SEN Policy Options Group

**A school for the future - 2025:**

**Practical Futures Thinking**

Policy Paper 7

6th Series

**Contents:**

**Chapter 1:**

**Introduction page 3**

**Chapter 2:**

**Presentation: the rationale for the design of a Future School page 7**

**Chapter 3:**

**A school for the Future 2025: presented scenario page 16**

**Chapter 4:**

**SWOT analysis: themes arising from SWOT analysis of page 19**

**presented scenario**

**Chapter 5:**

**Group scenarios: scenarios created by small groups create page 23**

**Chapter 6:**

**Conclusions page 28**

**Alison Black wrote Chapters 2-6; Brahm Norwich edited the policy paper.**

**Policy Paper released September 2012**

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

This paper is based on the Policy Workshop held at Birkbeck College, London on 25 March 2012 on the **A school for the future - 2025: Practical Futures Thinking**

This workshop examined the complex interaction between values, political, organisational and practical issues about teaching and learning in the design of schools for all. In the current policy context, when the Government is aiming to redress the ’bias towards inclusion’ (SEN Green paper 2011) it is useful to take a wider view of the purposes and design of school education. The workshop therefore aimed to:

1. Explore why some pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities leave mainstream for special schools at secondary transfer and why the special school population rises year on year as each year children pass through school.
2. Consider a model of a school for 2025 that seeks to address these issues, and evaluate this model through a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis
3. Enable participants to begin to develop their own model of a school in 2025

The workshop returned to some of the issues raised in a previous SEN Policy Options seminar about Future schools **(Future schooling that includes children with SEN / disability:** Klaus Wedell, Ingrid Lunt and Brahm Norwich, 2006).

Alison Black, an experienced teacher and doctoral student at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, designed the Future School model that was examined in the workshop. The model had been previously tried and developed following its use in workshops run at the European Association of Research in Learning and Instruction (EARLI) 2011 and a NASUWT conference on SEND and inclusion 2011.

**SEN Policy Options Steering Group**

This policy paper was the sixth in the 6th series of seminars organised by the SEN Policy Options Steering Group.  This group organised the initial ESRC - Cadbury Trust series on policy options for special educational needs in the early 1990s. The success of the first series led to the second series that was supported financially by NASEN. (See the list of these 26 policy papers at the end of this section). The Steering Group has representatives from local authority administrators, Government agencies, voluntary organisations, professional associations, universities and research. The further success of the second and third series of policy seminars and papers led to a fourth and fifth round of seminars which has also been organised with further funding from NASEN. These events are intended to consider current and future policy issues in the field in a pro-active way. They are planned to interest all those concerned with policy matters in special educational needs.

**Aims of the 6th series from 2006-2012:**

1. To continue to provide a forum where education policy relevant to the interests of children and young people with SEN/disabilities can be appraised critically and pro-actively in the context of the development of children’s services.
2. To inform and influence policy formulation and implementation, to encourage and support an active and ongoing dialogue on SEN policy and practice between key stakeholders such as NASEN and other professional associations; schools, local authorities, parents and other agencies.
3. To examine and evaluate policy options in terms of current and possible developments and research in order to inform and influence policy formulation and implementation in the field.
4. To organise events where policy-makers, professionals, parents, voluntary associations and academics/researchers analyse and debate significant issues in the field drawing on policy and practice in the countries of the UK, and:
5. To arrange the dissemination of the proceedings and outcomes through publication and summary briefing papers.

**Steering group membership**

The current membership of the SEN Policy Options Steering Group is:

Professor Julie Dockrell, Institute of Education; Peter Gray, SEN Policy Consultant; Dr Seamus Hegarty, Professor Geoff Lindsay, Warwick University; Professor Ingrid Lunt, University of Oxford; Professor Brahm Norwich, School of Education, Exeter University; Debbie Orton, National Strategies; Linda Redford, Policy Consultant; Penny Richardson, Educational Consultant; Philippa Russell, Disability Rights Commission and Adviser; Philippa Stobbs, Council for Disabled Children (CDC); Janet Thompson, Ofsted; Professor Klaus Wedell, Institute of Education, London University; Dr Tom Williams EPS, East Ayrshire.

*Current series*

The current series aims to organise full or half-day events on special education policy and provision over the years 2006-2012 which are relevant to the context of considerable changes in the education system.

If you have any ideas about possible topics or would like to know more about the events, please do contact a member of the Group or Brahm Norwich, Co-ordinator of Steering Group, at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter, Heavitree Road, Exeter EX1 2LU (01392 724805; email: [b.norwich@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:b.norwich@exeter.ac.uk)).

**I. Policy Options Papers from first seminar series**

**1. Bucking the market:** Peter Housden, Chief Education Officer, Nottinghamshire LEA

**2. Towards effective schools for all:** Mel Ainscow, Cambridge University Institute of Education

**3. Teacher education for special educational needs:** Professor Peter Mittler, Manchester University

**4. Resourcing for SEN:** Jennifer Evans and Ingrid Lunt, Institute of Education, London University

**5. Special schools and their alternatives:** Max Hunt, Director of Education, Stockport LEA

**6. Meeting SEN: options for partnership between health, education and social services:** Tony Dessent, Senior Assistant Director, Nottinghamshire LEA

**7. SEN in the 1990s: users' perspectives:** Micheline Mason, Robina Mallet, Colin Low and Philippa Russell

**II. Policy Options Papers from second seminar series**

**8. Independence and dependence?  Responsibilities for SEN in the Unitary and County Authorities:** Roy Atkinson, Michael Peters, Derek Jones, Simon Gardner and Phillipa Russell

**9.** **Inclusion or exclusion: Educational Policy and Practice for Children and Young People with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties:** John Bangs, Peter Gray and Greg Richardson

**9**. **Baseline Assessment and SEN:** Geoff Lindsay, Max Hunt, Sheila Wolfendale, Peter Tymms

**10.** **Future policy for SEN: Response to the Green Paper:** Brahm Norwich, Ann Lewis, John Moore, Harry Daniels

**III. Policy Options Papers from third seminar series**

**11.** **Rethinking support for more inclusive education:** Peter Gray, Clive Danks, Rik Boxer, Barbara Burke, Geoff Frank, Ruth Newbury and Joan Baxter

**12**. **Developments in additional resource allocation to promote greater inclusion:** John Moore, Cor Meijer, Klaus Wedell, Paul Croll and Diane Moses.

