstream schools' agendas. They would welcome greater celebration of individual pupils' progression as well as any formal academic achievements.
- the importance of developing the role of all schools (including special schools) as agents of social inclusion
- seeing special schools as part of the 'inclusion community' and as 'launch pads' for the delivery of more flexible, effective and timely advice and support for children with disabilities or SEN in mainstream schools.
- the development of confidence and competence in the mainstream sector (in particular improving the skills of Learning Support Assistants and teachers and providing 'fast track' access to specialist advice and support where necessary)
- improving the delivery of health or social care and therapies in mainstream settings (parents were interested in the idea of developing the role of schools as foci for these services)

- **implementing the DDA – and improving access to information, the curriculum and the physical environment on a progressive and planned basis. Parents were keen to be involved in local planning initiatives. Some parents felt that special schools also had major access issues to address.**
- **Recognising that the assessment and statementing system can be protracted, painful and disruptive to parents and pupils – and that parents need reassurance that provision identified in the statement will be delivered and relevant delegated budget safeguarded in mainstream settings.**
- **Family support: recognising the emotional and social implications of supporting children with SEN and disabilities**
- **Change and transitions: parents were willing and anxious to be involved in local (and national) debates about developing the inclusion agenda. In particular they wanted safeguards for any transitional arrangements around proposed special school closure and better management of transfer between primary and secondary school sectors. One parents' group highlighted the rapid increase in parents seeking special school placements as their children moved from the primary school sector.**

MESSAGES FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOCUS GROUPS

Please talk to ME!

I'm not an it

I'm not a she

I am a person

I am ME!

I'm not an it

I'm not a she

Ask my name

Please listen to ME!

I like my school

They like me

I've got a life

So please ask ME!

[Bolton Inclusive Play Project]

1. In consulting with children and young people, we recognised the challenge of consulting on both individual experiences and on views on the wider education scene and positive options for the future. Therefore, the focus groups drew upon the existing membership and facilitators of Triangle and the Bolton Inclusive Play project.
2. Triangle is a well known organisation based in the South East of England, with considerable experience in consulting disabled children and young people on a broad range of policy and practice issues. It is widely known for assisting local authorities (including LEAs) and schools in improving pupil participation in individual decision making and in helping to shape local services.

3. The Bolton Inclusive Play Project is an inclusive play and leisure service which works in partnership with early years services, schools and the local Extended Schools Programme, BEST teams, the voluntary sector and parent organisations and with a wide range of community services.
4. Both organisations had existing reference groups, representing a broad range of disabilities and SEN, which were accustomed to discussing a range of policy issues and assisting in the design and implementation of local services. The young people concerned were confident in working together and were able to reflect on their own situations, using a variety of techniques (including art and play). Their ages ranged from 8 to 16 years. Their disabilities and special educational needs included physical and sensory disabilities; learning disabilities and moderate learning difficulties; autistic spectrum disorders; ADHD and EBD and dyslexia. They attended (and had attended) a range of provision, including mainstream schools; resourced units; day and residential special schools. One pupil had been educated at home for some months. Two had experienced periods in hospital and a hospital school.
5. Both focus groups asked the children and young people to consider:
 - **Their own experiences in education. What had worked well, what had caused difficulties?**
 - **What did they feel about their present school? What did they like, what was less satisfactory?**
 - **Did they get the additional help which they needed? Were they happy with the way in which this was provided?**
 - **Had they moved schools? If so, did the move go smoothly or did they have difficulties?**
 - **Do they take part in after school or holiday activities? If so, what are they? Would they like to do more?**

- **What about friends?**

- **'Hopes and dreams' What did they want to do with their life? Would their school help them to achieve their ambitions? What did they think schools might be like in the future?**

The questions were designed to trigger discussion and to avoid any individual child feeling uncomfortable. The question around 'hopes and dreams' and the young people's own ambitions enabled the facilitators to use a variety of techniques to encourage the young people to think more broadly about the education they would really like and how it might be delivered.

The children and young people in both groups, notwithstanding a broad range of ages, backgrounds and disabilities/SEN had very similar views on a number of key issues.

There are now increasing numbers of groups of children and young people with SEN and disabilities across the UK. Many of these young people provide reference groups for local projects or services. Some of the young people we have worked with in the past have heard about the focus groups and have sent us their personal comments. These have been included in the report and are marked as personal communications. There was broad similarity in views between both focus groups and individual respondents. The young people's views have been grouped together below under broad themes. An example of one focus group's discussions is attached as an Annex.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL

'School is really important – it's children's work isn't it? Grown-ups go to work every day to earn their money. If you want to get a job, you have to go to work at school first, to learn lots of things. I want a good job, I want to get on in life. So I want a good school, then I've got a better chance, haven't I?'

[young woman with a physical disability, attending a mainstream school]

'I really miss school in the holidays. Sad, isn't it? But I do! My friends are all at school, we can have a good laugh and do things together. I wish the school taxis came in the holidays, it's so dull without my mates...'

[young man with moderate learning disabilities, attending a special school.]

'It's about hopes and dreams, isn't it? When I came back to school (after a long period of oncology treatment) I looked different, I felt different – but they treated me the same. If you feel good at school, you feel good with your life. I didn't feel very well and I'd lost my hair, but they helped me cope. I had a special 'buddy' to help me in my new class, she's my best friend now.'

[young woman recovering from childhood leukaemia, returning to her mainstream school – personal communication]

School was central to the lives of all the children and young people. Without exception, they thought their school was generally good (there was little questioning of placements in mainstream or special provision). Friendships were very high on everybody's agenda. Some of the young people had very limited lives at home because of lack of transport – coming to school enabled them to, as one young man put it:

'have some fun, do things with your friends. It's lonely at home.'

A key theme in thinking about school was that of:

'...everybody belonging, being able to do everything you want to...being in the school play, going on the school journey. We want schools to say 'we can do it'. I'm on my School Council, that's really good. I can make things better for everybody.'

The girl in question had a medical condition which necessitated regular periods away from school and some assistance with medication during the school day. She said succinctly that:

'..the most important thing about the school is that it wants to help you. I've been to three schools [two mainstream and one special] and they were all OK. Nobody said you were a nuisance, but I know some kids who have an awful time. My friend (at a mainstream school in a town where she previously moved) wanted to go back to special school because the teachers didn't understand about her medication [Ritalin for ADHD] and sometimes they didn't give it to her. Then she got high and got sent home. She got really upset because she wanted to learn.'

However, all the young people were ambitious. They wanted to achieve, they valued recognition of personal success and most had career plans.

2. CHANGING SCHOOLS – WHAT THE CHILDREN THOUGHT

A number of the children and young people said they had changed schools (most moving from primary to secondary school). However, four had moved from mainstream to day special schools. Two had moved to residential special schools. None of the children or young people queried their placement in either mainstream or special schools. Those that had moved between sectors seemed content with where they were now. However, a few young people reflected upon their moves and had some comments.

'...they [the special school] made me more independent, they made me start doing things on my own. I fell out of my wheelchair once and they said, sorry but get up! It was my own fault, because I hadn't done the straps up. They told me straight! I'm now in a mainstream school with my brother. My teacher from the special school talks to my new school teacher so I get the right help. He makes my new school let me do things- it's good to have someone saying, 'you can do it!' I did all right at 'X' special school – I feel good about myself now.'

