

ORGANISING THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE

Keith Postlethwaite
and Ann Hackney

Special Needs in Mainstream Schools



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SPECIAL NEEDS IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS
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Preface

This book, and its companion volumes, are intended for teachers and student teachers interested in mainstream secondary education. This volume deals with responses which a school can make to support that fifth of its pupils who have special educational needs. The other volumes deal with the responses which individual teachers can make to learning difficulties and to disruptive behaviour within their own classrooms.

The approach taken in the series is based on the idea that special needs can only be adequately met in schools if all teachers recognise that they have a role to play, and if all are able to develop some appropriate skills. However, this starting point does not negate the importance of specialist provision from special needs departments and from professionals who are based outside the school. Indeed the task of managing a school's special needs response involves enabling individual teachers to extend their own expertise, organising the special needs department so that it can help these teachers and the individual pupils who need more support than mainstream staff can provide, and co-ordinating the whole enterprise so that all teachers are aware of their own role and of the other services on which they and their pupils can draw.

The other books in this series concentrate on the classroom skills of the mainstream teacher. In this book we aim to do two main things which complement this emphasis on classroom skills. First, we hope to raise mainstream teachers' awareness of some of the broader issues which surround provision for pupils with special educational needs so that they are better able to relate to the special needs system of their own school, and to engage in discussion about how it should be organised. Secondly we hope to help special needs staff and senior management in designing, co-ordinating and operating the overall special needs response in the school—including the specific response to staff and pupils that can be made by the special needs department. At key points in the text we suggest activities which might help to extend thinking about these organisational and managerial issues. To draw attention to these activities we have used a tinted background with an **A** in the margin. Information and summaries of major points are highlighted between heavy horizontal lines, with an **i** in the margin.

We hope the book will be useful to individual teachers or students working on their own, to senior staff faced with decisions on special needs issues, to groups of teachers following formal pre-service and in-service training courses and, perhaps especially, to ad hoc groups that might come together in individual schools to explore some of the most fascinating and demanding tasks which we have to undertake as teachers.

K.C.P.
Oxford 1987

Acknowledgements

In preparing this book we have been given a great deal of help by a wide range of people, all of whom were busy with their own work but gave extensively of their time to answer our questions and discuss our ideas.

From time to time throughout the book we refer to the findings of our survey of practice in Oxfordshire schools (in 11–16 and 11–18 schools, in middle and upper schools, and in special schools) and to the more detailed research we were able to conduct in four case study schools in the county. We would like to thank the headteachers of all the schools involved in the survey, and especially the headteachers, staff and pupils of the four case study schools, for their co-operation and for the time and energy they gave to us despite the other, more pressing calls on their time.

We would also like to thank the wide range of ‘other professionals’ in Oxfordshire who responded to our request for information about their work with schools. It was from the data which they supplied that we were able to construct [Chapter 8](#).

Another important source of ideas, of constructive criticism and of support, has been the group of teachers with expertise in the special needs field who have been seconded to the Oxford Department of Educational Studies over the past four years. The close association which we have enjoyed with this group of teachers, and with the Oxfordshire special needs advisers, has been of great help to us. Furthermore, we have drawn directly on the research work undertaken by some members of this group—and, of course, have acknowledged this at appropriate points in the text.

We would particularly like to thank Bridie Raban, Mike Deans and Elizabeth Hitchfield for many hours of discussion which helped us to formulate some ideas and clarify others.

Finally, we would like to thank Elizabeth Paren, our editor at Macmillan, for applying just enough pressure to keep us to the task, and for her helpful comments on the text itself.

This book was produced by the Special Needs Research Team within the Oxford Educational Research Group. Team members were Beverley Davies, James Gray, Ann Hackney, Keith Postlethwaite and Bridie Raban. This book was prepared for the research team by Keith Postlethwaite and Ann Hackney. The book, which is one of a series of three, is one product of a research project which was funded by the Rayne Foundation and based at the University of Oxford, Department of Educational Studies.

1

Introduction

1.1 Outline

This book is one of three in a series dealing with responses to the issue of special educational needs in mainstream secondary schools. These books are one of the products of a three year study that was conducted by the Oxford Educational Research Group following a grant from the Rayne Foundation. The research involved two quite tightly focussed investigations: one on disruptive behaviour in classrooms, and one on the early educational implications of medical disorders at or near the time of birth. It also involved two broader studies: one on provision for special needs children of secondary age in Oxfordshire, and one on the nature and effect of special needs input to initial teacher training courses in universities in England and Wales. While the books are not formal research reports, the results of the four aspects of our research programme have been a major influence on what is presented here. The research is also relevant to the books in another way. During the project, the research team came to agree on some general principles relating to special needs. These are reflected in this series of books and play a particularly important role in the approach taken in this volume.

In this introductory chapter we will briefly discuss these principles so that the reader is clear about our own starting points. We will then describe the intended purpose of this book and its relationship to the other two.

1.2 Some general principles

a

The interactive nature of special needs

Our research has led us to regard as crucial the view that special needs arise out of an interaction between the characteristics of the pupil and the nature of the learning environment which the school and the individual teacher construct. A wide range of individual characteristics can make a pupil particularly vulnerable to less than ideal learning environments. (Discussion of such characteristics is provided in [Chapter 4](#).) Pupils with these characteristics will have special educational needs if, for example, schools fail to match the time available for a subject to the scale of the syllabus, if their timetabling is insensitive, or if they resource their courses inappropriately. Also, individual teachers can create special needs for these pupils by their attitudes towards them and by specific aspects of the way in which they work in their

classrooms. For example, a teacher who uses a history text written in complex language may create learning problems for a poor reader who could cope perfectly well with the historical concepts being considered, and a teacher who lectures with his or her back to a window can create learning difficulties for a partially hearing child who can normally supplement limited hearing by lip-reading. The notion of interaction clearly influences the way in which we should conceptualise 'pupils with special needs' and is a major factor in determining the way in which we should plan our responses to them.

b

The scale of the problem

Despite regional variations (Rutter *et al.*, 1975) and variations from school to school within a broad geographical region, and despite the somewhat arbitrary nature of some of the underpinning research (Gipps and Goldstein, 1984) the best estimate of the proportion of pupils who will have special educational needs in schools as they are currently organised remains that of the Warnock Committee: namely that some 20 per cent of pupils will have special educational needs at some point in their educational career and that one pupil in six will have such needs at any one time. To this group we would wish to add a group explicitly excluded from Warnock's terms of reference. This is the group of pupils who have need of additional or alternative provision as a result of their high ability. Denton and Postlethwaite (1985) have argued (on the basis of HMI reports) that this additional group might be as large as 10 per cent in any one area of the curriculum. The special needs group as a whole therefore makes up at least a third of the total school population.



Special educational needs lie on a continuum. There is no clear-cut distinction between pupils who have special needs and those who do not.

Most of these pupils who have special needs are in mainstream schools, and always have been in mainstream schools. Our own school-based research suggests that they are often, and perhaps increasingly, in ordinary classes within those schools.

c

Special educational needs and general ability

Pupil characteristics which may give rise to special educational needs include low or high general ability, specific cognitive difficulties, high ability of a specific kind, behavioural and emotional difficulties, physical handicaps and medical conditions. Although pupils with low general ability are, of course, a part of this group, the range of general ability within the group as a whole will clearly be very large. Even if we exclude the pupils with special needs arising out of high ability, we would be wrong to assume that the remaining special needs pupils will necessarily have low general ability. Many physical handicaps and behaviour problems, and even some specific learning difficulties, are unrelated—or only loosely related—to low general ability. (Some relevant evidence is presented in [Chapter 3](#).) Pupils with special needs can therefore appear in every class. They will be there in a first year mixed ability group, where we might find a child with less than average general ability having difficulty with a wide range of tasks; they will be there in a third year middle ability set, where there may be a physically handicapped child experiencing difficulty with

practical work in science; they will be there in an A-level history group, where there may be a very able pupil who is unable to spell.

Although some special needs persist throughout school, and beyond into adult life, others may be quite short-lived giving little time for response from adults outside the group of class teachers and form teacher with whom the pupil has regular contact.

d

The individual nature of special needs

The needs of individual pupils cannot be inferred simply from the category of their main disability even where this can be clearly distinguished. For example, two children with partial hearing may have very different needs. One may need nothing more than a good hearing aid, the other may have suffered such a loss of confidence in earlier stages of schooling that it is this loss of confidence, rather than the present hearing problem, which is the major need. The implication is, of course, that the needs of each pupil must be carefully assessed on an individual basis.

e

The response of the mainstream teacher

These starting points (individually perhaps, but certainly when taken together) suggest that response to special needs cannot be exclusively the responsibility of a small number of specialist teachers. Further support for this statement is provided in [Chapter 3](#). They imply that all teachers will work with special needs pupils. All teachers therefore need an awareness of the main issues. What is more, for most special needs pupils, ordinary mainstream teachers will be an important source of day to day practical support. Indeed, for some of these pupils, mainstream teachers will be the *only* source of such support. It follows that all teachers need more than awareness. They also need practical skills—skills of identification and assessment, and strategies for provision that they can call upon in their normal teaching. These skills are discussed in the other two books of this series.

f

The severity of some special needs

There is an enormous range in the severity of the problems which pupils with special needs have. Some problems are relatively minor, others are severe or even profound.

g

The thrust of integration

Some children with quite severe difficulties always have been in ordinary schools, either as a result of a specific decision or as a result of the inadequacy of screening techniques. The Warnock Report and the Education Act 1981 have provided some support for an increase in the trend to educate pupils with quite severe difficulties in mainstream schools. We certainly found evidence of such integration in our own research in Oxfordshire, some of which is summarised in [Chapter 7](#).

h

Specialist involvement

The last two points suggest that although individual teacher's responses to special needs in their own classrooms are of enormous importance, mainstream teachers should not be expected to be sufficiently expert in all aspects of special needs to handle all of them without specialist help.

