

## **EFFECTIVE PROVISION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (EPSEN) (HMI 1994)**

### **Extracts**

#### **Understanding special educational needs**

...shared understanding of the concept of special educational needs is fundamental to planning and making effective provision...

... special needs arise from difficulties in learning, or barriers to learning.

...there are special educational needs arising from difficulties which have an intellectual origin, and from barriers to learning which are usually physical...special educational needs may arise from social factors, within the home or at school...from delays or disturbances in emotional development which affect the individual's capacity to learn.

... most special needs arise from curricular difficulties, such as gaining access to the curriculum or problems in grasping and retaining concept and skills ... the causes of such difficulties are most likely to lie in a mismatch between the delivery of the curriculum and pupils' learning needs

The majority of children and young people experience temporary difficulties in learning which can be quickly remedied by additional help from the class or subject teacher, sometimes with the assistance of colleagues, A proportion of pupils, estimated at around 20%, have learning difficulties which are more intractable, but which respond to measures, such as through the assistance of a learning support specialist and/or some curricular adaptations. Between 1% and 2% of children and young people face difficulties in learning which are long-term, require exceptional intervention...

It is useful to conceptualise special educational needs not in static categories, but as represented on a continuum, without precise cut-off points.

#### **Developing an appropriate curriculum**

Teachers make use of the following planning strategies...differentiation, individualisation, adaptation, enhancement and elaboration.

Children and young people with special educational needs are most likely to learn when they:

- are motivated by stimulating and personally rewarding tasks;
- have confidence and a sense of personal worth;
- understand the relevance of tasks;
- believe they are capable of achieving the goals set;
- are given and use essential aids and equipment to circumvent and overcome obstacles;
- follow programmes in which learning is broken down into manageable steps;
- are encouraged to be independent and show initiative;
- participate in group, as well as individual, assignments;

- are able to apply knowledge, understanding and skills in practical situations;
- have sufficient levels of support from teachers experienced in their learning difficulties; and
- are given relevant home assignments.

... the most effective teachers are those who draw on a wide repertoire of strategies, are skilled and flexible in their use and are judiciously opportunistic. ... They also value teamwork with colleagues and other professional and have sufficient confidence to seek and give advice and be guided by others.

Many secondary-age pupils with special educational needs continue to need a great deal of practice to support and consolidate learning, but they tend to be resistant to repetition and overuse of one teaching approach. Skilled teachers create a positive climate for learning by maintaining a judicious balance between essential repetitive processes and practical activities.

Experience of self-assessment is an important component of secondary provision. Work in some special schools has also demonstrated the value of peer-group assessment. Both techniques, when well taught and sensitively used, encourage pupils to be self critical and to appreciate real achievement...

### **The roles of SEN specialists**

- **Tutoring and class teaching** Specialist teach special programmes for specified periods of time; they teach classes in special schools and units, and special classes in mainstream schools. Specialists also take classes in mainstream schools to free the class or subject teacher to work with individuals or groups, for example, in extending abler pupils.
- **Teaching co-operatively with class or subject teachers** Specialists (and/or other class and subject teachers) support the work of class and subject teachers by targeting assistance in a planned way to pupils experiencing difficulties in learning but also by enriching the overall quality of learning and teaching.
- **Providing consultancy support** Learning support staff, teachers from specialist advisory services and teachers from special schools advise the management team and colleagues on ways of improving the quality and effectiveness of learning and teaching throughout the school and on particular areas or subjects in the curriculum; they also give advice and guidance on the learning needs and programmes of individual pupils.
- **Providing specialist services** Learning support teachers use their unique position to provide exceptional services to individual pupils, such as supporting those with difficulties in adjusting to the life of their school or class; and provide short-term assistance to help pupils to catch up on work after a period of hospitalisation.
- **Contributing to staff development** Specialists in special educational needs are able to contribute to the enhancement of their colleagues' professional development through seminars and in-service courses, information sheets, and the exercise of the above roles.

## **Interprofessional co-operation**

Class and subject teachers... have the responsibility for teaching all pupils in their classes, including those with special educational needs. In effective schools they receive support from other members of staff...

Class and subject teachers hold the main responsibility for educating pupils, but should expect and receive support and advice from promoted and guidance staff, from specialist teachers and from members of the support services. Teachers with special needs remits have been shown to be of greatest assistance when they are able to fulfil the 5 roles outlined [above].

These roles are most effectively fulfilled when management create the necessary working conditions and when all members of staff recognise that learning support staff aim to assist their colleagues rather than take from them responsibility for pupils' learning.