

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POLICY

Special Educational Needs are defined as covering all learning difficulties except those arising from a difference of language between home and school. One in five children may have Special Educational Needs at some time during their education. In some cases the Need may be of a relatively short term nature, in others long term, and in some, permanent. The emphasis is on defining the child's Special Educational Needs and stating the most appropriate provision, wherever possible alongside children without such needs provided that:

- account is taken of parental wishes;
- the child's needs are met;
- that other children continue to receive an efficient education;
- resources are used efficiently.

The school's policy for helping children with learning difficulties or disabilities which hinder learning follows the guidelines set out in the Handbook for Schools entitled "Education Act 1981 Special Educational Needs", the L. E. A. Special Needs Policy (September 1989), and "A Curriculum for All - Special Educational Needs in the National Curriculum", (N. C. C. 1989). A child centred approach is used reflecting each individual's ability, needs and interests together with available parental help.

Procedures are usually informal and flexible. There is close co-operation between the staff, and the special educational needs of the children are discussed with a specialist teacher. The strategies and modes of teaching adopted vary with the needs of the pupil.

School Governors

School Governors have a duty imposed by law to ensure that:

- special provision is made;
- all likely to come into contact with the child are aware of his needs;
- teachers are aware of the importance of identifying and providing for pupils who have Special Educational Needs.

Parents as Partners

The concept of parents as partners is central to the Education Act 1981. Parents should always be kept informed about their child's progress at school and any difficulties should be made known to parents at the earliest stage. Jargon should be avoided. Teachers are so used to their own professional vocabulary, particularly since the advent of the National Curriculum, that this may not be perceived as a distinct terminological set due to the familiarity of teachers with the terms involved. Plain English aids clear communication with outsiders. In those cases where the child is in care or has guardians etc. , teachers must be aware of this situation.

Parental co-operation and involvement is encouraged. Parents are welcomed into school regularly and asked if they wish to help at home with their children's reading. The need to make reading an enjoyable activity rather than an onerous task is stressed. A wide selection of reading books is available for use at home and school. The School has a range of computer software suitable for pupils with Special Educational Needs in both number and language work. The school also operates peer group shared reading to encourage reading fluency. This has been extremely successful.

Equality of Educational Opportunity

It is the stated policy of this school that a child with Special Educational Needs has the same entitlement and consideration as every other child in the school. This is clearly stated in the school's General Policy Statement, which contains the aims and objectives for the school as a whole. Certain parts of that document are particularly relevant to a Special Educational Needs Policy.

The general principle governing the curriculum of the school is that every child shall be entitled to and shall take up a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which:

1. promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of children at the school;
2. prepares the children for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of secondary education and leading on into adult life.

Thus children with Special Educational Needs have their entitlement under the National Curriculum clearly stated.

Image Building

Children with Special Educational Needs are sometimes also labouring under psychological burdens caused by repeated previous failure, and their self-esteem is often at a low ebb. Learning is inhibited in such circumstances, and it is a stated aim of the school to enhance the self-esteem of all children as part of their education. Positive attitudes from staff towards these children helps to build their sense of worth. This Head Teacher makes no secret of his own Special Educational Needs at primary age! The attitude of the children to themselves and of others to them is thereby improved. The General Policy Statement too makes this policy clear.

The school seeks to meet the needs, specifically, of its children. It should provide a positive, caring environment in which the children are made to feel good about themselves. Establishing a good rapport with children, building their confidence, encouraging them to express individual ideas, examining established values leading to a greater understanding are at least as important as teaching the academic curriculum. The school is responsible not only for the physical safety and well-being of the children, but also for their psychological safety and well-being. The school must encourage the child's self-confidence and self-esteem. This is vital for learning, for all children. When the child's own image of self is counter-productive, when he regards himself as a failure and feels that others do too, the child will be unhappy with himself and will not learn. The image is thus self-reinforcing. Image building is thus a vital part of the school's work. It must also be remembered that those whose work and behaviour is less good may be the ones in most need of support and reinforcement. Teachers have the problem of ensuring that all children are helped to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. The more able have many successes on which to build, and the school seeks to provide for the particular needs of these children. Those who find the formal curriculum difficult are not to be denied opportunities for personal development either. It is vital that learning is seen as essentially useful and enjoyable.

Aims in providing for Special Educational Needs

As part of the school's policy of providing for all children a broad and balanced curriculum conforming to National Curriculum requirements, all the

objectives in the General Policy Statement are as equally applicable to children with Special Educational Needs as to others. However, certain objectives are particularly relevant to children with Special Educational Needs which are often most manifest in the areas of Language, Mathematics and Science, and are those of most immediate concern to those charged with remedial education of these children in order to equip them with the educational tools they need for the earliest possible return to unassisted mainstream schooling.