Sometimes this will be help for the mainstream teacher, sometimes it will be direct help for the pupils themselves. Such help can be provided by senior staff in subject departments, by senior pastoral staff, by teachers in special needs departments, by teachers in special schools, by LEA services such as educational psychology and the advisory service and by other local services such as social services and the health service. However, if this help is to be effectively deployed, mainstream teachers must be able to relate to it. They need an awareness of the nature of the help available from different sources, they need skills of assessment and referral, they need the skills of working alongside the support services when it is deemed appropriate that the help should be delivered to the pupil in their own classroom (e.g. when a support teacher works with a child in a mainstream class), and they need the skills of co-ordinating their own teaching with other forms of provision when it is deemed necessary to remove a pupil for specialist help for part of a lesson each week, for one of a number of lessons each week or for all lessons for a short period of time.

i

The significance of the issues to education generally

The whole list of starting points outlined above, places formidable demands upon mainstream teachers both in their individual work in classrooms, and in their more general professional activities as members of the school staff. It is inevitable that some readers will wonder whether these are appropriate demands, given all the other aspects of the teacher's job and the needs of all of the other pupils in the school. Surely what is implied above, though perhaps desirable in theory, is unrealistic in practice.

We base our response to this comment on an extremely interesting analysis of the problem put forward by Fish (1985). He argues that the search for higher standards in schools can lead in two directions. The first results in 'a narrower common curriculum, a less flexible approach to individual needs and the stigmatisation of pupils as not up to standard'. In this context special provision is held to be 'charitable provision for failures'. If this is the view, then we would agree that teachers would be unwise to devote as much of their energy to special needs as we have been suggesting in the paragraphs above. However, Fish outlines a second route to improved standards which involves 'better matching of tasks, objectives and materials to individuals'. In this approach, special needs work can be seen as the most refined application of the philosophy of the school as a whole. As such it provides a context in which one can obtain sophisticated and powerful insights into ways of achieving the most effective matching for all pupils. By accepting the demands which we have been outlining above, teachers would, on this model, be making a major contribution to the improvement of the education system as a whole.

1.3

Ideas for the use of this book

The intention behind this series of books is to help the student teacher and the practising teacher to respond realistically to these demands. The books on learning difficulties and behavioural difficulties are focused particularly on extending the range of the 'strategies for identification, assessment and provision' that are available to the individual teacher in his or her own teaching.

The intention of the present volume is to address some of the broader issues. We hope that this book will help to raise awareness of the legal context, of some of the arguments about the nature of the curriculum for special needs pupils, of the nature and scope of the special needs field, of the organisation of school-based identification procedures, of the organisation of special needs departments, of the arguments surrounding the integration of pupils with severe needs into mainstream schools and of the issue of liaison with support services outside school. We hope, by raising these issues, to help student teachers and beginning teachers to be better prepared to take part in discussions about their own school's response to special needs and to understand their own role in the overall structure. We hope also that the book may be of some help to more senior staff who bear the major responsibility for decisions on the organisation of the special needs response of their schools.

This book, like the other two, can be used by individual teachers who wish to explore this area of education. However it can also be used by *groups* of students or practising teachers. In the pre-service context we hope that it might be used by groups made up of students with different subject backgrounds. Many of the curriculum and organisational issues will be rather differently perceived by teachers of different subjects and in defining a whole-school response, compromise will be inevitable. Mixed groups of students would be well placed to explore the range of perspectives and to examine the problems and possibilities while working towards a compromise. In the INSET context the book might be used by a group of teachers meeting together on a course or by a school staff seeking to develop the special needs structure of their own school. The book might be used as a whole, defining the agenda of a series of meetings and providing some starting points for the work, or an individual chapter might be taken to initiate discussion of a particular point. With this 'group use' of the book in mind, we have often provided simulation exercises or lists of key questions at the end of chapters.

2

The legal context in England and Wales

2.1

Documentation

Because this chapter can present only the briefest outline of the relevant legislation, it is important to begin by indicating other, more detailed sources of reference.

The official documents which apply most directly to mainstream secondary schools are the Education Act 1981 (the key piece of legislation specifically concerned with pupils with special educational needs), the Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations 1983 (detailed guidelines on parts of the 1981 Act which are legally binding), and various circulars from the DES and the DHSS. These circulars are not legally binding but give advice on the Act and might well be referred to by courts in appropriate cases. Key circulars from the DES are Circular 8/81 which discusses the 1981 Act in general, and Circular 1/83 which is particularly concerned with assessments and ‘statementing’. There are also three DHSS circulars which discuss the relationship between the education and health services with respect to children with special educational needs. These are Circulars HRC (74)5, HC(80)8/LAC(80)3 and HN(82)9/LASSL(82)3.

Parts of other Education Acts (especially the 1944 and 1980 Acts) continue to apply to children with special needs. Two useful documents which cover the whole range of relevant legislation and therefore point out the implications of these earlier pieces of legislation are the *ACE Special Education Handbook* and the book by Cox (1985) entitled *The Law of Special Educational Needs—A Guide to the Education Act 1981*.

2.2

Focus of this chapter

In this chapter we shall concentrate on the law as it relates to children of school age and to local authority schools.

The duties of an LEA that are described below do, however, apply to pupils for whom the LEA has arranged placement at an independent school. Under some circumstances they also apply to children in the LEA area who are not attending schools, and to other pupils in the LEA area (e.g. pupils whose parents have placed them in an independent school in the area). For such children the duties apply when individuals have been ‘brought to the attention of the LEA’ as having (or probably having) special needs.

The law is rather different for children under the age of 2.

2.3 Definitions

The Education Act 1981 states that a child has 'special needs' if s/he 'has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made'. It explains that the term 'learning difficulty' should be taken to mean a 'significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his (or her) age' *or* 'a disability which either prevents or hinders (the child) from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools, within the area of the local authority concerned, for children of his (or her) age'. It also explains that the term 'special educational provision' should be taken to mean 'educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of his (or her) age in schools maintained by the local education authority concerned'.



In the terms of the 1981 Act pupils have **special educational needs** if:

They have a learning difficulty

i.e. *either* they have a 'significantly greater' difficulty in learning than their peers

or they have a disability that prevents or hinders their use of normal resources provided in schools in their area.

AND

This learning difficulty calls for special provision to be made

i.e. it calls for 'additional and otherwise different provision' to be made

It is interesting that, in the Act, the term 'learning difficulty' is used in a far broader sense than is normal. Normally it carries the implication of low general ability (e.g. low IQ), or low specific ability (e.g. difficulty with reading, or spatial reasoning). Indeed it is used in this way elsewhere in this series of books. However, in the Act, being in a wheelchair or being disruptive, could bring even an able pupil into the group with 'learning difficulties' if these characteristics were such as to 'prevent or hinder' use of normal resources. It is also interesting that the term 'learning difficulty' is defined by norm-referencing: i.e. by comparison with the difficulties in learning faced by the majority of children of the same age. Furthermore, the definition provides no clear-cut dividing line between pupils who have learning difficulties and those who do not. This is consistent with the idea of a continuum of need.

Similarly, the definitions of the terms 'learning difficulty', and 'special provision' involve the notion of the resources which are 'normal' or 'generally available' in the schools of a given LEA. Since special educational needs are defined with reference to both these terms, one should certainly expect variation, from area to area, in the population which has special needs under the terms of the Act. The variation can arise in two ways. First, a child with a given disability may be regarded as having 'learning difficulties' in one LEA but not another because schools in the two areas are resourced differently. Secondly, children acknowledged to have the same 'significantly greater' difficulty in learning in the two geographical areas might be regarded as having special needs in one area but not in the other, because, in the second area, the provision needed to overcome this difficulty is regarded as part of the provision 'made generally for children' in schools and no 'additional or otherwise different provision' is therefore required. This is consistent with the notion that special needs arise out of an interaction between pupil and school characteristics.

Section 1.4 of the 1981 Act makes it clear that a child should not be regarded as having learning difficulties *solely* because the language in which s/he is taught is not the language of his or her home. This does not, of course, imply that no special provision is needed—simply that this would not be made under

the terms of the 1981 Act. Also, Section 1.4 does not prevent a pupil for whom English is a second language from qualifying as a pupil with a learning difficulty (and thus perhaps as a pupil with special needs) if there is some additional problem such as generally low ability and/or a physical handicap. Section 1.4 does, however, run the risk of fragmenting provision for pupils of this kind. At the level of service to the pupil, this possible fragmentation is something that schools should clearly try to avoid.

As we have already mentioned, children with physical handicaps or medical problems clearly come within the terms of the Act and children with behavioural difficulties could also be included if it were argued that they too had a difficulty that ‘prevents or hinders...’ their use of normal resources. Very able pupils, who are in practice regarded as having special needs in some schools, do not seem to be covered by the legal definition. In terms of the 1981 Act, the legal duties of LEAs and others towards special needs pupils would not, therefore, seem to extend to this group.

2.4

General requirements of the 1981 Act

The 1981 Act makes some general points which apply to all special needs children who fall within its definition and these are listed below.

a

The duties of LEAs, school governors and teachers

[Section 2.1](#) reformulates a section of the 1944 Act so that it effectively requires LEAs to secure that special educational provision *is* made for pupils who have special educational needs. There is, then, a duty to provide. [Section 2.4](#) requires LEAs to keep this provision under review.

To this requirement for the LEA is added a duty for school governors. [Section 2.5](#) states that they must ‘use their best endeavours’ to ensure that appropriate special provision is made for each individual and to ensure that the teachers of special needs pupils are informed about the nature of each pupil’s needs. They must also try to see that, in general terms, ‘teachers in the school are aware of the importance of identifying, and providing for, those registered pupils who have special needs’.

