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Cadbury Trust

Policy Options for Special Educational Needs in the 1990s

Seminar Paper 5

PLANNING AND DIVERSITY: SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES

Special Educational Needs Policy Options Group

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CONTENTS

POLICY OPTIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN THE 1990s

This book is the fifth in a series of seven which deal with central policy issues in the field of special educational needs.

The need for a series of national policy seminars and papers arose from widely felt concerns about the future of special educational provision in the wake of the fundamental changes which are currently occurring in the education services.

It is over a decade since the 1981 Education Act on special educational needs came into operation. The Act supported developments in policies and practice for children and young people with special educational needs. Successive legislation from the 1988 Act onwards, though including some positive elements, has introduced a system which makes a minority even more vulnerable to majority interests in a context of constrained financial resources. The 1988 Act engendered anxiety that the developments in special needs education would be undermined, and it was in this context that a steering group was formed to plan the present seminars project. The steering group consisted of members contributing a national and diverse overview, and included headteachers, administrators, representatives of voluntary and professional associations, researchers and academics (see list on page 5). The ESRC and the Cadbury Trust have funded the seminar project.

The seminars take the form of a presentation by a person known to be an authority on the selected topic area, followed by a critical response from two discussants. A small group of around 30 participants with widely differing perspectives on special needs education are invited - MPs, local authority councillors, LEA officers, DFE and OFSTED representatives, heads of voluntary bodies, headteachers, teachers, psychologists, professionals from health and social services, researchers and academics. The contributions and a summary of the ensuing discussions are then prepared for publication.

To date, five seminars have taken place, and it is planned to hold two more. The proceedings of the first four seminars are already published, and we hope that these, and the publication of the proceedings of the remaining seminars, will contribute to the on-going debate and policy formulation in the area of special educational needs.

Policy Papers already published

Paper 1 ***Bucking the Market : LEAs and Special Needs.***

Paper by Peter Housden, Director of Education, Nottinghamshire LEA.
Discussants - Paul Vevers, Senior Manager Audit Commission.
- John Moore, Senior Inspector Kent LEA.

Paper 2 ***Towards Effective Schools for All.***

Paper by Mel Ainscow, Senior Lecturer, University of Cambridge, Institute of Education.
Discussants - Tony Kerr, Head of Direct Education Services, Harrow LEA.
- Brahm Norwich, Senior Lecturer, Institute of Education, London University.

Paper 3 ***Teacher Education for Special Educational Needs.***

Paper by Peter Mittler, Professor of Special Education, Dean of School of Education, University of Manchester.
Discussants - Carol Ouvry, Headteacher, Jack Taylor School, Camden LEA.
- Chris Marshall HMI, Office for Standards in Education.

Paper 4 ***Allocating Resources for Special Educational Needs Provision.***

Paper by Ingrid Lunt, Senior Lecturer, and Jennifer Evans, Lecturer, at the Institute of Education, University of London.
Discussants - Clive Danks, Headteacher, Round Oak School, Warwickshire.
- Hywel Thomas, Head of the School of Education, University of Birmingham.

Disclaimer: The views in this document are those of the contributors and may not represent those of their employers or the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN).

The document has been edited on behalf of the Steering Committee by Peter Mittler.

PLANNING AND DIVERSITY: SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES

INTRODUCTION
by Peter Mittler

The commitment to provide high quality education for pupils with special educational needs in ordinary schools is in danger of overlooking the contribution which special schools can make to effective special needs provision. The present symposium seeks to redress this imbalance by reviewing a number of options for the development of special schools in the future.

Max Hunt critically considers a number of alternative models from the perspective of a 'beleaguered Chief Education Officer', but one with a strong commitment to responsible and properly resourced inclusive education in which the special school is an integral element of the 'spectrum of provision'. Essential elements in successful practice include the effective deployment of resources; the contribution of non-LEA agencies; the commitment of teachers; effective school management and governor support; real consultation with parents. These possibilities are considered against the wider context of the 1993 legislation, the threat to LEA strategic planning represented by GM schools and above all by GM special schools.

Seamus Hegarty, Director of NFER with extensive experience of analysis and evaluation of special needs policy and practice, invites us to ponder two puzzles: given that everyone seems to be in favour of integrated education, how do we explain the enormous variations in practice within the UK and between the UK and our European partners? And why, at a time when everyone is demanding evaluation of integrated education, do we not subject special schools to the same scrutiny? Like Max Hunt, he sees special schools playing a new role as 'beacons of excellence' for smaller number of pupils in the future.

As a headteacher whose experience goes back to the 1960s, David Williams highlights the radical changes which have taken place in special schools and suggests that they should be more fully integrated into the mainstream of provision rather than being considered as an 'alternative'. Like Seamus Hegarty, he argues persuasively for a new role for the special school.

Finally, Philippa Russell summarises a wide-ranging discussion raising further options for policy and practice.

PLANNING AND DIVERSITY: SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES

Max Hunt

'The Secretary of State will have a power to make regulations to enable special schools to apply for GM status'

'The Secretary of State will have a power to require LEAs or the Funding Agency to bring forward proposals for the rationalisation of special schools'

(Choice and Diversity, 1992).

INTRODUCTION

Previous contributors to this series of papers have looked back from their particular perspectives over the decade since the implementation of the 1981 Education Act. While earlier legislation had laid down that all children should be educated in ordinary schools unless certain reasons could be shown for educating them elsewhere, it was the 1981 Act that gave significant impetus to notions of 'inclusion'. Hence, conscious efforts to break down the barriers between special and mainstream education were evident in the reviews of provision carried out by many local authorities in the mid to late 1980s.

The tenets of what Mel Ainscow (1993) has termed 'the individual pupil perspective' running through the legislation later sat less comfortably alongside the rather different principles implicit in the Education Reform Act. It is hardly necessary here to rehearse the perceived tensions stemming from legislation which turned the child into a funding unit and prescribed a uniform National Curriculum with mechanisms for "disapplication". Yet, where the 1988 Act can be viewed as, at best, an irrelevance to special education, the Parliamentary processes of 1993 have brought the issues very much centre stage.

A highly significant Code of Practice has been quickly followed by a plethora of draft Circulars and Regulations. Amongst them a document, boldly titled, *The Development of Special Schools*, and running to some 80 pages, must surely prompt reflection on where we are now heading in our efforts to respond to the 'continuum of need' which the Code has acknowledged afresh. My own perspective is simply that of the beleaguered LEA officer constantly juggling the separate imperatives of statute, local policy, school and parental pressure and, of course, a finite budget. All this in trying to make the system work for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged of our pupils.

I am primarily concerned in this paper with policy options in response to the needs of that notional 2 per cent of the population which the DFE still regards as likely to warrant formal intervention and the 'protection' of Statements. By drawing on some of the experiences of the last few years, I shall attempt to highlight key issues in the evaluation of options. My thinking is inevitably coloured by work in my own Authority since 1989 in broadening opportunities, particularly for pupils with severe learning difficulty and it leads me to extrapolate factors apparently critical to the success of options. The paper will finally focus on the potential impact of the most recent legislation upon special schools and their place within a new 'diversity' of provision. As the extracts from the 1992 White Paper suggest, I recognise tension between disparate elements within current national policy leading to two rather different visions for the future of special education.

STATISTICAL EVIDENCE

Amidst the rhetoric of 'inclusion', I find it salutary to set developments since 1983 into some statistical perspective. An assertion that my own Authority now educates more than 60 per cent of its statemented pupils in ordinary schools, while accurate enough as a statistic, probably says more about school and parental pressures to 'protect' support provision in mainstream than it does about any substantial shift in special school pupil numbers. Hence CSIE documents can tell a rather different story. Their 1991 survey while showing a 'national swing to integration' of 8 per cent between 1982 and 1990, still indicated 15 LEAs with increased incidence of segregated placement.

The Government's own UK *Education Statistics* for 1992 are a useful source of comparisons over the relevant period. Three aspects of the figures are particularly relevant:

1. Between 1981 and 1991, the total number of special (including non-maintained) schools in England and Wales fell from 1530 to 1393.
2. During the same period special school pupil numbers fell from 124,900 to 97,600.
3. Between 1986 and 1991, the number of pupils with statements who were placed in ordinary primary and secondary schools rose from 35,800 to 70,900.

Hence, the 1992 Audit Commission/HMI study was able to report a gradually declining proportion of pupils in special schools during the previous decade. For England the Commission identified a peak of 1.62 per cent in 1983 steadily falling to 1.41 per cent by 1991. Again alongside this decline, a steady increase was reported in the overall proportion of pupils with statements which reached 2 per cent by 1991. The 1992 *Education Statistics* suggest a figure nearer to 2.5 per cent, as do more recent LEA surveys.

Expenditure statistics are equally instructive. During a decade when spending on primary and secondary education rose in cash terms by 108 per cent the corresponding figure for special schools was 153 per cent. Yet this disproportionate increase coincided with reductions in both school and pupil numbers. The not unreasonable inference drawn by the Audit Commission was one of widespread failure on the part of LEAs to control unit costs by rationalising their provision in line with changes in their placement practices.

In any analysis of policy options for the future, these figures need to be interpreted with great caution. Further movement away from segregated special schools may be pursued for good educational reasons. Significant cost advantages are likely only where existing schools are operating well under their capacities. Local experience suggests that appropriately resourced integration is likely to be more expensive than a reasonably efficient special school. Educational criteria warrant separate application to the various models of provision available to policy makers. What does emerge clearly is a continuing pupil population which challenges the 2 per cent assumption behind much resourcing policy.

ANALYSIS OF MODELS

The basic continuum of organisational options for meeting children's special educational needs remains much as set out by Cope and Anderson (1977) in a study of ways in which units for children with physical disability were operating in the mainstream. Leaving aside the kind of special school without links of any kind to mainstream provision, which must surely now be confined to the residential sphere, six models are readily identifiable in current practice:

- the ordinary school placement without special help;
- the ordinary school with individual ancillary help;
- the ordinary school specially 'resourced', offering part-time withdrawal;
- the special unit offering part-time placement in ordinary classes;
- the special unit within the premises of an ordinary school;
- the special school with mainstream links.