[boy with multiple disabilities following a road traffic accident]

'...I was really frightened going to my new [mainstream] school. I'd been in hospital for ages, and I just didn't feel safe. But they were great, I got a 'buddy' to help me settle in and the LSA and the school nurse really helped. I didn't always feel very well but they found a quiet place for me to rest when I couldn't cope. I thought they'd bully me, but they didn't. One of the kids even wanted to shave his head to look like me! Luckily the teacher stopped him or I suppose his Mum'd be round saying I had given him ideas!'

[girl with epilepsy, moving to a mainstream school]

Some of the participants were aware that the change of school (including secondary selection) had been very worrying for their parents and that there had been much discussion in the background and arguing as well. When the young people who had moved to special schools or residential special schools were asked *'what's different'* about their new schools, they thought they were:

- *'friendlier'*
- *'nicer, my mum's really pleased that I am here now!'*
- *'doesn't get so wound up about the way I behave!'*
- *'doesn't make a fuss about my medication'*
- *'doesn't worry if I have a seizure, says they can cope all right and it is nothing to worry about.'*
- *'more friends – I can walk to school with them.'*
- *'I get my therapy now, I never got it in 'Y' school.'*
- *'It's better 'cos my mum is happier now. If your mum doesn't like your school, there's not much point in getting used to it. She'll move you on!'*

However, no young person made specific reference to the *type* of school to which they had moved. Although some pupils in mainstream provision had concerns about their support, none expressed any desire to move elsewhere. When a young person had moved from a special to a mainstream school, they were equally likely to express similar views to those set out above. In effect they were responding positively to schools in which they felt valued, confident and safe, regardless of the sector to which the school in question belonged.

3. ASSESSMENT, EXAMINATIONS AND REVIEWS

Regardless of the type of school attended, the children and young people were very conscious of assessment, examinations and reviews. Several in mainstream schools worried about SATs – not so much about their performance as, in some cases, being excluded from taking the tests. One young man was kept at home on SATs days – his mother separately recounted that she had acceded to the Head’s suggestion because she realised the importance of the school’s overall performance at critical key stages and she did not want her son to be unwelcome because he might ‘*spoil*’ examination results. He was very unhappy at being excluded from the excitement and the tensions around SATs in his mainstream school. He said that he:

‘...got my pencils and pens ready like the others, I said my mum was helping me at home too, we had these books from Smiths and we were practising the tests....after the day was over, I would say I had an asthma attack. I don’t have asthma but it seemed like a good idea, a sort of white lie. But I thought, I need to do some tests too. I need to show people I am good enough’.

[pupil at a mainstream school – not part of the two focus groups, but who wished to comment through one of the parents who shared their views with us.]

Another pupil [with moderate learning difficulties] in a mainstream school said that she would:

‘like homework, like my brothers. They say to me, why don’t you have homework? Everybody has homework, you don’t pass exams without homework. I felt sort of foolish. But my mum bought me a briefcase like the others. I used to just carry my

sandwiches in it, but Mum spoke to my teacher. Now she gives me homework, special reading and things. That's good. I say I don't like it at the weekends, I say I don't want to do it – but I do really. I'm like the others then.'

Another pupil also stressed the unfairness of no homework:

'it isn't fair not giving homework because you're disabled, it's as if you can't do anything. All the others in the class, they get told homework's important. Well, why isn't it for me too?'

A third pupil also felt sad about exams. He felt that:

'getting exams gets you a job, doesn't it? At my special school, we got certificates to show people we could do things. My new [mainstream] school says I can't do exams. I've got my IEP and all that stuff, but it doesn't say much about what I am good at! Will I get to college without exams?'

Most of the young people (in special and mainstream schools) were used to assessment. The majority took part in their own reviews and felt that this helped them learn. They enjoyed setting personal targets with their classroom teacher or SENCO. But others were less happy. One pupil with a physical disability said he was:

'sick of assessments all the time. Also, the other kids do tests, and I get assessments! Why? One of the lads said I was like a second hand car, I must be always breaking down to have all these people fussing over me. I felt really bad, sort of singled out.'

But he went on to say that his 'buddy' [at a mainstream school] turned on the other children and told them that:

'I'm not like a second hand car, I'm like a racing car that needs fine tuning! 'Mike' said to them, they're bothering with him because he's so good – they don't bother with you because you don't try to do anything well. The lads stopped saying anything after that. I felt better.'

Some of the young people talked about their IEPs and their school's internal systems for regular assessment, target setting, and review. The role of the LSA and classroom or advisory teacher was critical. All the young people liked receiving evidence that they were succeeding and a number were closely involved in target setting and monitoring outcomes. However, others had views about the extent to which lessons were differentiated to take account of their needs.

'When I moved to the special school, I found I could really do my work. Everything was presented in a way which I understood. Really, there was more time. And more understanding. After my [road traffic] accident, I found it hard to concentrate and I got muddled. I needed help to learn. They gave it to me. I think I will get back to mainstream – college anyway – but I needed to learn how to manage my life again.'

A girl in a mainstream school observed that:

'the real problem is time, I would ask the teacher to explain something again or to write something down because I couldn't hear well enough, and he just couldn't. I got behind and then they said I should drop French. I thought why should I, I want to go to France. They did not know what to do with me really.'

But other pupils had very positive experiences, including:

'really sitting down and working out how I'd learn best, where I wanted to sit in the classroom, what special equipment I needed. And the other kids were great, they helped too. They never said I was a nuisance, they always said, 'Natalie', you are coming too and I did!'

'I'm doing GCSEs this year and I didn't think I ever could. I've been pushed, yes that's the word, pushed. They kept saying to me 'you can do it' and I could!'

Some pupils had experience of dual placements or of a teacher from a special school providing outreach support and guidance. They found this a positive experience – as did those in schools with special units. One pupil stressed the importance of:

‘doing all the lessons I can with the other pupils – the things I’m good at, I need to be with the others. But some things are difficult. Then I’m pleased to get that extra help. My [former] special school teacher, he’s really good at working out why I’ve got problems with maths and stuff. My LSA now goes back to the special school sometimes, she says she gets really good ideas. It’s nice if we all learn together.’

[young man with hydrocephalus, who has moved from a special to a mainstream school with a resourced unit – personal communication]

4. LEARNING SUPPORT, PROVISION OF THERAPY AND PERSONAL ASSISTANCE

The young people from mainstream and special schools had broadly similar views about learning support and personal assistance. First and foremost they:

‘want to help choose our own LSAs and who helps us with personal assistance. If someone doesn’t really like you, that’s tough. But if you get on well, then everything is OK!’

Four young people had been involved in the recruitment of their LSAs and were enthusiastic about the process. One young man said:

'the school helped me make a video of my day, when I wanted help [with personal assistance] and what help I needed in learning. The good thing was that the video showed what I could do on my own. So my LSA knew what I needed and we got on from the start. Some LSAs treat you like small children – one of my mates, his friends said to him why do you have a childminder when you're big? He didn't! But they saw the LSA was always there. She was kind, nice but she didn't understand, you want help when you want it not all the time. It does mark you out if you are the only kid with a minder in your school!'