**13.** **Early years and SEN:** Professor Sheila Wolfendale and Philippa Russell

**14. Specialist Teaching for SEN and inclusion:** Annie Grant, Ann Lewis and Brahm Norwich

**IV. Policy Options Papers from fourth seminar series**

**15. The equity dilemma: allocating resources for special educational needs:** Richard Humphries, Sonia Sharpe, David Ruebain, Philippa Russell and Mike Ellis

**16. Standards and effectiveness in special educational needs: questioning conceptual orthodoxy:** Richard Byers, Seamus Hegarty and Carol Fitz Gibbon

**17**. **Disability, disadvantage, inclusion and social inclusion:** Professor Alan Dyson and Sandra Morrison

**18**.  **Rethinking the 14-19 curriculum: SEN perspectives and implications:** Dr Lesley Dee, Christopher Robertson, Professor Geoff Lindsay, Ann Gross, and Keith Bovair

#### V. Policy Options Papers from fifth seminar series

#### 19. Examining key issues underlying the Audit Commission Reports on SEN: Chris Beek, Penny Richardson and Peter Gray

**20. Future schooling that includes children with SEN / disability:** Klaus Wedell, Ingrid Lunt and Brahm Norwich

# VI. Policy Options Papers from sixth seminar series

**21.** **Taking Stock: integrated Children’s Services, Improvement and Inclusion:**

Margaret Doran, Tony Dessent and Professor Chris Husbands

**22**. **Special schools in the new era: how do we go beyond generalities?**

Chris Wells, Philippa Russell, Peter Gray and Brahm Norwich

**23.** **Individual budgets and direct payments: issues, challenges and future implications for the strategic management of SEN**

Christine Lenehan, Glenys Jones Elaine Hack and Sheila Riddell

**24. Personalisation and SEN**

Judy Sebba, Armando DiFinizio, Alison Peacock and Martin Johnson.

**25. Choice-equity dilemma in special educational provision**

John Clarke, Ann Lewis, Peter Gray

**26.** **SEN Green Paper 2011: progress and prospects**

Brian Lamb, Kate Frood and Debbie Orton

**Copies of most of these papers can now be downloaded from the website of the SEN Policy Research Forum as well as the NASEN website look for SEN Policy Options public pages for downloading these past copies.**

<http://www.nasen.org.uk/policy-option-papers/>

<http://www.sen-policyforum.org.uk/>

**Chapter 2:**

**Presentation: the rationale for the design of a Future School**

*At any given time and place, the most general question about preferable futures, perhaps, is ‘what ought we to do?’ To make such a decision, of course, we need to know where we have been in the past and where we are in the present, that is, our ‘initial condition’ (Bell, 2001, p. 72).*

This paper sets the scene for the workshop by presenting statistical data that highlights the disproportionate numbers of secondary aged pupils in special schools (Black, 2009), followed by an exploration of the reasons which stakeholders gave for this incidence as obtained through a national survey.

In 2011, of the 76,900 pupils aged between 5 and 16 in special schools in England, 49,870 were of secondary age (11-16), 65% of the special school population (based on national statistics). This pattern has remained constant over the past 8 years (Black, 2009). Indeed, when the raw data used by Will Swann (1985) in one of his early “integration statistics” articles is examined it can be seen that the same pattern existed as far back as 1978 and 1984, in both years approximately 62% of the special school population was aged 11 to 16.

**Figure 1: Data taken from DfE Statistical First Release (Department for Education, 2011)**

A closer look at these population statistics involves plotting the special school population according to pupil numbers in each age group (See Fig. 1). This shows there is a constant rise from just under 3,500 pupils in the age 5 group, to more than 10,000 at age 15. The largest leap in numbers is between the ages 10 and 11, from 5,900 pupils aged 10 to over 8,800 pupils aged 11. These figures imply that every year a number of students from a cohort leave the mainstream system and enter special schools, and that a larger than average number of children leave mainstream and enter special school between the age of ten and eleven. There is a possibility that this pattern may reflect some other factors, but when one cohort is followed longitudinally over a number of years the same pattern can be seen (fig 2).

**Figure 2: Data taken from SFR 2003-2010**

**A policy - research gap**

This pattern was mentioned on the Every Child Matters website in July 2009 (the webpage has since been removed). The cross-party Education and Skills Select Committee (2006) discussed how SEN statements as a proportion of the total school population are greatest between the ages of 12 and 15, but did not mention age in relation to special school numbers. The Audit Commission note “the special school population in England and Wales grows with each year group, with a leap around secondary transfer” (2002, p. 20). However, none of the main conclusions or recommendations made in the report relates specifically to this trend. A literature review (Dockrell, Peacey, & Lunt, 2002) carried out as part of this Audit Commission report pays little attention to this particular finding, commenting that a child’s Special Educational Need could be affected by gender, ethnicity, parental income/social class, troubled family circumstances and “other significant factors.” They do not specifically mention age despite drawing attention to the fact that the number of statements, and presumably therefore the number of children identified as having special needs, increase with age.

As well as being largely ignored in policy literature, it is also a pattern that is not often discussed or explored in inclusion research. Indeed, there is a paucity of studies relating specifically to the phenomenon of secondary over-representation in special schools. Those that mention or allude to the phenomenon do so almost as an aside and rarely mention it in their conclusions. Some studies discuss age as a factor within the whole special education system – including awarding of statements, rather than specifically within special schools. Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) discuss age as a factor in a section entitled “other forms of disproportionality”, indicating that proportionally more older children are identified as having special educational needs. They do not attempt to explain this finding. Another study profiled the characteristics of the population in special schools for those with moderate learning difficulties (Male, 1996) and reported findings under a number of variables, such as pupil numbers, proportion of boys to girls and pupils excluded, but did not discuss pupil age as a characteristic, something I see as an omission.

The pattern is not unique to England, the Scottish Executive have identified and investigated the same trend (Pirrie, Head, & Brna, 2006), observing that the age profile of the special school population has changed over time in Scotland, and that currently the majority of children and young people attending free-standing special schools are of secondary school age. They use this to support their hypothesis that the push towards “mainstreaming” has resulted in the placement of more children with special needs in mainstream primary schools. One respondent to their special school survey reported “there are fewer children coming into the school at the P1 [Primary 1] stage than there were five years ago.” A statistical conclusion is reached by the participant here – the age profile exists the way it does because numbers have fallen in the primary sector, but not fallen in the secondary, leading to the “imbalance” seen.