Ordinary Class Options

The opportunity for access to an ordinary (and preferably local) school is the understandable aspiration of the majority of parents whose children have special needs. For this to be possible on a full-time basis without the continuous intervention of a support worker must represent the ideal, since such intervention, unless very sensitively handled, can hinder the very integration that is sought. The advance of technology over recent years has turned the ideal into reality for significant numbers of children. Particularly in the area of physical disability and sensory impairment, where mobility and communication aids have transformed life chances, there is little reason why many pupils who in the 1970s would routinely have been placed in special schools should not now be taking a full part in mainstream education. And at this 'soft' end of the integration debate such pupils are generally welcomed. Their presence in schools bolsters a caring image without significant threat to the League Table score. They carry with them what I have on occasion referred to as a strong 'aagh' factor.

Other ordinary class options bring us into more difficult territory. For large numbers of pupils, access to the National Curriculum is now facilitated by the support of an extra adult in the classroom. Experience suggests that the most successful outcomes are achieved where the support worker is able to engage the pupil with other groups and so avoid acting as an isolating force. Planning is of the essence. There must be a clear perception of the precise purpose of the support - whether purely to provide physical help or perhaps more challengingly, where the presenting difficulty is emotional/behavioural, to keep the child 'on task'. Equally, unless over time the support worker is properly party to the classteacher's lesson planning, the effectiveness of such provision is likely to be much reduced. The difficulties may be even more apparent where placement is part time. Jacklin and Lacey (1991) in assessing initiatives for children with physical disabilities in East Sussex, report problems in achieving effective integration where children fail to 'get in with' other pupils and 'belong' fully to neither of their schools.

The Resourced School

So to the concept of the 'resourced' school with, typically, a recognised ability to cater for a given number of pupils with a defined range of needs. The model has now become commonplace, I suspect, in the area of physical disability where it was applied in the early 1980s by a number of Authorities questioning the continued viability of PH schools with falling numbers. The ability to group together a number of pupils with comparable needs within one ordinary school immediately generates economy of scale. Alongside the educational advantages of good role models and ready access to a broad curriculum, Health Authorities can better meet the needs of pupils in such areas as speech therapy and nursing

care. Less common have been recent steps in authorities, such as my own, to establish this kind of specially resourced provision for pupils with the more severe forms of learning difficulty. Given an additional specialist teacher and three 'care' staff with an adequate resource base, a 300 place primary school has taken eight such children permanently on to its roll.

Children for whom previous integration 'links' had offered the prospect of part-time and largely social integration are now gaining from significant measures of functional integration with age appropriate ordinary classes.

However, such initiatives may not easily be replicated in a climate of LMS, open enrolment and League Tables. These are not pupils who carry with them a significant 'aagh' rating.

Special Unit Options

The Unit has provided, perhaps, the more traditional alternative to special schools. It has seemed particularly appropriate for pupils with moderate or specific learning difficulty and for language disorders where intensive therapy is part of the overall prescription.

At its best, the Unit embedded in a mainstream school is virtually indistinguishable from the resourced model. Where Authorities have been able to provide levels of staffing beyond the basic needs of the Unit's function, this has helped integration into mainstream classes and the Unit has operated effectively as a resource base for the particular group of pupils. The expertise brought into the school by its associated staff has had spin-off benefit for other teachers and pupils and has sometimes been instrumental in developing whole-school policy towards the broader spectrum of pupils with special needs. Unit pupils have had the advantage of ordinary school role models while still getting specialist teaching.

Such positive outcomes have been easier to achieve where the pupil group has itself tended to evoke a naturally sympathetic response. The 'aagh' factor is much more difficult to discern with emotional/behavioural difficulty and the area where that shades into moderate learning difficulty. I have come reluctantly to accept the paradox that successful integration may be more readily achieved for some pupils whose learning difficulty is at the severe rather than moderate end of the range. The child with moderate difficulty has typically already felt failure in or been failed by mainstream school and is not an attractive prospect to the headteacher whose governors are wedded to the philosophy of the market and who take care, as Peter Housden put it, to 'choose their investors'.

Segregated units in mainstream schools

Hence to what is more often the purely locational integration of the segregated unit nominally within the premises of a mainstream school. I recall one 15 place EBD Unit in a large secondary school where pupils' sole contact with the mainstream was timetabled use of the gymnasium. The newly appointed Headteacher caused consternation by 'visiting' in his first week in post - an occurrence unknown in his predecessor's ten years incumbency. The implied isolation for staff as well as pupils of such arrangements causes a greater concern than for most special schools. One would like to think such Units are now rare. They certainly make nonsense of any 'inclusion' philosophy.

The Special School Since 1981

While the number of special schools has reduced, so has the special school purpose changed. The isolated day special school receiving its charges from a wide geographical area and forging no links with ordinary schools is surely a thing of the past. Populations have changed as integration opportunities have expanded and some like Cochrane (1989) see no long term place for separate schools. I shall contend that several roles still have legitimacy within a continuum of local provision.

At the very least, and certainly in closer knit urban authorities like my own, the special schools have been successful in forging links with mainstream neighbours. We could all quote our examples of social, and increasingly educational, integration where schools have been able to exploit their geographical proximity. In the best examples, the movement of pupils has been in both directions to the benefit of mainstream as well as the special school.

In a small number of cases, such as Abbeyfields in Northumberland or Springfield in Derbyshire, such initiatives have led ultimately to organisational merger. Since 1990, a Stockport primary range SLD school has incorporated a 20 place mainstream nursery class which is fully integrated and strongly suported by local parents.

Integration in 'neighbourhood' schools

In some ways more challenging to the administrator have been those initiatives which, as in my own authority, have sought to establish part-time integration experiences not in one neighbouring school but, for individual pupils, in what for them and their parents would have been the ordinary local school. Such initiatives have been attractive to parents but they raise other concerns about continuity of curriculum experience if a child's time is divided between two schools.

From these concerns have emerged more courageous attempts to secure full-time transfer. A particular Stockport project supporting five pupils in this way during 1989/90, demonstrated both the possibilities and the problems of a purist approach to inclusion (Jupp, 1992). While five children with severe learning difficulty had indeed been 'included' in ordinary mainstream classes with one-to-one full-time support, there were nevertheless questions left open about the extent to which functional integration had been achieved, about the degree of responsibility placed on a non-teaching assistant, about the ability of the local Health Authority to provide support to a dispersed population and about the ultimate affordability of such an approach in the face of pressure for efficient use of resources.

What has emerged strongly in all of these developments is that concept articulated by Cochrane (op.cit 1989) of the special school as a 'centre for integration' functioning in an outreach capacity in support of mainstream initiatives. The consequent dilemma has been how to encourage and sustain such moves towards inclusion without at the same time creating a residual special school population of the most severely disabled pupils, least acceptable to the resourced mainstream, and deprived of any real peer group stimulus. Further problems yet to be resolved for those who are integrated arise in my view from the inevitability of a widening cognitive gap as the peer group ages. The point is picked up in the Audit Commission/HMI Study (1992):

> 'the Ministry of Education and the Danish LEAs visited as part of the study reported a trend away from placing pupils with severe learning difficulties in ordinary classes. As such pupils grow older, the gap between them and their peers becomes wider and they become socially isolated'.

Similarly Lynas (1985), in a broad survey of integration practice and Jacklin and Lacey (op.cit 1991), report greater difficulty in maintaining integrated placements negotiated with secondary schools. In my own Authority, these problems of secondary age transfer are yet to be resolved.

I shall return to these issues in considering the impact of the very latest legislation on our ability to develop policy when diversity becomes dependent upon market forces.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING MODELS

Amidst the various initiatives of the last decade, important questions have frequently been raised about the evaluation of alternative modes of provision. For some parents, and the more extreme professional protagonists, it has sometimes seemed that mere locational integration into mainstream has been sufficient justification for organisational change. The assertion of a fundamental 'human right' to attend the same school as the child next door, with consequent obligation on the LEA to provide the resources needed to make it work, has few points of contact with debate about the educational needs of an individual child. Inevitably, therefore, the search for evaluation criteria begs some very basic questions about purposes and the meaning of words like 'integration' and 'inclusion'.

I take it as axiomatic that we strive to provide all children with the maximum access to a broad and balanced curriculum and hence to develop life chances. The 'developmental curriculum' of the late 1970s can be criticised as a cruel euphemism inevitably reinforcing segregationist practice. Yet at the same time it would be foolish not to recognise, as Dearing has done in his final report, that for many of the pupils I am concerned with here, progress in the National Curriculum is unlikely to get beyond 'working towards' Level One. Therefore to attempt precise separation of educational and social objectives and argue the primacy of the former is no more realistic than an assumption that special schools segregate where mainstream schools integrate. Inclusion as a general policy objective derived from an essentially moral position is no guarantee of achieving significant educational gain.

So how are we to evaluate options? From a curricular starting point and recognising the harsher financial realities of public policy, I can work with the 1981 Act principles now repeated in the 1993 legislation. In evaluating models we should be concerned with:

1. Meeting effectively the identified educational needs of the child;
2. Avoiding prejudice to the education of the peer group with which the child is placed;
3. The efficient use of limited resources.

At the same time, and long before the parental preference requirements of the latest legislation, common sense has suggested that pupils are more likely to succeed where the provision being made accords with the wishes of parents and hence has their support and confidence.

Application of these criteria to various integration initiatives in my own Authority - especially where pupils with severe learning difficulty have been concerned - leads me back to the definitional issues identified by Warnock in 1978. What is the educational significance or value of mere locational integration? I am not thinking here simply of the special unit established in some spare classroom of the local primary school but even of some supported placements in age-appropriate mainstream classes. The child who, in such a

setting, relates only to the designated full-time support worker and whose educational experience is incidental (although perhaps related) to general class activity is locationally integrated but little more than that.

