

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ENGLAND in 2015

Definition

“Disabled and non-disabled children and young people learning together in ordinary pre-school provision, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate networks of support”

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE) (2001:1)

A. Policy, Legislation and Strategies

The content of this report refer specifically to the provision of inclusive education for children in England. Within the UK legislation prohibits discrimination in education and supports inclusive education. The development of much of this legislation was driven by national disability rights movements such as the British Council for Disabled People (BCDP), and the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE). The notion of ‘inclusion’ was first introduced with the publication of the Warnock Report in 1978, which signalled a move away from the medical model of disability towards the social model, subsequent policy has been underpinned by disability legislation, in particular the Special Needs and Disability Act (SENDA; DfES, 2001). The Act made it unlawful for schools and settings to exclude children with special needs and disabilities. The same year The Special Educational Needs: Code of Practice (DFES 2001) further established inclusive practice by stated that the needs of children with SEN would “Normally be met in mainstream schools or settings” (DFES2001:1.5) A revised SEN Code of Practice took effect in 2002, setting out five principles, namely that:

- children with SEN should have their needs met
- these needs will normally be met in mainstream schools
- the views of children should be sought and taken into account
- parents have a vital role to play in supporting their children’s education
- children with SEN should be offered full access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum in the Foundation Stage and later years.

The ‘Strategy for SEN: Removing Barriers to Achievement’ (DfE 2004) set out the government’s vision for SEN over the next ten years and priorities for the future through four key areas: early intervention, removing barriers to learning, raising expectations and achievement and delivering improvements through partnership.

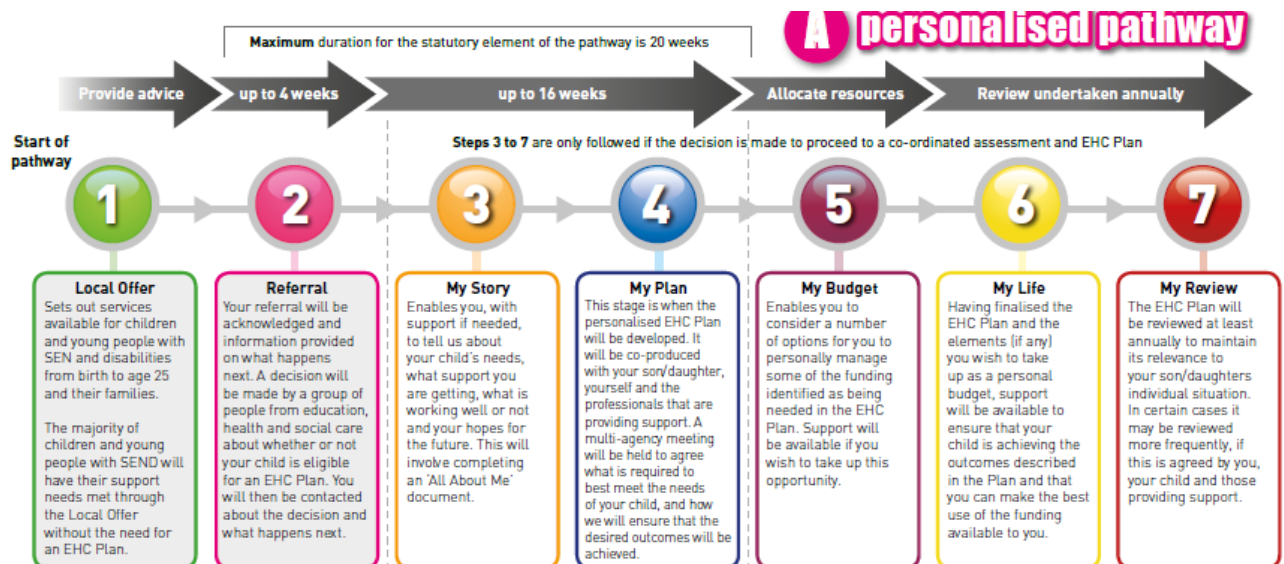
This overarching approach is also explicit within the curriculum documentation for children in the Foundation Stage (age 3-5) and Key Stage 1 & 2 (ages 5 – 11). With (QCA 2000) calling for a multi-agency approach to meeting children’s needs, close collaboration with parents and a focus on the removal of barriers to inclusive practice. The National Curriculum (DfES 1999) contained an ‘inclusion statement’ which sets out three principles that are essential to

developing a more inclusive curriculum; setting suitable learning challenges, responding to pupils' diverse learning needs and overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of pupils.