Similarly, in Germany also a related trend has been noted; “from all SEN pupils integrated in mainstream schools, the biggest proportion is in primary schools, compared to secondary schools” (Maikowski & Hausotter, 2004, p. 43).

**School population and proportion of students in special school**

Between 2006 and 2010 the population of students aged 5-15 in schools, including in special schools, has fallen fell from 6,406,820 to 6,155,550, a fall of 3.92%. The special school population fell by 1.33% in the same period. This “fall” in pupil numbers is seen in both the primary and secondary sector, but these figures hide a considerable difference between the patterns in pupil numbers in both sectors. The primary special school populationfell at a similar rate to the whole population aged 5-10; that is 2.78% and 3.33% respectively. The total secondary aged population fell at a rate of 4.6%, however the special school population of this age only fell by 0.53%.

There has been a very slight increase in the proportion of pupils in special schools over this period, rising from 1.17% to 1.20% of the total population. However, once again, there is a large difference for each age group. In the primary sector the proportion of students in special schools out of the whole primary population rose slightly, by 0.57%, in secondary the proportion of children in special schools rose also, by 4.26%, over the five years looked at in this study. This could be seen to demonstrate a trend towards segregation in both sectors, however, greater segregation in the secondary sector can be concluded, as the proportion of students in the special school sector at this age has risen at a greater rate.

The pattern of secondary over-representation is seen in most of the Local Authorities in England; only 6 go against the trend and have more pupils in Year 5 and 6 in special schools than they have in Year 7 and 8. Only 15 local authorities have equal numbers of pupils in both the primary and secondary age groups studied, leaving 126 that do have more pupils of secondary age than primary age (Black, 2009) (This is out of the 147 Local Authorities with both primary and secondary provision).

**Does the over-representation correlate with other indicators?**

Statistical analysis did not show any relationships between this secondary over-representation and other factors. For example, local authorities with higher percentages of pupils in special school were no different from those with lower percentages in terms of the primary secondary difference. Nor was there any notable relationship between population density of local authority and the primary-secondary special school difference.

I have used the statistical exploration outlined so far to describe the situation as it exists, an important starting point for qualitative findings. Florian, Rouse, Black-Hawkins and Jull (2004) advocate using and interrogating statistics as a starting point for addressing questions about inclusion, but add the caveat that it is necessary to go beyond the data and carry out studies of practice in schools, arguing that: “meaningful answers to questions about inclusion and achievement can be found but they require more than number crunching” (p.120).

**Results of questionnaire**

In September- December 2010 I sent out a questionnaire to a range of stakeholders involved in or have experience of KS2/3 transfer of children with Special Educational Needs in England. Participants were professionals involved in placement and statutory assessment decisions and parents of children with SEN. I took advantage of the fact the education system in England is divided into Local Authorities, which in turn can be grouped by type, and so I employed cluster sampling (Oppenheim, 1992) – making use of the fact that populations are structured in someway. Twenty Local Authorities were randomly selected after being grouped by type and ineligible authorities removed. This process in itself acted as a selection of the Local Authority stakeholders such as educational psychologists, inclusion officers and school advisors within that LA. Three schools of each type (primary, secondary and special) were also selected randomly in each identified local authority. Email addresses for professional stakeholders or their relevant departments were available on Local Authority and school websites, and the questionnaire was sent electronically to them.

Not all eligible respondents could be identified within a local area, thus snowball sampling (Fink, 2003) was employed, in particular for parents of children with special educational needs who had been involved in decisions regarding the placement of their child. Local Authority Parent Partnerships and regional parent/ disability groups were contacted in each selected local authority and asked to pass details on to parents in their area. The electronic hyperlink to the survey was also posted on-line on parents and disability forums, with a post-questionnaire filter used to remove those not in the randomly generated local authority area.

The questionnaire included both open and closed questions, and a Likert-type scale of possible reasons for purposes of triangulation and statistical data analysis. To ensure the Likert-type scale was not limited by the limited suggestions given in the literature, a pilot study was carried out, to elucidate other reasons that may not be reported in the literature. (The pilot study took the form of semi-structured interviews to get a breadth of suggestions as to why the situation may exist as it does.)

One hundred and two people responded to the questionnaire, 40 parents, 28 Local authority staff (educational psychologists, placement officers, SEN advisors etc) and 29 school staff (special school head teachers, primary school head teachers and SENCOs, secondary SENCOs). The approximate response rate (of completed questionnaires) was 25%.

**Common reasons for why there are more pupils of secondary age in special school given by stakeholders**

Analysis revealed several themes:

1. School level factors
2. With-in child factors
3. Parental concern
4. Stakeholder choice
5. Resources
6. An outcome of processes

Lesser factors, but still worth mentioning, were exosystemic factors (such as Local Authority factors/ government policy), relationships and chronosystemic (time related) factors (see Figure 3 for frequency themes appeared). The themes identified were complex, multifaceted and often interlinked. These main themes can be further sub-divided as outlined below.

**Fig 3: Frequency themes mentioned in open-ended questions**

School level factors include school structure and organisation (e.g. school size, school systems, and change and movement), school environment and ethos (e.g. disability awareness and pastoral support), school focus and curriculum (e.g. appropriateness, flexibility, focus), school staff (e.g. experience, attitudes and training) and benefits of special schools in comparison. The factor with the most mentions throughout the open-ended questions was school size.

With-in child factors, which account for 15% of responses, are those that frame the problem and barriers within the child. The child’s ability in a range of areas is called into question, such as their ability to cope and manage in a mainstream environment, their ability to access the curriculum, and their ability to achieve. Closely related to their ability to cope is their vulnerability within a mainstream environment. The complexity of the child’s needs, low attainment levels, and social “limitations” are other reasons why mainstream secondary schools are inappropriate for students with SEN.

Another factor for placement in a special school was as a result of the choice of stakeholders, primarily of parents, but affected at times by professional recommendations and requests. Placement decisions made by teams involving school staff, Local Authority staff and parents was mentioned less often, as were child voice and preference.

Resources, or the lack of them in mainstream schools, were another reason given. Resourcing here includes funding and the requirement of some children for more support than they would receive in the mainstream (for example one on one, all day and everyday). A need for access to specialist support from external agencies and therapists that is not met in mainstream was also mentioned.

The special educational needs identification process was also thought to explain the population patterns, particularly the view that as children grow older, it is easier to diagnose as needs become more apparent or conditions that were missed earlier in their school career. The importance of a transition plan between primary and secondary school was also highlighted, transition being seen by a few as a natural break to move children to a special school setting.