The school aims that each child shall learn:

1. to read fluently, with understanding, feeling, discrimination and enjoyment a variety of materials written in different ways for different purposes;
2. to write legibly and with a satisfactory standard of spelling, syntax, punctuation and usage;
3. to communicate clearly and confidently in speech and writing, in ways appropriate for various occasions and purposes;
4. to listen attentively and with understanding;
6. to apply computational skills with speed and accuracy;
7. to understand mathematical language and concepts in order:
to extend understanding through a process of enquiry and experiment,
to successfully manipulate them and apply them in various situations in home,
school and local area,
to appreciate the structure of mathematics and the nature of number,
to be aware of the applications of mathematics in the world,
to develop analytical and logical ways of thought;
11. to develop awareness of self and sensitivity to others, acquiring a set of moral values and the confidence to make and hold valid moral judgements, distinguishing fact from opinion, be aware of gender and multi-cultural issues, recognising prejudice, bias and superstition and to develop habits of self discipline and acceptable behaviour;
14. to be aware of the effects, and able to make use of new technology in a rapidly changing society, especially with respect to computers and electronic information handling;
17. to understand the value of achieving happiness for himself and others and that both may be achieved by contributing to society and others.

Additional Curriculum Provision

This does not imply a reduced curriculum for children with Special Educational Needs. Indeed the school seeks to provide for such children additional curriculum opportunities to enable their difficulties to be remediated over time.

Implementation

To ensure the implementation of the school's policy with regard to Special Educational Needs:

- a Co-ordinator for Special Educational Needs will be identified who will work closely with all staff in respect of identified children and with the staff provided by the county remedial service;
- the particular implications for these children will be part of appropriate curriculum policy documents;
- training for Special Educational Needs will be provided as appropriate, and opportunities will be taken in other staff development time;
- resources of finance and time will be allocated specifically for Special Educational Needs within the school's financial constraints;
- ensure that strategies for identification and provision of Special Educational Need are familiar to all staff and implemented;

-ensure that curriculum provision for children with Special Educational Needs is made.

The Role of the Special Needs Co-ordinator

The main aims of the Co-ordinator are to be concerned with all matters affecting Special Educational Needs in the school, and specifically to:

- act as a link between the L. E. A. and the school;
- work closely with the Support teacher in all aspects of Special Educational Needs;
- make policy recommendations to the Head Teacher;
- ensure an efficient identification system;
- facilitate internal communication with regard to Special Educational Needs;
- facilitate recording and monitoring systems;
- ensure close contact with parents;
- advise the Governing Body with regard to Special Educational Needs;
- liaise between outside agencies and the school;
- act as a focus for INSET about Special Educational Needs.

To enable efficient discharge of these duties, the Co-ordinator will need to be assured of support from the senior management in the school, the Governing Body and the L. E. A. Provision of INSET for the Co-ordinator on a regular basis is important, and the L. E. A. is best placed to provide this. This will ensure that the Co-ordinator has credibility as a change agent, which is necessary for the children involved to obtain the maximum benefit.

The Role of the S. E. N. Support Teacher

The Support teacher will diagnose the particular needs of the pupils identified as having special needs, and plan strategies with the class teacher to meet these.

Support teaching is provided to pupils withdrawn in small groups or individually. Support is also carried out within the classroom involving all areas of the curriculum particularly language, maths and science.

A child who experiences learning difficulties may often have a reduced capacity for unplanned incidental learning. The greater the difficulty, the greater is the need for carefully planned intervention. The teacher should have clarity of purpose and the ability to plan and implement a carefully graded teaching programme which is well-balanced and relevant to the child.

Identification

The General Policy Statement also contains important reference to the identification of Special Educational Needs.

Programmes of work should incorporate elements which contribute to assessment and comparison over time thereby providing:

1. information which teachers can use in deciding how a child's learning can be taken forward and in giving the children themselves clear and understandable targets and feedback about their achievements;
2. teachers and others with the means of identifying the need for further diagnostic assessments for particular children where appropriate to help their education development;

4. aggregated information about children's achievements which can be used as an indicator of where there needs to be further effort, resources, changes in the curriculum etc.

The children's reading ability is assessed using informal procedures during the first few weeks of each year with the aim of identifying those children who are likely to need additional help with reading and language development. This assessment is undertaken by the class teacher in collaboration with the Support teacher. Each child's specific difficulties are recorded and a tailored programme of teaching strategies is drawn up.

Children who enter the school from other schools will usually bring with them records of any Special Educational Need, but in any case, the teacher's professional judgement is brought to bear on such new entrants as a matter of course, and where Special Educational Need is thought to exist, the Head Teacher, Co-ordinator and Support teacher are informed so that the need can be assessed as above.

Batteries of tests are available to help teachers in the identification and diagnosis of Special Educational Need. Some are screening tests for use with groups, others are for use on an individual basis. Which to use, if any, will depend on the tests available, the type of Special Educational Need and the advice of visiting professionals concerned where appropriate. Details of tests, are to be found in the Special Educational Needs Resource File, accessed via the Co-ordinator.