Social integration in the sense of joining with mainstream pupils for play activity, for school assemblies and for meal times again is real only to the extent that interaction occurs with other pupils. Local experience of pilot schemes in primary schools has been positive at this level, with mainstream peers quickly accepting the disabled pupil and providing support both in and out of the class.

And so to functional integration, the highest of the Warnock forms. Amidst debate about the validity of distinguishing social from educational objectives for pupils with severe learning difficulty, there can be little argument about the need for functional integration to involve interaction with the teacher, the class and the learning task. Fish (1985) was surely right in his view that integration is a 'process not a state'.

This is an area bedevilled by a general dearth of research evidence on the efficacy of models, with much of the literature based on observation of limited local initiatives. Danby and Cullen (1988) in surveying the limited number of comparative and longitudinal studies, urge caution in applying mainly USA research literature to UK integration options. Experience in my own Authority has highlighted the problems of measuring educational efficacy for special needs pupils and their mainstream peers. Ultimately we fall back on the monitoring of individual pupils against some kind of checklist and try to assure ourselves that if a child has developed no less well in a mainstream setting than might have been expected in special school then the integrated model has proved itself.

FACTORS LINKED WITH SUCCESS

If there are reservations about the methodological rigour of much of the reported evaluation of integration projects, most particularly in the area of severe learning difficulty, it is still possible to see strong common themes in the operational factors associated with positive outcomes. I shall break them down here into six headings though more simply they would seem to divide into factors associated with resourcing and those to do with people.

Resources

Special education is expensive. In Stockport something in excess of 10 per cent of the total education budget is now devoted to special needs in one guise or another. The context is one of a statementing rate that has risen to just over 3 per cent. Given other pressures on budgets limited by ministerial capping powers, there is very real need for policy to be guided by efficiency in the use of resources. Hence, perhaps, as in other areas, there is an instinctive suspicion among parents and indeed teachers that alternative models of provision are driven by a mere search to cut costs.

The evidence from our own initiatives and more generally is to the contrary. Farrell and Sugden (1985), on the basis of a survey of research, contend that it is inevitable that the cost of educating pupils with severe learning difficulty will increase if integration is to be successfully achieved. Local experience in piloting the resourced school model suggests an increase in LEA annual expenditure per pupil of some 12-15 per cent resulting from the eventual planned closure of a 50 place special school. Recognition of such realities and emphasis upon them in the planning of alternative provision is a critical element in success.

Hence Mittler and Farrell (1987) in a particular survey of SLD options highlight the importance of assurances in such areas as premises adaptations, the provision of necessary equipment, ready access to a resource centre perhaps provided by a local special school and, of course, appropriate levels of support staffing.

Much of this no doubt boils down to the establishment of confidence among teachers, parents and the various other parties to any development initiative. The focus on resources has been sharpened by Local Management and those who plan changes in the way provision is organised must overcome understandable wariness in the schools. Successful outcomes appear to be associated with openness about resource implications and involvement of the various parties and agencies at an early stage in project planning.

Health and Other Agencies

Few of the options available to policy makers have been successfully developed by education providers in isolation. From the perspective of the individual special school trying to forge integration links, Jacklin and Lacey (1991) have suggested that the identification of pupils should be influenced by awareness of what therapies and medical support will be available in the mainstream setting. Similarly, they emphasise the value of multi-disciplinary working to generate the feeling among all the staff involved that they are part of a team sharing philosophy and purpose. There are implications for joint working not just between education and health professionals but also drawing in Social Services and relevant voluntary agencies.

The development of *Care in the Community* has been a positive influence in this respect. Its messages have obvious parallels with ideas of educational inclusion and the mechanisms necessary at local level for developing coherent Care Plans have equal relevance to the support of pupils with special needs. My own experience is of Joint Care Planning Teams - mirroring similar Teams involved in the planning of health strategies - one of which has been specifically concerned with children's issues. A forum such as this involving Education, Health, Social Services and representatives of the voluntary agencies can be extremely valuable in the early stages of policy development. There is little point in trying to move pupils out of segregated special education and into mainstream schools if the medical and paramedical attention they need cannot be planned and managed in parallel to support the integrated placement.

It may also be interesting to consider here local responses to the requirements of the Children Act 1989. Information from *Under 8s Review* is now becoming available but the inter-agency working implicit in the process is probably as important as the documentation that is emerging. At the level of the individual child, the experience in Stockport of a multi-disciplinary panel considering the case for formal assessment or the determination of provision has also been valuable. Reference to the Panel can in most cases secure consensus about appropriate provision and therefore widen ownership of the resulting decisions. While these remain ultimately matters for the statementing officer, the advice of the panel comprising representatives of Health, Social Services, psychologists and headteachers is a powerful consideration. The onus upon the various agencies to contribute positively in supporting an integrated placement is much strengthened and hence the likelihood of success the greater.

Teachers

Much of the literature and certainly local experience in my own Authority suggests that the paramount factor in successful outcomes from integration projects is a positive attitude among all the teaching staff involved. Initial misgivings are seen to stem from lack of knowledge or experience. Various studies report quite significant changes in teacher attitudes during the course of particular projects. There are implications here for both the initial and in-service training of teachers (Mittler, 1993) but a more immediate message for policy makers is to give ample time to preparation involving classroom staff at the earliest possible stage. There is obvious tie-up with open discussion about resources and back-up support.

The perspective adopted by Gibb and Donkersloot (1991) from work at a Humberside day special school operating also as a county-wide resource base is interesting here in emphasising the planning of 'desegregation'. By paying equal attention to the process whereby a child leaves the special school, a supportive framework is set up in which the mainstream teacher becomes part of a shared and, ideally, multi-disciplinary process of preparation. The approach has greatest relevance to projects concerned with individual pupil placement in appropriate neighbourhood schools. More radical policy changes involving wholesale merger or closure of institutions inevitably raise larger issues of teacher confidence and security. Success appears to be associated with gradual policy development in which teachers are enabled to feel part of the process and to have some genuine influence over events which may be raising challenges to their own pedagogy. The alienation which can so easily arise from some sense of being experimented upon is the obvious reverse threat to success.

As Fulcher (1989) points out in a study of very different approaches to integration in the USA, Britain, Australia and Denmark, success has very little to do with the nature of policy issued at central government level. In reality, policy is actually made and interpreted at all levels in any system. Of the four approaches examined, the Danish initiatives with their emphasis on pedagogic issues of how and what to teach in regular classrooms are seen to avoid some of the problems found in other more centrally-directed developments. The messages are just as relevant to UK policy planners and suggest that successful outcomes are more likely where adequate time and strategy are devoted to giving teachers a greater sense of technical competence for the teaching task ahead of them. There are implications for the role of advisory services and teacher training institutions which may not be in line with the current notions of 'reform'.

School Management

Evidence of teacher related factors leads into associations with school organisation and management. Many studies have concluded that a key concomitant of successful mainstreaming has been the quality of whatever management team was responsible for the pupils involved. Again experience in my own Authority reinforces just such a view. The degree of personal commitment and enthusiasm displayed by a team of headteacher, deputy head and SEN coordinator in establishing resourced primary school provision for a group of pupils with severe learning difficulty has been infectious within the wider staff group. Such influence goes ultimately way beyond the mere interpersonal and is reflected in the development of whole school policy so that all teachers recognise the shared responsibility for every child. The incorporation of the new dimension within the resourced school can

thus generate wider benefit to the whole school population.

In practical terms, this bonus can then be seen in flexible use of added resources, in the wider deployment of support workers with groups of children and in the involvement of a specialist teacher with pupils other than the integrated group itself. Developments of this sort are clearly the very opposite of that tendency identified by Mouseley *et al* (1993) towards the creation of just 'another specialist area in our schools' which is seen as frustrating externally imposed policy developments in Victoria. Again the message brings us back to preparation, openness and care to establish full 'ownership' among key players.

Parents

Concepts of planning for desegregation and emphasis on working with key players have obvious implications for the involvement of parents. I have already suggested that, beyond any requirements of legislation, educational provision which meets with parental wishes is much more likely to succeed than that in which there is no obvious demonstration of domestic confidence.

This lesson informs LEA practice from the earliest identification of learning difficulty and now comes strongly through the recommendations of the DFE *Code of Practice*. While the reality of finite resources will never allow for every parent to be satisfied, the maintenance of a local continuum of provision can at least offer the prospect of an educational placement broadly in line with parental wishes. Hence during an extensive period of consultation over expanded integration opportunities for pupils with severe learning difficulties, the retention of appropriate special school options somewhere within the system has been a strong policy theme.

Success in individual integration placements has been associated with very close parental involvement in identification, preparation and review. Indeed one valid note of caution about generalising from such initiatives may concern the degree to which positive outcomes have been almost pre-ordained by the involvement of self-selecting and enthusiastic families. Thus the pilot project is somehow 'doomed to success' and emphasises the need to take the views of parents and consult with them afresh before moving from pilot phase to area wide policy change.

In practical terms, experience suggests that the open meeting is a poor vehicle for this sort of discussion. Too often, such occasions become opportunities for the more vociferous pressure groups to dominate and provide a distorted picture of parental views. Successful outcomes appear to be associated more frequently with the taking of time and trouble to discuss policy options with individual parents. After all, if the result of policy change is going to be a variation in pupil placement, then formal contact will be needed anyway in reviewing the content of a statement. As Cochrane (1989) suggests in this context, planners should not assume that their precise version of change is the one that should or could be implemented.

School Governors

The literature on policy options for the 2 per cent gives scant attention to the significance of school governing bodies. Responsibilities for the 'general conduct and curriculum' of schools did perhaps lie dormant under earlier legislation but the 1981 Act imposed a clear duty in relation to pupils with special educational needs. In the light of more recent

changes, it is increasingly apparent that successful policy development in most school contexts will be associated with governing body support and commitment. That is certainly the evidence from recent initiatives in Stockport.