Parental concern for their child and how the child would cope in a secondary school environment was seen as another contributory factor, fuelled in some cases by the child’s or the parents’ previous experience of the mainstream. A number of parents undertook research to find the best school for their child and their needs, and some saw special schools as the best place for their child.

Relationships on a number of levels influenced placement choice. For example, relationships between parents and school affected decisions, positive relationships and trust meant advice from the school is acted on, parents wanted to be able to contribute to the school’s understanding of their child and sometimes relationships with mainstream staff breaking down. Then, there was mention of the relationships of the child with special educational needs with peers; bullying by peers in a secondary context was seen by some as inevitable, and the development and adjustment of friendships that occur as children age held the risk of some students being isolated. Friendship and acceptance was key requirements of schooling, and some felt this could only be provided in a special school.

“Peers” was a category in its own right, as there were aspects related to peers that were not necessarily related to relationships. The differences that emerged between a child with special educational needs and their peers were seen to become more pronounced as they aged, and the gap between them widen academically. Some noted that the gap was noticed by the child with special needs and by their peers, leading to low self-esteem and making the child stand out as different. It was also noted that some students with special educational needs could not be included in mainstream schools as they caused disruption to their peers and their learning (this was mentioned by 6 of the 102 participants).

Exo-systemic factors are those that are external, beyond the school, the child and their family, but are seen as contributing to placement decisions. The first is at a Local Authority level - school choice and provision (or lack of it), which takes many forms – the lack of provision for children with special educational needs made in mainstream, the lack of options for students with ASD, provision that is either social or academic, not both. It was interesting that government policy and the inspection regime were not mentioned by many as contributory factors, while league tables and national targets were mentioned by only 6 participants in the open ended questions. However, the Likert-type scale revealed that the majority of participants rated these factors as being a strong explanation for the over-representation of secondary aged students in a special school (52 out of 95 rated government policy and focus on academic achievement as being very strong explanation, and 44 out of 99 rated the inspection focus being on academic achievement as very strong explanation).

Chrono-systemic factors are those related to the effect of time, for example, when the child ages and develops, their difficulties increase or become more apparent and are exacerbated by the onset of adolescence and puberty. Difficulties arise as peers develop and become more selective in their friendship groups and less tolerant. As already discussed the achievement gap between children with special educational needs and their peers appears to widen as time passes.

Factors that were mentioned less often were those related to the appropriateness of placement in special schools, the suitability of the school for the child, the ability of the school to meet the child’s needs, and simply that mainstream is too challenging for the child. Despite these factors not emerging in the thematic analysis, the adapted and protective environment of special schools was placed highly on the Likert type scale. These factors were rated highly by 59 out of 98 participants in explaining the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools.

Placement in a mainstream school can create a risk of disciplinary exclusion and school refusing or can cause the child to be “excluded through inclusion”. The safety of the child within a mainstream environment is another factor considered, and to a lesser extent the safety of other children is put at risk by the inclusion of some children with special educational needs.

**Conclusion**

The over-representation of secondary aged pupils in special schools in England has not been explored in the literature in the field of special needs and inclusive education. Many reasons for the situation have been given by people with experience of the placement of children with special educational needs. These can be summarised as follows:

* School level factors, including: differences in school organisation (emphasis on size), school ethos, and staff/schools ability to met child’s needs, to personalise/ individualise the learning,
* With-in child factors, such as the child’s ability in a range of areas, their vulnerability, their needs and attainment levels, and social “weaknesses”
* parental concerns about their child
* A result of the choice of key stakeholders, primarily parents, but still affected by professional placement recommendations
* Resources – “support”, funding, availability of specialist staff
* An outcome of late identification and diagnosis,
* Exo-systemic factors, relationships, peers (including the risk of bullying), and chrono-systemic factors.

Dyson and Gallannaugh (2008) in their discussion on disproportionality in special needs education in England suggest that “the overrepresentation of boys, children living in poverty, and children from certain ethnic groups may indicate that there are distinct (albeit complex) gender, class, and ethnic cultures and that these generate behaviours in school that are interpreted by professionals as indicating disability” (p42). Whether the over-representation of secondary aged children in special schools is due to there being distinct cultures of “age” that generate behaviours that are seen to be indicative of disability is something that needs to be further explored. What is apparent is the high frequency of organisational factors and school/ local authority level processes that are seen to prevent older children being included in mainstream schools. This reflects Booth and Ainscow’s (2011) notion of barriers to learning and participation, the identification of which is one step of “the never-ending process” of inclusion. By changing these practices and removing these barriers secondary schools can become more inclusive of these children who have been included in primary school.

**References**

Audit Commission (2002). *Special Educational Needs: a mainstream issue?* London: Audit Commission.

Bell, W. (2001). Futures studies comes of age: twenty-five years after "The limits to growth". *Futures, 33*(1), 63-76.

Black, A. E. (2009). *Secondary over-representation: an enquiry into the distribution of age within the special school population in England.* Unpublished Masters dissertation, University of Exeter, Exeter.

Booth, T., & Ainscow, M. (2011). *Index for inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools* (3rd ed.). Bristol: Centre for Stusies on Inclusive Education.

Department for Education (2011). *Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, January 2011 (SFR 12 2011)*. London: Department for Education,.

Dockrell, J., Peacey, N., & Lunt, I. (2002). *Literature review: meeting the needs of children with special educational needs*. London: Audit Commission.

Dyson, A., & Gallannaugh, F. (2008). Disproportionality in special needs education in England. *Journal of Special Education, 42*(1), 36-46.

Fink, A. (2003). *The survey handbook* (2nd ed. ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif. :: Sage Publications.

Florian, L., Rouse, M., Black-Hawkins, K., & Jull, S. (2004). What can national data sets tell us about inclusion and pupils achievement? *British Journal of Special Education, 31*(3), 115-120.

House of Commons Education and Skills Commitee (2006). *Special Educational Needs: Third Report of Session 2005-2006*. London.

Maikowski, R., & Hausotter, A. (2004). Germany. In European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Ed.), *Inclusive education and classroom practice in secondary education: Literature review* (pp. 42-44). Brussels: EADSNE.

Male, D. (1996). Who goes to MLD schools? . *British Journal of Special Education, 23*(1), 34-41.

Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement* (2nd ed. ed.). London :: Continuum.

Pirrie, A., Head, G., & Brna, P. (2006). Mainstreaming pupils with special educational needs. *Insight, 27*, 1-8.