[personal communication from pupil with cerebral palsy, the only disabled pupil in a mainstream secondary school]

Most the young people attended schools where there was more than one LSA and the team work ensured that they got support regularly throughout the school year. But one young person resented not being able to come into school if his LSA was away sick – unless his mother came in to help with personal care. He was indignant that in his former special school, *'nobody's mother ever came in to 'help'*.

A number of the young people received physio or speech and language therapy and had regular visits from occupational therapists when at school. Three participants felt unhappy that therapy or any specialist support was often timed to coincide with important classroom or other activities.

One young man [personal communication] described how when he first attended a mainstream school, the personal assistants decided it would be easier to group all those who might need help at lunch time round one table. He was upset that he and other pupils with disabilities or SEN were, as he put it:

'sat round like little kids, when all we needed was some help in standing in the queue and carrying our trays back. We didn't want the assistants to go and load the food up for us. Half the time we didn't want what they had chosen and then we got told off like little kids for not eating it up! And they kept mopping the table all the time – as if the other kids didn't spill things too!'

He finally plucked up courage to tell a (non-disabled) friend about why they couldn't sit together over lunch. The friend encouraged him to talk to somebody on the School Council (which at that time was very interested in school meals!). As a result, there was a round-table discussion – with much embarrassment on the part of the assistants who thought they were doing all right. Now everybody sits where they like and negotiates in advance about any assistance required. The young man in question commented that:

'they did mean well but they saw us as babies! They made us feel like babies too. But with the School Council we sorted it out. Funny thing is, when I went to a special school, they were the other way round – pushing us to do more for ourselves. I guess we were pioneers at 'X' school. We were their first disabled pupils and they were learning on the job.'

One boy was concerned that his physiotherapist always came during 'double french' and he was worried about missing important GCSE course work. His teacher was expressing doubts about his ability to complete the course work if he continued to miss lessons. Another boy was angry that his mainstream school had no private place for individual therapy. He described the embarrassment of ***'stripping down in the gym'*** when other younger children were using it. Notwithstanding a screen, he felt humiliated and had asked his mother to re-arrange the sessions at the local hospital. One group of young people asked that:

'all schools should have private places for children to go, when they don't feel well, when they need treatment, when a doctor or someone comes to see them.'

A young man with ADHD felt that pupils with behaviour difficulties needed private places too. He said that in his mainstream school,

'there is nowhere you can go to wind down, it's so noisy and disturbing somehow. Sometimes all that noise just does your head in.'

Personal assistance with intimate care also came in for criticism. A strong plus for special provision or resources unit was seen as:

'decent school loos, enough of them, with hot water and accessible – and you don't get other kids hanging around all the time. Would you like to inject yourself in a school loo? They see me with my bag [of insulin and syringe] and they call me 'druggie'. The teachers get very cross and they stop it. But it upsets me.'

[13 year old girl with diabetes]

But other pupils spoke positively of schools' responses to their particular needs. One girl with an indwelling catheter was allowed to use the staff cloakroom, with

'no hassle, no bother, they are really nice about it.'

Another described how her classroom teacher and two LSAs agreed to be trained by the local health services in order to administer drugs if she had a seizure. She said that:

'it changed my life really, it meant I could go on school trips instead of sitting around back at school. Also, I felt good because they wanted to help me. When I did have a seizure, they were really good, practical. I didn't need to go to hospital. I felt better about myself.'

A number of young people happily placed in mainstream schools paid tribute to the role of special schools or specialist services in helping them acquire greater independence and manage their own health and personal care needs better.

One girl had received mobility training (for her visual impairment) in an outreach service from a special school. Another had learnt to manage an indwelling catheter herself and, as she put it, ***'pass my driving test in my wheelchair'*** in a specially resourced unit with strong support from a local special school. She felt that:

'I needed to learn a lot of basic things so that I could get out and about – outside school as well as in it. I needed to learn things that I don't think my school [a mainstream school] could really teach me. I think schools should work together more – like if you're very good at maths or music, you sometimes go to different schools. I thought, if I want to go to college, get a job, I've got to do things on my own NOW! It's tough....but I'm good on my own.'

Young people attending special schools had fewer issues about additional support in the classroom or for personal care. One young woman who was now attending a special school commented that:

'you're not a problem because they expect you to be like you are! There are more staff ready to help. When I was in mainstream, my mum said I was a pioneer, they had to learn from me! Now I am back in a special school to get really independent – next stop college. I think special schools could help mainstream more....my teacher really had to work hard when I was in 'X' school. I suppose I did teach her really.'

[young woman with epilepsy and physical disability, currently in a special school and about to move back to a local FE college]

6. 'GETTING A LIFE'

Although most of the young people enjoyed school, some thought that they could benefit from additional skills and support – or valued it, when provided. Key priorities for all the young people were:

- *'having friends, not missing anything'*
- *'playing sport, music, all the extra things...'*
- *'Messing around – in the playground, before and after school'*
- *'getting independent – using transport, managing self care where appropriate'*
- *'dealing with bullying and nasty things.'*

One girl was very indignant that although she attended a mainstream school, she was not able to remain for the after-school club because of transport problems. Another pupil was refused permission to join an after-school sports club because there were anxieties about his asthma. He felt the school was very cautious and complained that:

'if I don't play football with the other kids, then I can't talk to them about games and things that matter. I don't have many asthma attacks – why won't the school let me carry my inhaler around with me?'

All the young people (regardless of the school sector they were in) would have liked more after school and holiday activities. Many of the young people had limited ability to travel independently and would have valued more 'on site' provision. There was high praise for the Bolton Inclusive Play Project, which had developed a wide range of local activities, many based on schools and most with transport.

7. 'HOPES AND DREAMS' – MY IDEAL SCHOOL!

The young people were encouraged to 'dream' about schools of the future and what they would like for their own education and personal development. Many of the issues raised apply across both mainstream and special schools. However, they also illuminate the key factors for *pupils* in maximising their access to education; their self esteem and in supporting their ability to contribute to the life of the school and subsequently their communities. Their '*hopes and dreams*' included:

- ***'being equal and valued members of the school community'***. The young people wanted to be seen as being valued, to be on School Councils, to have parts in school plays, to play sport. One child thought schools should be reminded that 'life goes

- ***'having friends in and out of school'*** – there was wide support for the development of more play, leisure, after school services around schools (including special schools). All the pupils felt that friendships mattered – and they wanted the opportunity to meet a wide range of young people of their own ages. Some barriers to friendships were identified – in particular pupils with disabilities or SEN sitting separately at lunch, having different breaks, being constrained by school transport and not being able to use equipment in parks etc. when their friends could.