The statutory duty to use 'best endeavours' in relation to SEN has not been universally acknowledged since 1981. Often its significance has been in direct relation to the emphasis given in governor training programmes. My own observations suggest that it has come more regularly on to agendas as a consequence of LMS rather than from any obvious interest in special education. Growing awareness of the resource implications of adequate responses in a context of increasing delegation has made governors very much key players in determining the success of policy initiatives. The temptation to see this as a negative factor is not borne out by experience, though national figures on pupil exclusion and much anecdotal evidence are worrying. There are contrary indications that, for some areas of provision, governors still see scope positively to enhance a school's reputation for caring and for responsibility to its whole community by a successful special needs dimension.

If governors can be assured about adequate resources and support - and these are already seen for other reasons to be factors at the heart of successful initiatives - then their commitment and preparedness to view the provision as a positive entry in the prospectus is a powerful encouragement to staff, parents and pupils alike. My own resourced primary school chairman has become an advocate in the wider forum. Whether the latest changes stemming from the 1993 legislation will enable my optimism to survive remains to be seen.

General

Running through all six of these factors, whether resource or people related, is a common theme of careful and coherent planning. Such activity was inherent in the 'strategic role' envisaged for LEAs in the aftermath of the 1988 Act, and better defined by the Audit Commission in 1990. How far it will survive 'Clause Zero' and the detailed regulations now appearing under the 1993 legislation is another matter.

BEYOND THE 1993 ACT

I have previously acknowledged that the new Act, in contrast to the Baker legislation, has given special educational issues some prominence. Both in debates on the Bill a year ago and in the consultative processes around the Draft Circulars, a number of positives have been applauded. Indeed, while I shall later suggest that the overall effect of the legislation may be hostile to the fostering of inclusion, there is broad acceptance that Part III of the Act is generally helpful. So what are the implications for the future development of special schools?

Progressive Measures

Within the *Code of Practice*, the attention to school-based stages of assessment and provision reinforces good practice established in various local authority areas. It is surely right to emphasise the shared responsibility of schools, LEAs and other agencies in responding to the particular needs of pupils. Such a view supports both the interactive and curriculum perspectives described by Ainscow (1993). The message running through Part II of the Code should help focus attention on classroom factors and at least dampen down some of the LMS induced pressures to seek statutory assessment as a means to the labelling

and early export of a child seen as 'someone else's problem'. Evidence suggests, however, that the Stages procedure is likely to operate more effectively where schools' delegated budgets clearly identify elements of funding linked in some way to the incidence of special need and where implementation has built on sensitive consultation.

Also to be welcomed is the attention given to the role of school governors. As the use of 'best endeavours' becomes underpinned by school SEN Policy Statements for which governing bodies will have responsibility, there will surely be a sharper focus on what each school can and should be doing to provide appropriately for all their pupils' needs. Equally, there should now be more clarity among governors about means of working with the LEA and other agencies in supporting pupils for whom assessment and formal determination are appropriate. Whether reference to all of this in a Report open to questioning at the governors' Annual Meeting for parents constitutes any meaningful accountability is more doubtful. Experience across the country is generally that of minimal parental response to these meetings and of governing bodies optimistically taking absence to denote consent.

Of more practical significance in maintaining the validity and quality of the mainstream options will be the clarification within the Act of the LEA's right of access to all maintained schools for the purposes of monitoring provision under a Statement. Complementing this is the new power under Regulations to direct the admission of a pupil once the school is named in the final Statement. Some of the processes of 'consultation' that will necessarily precede such direction promise to be very interesting. Less contentious and perhaps more useful in the long run is the sharper focus on Annual Reviews within the *Code*. If adequate resources can be given to these Reviews, they should contribute significantly both to the continued success of mainstream options and the efficacy of special school placements.

Finally, a general welcome has been given to the widening of the rights of parents to express a preference. The new provisions will enshrine what already happens in some areas and mirrors my earlier reflection on the significance of parental support for the efficacy of any educational provision. Set alongside references in the *Code* to the continuum of provision matching the Warnock concept of a continuum of need, we seem to have an encapsulation of '*Choice and Diversity*' that supports those who would retain some breadth within service options.

The theme appears again quite strongly in the more recent draft Circular on EBD provision in which options are positively surveyed and reference made to arrangements in which special schools might make 'flexible use of provision from or in an ordinary school'. How sad then that such ideas, far from being developed in the separate Circular on the Development of Special Schools, are completely missing from it. Such concepts do raise interesting questions about funding mechanisms and brokerage when, in some areas at least, the traditional role of the LEA can no longer be assumed.

Threats to Inclusion

While much in the new legislation is welcome, its underlying philosophy is, for me, still fundamentally hostile to the concepts of inclusion developed over recent years. The dangers were very clearly recognised in the failed House of Lords amendments to the original 1993 Bill, which would have redefined and strengthened the LEA strategic role in the whole special needs area. Instead we are left with two very weak sections of the Act which do little more than exhort individual schools to consult with one another about their special

needs policies - and this only two years on from a requirement that all LEAs review provision throughout their areas and present coherent SEN policy Statements in support of schemes for the Local Management of Special Schools.

So where do the greatest threats to inclusive options lie?

More than a third of the total content of the 1993 Act is devoted to Grant Maintained Status. It is surely self-evident that the implicit pursuit of institutional self interest represents a philosophical antithesis to the inclusive polices of the last decade. The idea that 25,000 schools bobbing like corks on the turbulent pond of a social market will direct their attention to young people with special needs is already demonstrable nonsense. Even before comprehensive schools exercise the newly defined right to select a proportion of their entry on whatever curricular or ability grounds they feel able to justify, the evidence is available for what Roy Pryke has termed the 'freezing out' of pupils whose presence (or indeed frequent absence) might prejudice the League Table score. As one local parent governor so succinctly asked during an opting out discussion two years ago, 'does that mean we could keep the dross out?' Such a climate does nothing for authorities like my own, looking to establish new forms of integrated provision for children with severe learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems. Yet draft Circulars continue to profess government commitment to integration in mainstream schools.

Of all the recent documents, the one on the future of special schools has generated the most disappointment. Here was an opportunity to reflect on the rich diversity of good practice developed over the last ten years and to offer advice on a range of organisational models making the expertise of special educators more widely availably to the mainstream, particularly through the more innovative of Local Management Schemes. All this has been completely passed over. Instead, the Circular concentrates on the pursuit and acquisition of Grant Maintained Status.

The concept, as a general model for maintained special schools is one that I cannot begin to square with coherent policy development. If the essence of GMS is of an autonomous institution competing for custom in an educational market and with its survival contingent on keeping numbers up, how can this be in any way compatible with the furtherance of the sort of mainstream options examined earlier in this paper? Will future efforts on the part of LEAs which involve closing special schools as part of a planned shift into resourced mainstream provision be met with an opt out bid, and how will this be dealt with by a Schools Minister who has very recently suggested that special schools are 'uniquely suited' to operate under GM status? As Shakespeare's Duncan has it in *Macbeth*, 'Now has confusion made his masterpiece'.

The elevation of the Grant Maintained concept from being merely an option that Ministers in 1988, thought relevant for some secondary schools, to an explicitly preferred organisational model, yet within a statutory framework that still leaves the decision in the hands of small groups of parents, poses the greatest challenge to policy makers. As Lunt and Evans (1994) noted, there is now emerging almost a geographical divide between areas (predominantly in the south and east) where GM schools form a significant presence and what is still the greater part of the country where the LEA strategic role continues within new partnership arrangements that have emerged strongly under LMS. Intended by no-one and anticipated by few, this regional split now suggests two quite distinct lines of policy option for the future development of special schools and their alternatives. I shall consider them separately.

The Minimalist LEA

Given the strengthening of some aspects of the LEA role in the 1993 legislation, the prospect of wholesale demise has receded. Irrespective of whether they retain separate education committees, local authorities will continue to exercise educational functions, particularly in relation to SEN. Various attempts have been made to define the essential residual role for such an authority if most local schools take GM status. It seems likely that such thinking will be accelerated by the attentions of the Local Government Commission if the politically preferred outcome is to be the small unitary authority. The implications for special schools and their alternatives highlight many of the issues I have already raised.

Such an LEA would largely withdraw from the direct provision of services and operate instead as what Cordingley and Kogan (1993) have described as a 'multi-purpose purchaser'. The responsibility for any strategic planning would have passed to officials of the FAS operating out of offices in York. Whether the Common Funding Formula would offer the prospect of any reduction in regional spending variations or merely strengthen the discrepancies of Standard Spending Assessments remains to be seen. The LEA would be left with a range of pupil specific duties. It might operate much as the 'parents champion' envisaged by the Audit Commission in its own 1992 Purchaser/Provider analysis, though now slightly complicated by the removal of certain key support functions from the Potential Schools Budget and into the mandatory exceptions category.

Behind the rhetoric of 'enabling', where in this scenario are any effective strategic planning initiatives towards inclusion likely to be developed? The mainstream school, conscious of its market, may be happy to look at integrated provision for the physically disabled or perhaps even some 'dyslexics'. It is unlikely to make energetic overtures towards the local special schools whose pupils display the more severe forms of learning or behaviour difficulty. Having managed to export its more troublesome pupils, it will see little incentive to reintegrate them unless of course the local pecking order of parental preference leaves it desperate for any pupil-led funding. Meanwhile the special schools themselves, with the autonomy of GMS and driven by a Common Funding Formula, are unlikely to push for developments which might imply loss of income and even closure. In practice, there would be virtually no difference between the local authority's relationship with such schools and that with the non-maintained sector which presently fills particular niches in the more difficult sectors of the market. Both might feature in a purchasing plan.