It is the responsibility of all teachers to apply these principles to the teaching of all children in their classes in order to keep to a minimum the need for aspects of the National Curriculum to be dis-applied for a pupil.

Since the mid-2000s and the introduction of the Every Child Matters (2004) agenda there has been a steady move to increase multi-agency working and to consider the needs of the child in a holistic manner rather than considering education, health and social needs separately. The most recently the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (2014) is published jointly by the DfE and DoH reflecting this move. The SEND Code of Practice has been introduced placing increased responsibility on teachers for their pupils academic outcomes, its long term unwritten objective appears to be a pivotal, yet political driver for a greater number of pupils to leave education with recognised abilities and qualifications in core subjects (DfES 2014a)

Ofsted (2010) indicated that fifty percent of children identified by schools did not have a SEND, this statistic needs to be measured in terms of social disadvantage with a high proportion of children said to be living in disadvantaged areas with limitations to the quality of teaching and support experienced. The Code of Practice establishes a clear personalised pathway for children who have additional needs. It is clearly focussed on enabling the needs of the vast majority of children to be met within mainstream provision and without there being any need for long assessment processes. It imposes a legal duty to local authorities and to schools to be transparent about the offer of service they can provide for children with SEND. Moreover there is a far reaching and much needed role to actively involve parents alongside their child in relation to their budget allocation, and how this can be shaped /best used by parental control (DfE, 2014). The model below (Nottinghamshire County Council 2014) illustrates the process and timeframes



B. Implementation of the Policy: Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England

All accredited ITE providers must ensure all of that the content, structure, delivery and assessment of programmes are designed to enable trainee teachers to meet all the standards for Qualified Teacher Status across the age range of training. The Teachers' Standards set out clear expectations about the skills that every teacher should demonstrate and refer to children with special educational needs in Standard 5 which refers to teachers' ability to "Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils". Specifically teachers must

- know when and how to differentiate appropriately, using approaches which enable pupils to be taught effectively
- have a secure understanding of how a range of factors can inhibit pupils' ability to learn, and how best to overcome these
- demonstrate an awareness of the physical, social and intellectual development of children, and know how to adapt teaching to support pupils' education at different stages of development
- have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language; those with disabilities; and be able to use and evaluate distinctive teaching approaches to engage and support them. (DfE 2011 p11)

Initial Teacher Education at Northumbria University

Students on the BA (Hons) Early Primary programme at Northumbria University are expected to be able to cater for the needs of all children in mainstream school. Teaching in relation to special education and inclusion takes place across a number of Modules. In Year One students are taught how to use the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage (DCSF 2008) to plan and deliver developmentally appropriate experiences for children with additional needs. In Year Two is a greater emphasis on inclusive education within Key Stage One (ages 5-7), this includes how to use the National Curriculum (DfE 2014) and the accompanying Performance Scales (DfE 2014) (P Scales) to differentiate their teaching appropriately. All students also have the opportunity to visit a Special School, one of the specialist schools in the city for children with SEN. A small number of students will have the opportunity to undertake a placement in one of these schools.

At Northumbria we also offer Special Educational Needs and Inclusion MA and Special and Inclusive Education (National Award for Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) Postgraduate Certificate as well as more specialised courses such as MA Autism or the MA Dyslexia.

C. The Challenges

The promise of inclusion is not always borne out in practice. Inclusion in the real world and work of teaching practitioners should be underpinned by an ethos or philosophy of acceptance of difference, equal access to high quality education and support for learning needs alongside peers. Most importantly such an ethos can only be lived and practiced with a well-informed, capable teaching staff with the conviction and skills for genuine inclusion.

One of the underpinning purposes of SEND (2014) was to drive up standards, specifically to hold high aspirations for children such an ideology can be seen within the Teachers Standards (DfE, 2012.) Despite this aspirational view point over the course of a child's school experience the gap in achievement of children with SEND, and their peers' increases by 5%.