- ***'having school staff you like and trust'***: children with SEN and disabilities are exposed to a wider range of staff in school settings than their peers. The children and young people would have liked more say in the appointment of LSAs and personal assistants and were sometimes worried by their lack of experience or confidence in providing assistance. Staff in resourced units or special schools were seen as ***'knowing what they are doing'***

- ***'being listened to and respected'*** – some pupils felt that mainstream schools did not have the necessary skills to really listen and respect – for example not understanding special communication needs, not allowing sufficient time, not looking at the best way of offering accessible information. Pupils with hearing impairments who signed placed the greatest possible emphasis upon staff and other students being willing to learn BSL and to communicate with them. Two deaf pupils in special schools stressed the difference which full communication made to their feelings about their education. One focus group suggested that schools could 'start small' and ask children about everyday things like school food; activities and clothes. Most of the children and young people wanted to be active players in decision making but did not wish to have sole responsibility. As one girl commented, ***'want them to talk to me as well as my parents. I'm not invisible.'***

- ***'having our needs recognised and met!'*** Some pupils felt it was ***'kind of embarrassing to have to explain ourselves all the time'***. One pupil had designed her own 'passport', which she carried round, explaining what special adjustments, if any, she required in particular lessons. In one of the focus groups, the young people stressed the additional energy which they often had to expend to 'keep up' in mainstream and valued the sanctuary of the special unit where they could receive support for learning or have their personal care or therapy needs met. They were very clear that they did not like 'token' inclusion where they could not truly participate in an activity. Some young people suggested that staff from special schools could provide more support and assistance to mainstream colleagues.
- ***'managing any personal assistance or support for health needs'***: pupils were very sensitive to any potential loss of dignity in the way in which personal assistance or support for health needs were provided. School toilets were universally criticised for their poor design, lack of privacy and as places where teasing and bullying often happened. One pupil felt that his special needs on returning to school after chemotherapy were not acknowledged. But others talked about strong support from hospital teachers, school or community nurses and sometimes special school staff. There was often considerable anxiety about how such support would be managed if the usual member of staff was away. Pupils in special schools were generally happy with such support and had no complaints.
- ***'we need accessible schools – and that means playgrounds, playing fields, everything!'***: some pupils felt they were discriminated against in access to the full life of the school. One pupil had left a mainstream school and move to a special school because of access problems. Another pupil was kept at home because his mother was not satisfied with arrangements to get him out in case of fire. A third pupil worried that when she left her accessible mainstream primary school, she would have great difficulties in finding a similarly accessible

secondary school in her area. One focus group of young people felt that they should be involved in writing their schools' accessibility plans and that children were insufficiently consulted about what worked well in terms of access in education. All concerned stress the importance of looking at access more broadly than entry to classrooms and toilets.

- **'Information – for children and young people!'** Both focus groups underlined the importance of giving accessible information to pupils. One pupil commented that nobody had ever really explained to her what an assessment was. Another wished that her teacher would not **'talk back when I disagree with her and explain why I can't do something. I need to understand.'** Young people from minority ethnic groups felt that their information needs were often overlooked.
- **'to be part of a family!'** All parents are important, but parents of children with SEN or disabilities have a special and ongoing role in their education. Most young people thought their schools (special or mainstream) worked well with parents – but they also felt that the 'school of the future' would engage family members much more than at present. Two pupils at residential special schools felt that distance was no barrier to family partnerships and told of their pleasure that parents and siblings could come and stay at the school if they wished. Two other special school pupils praised their school for having an outreach role in the family home as well with between local mainstream schools. They described home sessions learning to use a new communication aid and agreeing with parents how they could support a pupil's IEP.

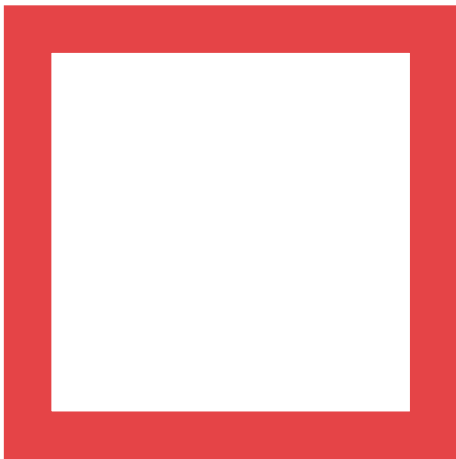
IN CONCLUSION:

The young people participating in the focus groups represented a wide range of disabilities and SEN. They had experienced a broad range of schools and had clear views about what they wanted from education. The majority of young people were very positive about their current school (whether special or mainstream). Although some literature on pupils' perceptions of education suggests that they may feel special schools to be stigmatising, no negative messages emerged from our focus groups. There were very clear messages about the importance of high quality support

both for learning and for any personal care or health care needs and about the active involvement of pupils in review and in planning for success.

Both focus groups, asked for 'last messages' about the future role of all types of school in supporting pupils with disabilities or special educational needs. The young people stressed the need for:

- *high expectations and equality of opportunity for all pupils – wherever they are educated*
- *the development of schools as community resources with a range of activities beyond the school day*
- *breaking down barriers between schools – pupils enjoyed what they called 'swaps' where they could enjoy the facilities of other schools and get appropriate support*
- *joining up services – getting health, social services or other support at appropriate times and relevant to the young people's needs*
- *Supporting and valuing families – many of the young people were acutely aware of their parents' anxieties and of the extra assistance they provided*
- *Celebration! Pupils were keen to have their aspirations and progress recorded, recognised and celebrated.*



Annex E: Types and numbers of Special Schools and issues affecting the Sector

TYPES OF SPECIAL SCHOOL

1. There are 3 types of special school: those maintained by the LEA; non-maintained special schools (NMSS); and independent special schools.
2. Maintained special schools, which can either be community or foundation schools (as defined by the Education Act 1998), are funded by the LEA and are broadly subject to the same legislative provisions as other maintained schools.
3. NMSS schools are not maintained by LEAs and are approved as special schools under section 342 of the Education Act 1996. They are non-profit making schools run by charitable trusts. NMSS schools are funded primarily through pupil fees charged to LEAs which place children there in order to have an assessment carried out or because the school is named in the pupil's statement. They are therefore indirectly funded from the public purse, via local authority expenditure. NMSS schools are subject to the provisions set out in the Education (Non-Maintained Special Schools)(England) Regulations 1999. The regulations deal with the initial and continuing conditions for approval by the Secretary of State. These relate to issues such as governance, health, safety and welfare, premises, non-profit making status of the school and so on. Approval may be withheld or subsequently withdrawn in the event of non-compliance, and certain matters once approved may not be altered without the prior approval of the Secretary of State. The underlying principle of the