Swann, W. (1985). Is the integration of children with special needs happening? An analysis of recent statistics of pupils in special schools. *Oxford Review of Education, 11*(1), 3-18.

**Chapter 3:**

**A school for the Future 2025:** **presented scenario**

This chapter describes one vision for an inclusive school (and education system) in the year 2025. It sets out the values related to education and inclusion held by policy makers, and reflected in the description of the national and school context. There is then an account of the national context – a picture of the education system throughout England in 2025 and within this context a description of a specific community school.

**Values and purpose statement**

All children are seen as able to learn and contribute to school and community life.

As such, all children are welcome in the community school. There is no separate special education system.

The education system seeks to:

* provide young people with a broad and balanced range of experiences and areas of knowledge
* enable personal fulfilment; and realise personal potential
* to prepare individuals for future life and work in a rapidly changing and uncertain world
* contribute to and improve society through the education and training of the young people in its care

**National context**

All schools are small (maximum 500 students), and all-age (5-16 yrs old). There is no divide between primary and secondary schools.

***National curriculum orientation:***

* Cognitive, meta-cognitive, personal, social and citizenship learning dimensions are given equal weight.
* Focus on knowledge, understanding, skills and dispositions needed for 21st century life.
* Schools are able to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of their students, have a degree of flexibility and independence about how and when it is taught and assessed.
* The National Curriculum is a minimum entitlement for all learners.

Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

* Professional qualification, post-graduate degree, runs over 2 years, resulting in a Master’s level qualification along with Qualified Teacher Status.
* Special educational needs and disability aspects are mandatory for completion of degree, as is an extended school placement module.
* Working conditions reflect professional status, with adequate non-teaching time for team planning, review and CPD.
* CPD is an entitlement, a statutory requirement; schools must make provision for it in terms of time and funding. It is personalised to meet needs of the teacher.

Personalised Learning Plan (PLP)

* Early and continued identification of learning strengths and needs is a key part of each student’s personalised learning; every student has a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).
* Schools are legally responsible for formulating and reviewing each student’s Personalised Learning Plan on a minimum of a biannual basis.
* There is national recognition that there is a spectrum of differing abilities and attainments. Disabilities are diagnosed and recognised, but integrated into PLP holistically in the context of student’s needs, strengths and learning goals.
* Formative assessment for learning is the norm.

***Parents/ guardians (Key worker for Children in care)***

* Parents are seen as important partners in students’ learning and are involved in formulating PLPs.
* They are provided with advocacy and counselling specialists should they require them.
* There is a school: parent contract outlining rights and responsibilities.

***Funding***

* Adequate common levels of funding are set and provided by the state to schools, supplied for specific purposes and reviewed through transparent audit trails.
* Schools can request additional compensatory resources through a bidding system. They need to provide evidence of the need for the resource and what they have attempted to provide to meet the need thus far.

***Accountability***

* School accountability is based on students’ achievement of PLP goals. Schools report these to parents and government. There is no standard national assessment framework or tests.
* National monitoring and publication of i. learning and achievements of children, and ii. quality of provision is done through regular surveys of representative samples rather than all schools.
* There is a multi-disciplinary team available on each school site. This includes psychologists, therapists, clinicians, social workers and counsellors

Schools are not permitted to discriminate on basis of gender, ethnicity, faith or learning ability.

**Braeburn Community School**

* A small school, both physically and in terms of student numbers (max. 350 pupils on roll).
* Clear vision based on rights and respect for all – this theme is open for discussion and deliberation by staff, students and parents.
* School council of staff and students who deliberate on and review broad school policy.
* Single storey, with accessibility as a key design feature, surrounded by playgrounds and outdoor learning spaces. These are used in curriculum time, as well as at break and lunch. (Break and lunch are staggered, for ease of catering logistics and playground supervision).
* Provision of other breakout spaces, including a sensory room, and a quiet room.

The students:

* Students are seen as individuals, with individual strengths and needs, who can each contribute to school life.
* It is recognised that **all** students have needs; and that provision is designed to best meet these needs.
* How each student obtains their curricular entitlement is discussed and negotiated with the student, their parents and school staff. (Could include peer mentoring, in-class teacher support, physical resources, out-of-class activities).
* Classes consist of students with mixed characteristics (abilities, dispositions, interests) from 2 consecutive year groups, maximum of 20 students per group.
* Class group remains constant throughout the class’s time at school, but there are structured opportunities for work with other classes/ age groups. Out-of-class opportunities are available to all students, but curriculum coherence is ensured.

***Curriculum: personal, flexible and adaptable.***

* The school community (school staff, students, parents) contribute to identifying topics that offer an opportunity to develop knowledge, understanding, dispositions and skills. These are reviewed annually with each cohort.
* Focus on personalised learning and flexibility in curriculum delivery, level of differentiation and assessment strategies, meaning students can opt in and out of various activities. Other activities are then provided to ensure the opportunity to cover the curriculum.
* Collective decision is made on what resources are needed (ie subject experts, external visits). Local community (businesses and organisations) can be involved in teaching programmes / facilitating learning opportunities, if required for a particular topic.

***Classrooms: are for children learning, not curriculum subjects***.

* Each class has its own baseroom with specialist facilities in each (ie wet areas, science practical areas).
* Up to date audio-visual systems and adaptive technology (where required) is available in each base.
* Pupils have ownership of room displays.

The staff: *all staff know and are known by all children.*

* Each class has their own generic class teacher who remains with them for two years.
* Subject specialist teachers team-teach with the class teacher/ lead mixed class activities.
* There is a structured transition every two years as the class’s main teacher changes, involves reviewing PLPs, observations and team teaching by the new teacher in the final term of a year.

***Peer group:***

* Peer teaching, coaching and mentoring is a key part of learning. All students have an opportunity to hold a guidance role for at least one other student. This can be across age, skill or dispositions. Students are trained for this role.

***Parents: parents are welcomed as experts and learners.***

* Welcome to participate in their child’s class and to take part in lessons.
* An important part of Continuing Professional Development, welcome to deliver sessions and engage with them.
* Part of the planning team for their child’s Personalised Learning Plan.

***Support:***

* School is a multi-agency site with provision for all students’ needs.
* Team teaching and teacher-as-facilitator role allows for in-class support of learning.
* Learning support is available for all students.

**Chapter 4:**

**SWOT analysis:** **themes arising from SWOT analysis of presented scenario**

Outlined below is a summary of the themes raised in the discussion following the presentation of the scenario. The group had been given the scenario in advance of the session, and there was also opportunity during the break to read and reread it. The discussion was framed around a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis, which was used as a framework to encourage participants to consider ALL aspects of the vignette, that is, both positive and negative facets. The themes are laid out in order of number of comments made ranging from most to least.