There is also a general duty which will, at least in part, rest on teachers. [Section 2.7](#) requires that, *where a pupil with special needs in education in an ordinary school*, those who are concerned with making special provision for that pupil should ensure that s/he ‘engages in the activities of the school together with children who do not have special needs’. This requirement for what is effectively functional integration of the child into the school (see [Chapter 7](#)) is subject to the conditions that:

- a) the pupil receives the special educational provision that s/he requires;
- b) an efficient education is provided for the other pupils;
- c) there is efficient use of resources; and
- d) the functional integration is ‘reasonably practicable’.

As long as these conditions are met, the Act does not exclude from this expectation any pupils with severe needs who might be in mainstream schools. Very different pastoral, extra-curricular and even academic arrangements for pupils with special needs would seem (subject, of course, to the conditions) to be contrary to the requirements of the Act. This part of the Act could therefore be seen as providing pressure towards the ‘normalisation’ of the special needs child which is a theme which recurs from time to time in this book.

Circular 1/83 expands on these general requirements—though its recommendations do not, of course, have the status of law. For example, it suggests that LEAs should encourage in-service training to improve teachers' abilities to identify, assess and provide for pupils with special needs, and it draws attention to the central role of mainstream teachers in 'recognising the child who is experiencing difficulties in learning', in assessing his or her needs and in trying out different ways of providing support.

b

Integration into mainstream schools

Another general point is that *the Act requires that children with special needs are educated in mainstream schools*, though this is, again, subject to the conditions a) to d) above, and to the requirement that account has been taken of the views of the child's parents (Section 2.2 and 2.3).

LEAs and schools who clearly wish to integrate pupils with more severe problems into mainstream schools might be expected to find ways of ensuring that conditions a) to d) were met wherever possible. The 1981 Act can therefore be seen as enabling integration to take place. However there is no duty on LEAs to try to fulfil these conditions, and since they are very broad, it is by no means clear that the Act will push less willing Authorities to integrate—even though its general spirit provides encouragement to do so. Swann (1985) discusses this point in some detail and concludes that 'there will be no national trend towards the integration of pupils with special needs' as a consequence of the Act. However, under the influence of similar legislation in the United States integration has increased, the crucial factor being pressure for mainstreaming from parents when they first discover that their child has special needs. Discussing this point, Biklen (1982) argues that parents whose children were already in special schools tended not to seek integration, whereas parents with a child newly identified as having special needs, who had no existing link with special schools, tended to press for a mainstream education for their child. As we shall explain later in this chapter, the 1981 Act does give some powers to parents to question LEA decisions about school placement and so, perhaps over quite a long period of time, the mechanism outlined here could result in increased integration.

c

The importance of assessment

Much of Circular 1/83 concentrates on the question of the assessment of pupils' needs. This, it emphasises, is not an end in itself but an essential step in making the right sort of support available to each pupil. It suggests that assessments should focus on pupils' strengths as well as weaknesses, and that they should take account of the nature of the support that the pupil has from home and from school. Thus assessment is related to the specific environment of the child, with the implication that features in this environment, as well as the characteristics of the child, may contribute to the child's special needs.

The circular expands on the central role of teachers in assessment by saying that teachers should be encouraged to keep full records of their pupils' progress, including records of any professional consultations and assessments and points out that assessment is not a single event but a continuous process.

Although it puts great weight on the role of the teacher, the circular points out that assessment may also call for input from others. It argues that parental involvement in assessment is always essential and that the child's point of view should also be taken into account. It goes on to recommend that the assessment system should allow for the 'progressive involvement' of other professionals so that as much information as is needed to adequately understand the child's problem is available. It suggests that LEAs should draw up

guidelines for schools to help them to develop appropriate systems of assessment and referral to external professionals.

An example of LEA guidelines

A better sense of the implications of the circular might be gained from the guidelines of one LEA which set out a five stage process.

At Stage 1 the head and school-based teachers, with parents where possible, are to be the only people involved. Observation of the pupil, results of normal school tests and of classwork and so on, parental information and data from medical and other records should be used to decide upon relevant action which would be classroom-based. On review, the intervention may be found to be successful, or teachers may wish to go on to Stages 2 or 3.

At Stage 2 visiting teachers such as teachers for the hearing impaired or visually handicapped or 'Special Needs Advisory and Support Teachers' might be involved with the school staff. Through a similar range of investigations as at Stage 1, but with the inclusion of more detailed school-based tests, decisions may be made about further classroom-based action, about the use of aids or special materials, and about the possible need for some curriculum modification.

At Stage 3 special needs advisers, educational psychologists, school medical officers and the social services might be added to the assessment team. Only appropriate professionals would be approached and there need not be multiple referrals. This could lead to more substantial intervention in the pupil's education but the aim would still be to maintain the pupil in the mainstream school. At this stage parents' involvement would be essential.

If the information about the pupil's difficulties are still inadequate, Stage 4 would follow. This would be a full multi-professional assessment (MPA) under the terms of the 1981 Act. If the MPA was to indicate that the child's problems were so severe that the LEA, rather than the school itself, needed to make provision (for example, if the LEA had to provide a service to the child that is not normally available in its mainstream schools, or if it had to place the child in a special school) then a 'statement' would be produced. This statement would constitute Stage 5 of the assessment procedure. The details of MPAs and of statements will be discussed in the next section.

2.5

Formal procedures

The duties of LEAs, governors and teachers that have been discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter apply to all children who, in the Act's definition, have special educational needs. However the Act also lays down additional, detailed procedures which have to be followed in cases of severe or complex need—cases which call for the *authority*, rather than the individual school, to determine the special provision that should be made. These procedures consist of making an assessment of need and then, if necessary in the light of that assessment, making a statement about the provision which will be made.

Section 5 of the Act states that in cases where the LEA is of the opinion that a child has special needs which call for *it* (not the school) to determine the necessary provision, or in cases where it thinks a child probably has such needs, then it shall make an assessment. LEAs could, of course, come to such opinions about children as a result of earlier stages of the kind of informal assessment procedure that we discussed in the previous section.

If they intend to make such an assessment they must inform the parents, provide them with the name of an officer of the LEA from whom they can get information and tell them of their right to make representations and submit evidence (Section 5.3).

After a prescribed time the LEA will consider any representations made and any evidence submitted by the parents and decide whether or not to proceed. In the case of children over two years of age, parents cannot actually stop the LEA from making an assessment if the LEA considers that it is necessary to do so—though parents could appeal under the 1944 Act on the grounds that the LEA was acting unreasonably.

If the LEA decides *not* to proceed it must notify the parents of its decision (Section 5.10).

If the LEA decides that it *will* proceed it must notify the parents and explain its reasons for wishing to do so; it must take educational, medical and psychological advice on the child; and it may take other advice (Regulations, 1983). We will discuss the details of these formal assessment procedures later in this chapter.

On the basis of this advice the LEA must decide whether it does indeed need to determine the special provision that is to be made for the child. If it decides that it does need to do so, then the LEA must produce a 'statement' setting out what must be done for the child (Section 7). We will discuss the nature and effect of these statements later in this chapter.

If the LEA decides that it does *not* need to determine the provision it must inform the parents and explain its reasons. The parent can then appeal to the Secretary of State in an attempt to get a statement made (Section 5.6). A recent survey reported by Sharron (1985) showed that by January 1985 twenty-six appeals had been made to the Secretary of State: fourteen had been resolved in favour of the LEAs, in three cases LEAs had been asked to prepare a statement and in nine cases the result was not known at the time of the study.

The whole procedure can also be initiated by the parents who can ask the LEA to carry out an assessment. This it must do unless it regards the request as 'unreasonable' (Section 9.1). By reference to the Education Act 1944, parents can appeal against an Authority's decision not to carry out an assessment when asked to do so. To defend its view that the request was unreasonable the LEA would have to be able to make a case that no sensible LEA would accede to it.

a

Assessment

We have mentioned that an LEA intending to undertake a formal assessment of a child must obtain educational, medical and psychological advice and may seek other advice. Details of the required procedures are given in the Regulations (1983) and in Circular 1/83.

These documents make it clear that the educational advice must be obtained from the headteacher of a school the child has attended in the preceding eighteen months. If the head has not taught the child s/he must consult a teacher who has. Specialist teachers of the hearing impaired or visually handicapped can also contribute to the educational advice. The medical advice must be sought from a designated medical officer who will consult other doctors (including psychiatrists) and co-ordinate their comments. Advice from speech and physiotherapists can be incorporated into medical advice. Psychological advice must be sought from an educational psychologist who will consult other psychologists, including clinical and occupational psychologists if appropriate. The 'other advice' might include input from, say, an officer of the social services. The social services and a designated nursing officer must be informed of the intention to assess a child. The LEA can ask for advice from these services if it is not volunteered following such a notification.

Circular 1/83 gives some fairly detailed guidance on the kind of advice that should be given. It suggests that there should be:

1. a description of the child's strengths and weaknesses (including physical health and development, emotional state, cognitive functioning, communication skills, perceptual and motor skills, adaptive skills, social skills, approaches and attitudes to learning, educational attainments, self image, interests and behaviour);

2. comments about the child's home and school environment, and about his or her personal, medical and educational history;

3. descriptions of the aims of any special provision to be made, e.g. general aims such as the aim that provision should encourage physical development and self-care skills, or cognitive development such as the ability to classify, or language, social or motor development, and more specific comments about approaches to be used or specific gaps in the child's development that need to be attended to;

4. comments about the resources that the child will need if these aims are to be met. This might include comment about special equipment (e.g. visual aids), special facilities (e.g. use of a private place for the administration of medication), specialist teaching materials, specialist services (e.g. physiotherapy), modifications to the physical environment (ramps etc.) or special arrangements for school attendance and transport.