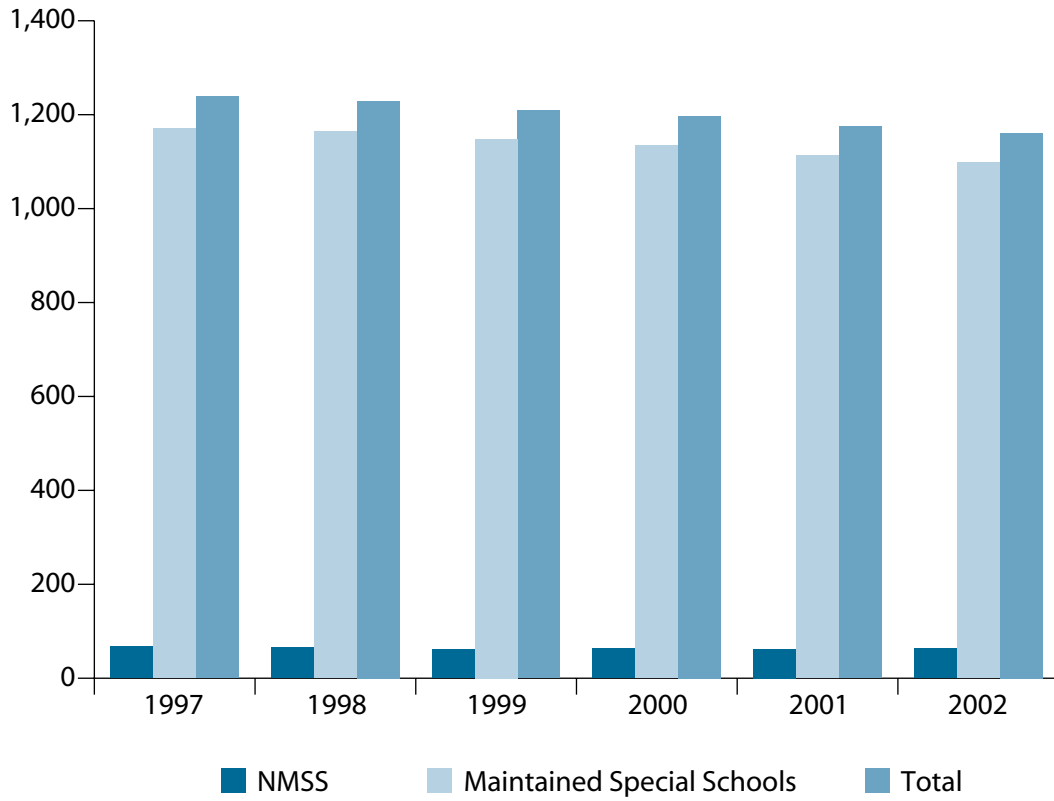
Regulations is that, as far as possible, non-maintained special schools are treated in broadly the same way as mainstream schools.

4. There is strictly speaking no legal definition of an independent special school. However, independent schools may be approved by the Secretary of State under Section 347 of the Education Act 1996 as suitable for the admission of children with statements of special educational needs. Such schools are in addition subject to the registration procedure for independent schools set out in Part VII of the 1996 Act. Any independent school where at least 50% of the pupils have SEN and 25% have statements is treated as a special school. Independent special schools are wholly funded by pupil fees and can be run on a profit-making basis. Most pupils are placed in these schools by LEAs, although parents can also meet the costs of a place privately. Where an independent school not approved, the Secretary of State needs to give her consent before LEAs can place pupils with statements there.
5. Approval of independent schools is dealt with under the Education (Special Educational Needs)(Approval of Independent Schools) Regulations 1994. These regulations, like the NMSS regulations, set out a number of conditions for the initial and continuing approval of these schools. The conditions deal with matters including fitness of school proprietors and staff, exclusions, health and welfare, religious education, incident and punishment books and the school prospectus.

NUMBERS OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS

- 6 The latest data show that there are: 1,098 maintained special schools, 63 NMSS, and 147 independent schools (89 of which are approved to take pupils with statements) in England. In terms of pupil numbers: 89,797 pupils are being educated in maintained special schools, 4,670 in NMSS, and around 5,760 in independent schools in England. The pupil: teacher ratio at maintained and NMSS is 6.6 and 4.8 respectively, and the average school size for both types of school is 81 and 74 respectively.

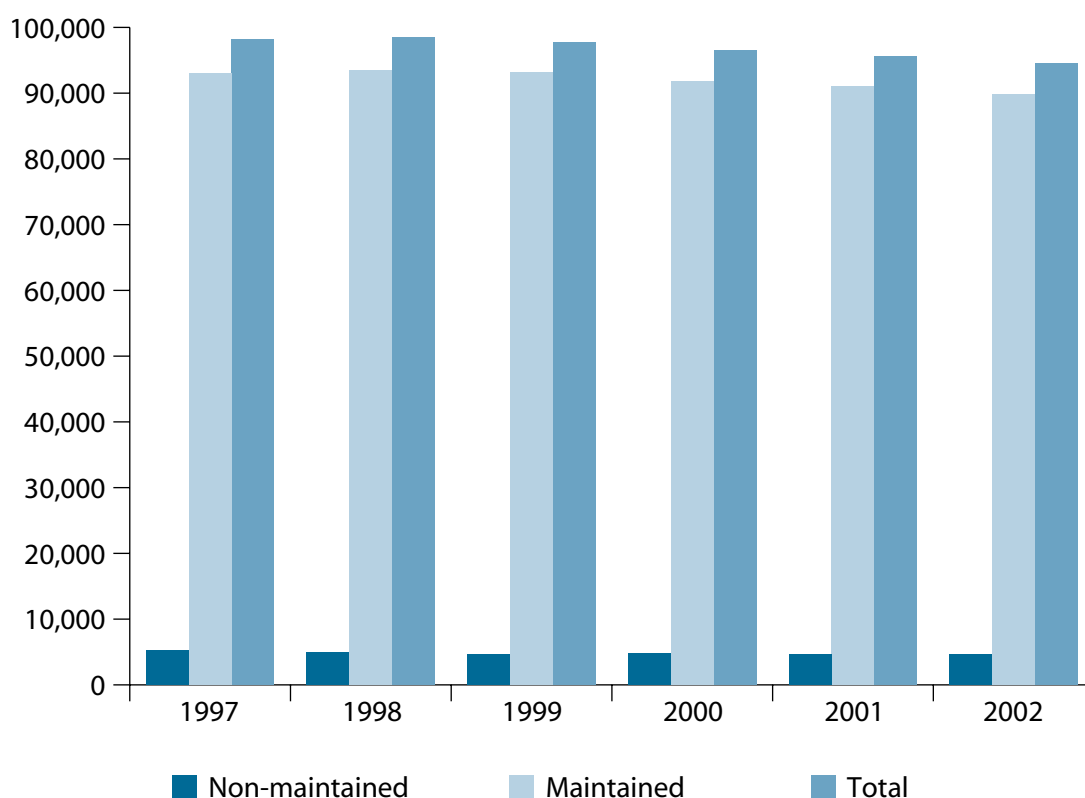
FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS



Type of School	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Maintained Special School	1,171	1,164	1,148	1,134	1,113	1,098
NMSS	68	65	61	63	62	63
Total	1,239	1,229	1,209	1,197	1,175	1,161