To maintain present links between special schools and the mainstream, let alone to foster innovation, work would be needed rapidly to establish a methodology within the CFF supporting 'integration' places along the lines of a few LMSS schemes. Such systems and accompanying service level agreements between schools are as yet untried and offer a fragile basis for national policy development. There may well be no affordable tariff level that could in such a market context secure the kind of mainstream participation implicit in the resourced school initiatives described earlier in this paper. As for the 'rational and coherent planning across the continuum of SEN provision', advocated by Lunt and Evans (1994), we would be left only with Clause 161 of the 1993 Act which enjoins institutions to consult with one another. Perhaps by then the FAS, under pressure to bring some brokerage back to the market, would have its regional offices and be able to take the strategic role, albeit with no local democratic credibility.

Monitoring and review within such a model, where the LEA has withdrawn to its legal minimum position, would have to distinguish between provision for individual pupils

judged through strengthened Annual Review, and OFSTED inspection of the institution. Confidence has yet to be established that the four yearly snapshot will prove adequate in these complex areas of special education or that sufficient relevant expertise will be found to sustain the programme. The minimalist concept leaves no place for the LEA advisory service and it would be for the market place to offer consultancy to assist in responding to OFSTED comment. University departments would obviously be well placed to move into such activity though perhaps with greater facility in the conurbations than in the rural shires.

The vision is hardly convincing. I continue to believe that the maintained education service has a critical contribution to make to the well being of society as a whole. Institutional self-interest within a market place which is naturally cruel offers a bleak prospect for our most vulnerable pupils and for the wider inculcation of social tolerance. How can we rail against a rise in anti-social behaviour and selfishness whilst allowing our education system to rely merely on a devil-take-the-hindmost philosophy? The current regional divide shows very clearly that there is still a viable alternative. It is found in the potential for synergy within local partnerships.

Partnerships for Progress

The diversity in special educational provision that has developed over recent years, and without which parental choice can have little meaning, has not been generated by market forces. It has come about in most parts of the country because committed professionals have worked together to build on what they took to be the principles of the 1981 legislation. In a very real sense, therefore, it is the consequence of shared processes of local planning that are no longer formally recognised in legislation. I suggest that it is through local partnerships embracing both special and mainstream schools within some framework of democratic accountability that we are more likely to foster best practice and benefit all of our pupils.

In my own Authority, the preparation of the LMSS scheme both clarified and strengthened the local partnership. The process was one in which all the special school headteachers were involved from the start. They, together with representatives of mainstream schools with special units and relevant LEA colleagues, made up the project planning team. Delegation of budgets had in fact begun some years previously; by reflecting on this experience, the group tested out together the implications of various funding methodologies. The scheme was thrashed out in a context of shared educational perspectives recognising the agreed roles of the various institutions under an over-arching SEN Policy Statement devised in consultation with other agencies and endorsed by the local authority. Hence practice is seen to be based on a set of values and principles with which all the partners to the process can to a greater or lesser extent identify.

By such means, the sort of flexibility and innovation tantalisingly touched upon in the recent EBD draft Circular is protected. As LMSS becomes embedded in the overall schemes for local management, integration projects such as the special resourcing of designated mainstream schools can be supported by appropriate adjustments to the funding formula and any necessary building adaptations can be incorporated into planned capital programmes. The brokerage for special school outreach work and part-time integration of special school pupils is provided by the LEA and the kind of pilot or experimental work that has been so important in developing practice over recent years is funded from the 'LEA

Initiatives' component of the Potential Schools Budget. Far from being 'held back to feather-bed bureaucracy', this is money deployed in schools on the basis of consultation within the partnership. All locally maintained schools are stakeholders in such a partnership through their headteachers and governors and recognise the community imperatives that go beyond short-term institutional interest.

Within such a framework, the role of the special school can continue to evolve and the expertise of its teachers be shared creatively with mainstream. Some may recognise in this the basic tenets of the Audit Commission's 1990 analysis of the future role of LEAs coming to terms with their loss of 'empire'. The partnerships I advocate have five key features relevant to special school provision:

- a context of shared values and local democratic accountability;
- clear and equitable funding mechanisms for local mangement, with central retentions reflecting educational purposes;
- SEN policy focusing on support for schools in their work to meet the needs of all pupils, with special schools retained as centres of expertise and outreach;
- monitoring of schools which builds on processes of supported self-evaluation;
- joint planning arrangements with other agencies.

To the beleaguered education officer, such arrangements offer some prospect of maintaining that planned diversity within which the needs of pupils and the aspirations of their parents can be met. For special schools, they can protect a developmental role, avoiding segregationist retrenchment. For the mainstream, they preserve a deeper purpose than mere institutional aggrandisement.

Which of these options for future policy development becomes the new reality is now ultimately dependent on school governors and local parents. Current evidence is that partnership concepts have significant appeal in many areas of the country. The alternative would probably bring little comfort to the author of a 1937 Ministry of Education pamphlet. In considering the role even then of 'experimental' special schools, he was concerned that, '... segregation during childhood tends to produce misfits in later life'.

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PLANNING AND DIVERSITY: SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES

A response by Seamus Hegarty

I am going to start by setting a couple of puzzles for you. Then I shall say a little about an aspect of special schooling that has been of interest to us at NFER for some time, namely the outreach activities that special schools engage in and, in particular, the links they have with ordinary schools. Finally, I shall turn to the future and engage in some speculation about the future of special schools.

TWO PUZZLES

Puzzle No. 1

The first puzzle is this. If everybody is in favour of integration and the ordinary school is the option of first choice for every child, how is it that there is so much variation in the use made of special schooling? Consider the position across the developed world. If we take 1000 Dutch children, then on average 45 of them will be in a special school. Cross the border into Denmark and six or seven of a thousand Danish children will be in a special school. Traverse the globe to New Zealand and the number drops to three per thousand. If you go around the education systems of the developed world, you will find that the use made of special schooling will for some countries occupy almost any position between these extremes.

In this country the average is 14 or 15 per thousand but this conceals very considerable variation. According to figures produced for the Centre for Studies of Integration by Will Swann (1991), the proportion of the school age population in special schools ranges from 0.55 per cent in Barnsley to 3.05 per cent in Lambeth. Now, there are many reasons why education systems vary from place to place but it is quite difficult to understand why there should still be so much variation in the use made of special schooling given the near-universal espousal of integration.

Puzzle No. 2

My second puzzle relates to the evaluation of special needs initiatives. I was struck by Max Hunt's comment on the 'problem of measuring educational efficacy for special needs pupils and their mainstream peers'. He draws attention to the perennial difficulty of deciding whether a particular pupil is benefiting from an integration placement or not. I tend to agree with him that we have to fall back on expert judgement. Controlled experimental designs have limited credibility here. If we can establish learning profiles - of strengths and weaknesses - for particular pupils, then experienced teachers can judge whether these pupils are achieving their potential. And if they are achieving their potential in an integrated setting, there is little more to be said - the integrated provision has established itself as a worthwhile option.

It is right and proper that integrated provision should be subjected to scrutiny in this way. But - and this is my second puzzle - why do we not subject special schools to the same kind of scrutiny? It is not as if special schools are institutions like prisons or hospitals

where it might be argued that admission criteria are clear cut. There are very few children who are automatic candidates for special school. Should we not therefore be constantly asking of those children who **are** in special schools whether they are doing as well as they might be doing in an ordinary school setting? This does not seem to happen, and we are left with an asymmetry between segregated and integrated provision in terms of the extent to which they are expected to justify themselves by reference to empirical outcomes.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

I turn now to outreach activities from special schools. As Max Hunt notes in his paper, there is a good deal of such activity about. We conducted an initial study into the topic at the National Foundation for Educational Research in 1985 (Jowett, Hegarty and Moses, 1988). Somewhat to our surprise, we found that nearly three quarters of special schools reported having a current link with an ordinary school and a further ten per cent proposed developing such a link in the future. The links encompassed a wide range of activities, involving both pupils and staff from special and ordinary schools. They also entailed joint use of plant and curricular materials.

We have had the opportunity to repeat this study recently and a report will be available shortly from Felicity Fletcher-Campbell. I do not intend to say very much about it today but there are a few points that should be made.

1. There are still lots of links between special schools and ordinary schools; if anything, they have intensified since 1985. In the 1993 data, 83 per cent of special schools reported a current link with one or more ordinary schools. These links encompassed the wide range of activities reported in the earlier study.
2. The curriculum environment of the ordinary school was seen as a critical factor, and it was considered very important that staff address any mismatch between the learning experiences on offer in the special school and in the ordinary school.
3. Concerns were expressed over the resourcing base. Link activities were seen to incur definite costs for the participant schools, and it must be questioned whether some links would survive unless an explicit funding mechanism is established.

THE NEXT TEN YEARS

I would now like to turn to the future and, taking a ten year time span, reflect on the possible situation of special schools in this country in 2005.

Some of the predictions one might make about special schools are relatively straightforward and - in terms of speculating about the future - of lesser interest. I predict that there will still be a sizeable number of special schools, probably catering for a slightly smaller percentage of the school population. If pressed to quantify this, I would suggest that there will be at most one per cent of the school age population in special schools and quite possibly less than that. Some consequences follow from that. First of all, special schools will be educating pupils with more severe and complex learning difficulties. Their unit costs will be more expensive because they will need to have smaller teaching groups and draw on a wider range of expertise.

Other factors too will push costs up. Buildings will be better as old and unsuitable accommodation is taken out of stock. There will be greater use of information technology,

both to control the physical environment, enhance mobility, improve personal safety and so on and to facilitate teaching and learning and pupils' access to the curriculum. It is likely too that there will be more use of residential provision consequent on the smaller numbers of special schools and their uneven distribution (as some local authorities may well dispense with special schools entirely). Underpinning all of these factors will be the rising tide of expectations, which will affect demand for educational provision generally but which is likely to be especially pressing in respect of pupils with the most severe difficulties.

One could carry on in this vein, elaborating changes that fall within the existing concept of a special school. I would like to take a few moments to move to a broader canvas and sketch out a scenario that entails changes in the very notion of a special school.