Circular 1/83 recognises that this is a detailed list and says that each professional should concentrate on things which lie within his or her area of expertise. Also each person giving advice should highlight the particularly important points in their replies. The circular gives other general guidelines such as the idea that advice could be given separately or through case conferences, and that the final decision on placement should be made by the LEA so should not be pre-empted by the comments of the advisers. Similarly advisers' comments should not be restricted by knowledge of limitations in the resources available in the LEA but should reflect their professional assessment of the problems and needs of the child. However Sharron (1985) reports that there have been occasions when advice has been returned to professionals by LEAs with instructions to revise it. The system does not always seem to work as was originally intended!

The circular reminds professionals that, if the LEA decides to make a 'statement' on the child, copies of all advice will be made available to parents. Parents have no legal right to receive copies of the advice if the LEA decides not to make a statement. However, they could take the view that they were handicapped in challenging this decision by having no access to the advice and could, therefore, complain to the Secretary of State under the 1944 Act on the grounds that the LEA was acting unreasonably. It seems sensible, therefore, to assume that parents will see all advice submitted as part of a formal assessment.

Finally, the emphasis in the assessment is placed on co-operation between the professionals with the parents being kept 'informed and involved'. There is, therefore, a concept of partnership which, Circular 1/83 argues, should be extended to include the child or young person where appropriate.

b Statements

We have already outlined the consequences of an LEA decision not to make a statement after carrying out an assessment. If the LEA *does* decide to make a statement then it will produce a document along the lines of the model annexed to the Regulations 1983. This will state the nature of the pupil's needs, the educational provision it deems appropriate to enable it to meet those needs, the school placement that it considers appropriate, and any non-educational provision that will be made available by the LEA, the health authority or social services to enable the child to benefit from the special educational provision. It will also contain copies of the advice and representations made by parents and of the professional advice collected by the LEA.

A copy of the statement in draft form will be sent to the parents who can make representations upon it and ask for meetings with an officer of the LEA or with any of the professional advisers (Section 7).

After these representations the LEA has three options. It can decide not to make a statement after all, and must inform parents of that decision. It can make a modified statement. It can make a statement in the original form (Section 7.8). Parents must have a copy of this final version and must be informed by the LEA of their rights to appeal.

If parents wish to appeal against the final version of the statement, they can do so to a local appeals committee which is empowered to confirm the statement or to ask the LEA to review it. If still unsatisfied, parents can appeal to the Secretary of State who can confirm the statement, ask for a review or instruct the LEA to cease to maintain a statement on the child (Section 8).

At the time of the survey reported by Sharron (1985), nineteen statements had been referred to the Secretary of State. In six cases the LEA statement was upheld; in six cases it was amended; seven cases were still to be decided at the time of the study.

If parents do not appeal against the final version of the statement it comes into force and is then legally binding on the LEA which has a duty to make the provision described in the statement unless the child's parents have made 'suitable arrangements' (Section 7.2). Such arrangements might, for example, include placement of the child in an independent school.

Statements are reviewed annually, on the basis of reports from school, and comments from parents and other professionals if appropriate. The review, or a request from the parents, can initiate a re-assessment of the pupil's needs. In any case a re-assessment is mandatory within a year of the child reaching the age of 13 years 6 months if the original assessment was done before the child was 12 years 6 months (Regulations 1983).

The LEA can change a statement, or decide that it no longer needs to maintain one, on the basis of a review or re-assessment. It must tell parents of its intentions, invite their views, consider them and inform parents of its final decision. Parents have rights of appeal against such changes.

LEAs differ in their interpretation of the Act. For example, at least one authority regards the provision, in some mainstream schools, of 'units' for children with moderate learning difficulties as part of the normal arrangements made for education in the county. It therefore argues that children who attend these units, who would have been regarded as ESN(M) under previous legislation, do so as a result of the normal procedures of the system and are not children for whom the *Authority* has to determine provision. The implication is that it does not need to go through the formal assessment and statementing procedures for these children. Other authorities do make statements for children in mainstream schools. In so far as statements can protect any special provision that a child might require they could be seen as useful for the children. However statementing can be seen to imply the proliferation of bureaucratic procedures and, above all, the creation of a new category of pupils distinct from those 'ordinary' pupils who do not have statements. This could deflect teachers' and other professionals' attention away from co-operation in active support of pupils and into a complex paperchase, could over-emphasise differences between statemented and non-statemented pupils and under-emphasise similarities and common aims and needs, and could deflect attention away from the very real needs of many pupils who do not have statements but who still need support in order to achieve what they are capable of achieving in school. This issue has been discussed at some length by Sayer (1983, 1985). There do not seem to be easy answers, but teachers should perhaps try to find ways of minimising the problems which tend to follow from either extensive or minimal use of the statementing procedure.

2.6 Study suggestions

a) As discussed in this chapter, the general requirements of the 1981 Act include:

- that governors try to ensure that special provision is made for each pupil with special needs and that teachers are informed about the special needs of any pupil they teach;
- that governors try to ensure that teachers are aware of the importance of identifying and providing for pupils with special needs;
- that there is functional integration of pupils, subject to certain conditions;
- that assessment procedures begin with teacher-based assessment based on ‘full records’ of pupils’ progress and move on to a progressive involvement of other professionals, with parents informed and involved.

Use this information to carry out [Activity 2.6a](#).

b) In this chapter we have listed some of the areas which should be assessed when formal procedures are under way (pp 13–14). Using this list carry out [Activity 2.6b](#).

A

ACTIVITY 2.6A

Consider the following questions:

1. How do the procedures in your school match the requirements of the 1981 Act?
2. What developments would be needed to achieve a better match?

A

ACTIVITY 2.6B

Consult the list and make a note of the areas which are reasonably the *teacher's responsibility*. Then:

1. For each of these decide what should be assessed. (E.g. What are the components of ‘communication skills’?)
2. For each thing to be assessed, decide how you could collect relevant information. (E.g. How would you collect information on pupils’ behaviour?)
3. How could these detailed assessments be related to the normal record keeping that teachers do?

It might be interesting to consider these questions again after reading [Chapter 5](#).

3

Aims, expectations and curriculum

3.1

Aims and special needs support systems

In all aspects of the school's life it is important that the organisational systems which we set up reflect the aims which we are trying to achieve. For instance, if we are trying to promote the skills of co-operating with others, we would clearly be foolish to adopt teaching styles and to organise extra-curricular activities which place emphasis solely on competition between individual pupils. Again, if we are trying to encourage independent study in Year Six we would be unwise to arrange for the sixth form timetable to be one hundred per cent teacher-contact-time. This line of reasoning is no less relevant when we are considering the organisation of support systems for pupils with special educational needs. In developing organisational structures, setting up identification and provision procedures and planning pupils' activities, we should be clear about the aims which we intend the special needs pupils to achieve and should check back from time to time to ensure that the steps we take are consistent with these intentions.

What, then, are the appropriate aims for pupils with special educational needs? Since aims are necessarily broad statements of the school's intentions one can argue that aims for special needs pupils should be the same as the aims which are established for all other pupils. This principle is clearly articulated in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) which states that 'the purpose of education for all children is the same; the goals are the same' (Para 1.4). It is confirmed in recent DES curriculum statements, notably *The Organisation and Content of the Curriculum: Special Schools* (DES/WO, 1984a). This paper states that the curriculum principles which are developed for most pupils in mainstream schools should also apply to the children with special educational needs who are educated in these schools. Furthermore it argues that the general aims of education, and the overall range of the curriculum, should still be essentially the same even when pupils 'have special needs on a scale that makes it necessary for them to attend either special schools or designated classes or units in ordinary schools'.

A good indication of the kinds of general aims that should, on this basis, be taken to apply to children with special needs can be found in the results of the curriculum enquiry which DES undertook in partnership with five LEAs and teachers from forty-one schools, beginning in 1977. Twelve aims regularly emerged in the course of this enquiry. These are set out in [Figure 3.1](#).

Figure 3.1

Twelve general aims

- 1.** To give children the experience of school as a caring, supportive community where life is enjoyable and where there is equal provision regardless of sex, race or culture.
- 2.** To enable all children to develop as fully as possible their abilities, interests and aptitudes and to make additional provision necessary for those who are in any way disadvantaged.
- 3.** To allow children to develop lively enquiring minds, to be capable of independent thought and to experience enjoyment in learning so that they may be encouraged to take advantage of educational opportunities in later life.
- 4.** To develop appropriate skills in, for example, literacy and numeracy.
- 5.** To develop a curriculum which ensures contact with those major areas of knowledge and experience which will help children to know more about themselves and the society in which they live.
- 6.** To work in ways which will enhance the self-respect and confidence of young people and encourage them to take responsibility for themselves and their activities.
- 7.** To establish a partnership between the school and the community it serves and to develop understanding of a wider community and of the ways in which individuals and groups relate.
- 8.** To give children the skills necessary to respond effectively to social, economic and political changes and to changing patterns of work.
- 9.** To develop the social skills necessary to work successfully with other people.
- 10.** To equip children for their adult roles in society and to help them to understand the responsibilities of being parents, citizens and consumers.
- 11.** To encourage appreciation and concern for the environment.
- 12.** To develop interests and skills which will continue to give personal satisfaction in the use of leisure time.

(DES, 1984)

If we decide that the aims shown in [Figure 3.1](#), or similar aims of education are appropriate for most pupils, then we clearly have a duty to ensure that the mainstream academic and pastoral organisation of the school provides the opportunities that will enable the pupils to attain all of them. (This could clearly imply significant shifts from present practice, at least in some schools.) More importantly in the context of this book, if we also accept such aims for pupils with special educational needs, and if, like Warnock and the DES, we accept that these pupils will need additional help to attain them, then we must ensure that this additional help also matches the full range of the aims.