There is a need to start early as the research and literature on early intervention encompasses the need for cooperation and collaboration of strategies and interventions for children's progression. Such strategies and interventions should emanate from a range of professionals into an appropriate pedagogic approach, viewed to be critical to successful outcomes for all children (Nutbrown, 2009.)

One challenge exposed by Ofsted, (2008) and Lamb, (2009) suggests that children with SEND who increasingly attend main stream schooling are in reality taught by teachers who do not necessarily have the knowledge, skills and expertise to teach diverse, and a challenging range

of pupils in a single class. This is coupled with widely felt concerns that many children with SEN spend too much time being withdrawn from class to be taught in 1:1 or small group situations by non-teaching staff. The IOE (2013) found that some children with acute special educational needs spend over a quarter of their week away from their class, teacher and peers. Other academics argue that 'full inclusion' ignores the obvious 'practical realities' of disability and the rights of other children to an effective education (Hodkinson & Vickerman 2009).

Both a need and challenge converge on the issue of teachers attitudes. The need to establish and sustain warm and educative partnership arrangements between parents, children and the school system will always present as complex however Humphrey and Squire 2010; Humphrey 2014; Florian and Linklater, 2013; propose that teachers attitudes' toward children with physical disabilities is far more positive than that encountered by children with emotional and behavioral difficulties. One suggestion is that children with physical disabilities can be more easily conform to conventional or generic approaches to learning and teaching whereas emotional and behavioral issues can present as more challenging for teachers and pupils alike. Gilbert (2012) concludes that this is a consequence of the impact of the pressure of school league tables.

The current scholastic agenda of government places great emphasis on results. Such results need to be provided by proven methods of assessment and continuous monitoring of pupils by intelligent and proactive teaching staff. But parallel to the pupil agenda is the agenda for teachers. This agenda interweaves classroom results with workload, increased pressures on individual classroom teachers and most significantly their pay potential, payment and progression (Perryman and Ball, Ryan and Bourke, 2013.) What does the policy say?

'..No longer will families have to fit around the system; when these reforms take effect, the system will have to shape itself around the family... This new legislation will revitalize professional practice and introducing real cultural change – forcing them to work in genuine partnership with other services and with families'. Edward Timpson (no date) Children's Minister explanatory address on the new SEN Code of Practice.

The strategies within such a new code of practice are said to be governed by political drivers, target setting and a performance management culture at a time of fiscal uncertainty (Penketh 2014, Ball 2013.) As such the notion of performativity, accountability and inclusion fail to convey an ethos of welcome and support, in contrast the ideology appears ill thought out and conveys a sense of obligation, marginalization of children and appears to overwhelm many teaching staff (Hodkinson, 2012; Reid 2013; and Penketh 2014).

There are a number of current worries about the inclusion of children with additional needs in mainstream schools. In 2007 Mary Warnock referred to the 'disastrous legacy' of her 1978

report, arguing that there are 'limits to what can be achieved in mainstream schools, given the diversity of children's needs and the finite available resources' (Warnock in Cigman 2007:xii). For many practitioners this is the crux of the problem. The range and complexity of needs that mainstream teachers are expected to be able to deal with is vast and many teachers feel that their training was not able to prepare them sufficiently for the challenges this entails. This is coupled with widely felt concerns that many children with SEN spend too much time being withdrawn from class to be taught in 1:1 or small group situations by non-teaching staff. The IOE (2013) found that some children with acute special educational needs spend over a quarter of their week away from their class, teacher and peers. Other academics argue that 'full inclusion' ignores the obvious 'practical realities' of disability and the rights of other children to an effective education (Hodkinson & Vickerman 2009). While Gilbert (2012) concludes that this is a consequence of the impact of the pressure of school league tables. Despite this a review of the SEN system by Ofsted in 2010 claimed that children were being wrongly labelled as having Special Educational Needs when their underachievement was a result of poor teaching.

The new personalised pathway is part of the government drive to challenge inequalities, drive up standards and achievement and provide more choice for parents about their children's care and education. It is early days and despite positive outcomes from the 'Pathfinders' the picture as to how this working in practise is mixed and there is little formal evaluation to draw on.