The special school as a multi-purpose institution

The developments I have been talking about entail a considerable investment - in buildings and equipment, in software and other materials, and especially in staff and expertise. If we want to capitalise on this investment and especially on the expertise that some special schools have been building up, we need to move beyond the ad hoc outreach activities identified to date. We must move to the notion of a special school as a multipurpose institution, that would for example:

- be a source of information on all matters relating to special educational needs;
- conduct assessment particularly in difficult cases;
- provide advice, consultancy and support;
- engage in curriculum and materials development;
- evaluate software, equipment and other materials;
- conduct research and run experimental projects;
- contribute to professional development, whether through INSET courses, attachments, workshops, joint working, or so on;
- be a resource for parents;
- provide counselling and careers advice for older students.

All this takes us well beyond the familiar notion of a school, be it special or otherwise. It entails elements of numerous existing agencies such as a teachers' centre, an advisory service, a library and information service, a pilot project, a resource centre, a training institution and a careers service.

Before dismissing this as utopian or unnecessary since the functions in question are already well serviced, one should consider two facts:

1. Each of these functions is being carried out by some special schools already.
2. The agencies who might be expected to provide the services implied here are not delivering them universally across the country.

What I am suggesting is that we seek deliberately and systematically to create a new kind of institution that would be a powerhouse for special education in its locality. Ideally, this would take place within the ambit of a local authority but it could happen outside it if

different funding imperatives prevailed. Such an institution would have direct full-time, or near full-time, responsibility for a small number of pupils but would have an indirect responsibility for a wide range of matters relating to special educational provision in its own community.

I recognise that there are difficulties with this concept - and it would be very easy to enumerate them - but there are difficulties too with not doing something like this:

- special schooling withering on the vine;
- special needs expertise being dissipated;
- major gaps continuing in special needs provision in ordinary schools;
- failure to capitalise on our investment in special education;
- children and young people with special educational needs not getting the best we can give them.

If we are to move significantly in this direction - other than in a small number of pioneering examples already known to us - there is need of three things:

1. Major investment in training and professional development.
2. Overhaul of the funding basis. Recent initiatives such as local management of schools have helped by drawing people's attention to the cost-incurring elements of provision. But, so far as what I am talking about here is concerned, that is only the beginning and much more work needs to be done.
3. Imagination to go beyond the here and now and to escape the constraints of a hundred years of history of special schooling.

In summary, I am saying that in the medium term there will still be a role for special schools. Not only that, it will be a more important and more challenging one than special schools have at the moment. They will retain responsibility for the full-time education of some pupils but, beyond that, they have the potential to become beacons of excellence in special educational provision, gathering and disseminating information, animating the practice of ordinary schools and others concerned for pupils with special educational needs and helping to transform both the concept and the practice of special education.

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PLANNING AND DIVERSITY: SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES

A response by David Williams

In responding to Max Hunt's paper as a teacher trained in the 50's and who first taught in special schools in the 60's, I am in a good position to consider the provision for pupils with special educational needs today compared with 30 years ago.

In many ways I feel fortunate at having entered teaching and special education at that time: it was indeed the Golden Age of Certainty.

As a primary school teacher, one knew that if you were teaching the A stream, the 11+ was the be all and end all. The mornings were largely composed of English and Maths with Progress Papers thrown in for good measure. The afternoons were reserved for more relaxing activities; cutting, sticking and stitching and a modicum of other subjects. There was no problem with History, for Unstead's Series of four books took you very nicely through each of the four years between 7 and 11, from prehistoric man through to the Industrial Revolution. Access to all the other subjects of the curriculum followed a similar pattern. Throw in a game of football for the boys on the cholera patch in the adjacent cemetery and a reading of *Wind in the Willows* on Friday afternoon and one could go home for the weekend knowing with certainty that a job had been well done.

Below the A stream were the B and C streams and sometimes a rag tag and bobtail group who were called the remedials who were often taught in the boiler house or cloakroom as there wasn't always a classroom available for them.

Children with additional difficulties were each ascertained quite clearly and distinctly into one of ten categories and there were ten types of special school to cater for each in turn. Junior Training Centres catered for the mentally handicapped who were conveniently labelled ineducable. If there was any doubt about the correct category, you labelled the children 'delicate' and probably sent the child to an Open Air School where breakfast, dinner and tea were provided, with a sleep after lunch for children and perhaps for supervising staff as well.

A little later, of course, the title ESN was utilised for large numbers of the ascertained group. There was, perhaps, surprisingly even for the time, no embarrassment about the use of the label "educationally sub-normal".

Again, there was little doubt about what to teach this group because Tansley and Gulliford told us very clearly all about the essentials, in their handbook, which became the Bible to the trade, *The Education of Slow Learning Children.*

Life was, in this tight knit structure, very certain, straight-forward and uncomplicated, rather like village life controlled by the squire and the vicar. No difficult questions asked. We knew where we were going, what we were doing, and very proud we were of that.

A year's secondment at an educational institution to get your diploma in the education of handicapped children after which you were not only made professionally in terms of swift promotion but you felt that you were amongst the cream of the profession. You were the expert, the one with knowledge. You were the one who could help these handicapped children, and help them you did. They inevitably left at 16 and, of course, obtained full

time employment immediately. These were the times of certainty. I am not saying all was perfect but life was ordered, orderly and secure.

As Max Hunt's paper clearly demonstrates, all these educational certainties of life have gone. In times of constant change, what certainties can there be?

I find it interesting to reflect that, bombarded as we are now with ever more complex legislation which purports to offer more choice to parents and pupils, we have, paradoxically, only succeeded in imposing increased rigidity and inflexibility. I feel that, as a result of all these changes, the children about whom we are concerned, those children who are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, might be made somewhat more vulnerable and more disadvantaged as a result of the very legislation which, one is informed, is being enacted to benefit them.

There is, for example, the rigidity of the Statement of Special Educational Need. Once written and agreed, this document is difficult, time consuming and expensive to amend. Schools have to be certain that they can meet the needs of the pupil as listed in the document. If they wish to change the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum or re-order the educational priorities for a pupil or offer temporary boarding to a day pupil, then the statement has to be amended. This is surely going to bring problems to schools when they are obliged to accept pupils with statements - as they will be in forthcoming legislation.

In this context I was disappointed that the DFE did not consider further in the Regulations the recommendation of the Third Report of the Education Select Committee which proposed that Statements should be completed in two distinct phases. The initial first part would determine the learning difficulties of the pupil and identify a school which could attend to those difficulties. But then it would be the responsibility of the receiving school, after an agreed period of time and following discussions with the parents, to complete the statementing process by determining quite clearly in priority order the educational and other needs of the pupil, including of course the elements of the National Curriculum which would and would not apply.

Recommendation 12 reads:

> 'We recommend that the purpose of Statements should be limited to the specification of needs, targets and resourcing arrangements and where provision should be made. A separate document negotiated with the provider, should specify a programme for the child with more detailed objectives. This document should be produced within a finite time limit after the Statement is made, and be subject to regular review'.

This procedure would not only be helpful to parents but would also be supportive to schools when having OFSTED inspections. Far more importantly, the educational prescription for the pupil would be appropriate, relevant and meaningful. You will recall that Sir Ron Dearing has proposed in his final report that there should be full negotiation with parents over the nature and content of the curriculum where pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. It really is quite unacceptable for schools to be instructed to accept a pupil with a Statement when need and curriculum content have already been determined by third parties and then possibly to be subject to criticism because needs of the pupil are not being met. It is far better to leave the final judgement regarding curricular priorities to the staff of the schools and the parents.

A home/school curriculum contract signed by both parties sent to the LEA and inserted in the Statement would give the DFE and OFSTED the safeguards they require to ensure that schools were acting professionally and in the best interests of the pupils. This procedure would certainly ensure that relevance was given similar high priority along with breadth and balance. I do believe that future generations will consider with disbelief the current DFE/SCAA/OFSTED view that the National Curriculum is good therefore it is good for all pupils. Max Hunt mentions the difficulties which mainstream schools encounter when attempting to deal with an ever-widening cognitive gap. If you broaden this difficulty to a range of special needs, the size of the global problem can be much better appreciated.

We talk endlessly about a continuum of special educational need and whilst specific provision can be made for the individual pupil in a variety of ways, it remains extremely difficult for a child with a statement to move between different types of provision. Problems arise not only because of the rigidity of the statementing process but also, of course, because of funding difficulties.

It really makes no sense, when trying to meet the needs of children with statements who have the most complex learning difficulties, to limit the provision to one specific educational establishment.

I have physically disabled children in my school who would benefit enormously from short periods of full-time education in mainstream settings. I have other parents and indeed staff who would like older children to have experience of full-time mainstream secondary education but they will not take the necessary action to have the statement amended permanently for fear that their child would not cope, that they would fail and would have to return to a special school. In the present climate this would be seen as failure. On the other hand, I am sure that there are pupils with special needs in mainstream schools who would benefit in the same way from an agreed period of full-time education in a special school.

In an ideal world ought it not to be possible to have flexibility built into the system? This would add yet further to choice and diversity and would give encouragement to parents who still see making a decision regarding school placement as a long term commitment which once made is difficult to change or adapt. Why not therefore bring special schools more fully into the range of provision rather than thinking of them simply as alternatives at the very margins of provision?

The same principle ought to be available to members of staff who could in the same way share knowledge and expertise. In response to Max Hunt's paper on provision, therefore, I would make a plea for less rigidity and more flexibility in provision at all levels. I am realistic enough, however, to realise that if such interaction was difficult in the past when all schools were administered by the LEA, how much more difficult is it going to be when there is a hotch potch of schools in an area; some GM some LEA and all vying one with another for custom and cash.

I have at this point to make it clear that I have no problem coming to terms with the concept of the segregated special school, with the concept of segregated education. A lifetime's teaching experience has proved beyond doubt the benefits to some pupils and some parents of this type of provision. I see no need to apologise for the continuation of separate schools where they are needed to meet the special educational needs of some pupils throughout the range. I note that in his paper Max Hunt relates many of his comments to pupils with physical disabilities or those with severe learning difficulties. I have a concern for those pupils who are blind/deaf, blind/SLD, with severe behavioural

problems and those with the most profound and complex learning difficulties. Where do these children figure within the six model range he mentions?