SEAC also has useful guidance for identification of Special Educational Needs. "The implementation of the National Curriculum makes it desirable. . . to identify the degree of relationship (the tests) may have with the attainment target. . . . However the assessment process of the National Curriculum itself will. . . provide information. . . by revealing profiles of performance across the attainment targets, and partly by focusing on the extent of achievement within them. "

Recording and Monitoring

These two aspects go hand in hand, as the principal purpose of recording is to enable efficient monitoring, leading to maintaining the most appropriate provision as the child develops and needs change. It is important that detailed records are maintained for all children with a Special Educational Need. The recording arrangements the school is devising for the National Curriculum will of necessity be detailed in terms of the Attainment Targets, but there is a need for additional recording for Special Educational Needs, as these children have access to additional curriculum arrangements. These records will vary according to the type of Special Educational Need and the stage that the child has reached, but in all cases should contain:

- a definition of the nature of the Special Educational Need;
- procedure to ensure that the Head Teacher and all contact staff are aware of this;
- the results of all tests administered, if any;
- a record of work undertaken;
- a note of any attendance problems;
- an assessment of progress for each term;
- a record of parental contact, with conclusions and commitments made;
- any communications received from parents with respect to Special Educational Needs;
- a record of contact with outside professional agencies;

- any communications received from outside agencies with respect to Special Educational Needs;
- any outside treatment for the conditions leading to the Special Educational Need.

The child's progress is carefully monitored. Samples of the full range of the children's language work are kept. This provides a useful means of ensuring that progress is being made. The class teacher keeps a record of the specific needs of each child. This may include information about the child's physical, academic, intellectual and social development. General observations about overt behaviour may also be included.

Planning a programme of work.

Having specified and recorded the child's problems, the teacher will then decide upon those problems which require particular attention. An attainable target is then set which will give the child the best chance to achieve success and result in a boost to his confidence, motivation and self esteem. The interaction between the pupil and the school, including its curriculum, can lead to learning difficulties, and this should be taken into account.

In the withdrawal groups much of the teaching and reinforcement is undertaken through games and oral work. On-going assessment results in individual children or small groups receiving temporary help with difficulties in, for example, maths.

Statements of Special Educational Needs

The decision to recommend to the L. E. A. that a formal assessment, possibly leading to a Statement being formulated, be made will follow from various stages of assessment within the school. Parents will have been involved at all stages of decision making, and the issues explained as clearly as possible to them. Advice from outside expert agencies will be of great importance, and the decision will be the result of all these factors being agreed among the Head Teacher, Co-ordinator, Class teacher, Support teacher, outside agency representatives and the L. E. A. Where children have Statement of Special Educational Need in being, close observation of the provision laid down in the Statement will be required.

Strategies for Provision

The school is exceedingly fortunate in having a large group room available for Special Educational Needs. This is a pleasant room, not shared in use, with large windows ensuring it is light and airy, with pleasant and extensive views. The Support teacher is able to use this as a base and a resource store. The school policy is to adopt a flexible approach to provision, matched to the requirements of the individual child. Use is made of in class support, with the Support teacher working alongside class teachers providing support for children in their mainstream classroom.

In other cases, children are withdrawn from classes to the group room where there are specialist resources available, and where, in the small group, they have access to a much greater degree of teacher input, as well as a higher rate of access to resources such as the computer.

To quote the N. C. C. , "Pupils with Special Educational Needs thrive best in a supportive. . . environment which is anxiety-free, stimulating and rich in the varied experiences it presents. " For many Special Educational Needs children, the mainstream classroom is a place of some anxiety, and for these the security

of withdrawal is an absolute requirement for at least part of their programme. This Head Teacher remembers to this day what a haven it was!

Information Technology

The role of I. T. has been mentioned above, but it is worthwhile noting references to Special Educational Needs in the school's I. T. policy.

all children will handle a computer and gain keyboard skills through direct experience

all children will learn to use video and audio equipment

all children will learn to use a telephone with confidence, and to communicate with confidence orally with technology

3. The Curriculum

3. 1 Aims

The school aims to:

*use Information Technology, as appropriate, to improve the learning experiences of pupils with special educational needs or physical handicaps

5. 3 Equal Opportunities

*The school will actively encourage cross-curricular I. T. related activities to be offered equally to all pupils, regardless of ability, gender or ethnic origin.

5. 4 Special Educational Needs

*The school will actively encourage the use of Information Technology, where appropriate, to stimulate and provide challenge for pupils with learning difficulties

*Information Technology will be used, where appropriate, to stimulate and provide challenge for those pupils requiring extension

*It is the aim of the school to allocate a computer system for which Special Educational Needs would have first call.

6. The Class Teacher

6. 1 Basic I. T. Skills

The school will ensure that all class teachers become competent with Information Technology by encouraging the acquisition of basic I. T. skills.

Class teachers will develop the ability to:

*Use computer peripherals, as appropriate, and recognise the importance of such peripherals for pupils with special educational needs

It is the eventual aim of the school to devote one of our computer systems solely to Special Educational Needs, for use in this group room.

The curriculum provision made for each child will vary, depending on the nature of the Special Educational Need, and the stage which the child has reached. The

school is also fortunate in being on one level, so that the physically disabled can move without the hindrance of stairs.

It is an objective of the school that at least 75% of those children identified as having Special Educational Needs on entry are working without support in mainstream class full time by the end of Key Stage 2.