Some practical implications

Some of the implications of this position can be seen by considering three of the above aims. First, if we want special needs pupils to experience a curriculum which ensures contact with the major areas of knowledge and experience, we might wonder at the adequacy of a special needs support system that offers help only in the area of literacy. This is undoubtedly an important area, but can we be sure that this support alone is enough to help pupils to experience success in their learning in, for example, science? If we are relying on the science teachers to provide the support in areas other than literacy, is this an explicit expectation, are they aware of it, and do they have access to appropriate materials and in-service training? Secondly, if we want children to work in ways that will enhance their self-respect, are we wise to withdraw pupils for small group teaching and then to use the time to work mainly on content such as literacy or numeracy in which they have a history of failure? Indeed, are we wise to withdraw pupils at all? Thirdly, if we want to encourage the development of social skills, are systems of support which emphasise the academic aspects of school sufficient?

These are not rhetorical questions. Successful support with numeracy might well enhance self-respect even if other opportunities to develop this are neglected. However it is worth considering that more success might be achieved through other approaches. One may, for example, use the special needs support structure to help a pupil to do some serious work in the context of an area of interest which s/he might have. In this area s/he might be capable of creating something impressive which other, generally more able pupils, would not easily be able to produce. Achievement of this kind might greatly enhance self-respect and confidence as a learner. Again, the development of social skills *may* take place in the close adult/pupil or pupil/pupil interactions that can go on in small group teaching, even if that teaching is focused on academic aims. However, social skills might be more fully developed if more systematic attention were to be paid to them in their own right.

What matters, therefore, is not that we automatically discard existing practice, but that we re-examine this practice in the light of the full range of aims which we have set. One likely consequence of such a re-examination is that there will be some changes in what ‘special needs teachers’ actually do with pupils, or at least changes in the emphasis on different aspects of their work. Another likely consequence is that we will be forced to conceive of special needs support as something which permeates the academic, pastoral, administrative and interpersonal procedures of the whole school. This follows from the fact that the aims are very broad. Because of this, pupils with special needs (like all other pupils) will require input from adults with a wide range of expertise if they are to begin to achieve the aims. What is more, this widely ranging expertise will have to be exercised in a variety of situations, for example, in teaching and tutoring situations, in the context of extra-curricular activities, and in the hidden curriculum of how teachers and pupils relate to one another, how they respond to disability or difference, how decisions are taken, how rewards and punishments are handled. It is logically as well as practically impossible for the ‘special needs staff alone to have responsibility for providing this range of expertise in this range of contexts to all pupils with

special needs. Inevitably every member of staff will be involved, with 'special needs staff' providing particular sorts of expertise, sometimes in direct support of pupils, but also in support of their colleagues.

3.2

Other curriculum issues

As we have seen, the argument that the *aims* of education should be the same for all does, in itself, have significant practical implications. However, these aims are very general and cannot be directly translated into a fully detailed specification of what should happen in school. To achieve such a specification we must determine, for each aim, a number of more detailed objectives. In the light of the aims and objectives we must then select specific areas of content and set up appropriate teaching and learning situations. We must also choose teaching methods and obtain resources. Finally we must adopt appropriate methods of assessment so that pupils' progress towards the original aims can be monitored. Through such a process we determine the overall school curriculum; if the original aims are broad, this curriculum will cover academic and pastoral goals, and also the goals usually served by the so-called hidden curriculum.

There is much to discuss about each stage of this process when we are considering curriculum development in general terms. However, in the context of pupils with special educational needs, the essential question is at what point in this sequence should planning for 'normal' and 'special needs' pupils diverge?

a

Defining objectives for pupils with special needs

The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) suggests that there *may* be divergence at the stage of defining detailed objectives which, it argues, should be 'related to the particular children to whom they apply' (Para 11.7). However, the report goes on to say that, even where children have quite extensive needs, 'every attempt should be made to see that the chosen objectives are as near in scope and quality to those of other children of the same age as is practicable'. It also stresses that children with special educational needs in mainstream schools need 'access to the whole range of the curriculum, not just a limited part of it'. The report therefore argues that the major point at which diversity is to be expected and welcomed is not at the level of different objectives, but at the level of choosing 'materials, experiences and teaching and learning methods' that will enable pupils to strive for the same objectives (Para 11.8). Similar points are implicit in the DES paper on the 'entitlement curriculum' (DES, 1984) which also provides useful guidelines on the kinds of objectives that might be considered in such areas as skills, attitudes, concepts and knowledge.

This emphasis on finding ways of helping all pupils towards the same aims and objectives is an extremely important one. It is not impracticable idealism. It does not imply that all pupils will be able to achieve the same curriculum objectives at the same pace. It does, however, mean that these objectives remain as the basis for structuring every pupil's programme. Some pupils with special needs will achieve the objectives far more slowly than their peers—indeed, some may still not have achieved them by the end of their schooling—but a full range of learning experiences appropriate to the full set of objectives *will* have been presented to every pupil, including every special needs pupil, throughout that period of schooling.

b

Defining objectives for the profoundly handicapped

However desirable it is that most pupils with special needs should strive towards the common objectives set for pupils generally, the needs of the small group of profoundly handicapped pupils are so special that no amount of support could make these normal secondary school objectives the most appropriate ones for them. This leads to the conclusion that their special need is for a curriculum focused on different objectives. This curriculum would provide explicit teaching on things which were on the 'curriculum' for all other pupils, but which most will have mastered at earlier stages in life, e.g. before entry to primary schools. The curriculum for such pupils is not, therefore, arcane, even though it is very different from what secondary schools usually provide.

c

The range of curriculum options

The range of options discussed above is also recognised in the note produced by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office (DES/WO, 1984a). The authors suggest that most special needs children will continue to receive their education in mainstream classes of ordinary schools and that the curriculum principles expressed in general curriculum documents (e.g. DES/WO, 1984b) apply to them. They need a *mainstream curriculum* even though they may need help to pursue it successfully.

The authors then point out that some pupils have more severe needs. (It is clear that the kinds of pupils they refer to at this point are those who, in the past, might have been placed in a special school or in a special unit or designated class in an ordinary school.) Some of these pupils may still need a *mainstream curriculum but with considerable support* from the use of special aids, or from ancillary helpers or through specially skilled teaching. They may also need adjustments to the balance or detailed content of the curriculum, and may need to spend longer in school to achieve the standards normally expected of sixteen year olds.

Other pupils with complex difficulties may need a *modified curriculum* which is similar to that provided in ordinary schools but is a curriculum which, 'while not restricted in its expectations, has objectives more appropriate to (these) children'. For this group, subjects may be taught in less depth and there 'should be a strong emphasis on personal and social development'.

Still other pupils may need a *developmental curriculum* 'covering selected and sharply focused educational, social and other experiences with precisely defined objectives...designed to encourage a measure of personal autonomy'. It is suggested that this be achieved through emphasis on the 'acquisition of communication, self help, mobility and social skills, very basic literacy and numeracy and an understanding of the world about them including simple science and its application to everyday life.'

This DES paper therefore outlines interesting options in planning for pupils with special educational needs. At one end of the continuum, this planning has much in common with that undertaken for all other pupils. Decisions on aims and objectives, on content and on the nature of the appropriate teaching and learning situations are essentially the same as the decisions made for mainstream pupils. Modifications lie mainly in the area of teaching methods and materials. At the other end of the continuum is planning for a developmental curriculum in which only the broadest general goals are held in common with the plans for mainstream pupils. Planned objectives, content, teaching and learning situations (even to the extent of school placement), teaching methods and materials, while sometimes influenced by choices made for mainstream pupils, are all special.

d
Designing a curriculum

In designing an overall curriculum for a given mainstream school, decisions have to be taken about how far along this continuum the range of special needs planning should extend. The most important points, in our view, are:

- a) that these decisions should be taken quite explicitly;
- b) that the special needs support structures in the school should be consistent with these decisions; and
- c) that whatever general decisions are taken, the possibility of a specific and different response to the needs of an individual pupil should always be open.

In connection with the first point we would argue that special needs pupils should not have to follow courses with different aims and objectives just because no attempts have been made to find teaching methods that can enable them to be successful in attaining the general objectives of the school; equally, pupils with severe problems should not be forced to strive for these general objectives just because insufficient attention has been given to the possibility that their needs might be better met in other ways. The decision about the appropriate objectives for the pupils with special needs should be made explicitly, the implications should be worked through and ideas (e.g. for alternative teaching styles) tried out. Such developments should be evaluated at agreed intervals and the original decisions should be reconsidered in the light of these trials. The issues are complex; they are affected by the range of need that the school's pupils have, by the facilities and resources available, by the range of expertise amongst the staff. Therefore, there can be no ready-made answers, but a procedure such as that outlined could enable a school to find the answers that suit it and its pupils best.

In connection with the second point we would suggest that some special needs support structures are more appropriate to some curriculum decisions than to others. For example, if it had been decided that a modified or developmental curriculum was needed it would not seem appropriate to design the special needs support system entirely upon the principle of support from a second teacher in mainstream classes, for the mainstream class environment would place too many constraints on the content of the alternative curriculum. Similarly, if a 'mainstream plus support' curriculum was chosen, it would not seem appropriate to support pupils entirely through work in special classes with limited access to mainstream facilities and the full range of subject teacher expertise.

The final point is self-evident. However carefully considered a school's overall plan for special needs pupils is, the particular problems of an individual pupil may render that plan inappropriate for that child. The system should always be flexible enough to respond so that children are not forced to fit a system which does not suit them.

e
Some practical implications

We suggest that staff should discuss whether the needs of their pupils can be served by the mainstream curriculum alone, or whether, for some pupils, it is also necessary to consider the incorporation of 'mainstream plus considerable support' or even 'modified' curricula. The need to consider a developmental curriculum in mainstream secondary schools is unlikely to arise at present, but examples of the integration of children with severe learning difficulties into mainstream schools (Hackney, 1985) demonstrate that it is by no means inevitable that it should always be dismissed.