**The curriculum**

Strengths were seen in the flexibility of the curriculum the school offered, along with the equal focus on a range of learning outcomes, based as it was on a “focus on students and their outcomes, rather than provision made” by the school. It was recognised there would be practical flexibility in terms of location of learning and times of attendance. There was a need to see students as variable, and if this was in the ethos of a school the flexibility would be a strength. The central role of the personalised learning plan for all children was lauded.

There was a difficulty was related to the assessment of the variety of learning outcomes, as it was noted schools are currently skilled in assessing cognitive learning outcomes, but not on the wider dimensions discussed in this model. There is a need to develop robust measures for these dimensions, or there is a danger the school will become focused on one learning dimension to the expense of others.

**Training and Continuing Professional Development**

The teacher training element of the vignette was seen as a real strength, regarding its high quality and continuous nature. No threats were seen in the implementation of this model, and the only weakness was that there was no mention of the school leadership having mandatory training in Special Educational Needs and Disability.

There were many suggestions on to how the model could be further developed. The first centred around involving all staff in training opportunities, recognising that if “classroom assistants are well and appropriately trained you gain more from them”, and extending this to parents and other adults outside the school who are involved with the children. This training would make the school into a community, especially with the suggestion that part of professional development itself could be focused on developing more supportive, collaborative relationships with other staff and parents. Professionals should be trained to work directly with parents and in how to engage with them.

It was also suggested that there was a need to encourage staff to undertake action research, to ensure that the school system was based on good practice, and outcomes that were truly of benefit to the school/ children. This should then be disseminated to inform practice within the school and beyond.

**Leadership**

One participant commented “There is no mention in this model about leadership, what the leadership of this school looks like . We can make assumptions about the leadership, but would be useful to have something explicit”. It was suggested by one participant that leadership was required for marketisation, accountability and not losing high expectations. Another role for school leaders today it was suggested is in school self evaluation and forward planning. Self evaluation was necessary to be aware of what the school does well and to plan ahead; otherwise there was a perceived danger of the school focusing on one area to the detriment of others, or not being supported by the public.

However, another person argued that the apparent lack of leadership was in fact a strength, as leadership is “currently framed within strong notions of school effectiveness and aligned with a national inspectorate”. It was suggested that leadership could become more centralised within the school, and based on democratic principles as used in other countries.

Another problem regarding leadership is that of the role of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator. It was felt that as the scenario contained “no discussion about teacher responsibility for Special Educational Needs and maintenance of the Personalised Learning Plan” there was a risk that the tendency to see special educational needs as “an optional activity, that the SENCo is in charge of” would continue.

**The role of parents**

The role of parents in the scenario was seen as positive and empowering, but also raised as a concern. Parental participation was seen as providing a forum for creating mutual understanding of where each party is coming from; parents will have an insight into the school, and the school will have deeper insight into the student and home life. Parents are seen as a valuable resource, able to provide deep knowledge of their child, and enhance learning opportunities for staff. However, it was recognised that not “all parents are going to be supportive and engaged”, and there are “increasing numbers of parents who are disengaged with their child’s education”.

It was felt more detail was required on how the school engaged with parents, and what role they played in the review and planning of their child’s learning. The scenario could also be developed by providing the opportunity for professionals really engaging with parents “most parents given the opportunity would like professionals talking, listening, spending time with them, building time into their day to really engage with parents, not just to give information, but actually find out a little more about their children”. This could be further enhanced through training professionals in working directly with parents, and on how to engage parents.

**School size**

The small size of the school was commented on and critiqued – it was felt that the size could limit peer group and social interactions, and finance and resources. There was a danger some felt in a small school meaning people with disabilities may feel isolated.

It was suggested size was not the real problem, in their experience parents would cite size as being a reason they did not want their child to go to mainstream secondary schools, but the participant said often primary school were of a similar size. They suggested it is more related to the different school organisation, and if you removed the need for children to move around a large school as my model has by having a baseroom size would no longer be seen as an issue.

**School choice**

The danger of the school becoming a special school “by default” was raised. If this was a stand-alone school, parents would choose not to send their child there they want a more academic model, and their child’s needs are met in the current system: “Market availability [will] drive placement”. Other models were recognised – the Scottish model where “all children go to their local secondary school, there is no chasing about all these different schools”, and it was seen that this is the basis behind the scenario: “this model is predicated on whoever the funding agency is for this school commissioning this school, in this area, for all children”.

**Funding**

“There is a big emphasis on personalisation, every child has a PLP, multi-disciplinary teams on-site, parental advocacy, teachers working in a topic based way, mapping a complex curriculum. This is vastly more expensive than the current system”. The notion of “adequate levels of funding” was disparaged in light of the current economic climate. Bidding for funding had been experienced by some participants and was described as a difficult, “clunky” system.

The macro-political issue of how tax-payers money is used was raised, and the democratic will for money to be used to finance schools like this one. It was noted that if all schools are like this it will be an expensive system, and so unlikely to be achieved as the democratic will may not be behind it.

**Multi agency teams**

Access to a multi agency team was seen as a high priority for various members, as “we are hungry for them in schools”. A need was seen for opportunities for multi-agency working, and schools having prompt, flexible access to a range of specialist support.

However, various issues with the multi-agency availability where raised

* It could result in a watering down of multiagency teams if there are not enough to go around
* a technocratic medical approach may be followed by some agencies, which could result in the medicalisation of SEN, which is against the apparent ethos of the school
* where does the school access specialist support and expertise regarding low incidence needs

**Clustering of schools**

The notion of clustering schools was raised by participants with a number of perceived benefits

* Ability to offer more pathways and diverse ways to gain qualifications and skills
* Ability to commission provision for students who have special educational needs in one school

It was noted that the second point acted against the ideology of the model whereby all children in a community attend their local school.

**Discrimination**

The notion of schools not being able to discriminate was seen as a strength, and it was suggested that culture and sexual preference be added to the list. One member of the group argued this was nothing new as was already legislated for under the Equity Act 2010, but this was countered by another pointing out the under schedule 27 of the Education Act schools could discriminate against some pupils.

**A place called school**

One participant commented that the scenario was focused on a building called school and queried if that is necessarily the best way to educate. Another member of the same group said the school presented flexibility for off-site learning, and flexibility around where and how the personalised programme is completed. This also relates to the potential of clustering schools, moving beyond learning taking place in one building.