Source: Annual Schools' Census

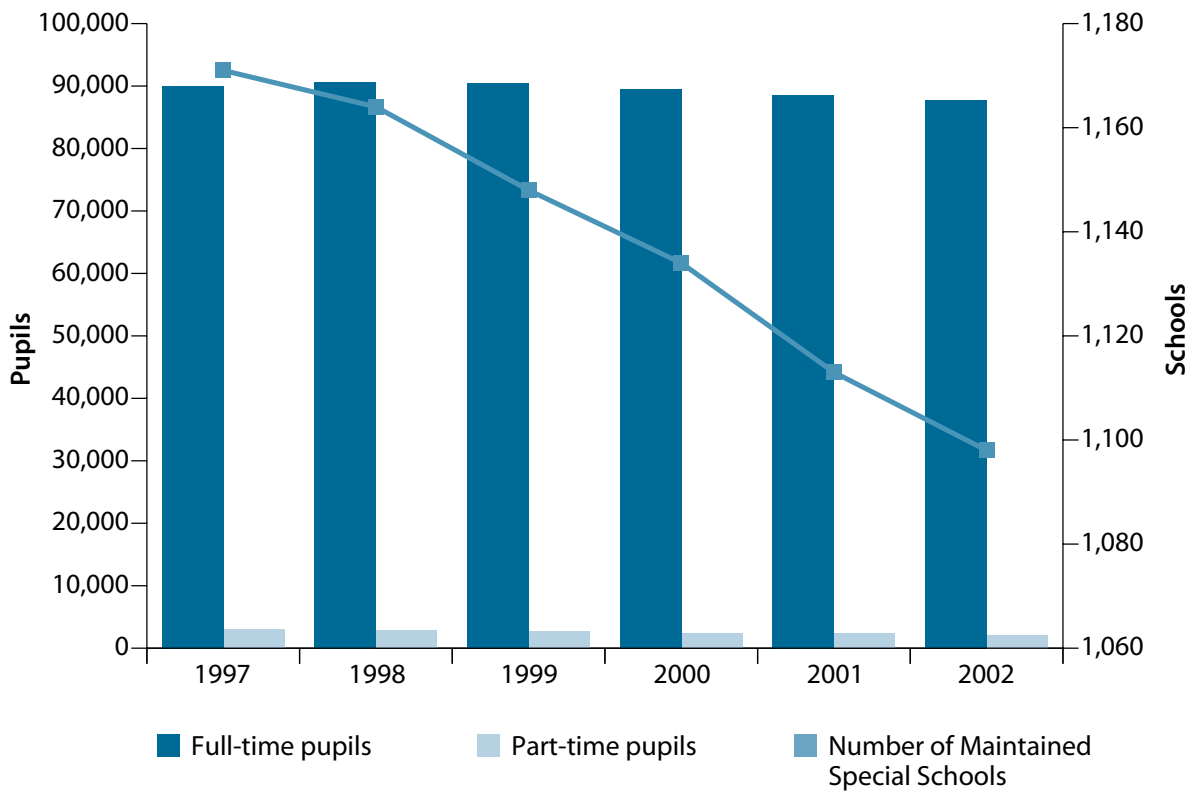
FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF PUPILS ENROLLED IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN PREVIOUS YEARS



Type of School	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Maintained	93,018	93,472	93,085	91,802	90,963	89,797
Non-Maintained	5,231	4,955	4,608	4,768	4,635	4,670
Total	98,249	98,427	97,693	96,570	95,598	94,467

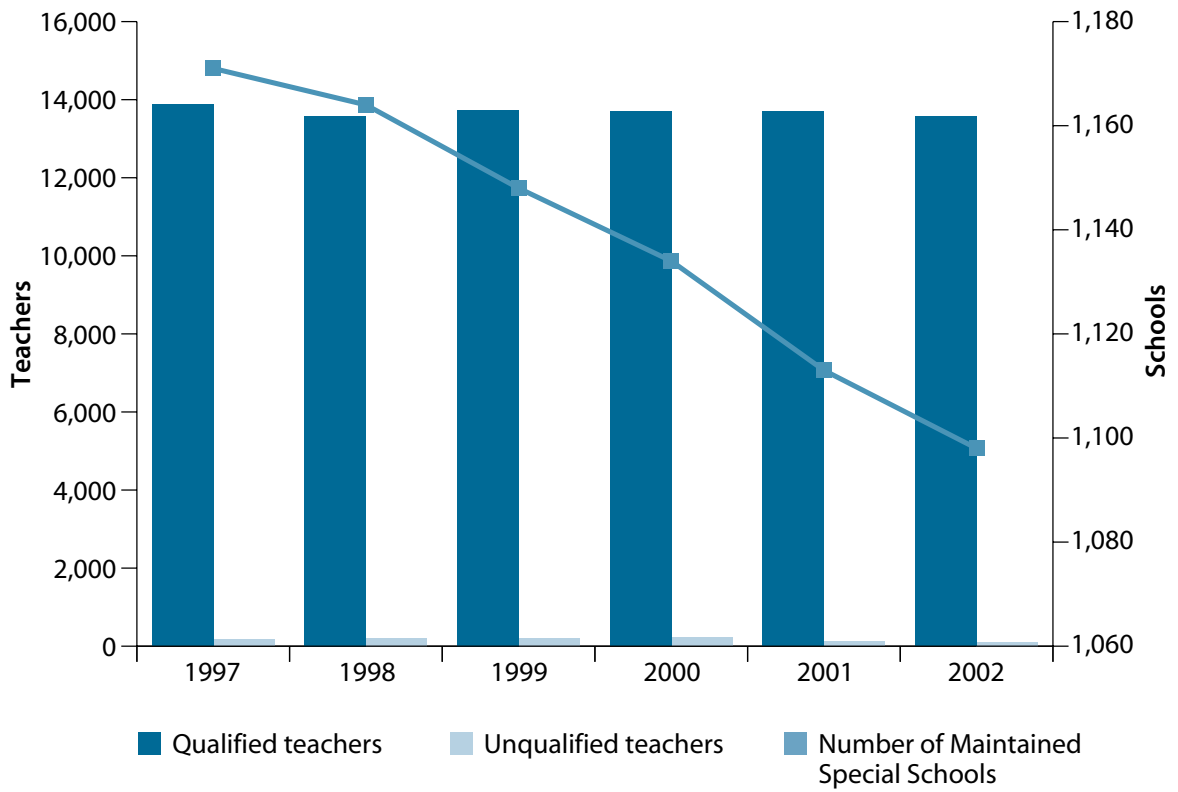
Source: Annual Schools' Census

FIGURE 3: MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL – PUPIL NUMBERS