In this context I was very pleased to note that in the Draft Circular on the Development of Special Schools, the Department recognised the need for a strong and vibrant special school sector. It has to be acknowledged, as highlighted in the substantive paper, that populations within special schools are declining and are becoming more exclusive. But then this has always been the case. Over the years, special schools have reflected changes in legislation, changes in attitudes, changes in medical procedures or changes in the structure of society at large.

A PH school in the 1950's would have had a population consisting of debility, heart cases, post polios, asthma, bronchitis, epilepsy, and so forth. In 1970 my school would have had over half its number affected with spina bifida and about 10 per cent cerebral palsy. Today those percentages are directly reversed. The numbers of pupils on roll are broadly the same but there has been a significant population shift. Staffing needs have also changed: in 1970 with 90 children I employed three classroom assistants (SSAs), today I employ 18. A high proportion of my pupils are totally dependent on adult assistance for all needs including access to the curriculum.

Similar movements can be found in schools which take pupils with MLD. In times gone by, social deprivation was the major cause of learning difficulties. Some years ago, significant behavioural problems coupled with slow learning was the primary reason for admitting to MLD schools. Now the position has come full circle and pupils in these schools today often have massive social deprivation. Over three quarters of the pupils of some schools have an entitlement to free meals. This means, as one head put it, 'You have to be so poor it just isn't true'.

In highlighting the range of provision for SEN, Max Hunt fails to mention the contribution made by the residential special school. Although somewhat unfashionable, I do feel that boarding education still has a significant role to play in meeting the needs of statemented pupils - often those with the most profound and complex physical and medical difficulties or those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. In some areas, it is still necessary to board in order to access the specialist provision required and where this is only made on a regional or national basis.

As with other special schools, the role of the residential special school has changed. Agreeing to allow your child to live away from home is nowadays not so often acceptable to parents. Whether this is for family or financial reasons is often difficult to say. However having a residential facility available in certain situations for certain pupils is very important and still essential.

This matter is covered in the Draft Circular entitled, 'Pupils with Problems'. In Para.70, the DFE agrees that the correct curriculum and the correct type of care can in certain situations only be met in a specialist residential setting. It goes on to say that for these children boarding away from home may be wholly appropriate and beneficial and may indeed be the only way for them to make progress. Where family support is lacking or inadequate or family influence is harmful, children need to be provided with the security of an assured framework in which they can learn and develop. This section is developed into a general appeal for all departments of local authorities and the health authorities to work closely together to evaluate and monitor all placements perhaps through a Joint Standing Panel. From my own experience, I know that having short term boarding available to

parents is very much welcomed and a number of recent OFSTED reports have highlighted the benefits of temporary boarding to permit the development of the skills of independent living.

In the present climate, where one department of local government is often keen to transfer financial responsibility for provision on to another, there is a clear danger that some local education authorities will not see access to boarding as a clear educational need and will seek to off-load the responsibility to health or social services. These are trends that need to be carefully monitored.

In his excellent and comprehensive paper, Max Hunt covers most competently and thoroughly many of the current issues in new legislation which are giving rise to concerns and worries: GM status for special schools; the establishment of the funding agencies who will be responsible more and more for planning and provision. Local Government legislation will probably bring into being new, often smaller unitary authorities. Many of us would query their ability to provide for mainstream education let alone for the whole range of special educational needs.

I began my commentary by reflecting that in the early years of my career everything was secure and known. I do feel that with the introduction of so much new legislation and so many new regulations, we are now moving rapidly into the area of the unknown:

- What will the implications of all this legislation be in the future for this vulnerable group of pupils?
- What will the pattern of provision be in five or ten years time?
- How will the FAS cope with the planning of special educational provision within a locality, regionally and nationally?
- Who will oversee the FAS to ensure that deficiencies in provision do not arise?
- What will be the results of giving parents a greater degree of choice of school for their statemented child?
- How long will it be before community trusts propose charging schools particularly the GM Special Schools for the services they provide?
- Have choice and diversity given way to confusion and uncertainty?

Many of us working in education at the moment do not have a clear and distinct picture in our minds of the pattern of special educational provision over the next five to ten years. I hope that our colleagues working at the Department do have a clear picture of the implications of their current policies. If the pattern of special education for pupils with special needs throughout the continuum and through the range of learning difficulty is not clear, then we may be sure that our most disadvantaged pupils will be even more disadvantaged with the destruction of those specialist facilities which they most need.

RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY: DO SPECIAL SCHOOLS HAVE A CONTINUING ROLE?

Summary of the discussion by Dr Philippa Russell

Discussions about the future role of special schools have dominated many debates about the future of special education over the past decade. The Audit Commission challenged assumptions about some LEA placement policies and about the extent to which children with special needs could and should increasingly be supported in mainstream schools. Discussants at this seminar reflected upon the subsequent debates; about the new requirements for greater specificity in assessment, placement and review in the Code of Practice and about the importance of considering both the strengths and the inherent difficulties of an education system which provides very diverse options for pupils with special educational needs.

The White Paper, *Choice and Diversity* (Department for Education, 1992), sets out five key themes, namely:

- quality;
- diversity;
- parental choice;
- school autonomy;
- accountability.

All five have major implications for the future role of special schools and the extent to which mainstream schools can respond to diversity in the pupil population, when such diversity is accompanied by complex special needs.

Participants felt that the Warnock 'categories' of levels of integration - social, locational, functional - had initially helped to create an awareness that integration is a process not a single state and that placement is not, in effect, integration unless matched by a range of appropriate support services. However the growing aspirations towards the meeting of a continuum of needs within mainstream - with support - and the expectations of the new generation of parents that their children will, in general, be educated alongside their peers have not always been achieved.

Several discussants argued that the notion of *choice*- implicit within both the 1981 and 1993 Education Acts - is an illusion. The disability movement is currently strongly rejecting the current lack of real choice, when compulsion is ultimately utilised in determining where a child might be educated. A statutory assessment system may be perceived as a means of allocating an equitable and an appropriate level of resourcing. In practice, it may also act as a 'gate-keeper' and restrict choices on parents against their wishes.

There was equal concern that *diversity* was incompatible with a market force approach which is rapidly 'rationalising' school places. Diversity and choice are possible only if there is some surplus (and hence some flexibility) within the system. The education landscape has changed, in particular because of the growing impact of the consequences of the 1988 Education Act and LMS.

Diversity will only be possible if:

1. The principle of a 'free market' means that there are sufficient, adequate and available options for parents to choose between. But this option is unlikely to be achieved because empty places reflect loss of income in a commercial model of service delivery;

   or -

2. The LEA or a similar body is operating a strategic policy across a whole locality in order to ensure a range of options for pupils with special needs.

Parental choice will not only affect families with children with special needs. The preferred options of the wider group of parents of children without special needs will also affect the admissions arrangements, as will the Governors' priorities and the availability of places of pupils with special educational needs. In an increasingly competitive society, with highly individualistic attitudes towards the definition of success in educational terms, some pupils are likely to be seen as too expensive. In such a situation, the choice of the majority may in effect over-ride the choice of the family or child in question to be part of their local school community.

Should parents be able to choose a special school for their child? There were views that if the element of compulsion was removed from assessment (as in New Zealand), then parents could make real choices - which might include special schools. There would be greater collaboration between both school sectors and the role of the special school as resource centre could be better developed.

School autonomy within the special school sector worried some delegates. The guidance on the development of special schools focuses primarily upon the development of grant maintained (self-governing) special schools. Since all pupils in such schools will have statements (and, hence, use resources allocated on the basis of an LEA's assessment arrangements and budgetary arrangements), the model offers little positive thinking to the much wider options for special schools at the end of the 20th century. And how will accountability of grant maintained special schools be expressed, especially when they are small and may have opted for GM status because of low pupil intake or to avoid closure?

SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND GRANT-MAINTAINED STATUS: A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS?

Until the Education Reform Act 1988, the basic structure between schools, governing bodies, LEAs and Central Government had been largely unaltered since the 1944 Act. One participant noted that the Audit Commission's concern about the static nature of some special schools and the use of such schools as 'refuges' for those rejected by the rest of the system had highlighted the problems, which existed even under strategic direction of the LEA, when special schools seeking a more interactive relationship with the mainstream sector could not persuade their mainstream partners to accept children back from the special sector.

Another discussant likened the growing antipathy to 'children with problems' to the current debate about 'crime and punishment' in our society, with growing public perceptions that children who do not 'fit' should be placed in separate provision to protect themselves (and others). It was also noted that the special school sector is not a single

interest group. It includes highly sophisticated education services for children with complex and low-incidence disabilities. Many schools work as a service rather than as a single building-based school, and those schools catering for the socially unacceptable children with EBD and similar problems can frequently not make the ties and connections with their wider school community that they would like. For instance, it is rare for neighbourhood schools to wish to accept responsibility for EBD units (however defined), whereas many schools were positive about including special resources for children with physical or sensory disabilities or severe learning difficulties. In effect, the notion of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor has returned in some policy making and strategic thinking at national level. 'Custodial' as opposed to 'developmental' concepts are not helpful in debates about the future contribution of special schools.

Considerable concern was expressed about longer-term effects of GM special schools. Since the mid-1980s, when the NFER carried out its first survey of the linkage arrangements between special and mainstream schools, the percentage of special schools with formal link arrangements with neighbourhood schools has increased from 75 per cent to 85 per cent. But there was scepticism that such arrangements would survive a market force approach. Would governors of either sector wish to or be able to fund such inter-changes? The Audit Commission had referred to 'institutional inertia' in changing the culture of special schools. But many mainstream schools also had failed to accept a culture based on a continuum of special needs and the principle that schools should provide an inclusive and supportive community for a much greater diversity of children.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE: MEASURING QUALITY

The theme of quality assurance and ongoing monitoring and evaluation has been running through all human services. Several participants drew attention to the current debate about what constitutes an effective health service or delivery of community care within organisational structures that are intended, on the one hand, to demonstrate financial efficiency but, on the other hand, to meet highly individual needs in a consumer-led way. There was some discussion of the current approach to measuring outcomes within the education system, namely:

The preferences of parents

Parents are the 'purchasers' of education services by expressing choice under open enrolment arrangements. In practice, statutory assessment, shortage of places in popular schools, and the determination of some schools to choose parents rather than vice versa, have 'bucked the system'.