**Other comments**

The notion of continuing education was raised – how will children apply what they learn after 16, and the need to get the multiple outcomes this school is based on recognised in a post 16 context. Another strength was that the all through school diffuses the issue of secondary transfer.

**Theoretical issues raised**

The contributions of participants were framed, even bound, by knowledge experience and language, as recognised by one participant “[there is] theoretically and conceptually a danger in discussing the future in terms of what we have in the present. When we talk about “commissioning”, “governance” and so forth we need to dispense with these notions that pertain to the present”. One participant said as an aside during a point she was making that she was hesitant to use the word “federation” when describing school clustering, acknowledging that terms we use can be laden with meaning and preconceptions.

**Summary**

This thematic analysis of the discussion shows the given scenario was seen to have strengths and potential, but also weaknesses and failings. Most areas will lead to clarification and the addition of extra detail to the final scenario. There were difficulties seen in engaging different types of parents, in the size of the school, in the potential of the model becoming a special school by default, in funding the system and in the role and availability of multi-agency workers. There was lack of consensus in some areas, particularly in the role of leadership, where some argued for leadership and some against. Finally there were abstract discussions on the limitations of language and the need for a building called “school”.

**Chapter 5:**

**Group scenarios**: **scenarios created by small groups**

Following the discussion and evaluation of the scenario the participants split into 5 groups of between 4-7 people. Each group had the brief to design a school of the future, and had the choice to start completely from scratch, or to further develop the scenario that had been presented to them. The groups worked on this task for 45 minutes, then chose a representative to feed back their design to the other groups. Most of the groups chose to add detail to the existing scenario, questioning it and making further suggestions for refinement. Below is a summary of each group’s feedback, finishing with an outline of common themes across the feedback.

**Group A:**

The more we spoke, the more we agreed with both the principles of both school and national context. We kept coming back to national context, if school was to succeed it would not succeed in isolation or as a number of small schools like this in the country or Local Authority. Bold change is needed. Education should be non-party political. Everybody support the ideals, so changes in practice and policy would not change every time administrations changed. We focused on the national context of the given school – agreed on the whole, but added bits.

There would be no competition in terms of league tables or academic outcomes as the only measure of achievement. It was not necessary for parents to have the right to choose a school; they could choose lots of different avenues within a school for child to follow.

This means that schools would not select on the basis of faith, fee paying etc. If parents had a right to chose they are probably more discriminatory than anyone else – they might discriminate on where they send their child on the basis of who they want them to learn alongside.

Every member of staff who works in a school is qualified in a set of competences, knowledge and understanding of child development. There are ramifications in terms of funding, more funding in terms of rates of pay – if we are to expect competences and knowledge and understanding it would be costly

Urban and rural environments: Urban, operate a hub and spoke model, so not every school would need a multi-agency team. In a rural setting it is more important for all those things to be available to all students

Teacher and staff training opportunities for sabbaticals: lots of opportunities for staff to do proper training, not a tick-box exercise for schools with 5 teacher education days that there are at the moment. School terms are helpful, right across the year. There would be opportunities for teachers to have training in school terms

**Group B**

We found it very difficult to redesign a school partly because of issues and uncertainties at a national context. We set off and wanted more details of the national context because of its powerful influence.

Is there a private sector? Other questions were about whether there was a market in schooling and trading of services. There are different types of market system and market failure. The position of Government and local authority are all quite critical for the design of schools.

Language of inclusion: schools can be called inclusive, but in practice quite the reverse in places. There were concerns about how useful that term is. There was also not enough about disability and the use of labels.

What is counted as an academic subject? There is a difference between a subject in academic terms, and the content of a programme. Also, how long would school terms be?

There was some suggestion about having a single age school instead of two age school system as there are transition issues raised by this.

Special schools open to all, based on reverse integration.

How does one design quality control in a new national context?

**Group C**

We started off thinking about what would be the worst school you could come up with, could we do the opposite? The worst school might involve total inaccessibility, corporal punishment, etc.

We considered a child and person centred model. What we would hope would be there from their point of view, rather than starting for concept of a school. This meant not looking necessarily looking at this question starting with a school.

Preconceptions of a school: it is very difficult to think about a school for the future without coming back the preconceptions and experiences of teachers, parents etc. This is why we focused on values and outcomes you wanted for all learners, not just children or staff.

When talking about all learners, this includes students, staff, community. Responsibility is for all and responsibility by all.

Valuing a broader set of outcomes, not one at the expense of others, unlike at the moment where some have higher priority.

Assessments and learning would be a collaborative effort, involving collaboration at a number of levels.

Parental collaborative contribution to development would involve the whole parental group, rather than the market.

The use of learning spaces in new school is important.

**Group D**

There would be clear pathways for children to follow, a 7-14 model with clear pathways in and out. The new school would be de-structured and de-layered.

Children would have contact with peer group at least once a day.

There would be a basic level of entitlement for all children; education would be compulsory for all children.

There would be required levels of training for all staff working with children.

The basic structure would be supplemented by access to specialist support – prompt and flexible

The question of funding was discussed; would there be a level about the current local one. We talked about the notion that there might be something called a local authority that might be needed, but we did not go into that in any detail.

These were the givens that were assumed:

* Compulsory education
* Re-conceptualisation of the role of people responsible for helping to develop children
* Learning was beyond buildings, we talked about the use of ICT, distance learning, but because we were thinking about all children including vulnerable learners we thought we must not forget that children need looking after. You could not have an over-reliance on independent learning, otherwise you might develop a segregated system within your own model.
* Locally/nationally there would be no competition

We talked about whether that might lead to the fact there would be no need for parents to express a school preference. Would this model go as far as to remove a right for parents to express a preference….it was a good ideological dialogue to think about parental preference in a new context.

We thought that geography would inform the extent of building sited learning and someone was very exercised about the cost of transport and the need to consider this aspect.

Issues for children with SEN that came up:

* Getting lost in sophisticated systems and pathways
* The need to have predictability for children, for their families
* Enabling access to specialist input the low incidence needs

**Group E**

We thought this was an outstanding school in conception, but there was still lots of evolution for it to undergo. We have some ideas, but questions as well.

Flexible, community based school, based on personalised learning and good practice.

What would staffing structure look like? This is not just about teachers but learning mentors, different focuses on different parts of the young person engagement with parts of a school.

Multiple learning outcomes: cognitive, personal and social, citizenship are as important parts of school.