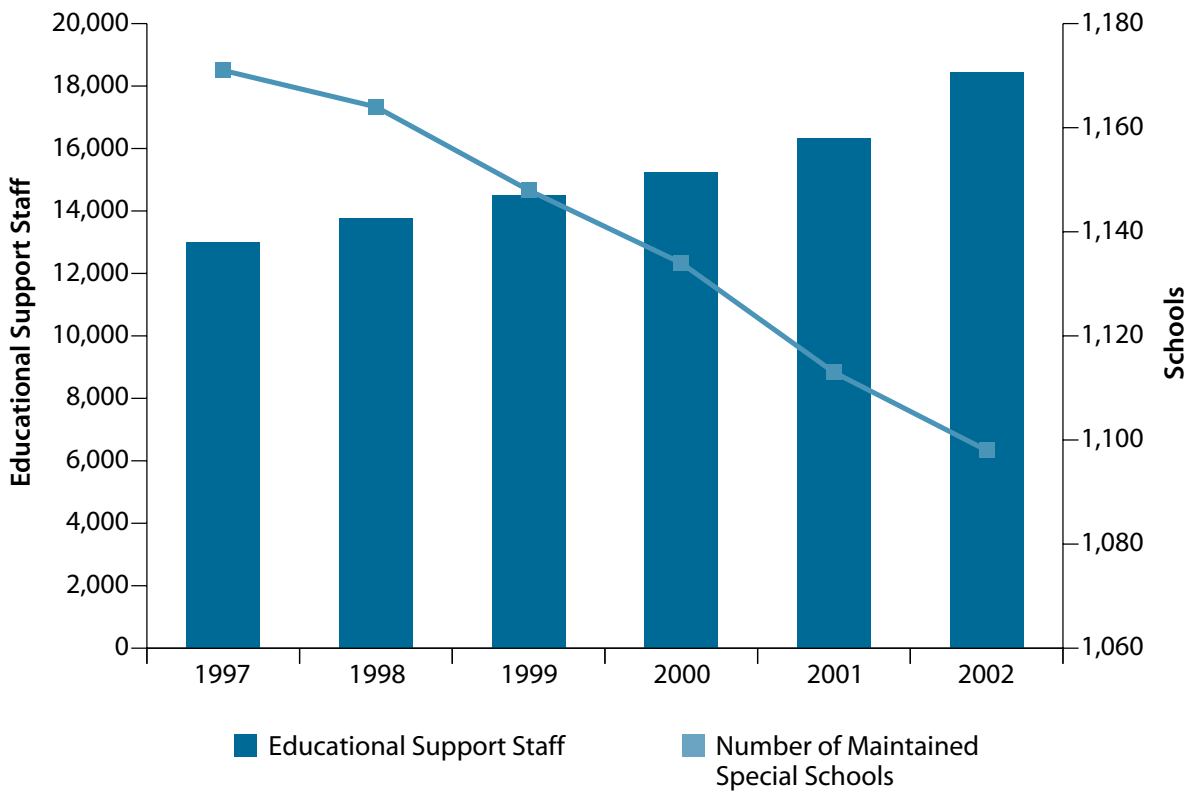
Source: Annual Schools' Census

FIGURE 4: MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL – TEACHER NUMBERS



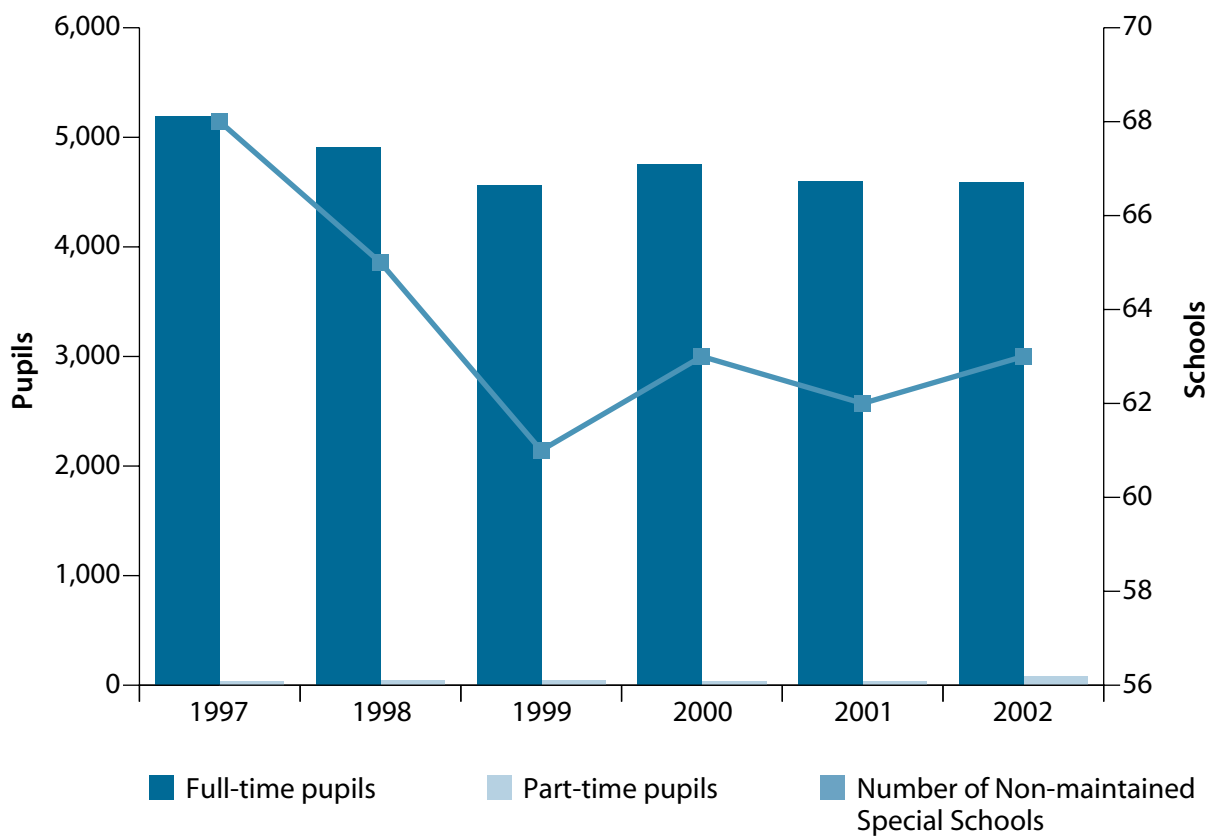
Source: Annual Schools' Census

FIGURE 5: MAINTAINED SCHOOLS – EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT STAFF.



Source: Annual Schools' Census

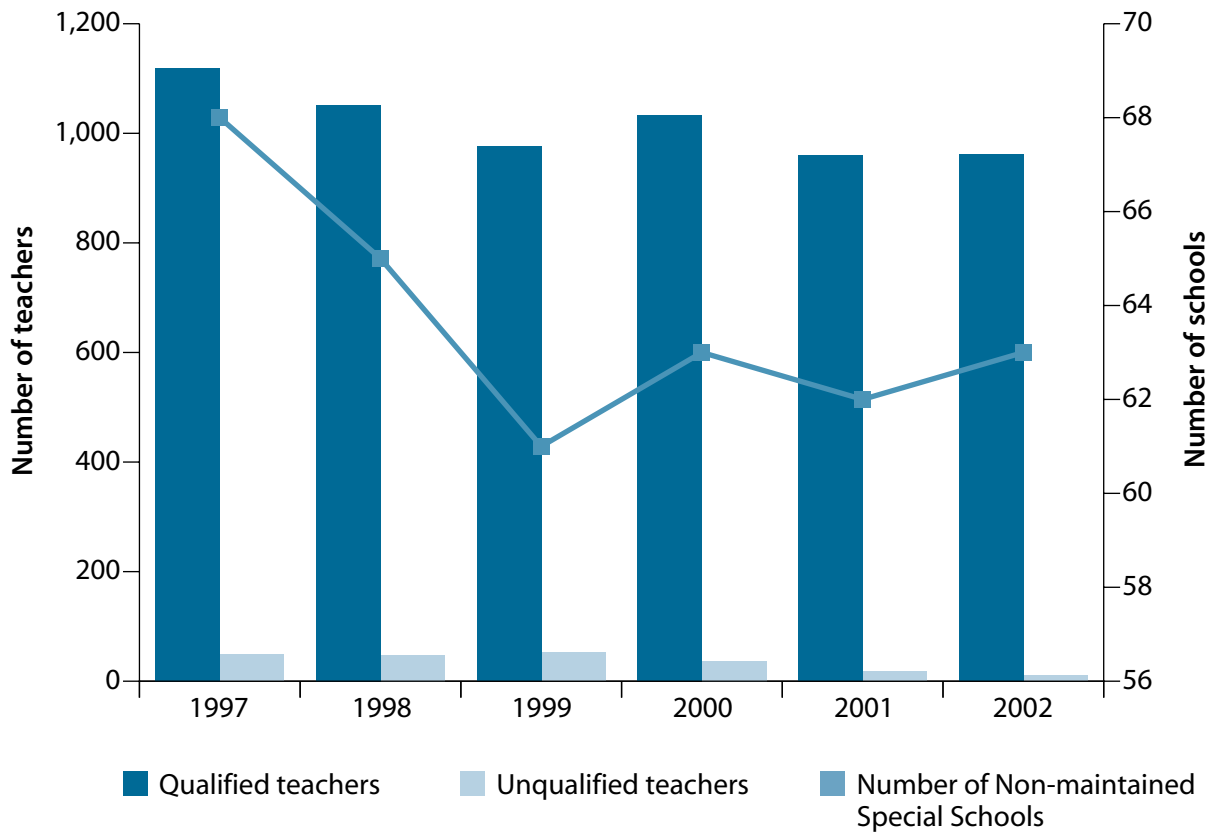
FIGURE 6: NON-MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOLS – PUPIL NUMBERS