OFSTED inspections

There are serious questions to be asked about the availability of enough inspectors with SEN experience and whether in consequence *all* provision for pupils with special needs will be adequately inspected.

Governing bodies

With new school policies, governors' duties and responsibilities to pupils with special needs will be clarified. But their priorities may not be a more inclusive school and many governing bodies have no special needs expertise.

Government guidance

As a framework for meeting special needs probably into the 2lst century, the Code of Practice has been widely welcomed. But clarification of duties may be daunting and there is a collective reluctance post-Dearing in many schools to introduce additional new procedures.

The LEA

Where there are no or few grant maintained schools, the LEA (notwithstanding a reduced central budget) can still plan; regulate; provide a strategic over-view and safeguard the system. The advent of the Funding Agency and the dual responsibilities in some local authority areas leaves much cause for concern.

Individual assessment and review

The Code of Practice establishes a clearer framework for identification; assessment; action and review right from the first expression of concern about a special educational need. The irregularities between LEAs in terms of numbers of children with statutory assessments and statements may disappear. There will be greater transparency within the assessment systems (however defined). But more determined parents - and the new SEN Tribunal system - may not diminish time spent on statutory assessment. Parents wishing for either local 'inclusive' education for their child or perhaps distant residential and highly specialist special school provision will be challenging the purchasers to provide what they, as the customers, actually want.

The individualising of special educational needs

Whilst crucial in terms of planning early intervention, this could also create perverse incentives to identify and specify special needs primarily as a way of ear-marking individual resources. Special schools represent a very special and costly resource. If they are not to become the custodians of the children who are seen as 'hard to place' or unacceptable to other parents, and if they are to be allowed to diversify and identify new roles for their expertise, then *individual needs* have to be balanced within an overall LEA policy about collective provision which may resource *schools* rather than individual *children*, and where the context as well as concept of special needs is constantly challenged.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The group felt that - at least for the foreseeable future - special schools would continue to form part of a diverse range of options for children with special educational needs. As the epidemiology of childhood disability changes (with more children with severe difficulties in the community), special schools themselves would need to change.

Future options for exploration include:

- **The special school as a service** - i.e. the special school as a resource to the wider school community, not necessarily with pupils regularly on site. It was acknowledged that this trend would have major implications for staff training and development and for the creation of an interactive culture within mainstream schools, which would accept new community partnership of this kind.
- **Providing a regional service** for children with low incidence disabilities (again, not necessarily on an 'in-school' basis).
- **Training for special educational needs** - perhaps on a wider than LEA basis, e.g. for medically fragile children where special schools may have specialist health care input which could be shared with other community services), or in the use of IT.
- **Providing a 'safe place'** on a short-term basis for those children whose subsequent inclusion would necessitate intensive support and the integration of child health and other provision at an early stage, or who might require a sophisticated and specially adapted school environment for a particular period of time.

Problems for the future remained:

- difficulties about recoupement;
- the use of special schools, particularly in the non-maintained sector for social care rather than education;
- the problems of running two separate models of education and the need to seriously consider unlocking some of the currently separate resources and reinvesting them in community provision, albeit safeguarding and developing new forms of expertise.

There was widespread concern about the difficulties of moving children between sectors and the reluctance of the mainstream system to receive children back from special schools. It was noted that institutions are as much created by those who do not wish for new neighbours as by those services which appear to retain their service users for unnecessary periods of time.

Finally, there was widespread agreement that special schools cannot be seen in isolation from other schools within an increasingly turbulent and changing education landscape. Growth and change are not possible without strategic planning; without adequate and equitable resourcing and without a major commitment to professional development, organisational change, school development (within both school sectors) and a philosophical as well as organisational framework which permits the education system to evolve and learn from experience at local level.

The spectre of local government review exercises many minds - but in the medium term at least special schools are likely to stay. Looking to the future and the possibility of a genuinely inclusive education system, it may be *their* growth, development and change

which will finally demonstrate that all children *can* be educated with their peers and within a system which is sensitive to consumer as well as organisational and financial constraints and which responds to the needs of those who are seen as particularly challenging to that system.

Reference

Department for Education (1992) *Choice and Diversity*. London: HMSO.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

by Peter Mittler

During the 1970s and 1980s, educational integration was seen by many as a moral imperative and its attainment took on some of the elements of a crusade. Inevitably, in such an ideological climate, the issues became over-simplified, even if in a 'good cause'. Special schools came to be portrayed as inherently bad because they segregated children from their peers, because - by definition - they provided an inadequate preparation for the 'real world' and also because their teachers tended to under-estimate the abilities of their pupils. It was only last year that a well-known headteacher of a special school stated in public that, 'There is no such thing as a good special school'. Conversely, ordinary schools were sometimes portrayed as *ipso facto* providing a better environment, both socially and educationally, and able to do everything that special schools claimed to do - only better.

Today, the issues are presented in a less simplistic and polarised light and are recognised as exceedingly complex. But the commitment in principle to what we now call inclusive education has increased and there is wide agreement in the UK and in many other countries that this is the right goal to pursue.

Many staff working in special schools seem to share this view and are actively working towards inclusion at local level. Link schemes which began in the 1980s have not only survived but grown in quantity and scope, despite the fears generated by LMS and the avalanche of legislation and regulation which has engulfed all schools since 1988. Teachers in both sectors have worked hard to end the isolation of the special school, with the result that there is now a much greater range of professional and personal contacts between them.

The national curriculum, despite its limitations, its over-prescriptiveness and its original total neglect of children with special educational needs, has at least provided all teachers and all schools with a common language and a more inclusive framework for all. It has also brought out the best in teachers working in special schools, determined as they were not only to insist on their pupils' entitlement to the 'broad, balanced and relevant' curriculum but to develop innovative and imaginative methods to ensure that this became a classroom reality. These efforts have impressed HMI as well as colleagues in ordinary schools and have resulted in better working relationships being developed through training courses and joint working.

Contributors to this volume reflect the increasing complexities of developing policies which are genuinely responsive to the individual needs of children, which respect the views of parents but which are nevertheless consistent with the realities of day to day decision making on the ground. Max Hunt, moving from a post of Assistant Education Officer with responsibility for special educational needs to Chief Education Officer with accountability for the whole service in the same LEA, writes from a position of considerable experience in balancing the many different elements involved in moving forward to 'responsible inclusion', far removed from the 'maindumping' described in some of the anecdotal accounts of school integration which have appeared in print. His is one of the few LEAs that has commissioned more than one independent evaluation, with results that reflected a strong commitment to inclusion of children with severe learning difficulties in resourced primary schools on the part of teachers and other staff in both ordinary and special schools, as well as parents in both sectors. The evaluations underlined once again the crucial role of a well trained and innovative support service, the need for high level political and

management support and above all adequate and sustainable resourcing.

Where do we go from here?

The post-Dearing curriculum reviews included a special needs representative on each working party and elicited a commitment from the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority that each programme of study must be accessible to the whole range of pupils with SENs. SCAA has a Council member and a professional officer to ensure that this commitment is reflected in practice. The Dearing review provides an opportunity for special and ordinary schools to develop a more balanced curriculum which includes but also transcends the national curriculum.

The notional relaxation and 'freeing up' of the curriculum, the apparent re-empowerment of teachers to carry out their own assessment and the imminent SCAA research commission designed to identify and disseminate examples of good practice in recording and celebrating the achievement of pupils at Level 1 and between Levels could all lead to a major reappraisal of curriculum access for all pupils with SENs. This, in turn, could lead to a new level of collaborative work between teachers in special and ordinary schools.

The Code of Practice has been welcomed because, for the first time, the spotlight is on ordinary schools and on how they can improve the quality of their own work in identifying and meeting the needs of all children and avoid unnecessary and avoidable recommendations for special school placement. On the other hand, the Code says next to nothing about special schools; on the contrary, the most recent government guidance on special schools consists of little more than guidance on how to become a grant maintained school - a contradiction in terms, as suggested by Philippa Russell in her summary of the discussion.

The theme of the present series has been concerned with options and choices (if the latter word has retained a semblance of credibility).

- Parents must be allowed genuine choices, based on full and unbiased information; such choice should be extended to the children themselves, as mandated by the 1989 Children Act.
- LEAs must continue to plan for and offer a range of provision, which is likely to include strategically planned and effectively monitored special schools for some years.
- The option of inclusive education should be the starting point for every child, both in special and ordinary schools, starting perhaps with 'new' children entering the system for the first time and listing what human and financial resources would be needed for the individual child to be educated to the highest standard in their local school or in resourced mainstream provision. Annual reviews for all children should consider the possibility of a greater degree of social and functional integration for all children, whether they are in special or ordinary schools.
- At the same time, it has to be recognised that there are individual children whose parents and professionals are agreed that their needs cannot, at least for the time being, be met in their local school and whose individual needs would genuinely be better met in a special school. We cannot continue to use the rhetoric of choice and of meeting unique individual needs if we deliberately remove special schools from the spectrum of choice and provision or speak about special schools in derogatory terms as a last resort when all else has failed.

- What is needed now is a new partnership between special and ordinary schools, one based on a genuine appreciation of the distinctive strengths of both sectors. Such a partnership would be reflected in special schools becoming valued members of local clusters of secondary and primary schools, hopefully including pre-school and post-school provision, linked organically with a well-trained support service, planned and resourced by an effective LEA and committed to meeting individual needs across a wide spectrum of provision. Such a partnership should lead to new and more productive relationship with parents in which all are working together to support the learning and development of all pupils.