Draw on resources, diversity and skills of local community (difficulty in engaging some of the community, challenge of engaging community in the lowest 10% of socio-economic status).

Do we mean ALL young people – there will always be some young people who will be very difficult to engage? How will the school link with those young people?

Use of ICT: this would not be a classroom-based school. ICT, social networks, young people being prepared for the global market.

Allocation and bidding for SEN and additional needs: we had more questions than answers.

Challenge with respect to medicalisation of SEN and new technologies and issues that these might involve.

Parental choice, involvement and preference: these are all very difficult things, but vital components of how parents and young people fit in.

This new school would be community based on a learning culture that was continuing to learn. This meant being prepared to take risks.

**Summary of themes arising across the groups**

Three of the five groups used the given scenario and elaborated on it, two focused particularly on the national context and landscape. The remaining two groups came up with a framework for a future school and national context. Two groups suggested different starting points for considering a new school design or model:

* What would be the worst, least inclusive school, then do the opposite
* Have a single age / 2 age school
* Open special schools to all – “reverse integration”

Some themes were common across the majority of groups. The first of these involved issues of school selection and parental choice. All groups saw this as contentious and problematic and no answers to the questions and issues raised were provided. Parental choice and school selection are influenced by the existence of a private sector, competition between schools and school curriculum provision. One group argued that if parents could collaborate within a school that would remove the need for marketisation. Another thought was that if pathways existed within schools, rather than between schools that would get rid of need for parental choice between schools.

Three groups proposed having diverse avenues and pathways within a school, involving flexible, personalised learning. This would be enhanced by the valuing of a broader set of curricular outcomes beyond the focus on the academic. This was suggested as countering competition between schools.

The qualifications and training of staff was also seen as a high priority by the majority of groups – extending this to all staff who work with children in the school. Two groups extended this further seeing the school as a community of learners, which involved both children and staff as learners.

Geography and location of the school was seen as an influence on the school and its resources – urban schools could share resources; rural schools would need to be more self-contained. Specialist support should be prompt and flexible whatever the location. The extent to which the learner should be building sited or classroom based was questioned, especially in rural areas. Two groups saw an emerging role for the use of ICT and networked learning. Issues were raised about the potential of this leading to a segregated system, and creating problems regarding the care of the learner.

The concepts of special educational needs, inclusion and groups of learners were discussed by 3 of the groups, but did not make up a large proportion of comments. One of the other groups predicated their model on a school being for all children, the other group made no distinction on different types of children. The given vignette was critiqued for not having enough information on disability and the use of labels. This group also noted that schools can be called inclusive, but practice the reverse. Another group questioned if we mean all young people, pointing out that not all young people will be easy to engage, and asking how will the school link with those young people. Two groups raised practical issues for children with SEN – one about children who may get lost in the sophisticated pathways offered by the school and some children needing predictability that this model does not afford. Gaining access to specialist input for low incident needs may be an issue, as would the allocation and funding for additional needs. There are also challenges regarding the medicalisation of Special Educational Needs, the development of new technologies and issues that might arise because of this.

To conclude, the main themes discussed were school selection and parental choice, the central role of flexible, personalised learning and diverse pathways, qualifications of staff in school, and the location of the school, or if such a building should exist. Issues regarding students with special educational needs were discussed, but this was not the primary focus of any group’s feedback. A few of the groups questioned key points of the existing vignette and their own, but made it clear they were not sure of the answers themselves, highlighting that tensions exist.

**Chapter 6:**

**Conclusions**

The workshop started with the presentation of the current situation as the basis for designing a school for the future.

Two thirds of the population of special schools (age 5-16) in England are of secondary school age (11-16). This patterns goes as far back as 1978 and 1984 as reported by Will Swann (1985). The population of special schools when plotted by age shows a year on year rise with a larger than average jump between age 10 and 11. These figures imply that every year a number of students from a cohort leave mainstream and enter special schools, with a larger than average jump at primary: secondary transition.

There is a lack of studies on or policy comments related to this pattern, and where the pattern is mentioned there is no further exploration or explanation of the pattern. The pattern is not unique to England, and has been reported in Scotland (Pirrie, Head, & Brna, 2006) and Germany (Maikowski & Hausotter, 2004).

A survey of stakeholders involved in primary to secondary transfer of pupils with special needs showed that the most common reasons for this patter were related to school level factors. These accounted for a third of all suggested reasons. These factors are made up of issues such as school structure and organisation, school environment and ethos, school focus and curriculum, school staff, and benefits of special schools in comparison to the mainstream. The factor with the most mentions throughout the open-ended questions was school size.

The importance and relevance of school size as an issue also arose during the analysis of the presented future school scenario during the session. It was suggested it was not size *per se* that was the real problem, but it is more related to the different school organisation (different classrooms, different teachers, more movement around school), and if you removed the need for children to move around school size would no longer be an issue.

The presented school scenario, designed by Alison Black based on feedback from previous workshops, was created to circumvent the issues raised in the stakeholder survey, and was based on the principles of “all children are seen as able to learn and contribute, all children are welcome in the community school, there is no separate special education system”. The scenario also described the national context, in which all schools in England operated under these principles, to avoid the described school being an isolated example and becoming a special school by default.

The workshop group evaluated the scenario as having positive potential but also some weaknesses that call for further clarification. As previously mentioned there were difficulties related to the size of school and a perceived danger of the school evolving into a special school through mechanisms of parental choice. Other difficulties related to the feasibility of engaging with all parents and of funding the system. The flexibility of the curriculum and focus on a range of outcomes, the teacher training element and the prominent role of parents were all seen as strengths of the scenario.

The feedback received, contributions and suggestions made by small groups in the “plan a school of the future” task will be used to refine and clarify the presented scenario further. It can be concluded that this kind of workshop using a future schools scenario has the potential to further stir debate about potential inclusive educational policy that began in this session. The scenario tasks provide opportunities for participants to engage in some in depth and practical future thinking.

**References:**

Maikowski, R., & Hausotter, A. (2004). Germany. In European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (Ed.), *Inclusive education and classroom practice in secondary education: Literature review* (pp. 42-44). Brussels: EADSNE.

Pirrie, A., Head, G., & Brna, P. (2006). Mainstreaming pupils with special educational needs. *Insight, 27*, 1-8.

Swann, W. (1985). Is the integration of children with special needs happening? An analysis of recent statistics of pupils in special schools. *Oxford Review of Education, 11*(1), 3-18.