	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number of NMSS	68	65	61	63	62	63
Full-time Pupils	5,191	4,911	4,565	4,735	4,601	4,591
Part-time Pupils	40	44	43	33	34	79

Source: Annual Schools' Census

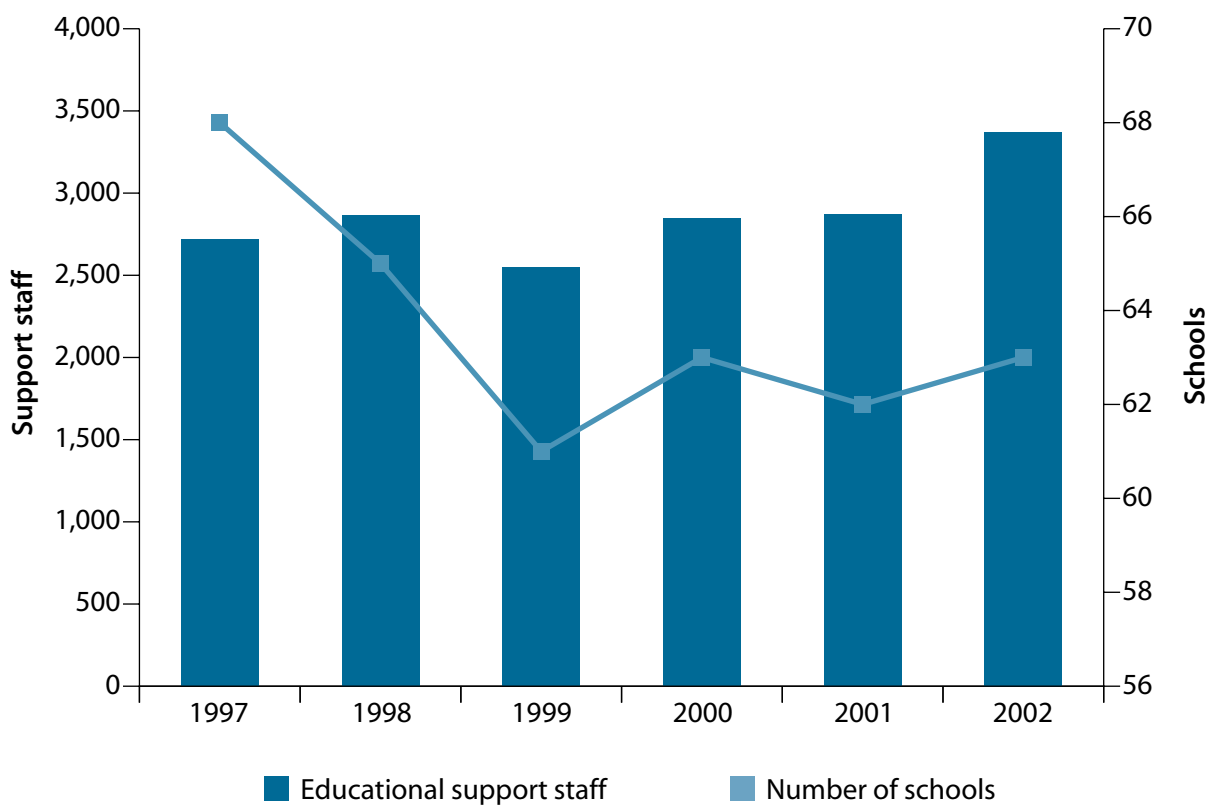
FIGURE 7: NON-MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOLS- TEACHER NUMBERS.



	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number of schools	68	65	61	63	62	63
Number of qualified teachers	5,191	4,911	4,565	4,735	4,601	961
Number of unqualified teachers	49	48	52	37	18	10

Source: Annual Schools' Census

FIGURE 8: NON-MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOLS – EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT STAFF



	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number of NMSS	68	65	61	63	62	63
Education support Staff	2,718	2,866	2,546	2,844	2,873	3,371

Source: Annual Schools' Census

FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIAL SCHOOLS SECTOR.

Pattern of Special School Provision

7. As the graphs show above, there has in recent years been a small decline in the number of special schools, and pupils attending those schools, although the extent of the decline is reducing and there is considerable variation across LEAs. Some LEAs have taken steps to reduce the number of special schools, and to move more children with statements into mainstream; some LEAs have almost the same number of special schools as they had 5 years ago; and some LEAs have opened new special schools (in most cases for children with BESD). It is a very diverse picture across the country. More recently the pattern of special school closures appears to have slowed down as some LEAs have come to the view that once they have closed their special schools, there will be problems in acquiring new sites.
8. The current pattern of provision has emerged because of four main factors: greater emphasis on the inclusion of pupils in mainstream schools; rationalisation of school places as a result of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR); the impact of OFSTED inspections; and rationalisation of SLD and PMLD provision.

Inclusion

9. The pattern of movement towards the inclusion of more pupils with statements in mainstream schools differs widely between members. It reflects an emerging pattern within society in general, and an increasing willingness in mainstream schools to seek to provide for pupils who would previously have been placed in special schools. There has also been an increasing determination by parents to seek to place their children in mainstream schools, although many continue to opt for special school placements and will pursue appeals to the SEN Tribunal in order to secure such placements.

Local Government Reorganisation

10. Almost all the new unitary authorities, and many of the authorities which have reduced in size and scope, have sought to review their special school provision. Some unitary authorities have very few special schools within their boundaries, and are dependent on the placement of their pupils in neighbouring LEA special schools. However, the majority of these authorities have sought to rationalise their provision

so that more specialist provision is available within the LEA's boundaries. In some cases this has resulted in LEAs placing more of their pupils in independent schools.

Rationalisation of SLD and PMLD Provision

11. Many authorities have, as a result of pressure on their budgets, sought to reorganise their special schools by bringing together the decreasing number of pupils with MLD with those who have SLD. Some authorities have brigaded both groups of pupils under the umbrella term complex learning difficulties. While there are some very good examples of this type of provision, particularly where there is clearly differentiated provision to meet the differing needs of the pupils, there have been a number of instances where this provision has come about as part of a process of drift and without sufficient forethought and planning. Some of these schools have encountered problems in terms of organisational management and the devising of a suitable curriculum for their pupils.

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