Since we have argued that all staff will be involved in the support of children with special needs (see [Chapter 1](#) and earlier discussion in the present chapter), we suggest that all staff should have a clearly defined role in these discussions.

In these discussions, staff should clearly go on to consider the nature of the school's special needs support system that is implied by the curriculum choices which they have made. Attention should also be given to the nature of the responsibility of mainstream staff for the development of alternative materials or teaching styles for use in their own teaching, and for helping to develop ways of working with special needs staff in their classes, and ways of supporting special needs staff who are involved in teaching their subject to 'special classes'.

Finally, we suggest that decisions should be made on a clear procedure for responding to the situation of individual children for whom the general system adopted by the school does not seem appropriate.

Clearly, the range of problems faced by the pupils who are members of the school will be a major influence on these discussions. Nevertheless, general points can be made and in the rest of this chapter we will discuss some of these.

3.3

Some points on appropriate curricula

a

Richness

Brennan (1979) provides clear evidence that the curriculum offered to special needs pupils (especially in mainstream schools) was less rich than that made available to other pupils. They were less often involved in educational and recreational visits, and their lessons less often involved the use of audio-visual aids. In our own case studies of schools, we have examples of special needs pupils doing 'science' without access to a laboratory and with no emphasis on practical work, and of emphasis on literacy and numeracy to the exclusion of other enriching activities. This seems to be tragic, partly because research evidence quoted by Brennan suggests that special needs pupils make less 'use' of their environment than their normal peers and that schools are therefore missing an opportunity to provide some compensation, and partly because the provision of rich experiences might enable teachers to identify activities or topics that especially interest individual children with special needs—activities and topics which might be then used to stimulate their thinking and learning. It would seem, therefore, to be particularly important to consider whether any planned curriculum does provide sufficient richness for all pupils, however severe their needs.

b

Special needs and ability

Many children with special educational needs do not have low general ability. There is for example no evidence that behavioural or emotional problems are always associated with low IQ. Indeed even the title of Kellmer-Pringle's book *Able Misfits* suggests that the opposite can be true (1970).

Where special needs arise as a result of physical handicap or of a chronic medical disorder the link with low ability, though it can be present, as in the case of children with cerebral palsy, is by no means inevitable. For example, Rutter and colleagues (1970) demonstrated that the IQs of pupils with 'uncomplicated epilepsy' were normally distributed across the range of intelligence. Presumably, Rutter was excluding from this group pupils whose epilepsy was 'complicated' by cerebral palsy. Roughly a third of children with

cerebral palsy do have epilepsy and the inclusion of this group skews the IQ distribution of pupils with epilepsy towards the lower end of the IQ range.

Similar results have been found by Kubany and colleagues who discovered that the intelligence of diabetic children was comparable to that of non-diabetics, and in a further study by the New York City Board of Education which showed that that IQs of children with heart disorders were even somewhat above average. (For accounts of the last two studies see Cruickshank, 1980.) Also, a number of researchers have shown that the IQ of partially hearing children followed the same distribution as that of their hearing peers and that partially sighted children also had IQs in the normal range although they seemed to bunch somewhat below average (Mittler, 1970).

The overall implication of these studies would appear to be that it is sensible to think in terms of curriculum aims and objectives for such pupils that are the same as those for mainstream pupils. Indeed it would be hard to justify offering them a very different curriculum if their potential to cope with a curriculum which leads to qualifications that are regarded as 'saleable' by society, is comparable to that of their non-handicapped peers. The tendency noted by all of the above authors for the school performance of such pupils to be below average does not weaken this case though it does, of course, emphasise the importance of greater understanding of the educational implications of such handicaps and of commitment to the development of appropriate teaching styles to help the pupils achieve these goals.

c

The potential of children with learning problems

Even where special needs do arise directly from a learning difficulty, it is easy to underestimate the potential of pupils to succeed.

In his excellent book *Yes They Can!* Weber (1978) makes this point very clearly and gives an interesting account of the achievements of a group of slow learners in areas such as writing, reading, and creative, logical and critical thinking. He also discusses how such achievements can be encouraged.

Similarly Malecka (1985) has described an experiment in which children in an ESN(M) school were taught some French and reported that this led to 'enhanced self esteem and peer group esteem in and out of school' which was 'ample motive and reward for the children...'

Again, when HMI discussed their visits to a number of secondary schools to inspect the arrangements made for slow learners they commented that pupils 'though handicapped by their considerable language difficulties, showed good understanding and an ability to arrive at well considered conclusions' (DES, 1984). They went on to say that 'ideas which are in themselves complex can be handled by less able pupils if they are introduced in the right context and through appropriate methods'.

These points stress again that although there may be good reasons for changing the basic aims and objectives of the curriculum for some children with special needs, we must be very sure of our ground before we make these alterations simply on the assumption that they would not be able to succeed with mainstream aims and objectives. With appropriate teaching many of them can.

d

What mainstream curriculum?

The emphasis in the previous paragraphs on mainstream aims and objectives should not be taken to imply that the *present* mainstream curriculum is necessarily ideal for special needs pupils, any more than it is ideal for pupils in general. The thrust is rather that the basic educational needs of almost all pupils are essentially

the same and therefore that as we develop the mainstream curriculum, perhaps along the lines suggested by the list of aims suggested in the DES enquiry and quoted in [Figure 3.1](#) (page 18), we should take account of insights from the special needs world in order to produce a curriculum which better serves (almost) everyone. Having done so, we should then consider the special needs group again to determine what special forms of teaching, what special resources, what special support—in general what special delivery systems—are necessary to enable them to succeed with this new curriculum.

An example of this process can be drawn from Fish (1985) who argues that we easily underestimate the employment potential of young people with learning difficulties. He suggests that, however difficult the labour market, people with special needs have a right to a reasonable share of that market. He then shows that this is realistic by citing experience in the USA of ‘mentally retarded girls who in other countries might go from schools to day centres, (who) are able to carry out laboratory testing techniques in an oil company laboratory’. He argues that the specialist vocational training that is needed to bring about such outcomes is relatively straightforward, but that the difficulty is in giving the young people help to develop adequate social skills to sustain a role in open employment. Recognising this need within this group of pupils may encourage us to place more emphasis on the basic aim ‘to develop the social skills necessary to work successfully with other people’ when we are designing the curriculum for all pupils. However, we might still think about special ways of emphasising this aim in the educational programme of the special group.

3.4

Study suggestions

The overall thrust of this chapter can be summarised in these statements:

1. That mainstream curriculum development should be carried out in the expectation that the general aims and objectives of the curriculum will be appropriate for most of the school’s pupils with special needs.
2. That explicit decisions have to be taken about the need to provide alternative curricula, with different objectives for some pupils with the most severe problems.
3. That the school’s special needs support system should be set up in ways that are consistent with the curriculum decisions which have been taken.
4. That great attention should be paid to the development and trial of alternative teaching styles and of special resources so that the option of the mainstream curriculum can be kept open for as many pupils as possible, for as long as possible.
5. That all teachers should be aware of their own responsibilities in relation to special needs pupils in their teaching and their tutoring and of their role in relation to the formal special needs support system.
6. That the system should always be flexible to the particular needs of an individual pupil and that there should be clearly understood ways of initiating discussions about such a case.

A

ACTIVITY 3.4

Consider the statements made at the end of this chapter in the context of your own school.

1. How far do they apply to its present practice?
2. What practical changes would be involved in implementing them?
3. How desirable are these changes in your own situation?

4

The range of special educational needs

4.1

The Warnock Report

When the Warnock Committee in 1978 reported upon the education of handicapped children and young people the concept of 'special educational needs' was central to its thinking. This concept was to replace the previous categorisation of handicapped pupils enshrined in the 1944 Act and subsequent Regulations. The intention of the statutory categories had been to ensure that local authorities made provision, in special or ordinary schools, for a wide range of disabilities. By 1959 the categories were as follows:

Blind pupils

Partially sighted pupils

Deaf pupils

Partially hearing pupils

Educationally subnormal pupils*

Epileptic pupils

Maladjusted pupils

Physically handicapped pupils

Pupils suffering from speech defect

Delicate pupils

The Warnock Committee acknowledged the value of the categories in focusing upon the existence and needs of different groups of handicapped pupils but came to the conclusion that the categorisation was nevertheless unsatisfactory. Many children had more than one disability and a single label concealed additional needs. The essentially medical nature of most of the categories did not necessarily have any

*In 1970 when mentally handicapped children became the responsibility of local education authorities the ESN category was extended to include those children but was subdivided into ESN(M)—moderate educational subnormality to cover the existing pupils and ESN(S)—severe educational subnormality—to categorise the new clients.

bearing upon educational need. The use of such categories also unhelpfully implied that children who shared a disability would be suited by similar educational provision. In many instances the category label could be stigmatising and remain with the child beyond the school period. This particular categorisation might also be an obstacle to special provision for many children whose needs were acknowledged but who failed to fall neatly into any statutory category. However, the perpetuation in categories of 'the sharp distinction between two groups of children—the handicapped and the non-handicapped'—was the most compelling argument for the Committee in recommending their abolition.

The Committee advocated the use of a detailed description of special educational need in place of a category of handicap. It was acknowledged that notions of disability might still be needed, especially for children with sensory and physical disorders, but only in so far as they contributed to the child's educational need. The 'educationally subnormal' label, which was regarded as both offensive and imprecise, should be replaced by the idea of a learning difficulty of different degrees of severity and of certain 'specific learning difficulties'—such as in reading. By employing such an all-embracing notion as a 'learning difficulty' it was possible to acknowledge the needs of the child in a remedial class or group as well as the child with a severe mental handicap. It is interesting to note that the Committee advocated the retention of the term 'maladjusted' despite its possible stigma because it implied that 'behaviour can sometimes be meaningfully considered only in relation to the circumstances in which it occurs'. The importance of considering the context as well as the child will be taken up later.

In addition to loosening up the definition of special educational needs the Committee suggested, on the evidence of surveys, that up to one in five children might have such needs at some stage in their school careers with one in six in need of special provision at any one time. In this way too, the static feel of the categories was abolished. Some children would need support throughout their school careers, but for many that support would be needed only occasionally or intermittently.

4.2

Special educational needs and the 1981 Act

In the wake of the Warnock Report came the 1981 Education Act, implemented in 1983, under which special educational provision is now made. Many Warnock ideas are incorporated and the idea of 'special educational needs' is central. As we discussed in detail in [Chapter 2](#), a child is deemed to have a special educational need under the terms of the Act, if s/he has a 'learning difficulty' calling for special educational provision to be made. A child is defined as having a learning difficulty if

- a) s/he has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his/her age, or
- b) s/he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him/her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided in schools, within the area of the local authority concerned, for children of his/her age.

These definitions although somewhat evasive certainly suggest something of the range of needs which teachers might encounter.

a

Children with a 'significantly greater difficulty in learning'

Mild

It is difficult to know what 'significantly greater' means in relation to a learning difficulty but we should perhaps mention first the pupils who are in remedial groups. Although they may not be severely educationally handicapped nevertheless it seems important that there is some extra help given to their needs. As, however, schools usually make provision of this kind perhaps this group does not strictly come under the terms of the Act but, as we remark elsewhere, their needs could become very special if existing resources were eroded or re-allocated under pressure from other educational initiatives.

Moderate

The 'greater difficulty in learning' phrase seems to encompass many of the children encountered in the old ESN(M) schools, units, or classes, children who might also be labelled slow learners. When assessed for special provision, particularly on verbal tests, these children have often been allocated low IQ scores, usually within the range 50–70. Their limited intellectual skills have often been associated with social and emotional immaturity, and at times, physical or behavioural disorders. Academic progress has usually been slow but discernible and in more prosperous times these children have gained employment and ceased to be 'special' when free of educational demands. That picture is of course a massive generalisation which has to encompass many individual variations. In educational terms these children need considerable support, modification to the curriculum to match their slower learning pace and immaturity and teachers who appreciate their needs and can foster a growing sense of confidence and competence.

Severe

Another group of children in this 'greater difficulty in learning' category are the more severely handicapped pupils who even now may be found in the special schools which were labelled ESN(S). At one time teachers in mainstream schools had no need to be concerned at a professional level for the provision for these children, but that is no longer the case. In many areas some of these children are now being integrated full or part-time into their local schools with varying degrees of support and their needs have to be considered with the rest of the children. (For examples see [Chapter 7](#).)

Among such children are the majority of children with Down's syndrome and other handicapping syndromes and conditions, either congenital or acquired early in life, which leave them with limited intellectual functioning. Again this may be associated with physical or behavioural disorders. The experience of the last fifteen years in the special schools has demonstrated quite clearly the educability of these children and the various teaching strategies and curriculum adaptations which meet their very special needs.

There is such diversity among this group in terms of ability and disability that it is impossible to spell out in any general way what their educational needs are. Each child has to be assessed and managed on an individual basis. What can be said, however, is that they need a good deal of individual help and teachers with particular skills of diagnosis, assessment and management suited to very slow, uneven and/or deviant learning styles. Their curricular needs may include help in passing through the early developmental stages

usually reached in the pre-school years and a detailed analysis of any programme to allow for small step learning.

Specific learning difficulties

The 'greater difficulty' in learning must also cover children with specific learning difficulties whose overall functioning is within the normal range. (This is not to imply that children with moderate or severe learning difficulties cannot also have specific learning difficulties.) Frequently the weakness is in the area of literacy—particularly reading or writing—but one may also cite children with severe numeracy problems, those with specific expressive or receptive language disorders and those with weaknesses in specific cognitive functions such as comparing and categorising, sequencing and reasoning. Those unfortunate children who find it difficult to master the basic literacy skills which are so crucial in later academic success certainly need very specific help. This need not necessarily occur in withdrawal classes but must be geared to their particular weakness. For some the problem may be remediable, but experience has shown that others need to be restored to self confidence and to learn strategies that will help them to develop and progress despite a persistent disability.

Undoubtedly there are many other specific learning difficulties but in our society we are not so concerned with aesthetic, creative, practical or physical aspects of development so that children who fail utterly in music making, art, woodwork or P.E. do not acquire a 'special needs' label. Perhaps they should. That would certainly change our concept of special needs. Further discussion of our limited views on special needs may be found in Wilson and Cowell (1984).

b

Disabilities that hinder progress

Physical and sensory handicaps

The second part of the definition refers to a disability which prevents or hinders a child in making use of ordinary educational facilities. This immediately suggests a physical disability which may hinder access to school buildings or specialist rooms or to areas of the curriculum which necessitate physical co-ordination, mobility or manual dexterity. We are also reminded of children with sensory disabilities which cut them off in part or entirely from the visual or verbal signals which are a key feature of the teaching and learning processes.

Some of the needs of these children can be met in very obvious and practical ways through physical adaptations to buildings, availability and use of disability aids and, in some cases, the support of welfare assistants (see Hodgson (1985)). It is, however, important to remember that their disabilities may have generated secondary handicaps such as emotional or social problems, learning difficulties, restricted experience and missed schooling. In the effort to compensate for their disability in an able-bodied world they may tire easily and be unable to compete in pace with their peers. Although therefore a disability should not be a bar to a mainstream education it needs to be understood and allowed for if the child is to benefit. There are circumstances where pupils have taken a slightly reduced range of subjects to allow extra time for writing or typing. This sort of experience is reported in the account of the integration of physically disabled pupils into a secondary comprehensive (C.S.I.E. undated). It may be necessary too for mainstream teaching staff to be supported by visiting specialists who can advise on appropriate teaching strategies and on the most effective use of mechanical or electronic aids.

Chronic medical disorders

Similar needs for understanding and awareness may be met in children with chronic medical disorders such as epilepsy or diabetes. The actual disability may be managed by others and the child may appear quite unremarkable in the school context except for occasional physical manifestations but the chronic disorders do carry educational implications. The children may have missed vital steps in schooling, they may suffer in psychological or social ways because of their disability, their general well being and awareness may be inconsistent in a way which is fairly unobtrusive but potentially damaging for academic success. In such cases part of the understanding and awareness needs to be an adequate system of monitoring progress and the facility to offer appropriate support after a period of learning disruption. A more detailed discussion of the implications of a chronic medical disorder may be found in Hackney (1985a).

Emotional disorders

Children with emotional or psychological disorders must also be regarded as having special educational needs. Behavioural disturbances are often associated with established learning difficulties although the direction of any causal connection may not be easy to unravel. Behavioural difficulties arising from some traumatic experience, though not associated with learning difficulties in the past, almost certainly prevent or hinder satisfactory learning. The children's needs are various but the experience of success in terms of academic or other school work as well as some kind of satisfactory relationship with at least one authority figure may be beneficial. Outside help may be sought and used but solutions also need to be found within the school. Although it would be a mistake to have low expectations for such pupils, a certain flexibility may avert potential crisis and breakdown points. Support for staff under stress, however, may be as important as support for the disturbed children. Wilson and Evans (1980) provide a comprehensive account of this special educational need.

c

Other aspects of special need

The needs of the most able

There are some categories of need which are either omitted from the Act or specifically excluded. Children who are very able or 'gifted' hardly seem to qualify under the Act's definition but there is undoubtedly evidence that their special abilities may hinder them from making best use of a mainstream education either because they become social misfits and disturbed or because their talents are unrecognised or neglected. Such children may be content to drift through school with the minimum of effort or become frustrated and disillusioned with the mismatch between their abilities and the schools' demands. Either way their education cannot be counted a great success. The school has somehow to challenge their talents in a way which encourages development but remains acceptable to their need for social approval from their peer group. The recent development of enrichment programmes for more able children may help in this effort and demonstrate the appropriateness of a wide range of resources and materials for all groups. Such programmes may on occasions need to be supplemented by more intensive provision, for example withdrawal from timetabled work for a day to engage in special activities, tutorial work with teachers and visiting experts, attendance at a residential school and so on. Tannenbaum (1983) is an excellent source of discussion about all aspects of giftedness. There is no clear divide in general terms between the average and the more able

and individual children may be endowed with very disparate abilities. In the end, therefore, all children gain if the needs of all ranges of ability can be met.

Social disadvantage

Social disadvantage too is not specifically mentioned in the Act although it may perhaps constitute a 'disability' which hinders some children. They may be deprived of common childhood experiences, forced to live in unsuitable conditions which endanger their physical and mental energies and compelled to face day-to-day difficulties in living which would tax the strongest adult. Mortimore and Blackstone's book *Disadvantage and Education* (1982) presents an overview of this aspect of special needs. Schools cannot change social conditions but can compensate to some extent and this is recognised in part by the extra staffing in Social Priority areas. This help, however, may not be available to individual children in a relatively advantaged school. Nevertheless children can be supported through counselling, through homework facilities at school and through the school's close liaison with social services and families where possible.

Children with English as a second language

The Act specifically excludes children from the special needs label if their difficulty stems from speaking a language other than English at home. This nod to the acceptability of cultural diversity in our schools cannot conceal the fact that a poor command of written and spoken English is a disadvantage in our current educational system and that children may need more than a short intensive language course to compensate. Moreover it makes for difficulties when children for whom English is a second language also have special educational needs as recognised by the Act. For the everyday working of a school it probably makes sense to regard these children as having a temporary special educational need until they can manage as well in English as in their first language. The ESL language teaching catered for by Section 11 funding (Local Government Act 1966) is often not enough to ensure that the children can express themselves or comprehend as competently as in their first language. There needs to be coordinated support from special needs and ESL teachers as advocated by Roaf (1985).

d

Severity and persistence

There is one aspect of special needs which has been mentioned only briefly but which ties in well with the idea of a school developing flexible systems of support. Just as special needs are defined to some extent by the context, and so have a measure of relativity, so too we have to consider them in the dimensions of severity and persistence. Factors bearing the same name—such as a reading problem, anxiety, epilepsy, inattention—need considerable examination before an appropriate response can be made otherwise we return to the criticisms made about the old handicapping categories when the label rather than the individual needs dictated provision.

There are some children whose special educational needs are likely to be both severe and chronic, such as children with a severe mental handicap or those with virtually no sight. Although with appropriate teaching they will gain increasingly in competence and independence it is unlikely that progress will be maintained without continuous support and provision of a special kind. Other children have severe needs of a much shorter duration. The child who is immobilised by an accident and unable to attend school needs educational support within the home or hospital to ensure continuity of progress and this support may well

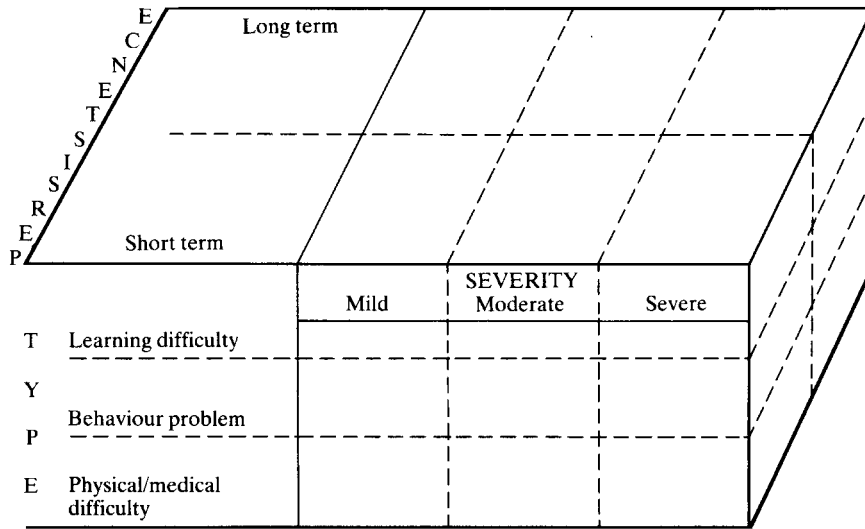


Figure 4.2d

have to be closely tailored to immediate factors of health and mobility. Once a recovery is made, however, and essential learning checked, that support should no longer be needed. Similarly, a child whose psychological balance is upset by some trauma such as a bereavement may need very intense support for a period. This may involve counselling, social work participation, modified academic requirements, even access to a sanctuary or retreat within the school. Although the healing process in this case may be slower than in the case of a physical hurt, in time the support may be reduced and relaxed and the special provision no longer needed.

Other children have moderate or mild problems which require less support but perhaps for a long period. One example may be the child with a moderate hearing loss which is not remediable and so will always need to be taken into account. The support needed, however, may be relatively minor, such as care over seating arrangements and careful monitoring of progress in language comprehension and competence. Other moderate or mild needs may be of short duration, such as those arising from several short absences through illness or from a change of school. In both cases care has to be taken to ensure that key elements in the curriculum have been covered and that the child is not left at a permanent disadvantage through a temporary disturbance. This analysis can be summarised and the independence of the dimensions emphasised by Figure 4.2d.

4.3 Relativity of need

A learning difficulty may be identified in a child who has a ‘disability which either prevents or hinders him/her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided by schools within the area of the local authority concerned, for children of his/her age.’ The wording of the last part of this definition implies that the difficulty is not an absolute fixed entity but a condition that is relative to the provision made in schools in the area. It is important to be clear about the distinction between situations here. If a child has a

disability of the kind listed above and the school or LEA is not yet in a position to accommodate that child with the minimum bar to learning, then that special educational need is unmet, and the school is not fulfilling its duty by the child. If, however, the school as part of its normal range of provision can accommodate the child the needs are being met. Except in strictly legal terms, that does not, of course, mean that the need is no longer there. A blind child in a school with specialist facilities for teaching the visually handicapped does not cease to have the special needs associated with blindness. Should the school cease to make that kind of provision the need will again become apparent as an unmet need. However, it is in cases of *unmet* needs that authorities and schools have a duty to make some special provision *over and above or different from* what is normally available. The extent of special needs, therefore, is defined not only by pupils but by the ability and willingness of a school to cater as a general rule for the diversity of ability and disability within its potential pupils.

This idea of relativity of needs leads on to the view that special educational needs arise from the interaction of the child with the learning environment, and factors which create problems may lie in the child or the environment or, most likely, in a combination of the two. When making some assessment, therefore, of the nature of an apparent special educational need with a view to meeting that need it is crucial not only to examine the educational implications of within-child factors but also those of situational factors in the school.

4.4

The interaction of child and learning environment

a

Within-child factors

In some ways it is easiest to appreciate the limitations imposed by physical or sensory disability and to make appropriate responses in teaching. Children with physical disabilities may need assistance to get to classes on time, may need lifts or ramps to obtain access to different areas of the school, may need work surfaces of different heights to take part in various practical activities, may need typewriters, computers or amanuenses to complete written work, or may need some satisfactory alternative to physical education lessons. The child with a hearing loss may need to use a hearing aid, the teacher may need to use a radio microphone; the position of the child and the teacher in oral presentations may be crucial for lip readers; group discussion time needs to be organised carefully if the child is not to be isolated and written hand-outs may be necessary to ensure that key information is available. The child with a visual handicap may need a variety of low vision aids to maximise the sight she or he has as well as specially developed materials in braille or large type; the lighting in classrooms and work surfaces also need to be suitable.

Children who are chronically ill or occasionally miss large periods of schooling for hospitalisation obviously need to receive work to enable them to keep up with their peers and their progress has to be carefully monitored to avoid key gaps in understanding.

In some ways the needs which have such an obvious profile and can be met in highly practical ways are the easiest to understand. Help may be needed from outside specialists because children are affected differently by seemingly similar disabilities. What is suitable provision for one child with cerebral palsy may be totally inappropriate for another. Nevertheless, teachers may feel that there is something tangible to tackle. It is, however, important to remember that such children's needs may also include teaching which takes account of delays in higher concept formation due to lack of the normal sensory and perceptual

experiences. They may also need emotional support to cope with their own and others' response to chronic disability.

Other within-child factors are less easy to grasp because they are less obvious, less dramatic, less susceptible to practical solutions. The child with epilepsy may not always show the major symptoms. While the convulsion is disturbing it is obviously something to be dealt with as a short term emergency and it is easy to see that it effectively blocks learning for a while. The child with epilepsy may also, however, experience frequent and short periods of altered consciousness which may be almost unnoticeable in a classroom but which may interfere much more radically with satisfactory learning over a long period. The child with diabetes will not often, if ever, enter a coma, another obvious medical emergency, but his or her alertness and responsiveness may vary with the fluctuations in blood sugar levels which are difficult to eradicate even with the most sophisticated medication.

Any child who is on regular drug therapy may suffer from unwanted side effects which may alter behaviour or attention. Children with any sort of physical or sensory disability may become tired more easily than their peers in their efforts to compete on equal terms in work and play.

The child who is worried or anxious or otherwise psychologically disturbed may draw attention to his or her needs in very obvious ways through tears or aggression or bizarre behaviour, but many may switch off from school in much more subtle ways which are liable to misinterpretation as some defect in attention or co-operation.

It would seem that the needs of children with intellectual handicaps should be easy to understand too and amenable to the psychologist's tests. However, the risk here seems to be that the child's difficulty is seen in global terms—an inability to read or write or spell—and the diagnosis which leads to useful remedial or supportive measures has still to be done. An IQ figure, even two figures, for verbal or performance tests, can only hint at how the child might function, at the level of conceptual thinking, at the disparities which have to be appreciated if the child is to be appropriately taught.

All these within-child factors suggest that the teacher cannot simply rely on the 'label' to know how a child is affected and how best to help. We are back with the 'categories' dilemma. The label is only the starting point for understanding and much more investigation has to be completed by the teacher and with the help of other agents, before appropriate strategies can be devised.

b

School factors

The idea of 'appropriate' teaching reminds us of the need to examine the school factors which may contribute to special educational needs. The Warnock Report put forward a figure of approximately 20 per cent for children who might at some time have special educational needs. The size of that figure, which is meeting with some agreement in local authorities (e.g. Burnham and Robbins 1980), emphasises the importance of the part which schools play in creating special educational needs. There will always be a few children whose needs are so special that in any context the school has to rethink its curriculum or style of teaching, but to do that for 20 per cent implies that the general educational offering is not shaped for the range and diversity of a normal comprehensive intake. To make 20 per cent special is to throw doubts on the suitability of the ordinary provision.

To cater well for the problems caused by disabilities may seem a tall order for the average school. Undoubtedly it would be unreasonable to expect any school to fulfil the individual needs of diversely handicapped children without some special effort but some of these needs are common in modified form to very many children. The need for good working conditions, the clear presentation of material in different

modes, and the monitoring of progress, particularly at times of stress or ill health, is not confined to the obviously disabled and if these things were provided as routine the extra needs of a few children would not seem too onerous. Indeed, in meeting these needs teachers might well extend their own expertise to the benefit of many more pupils.

To cater well for intellectual needs seems perhaps an even more obvious obligation for schools. If the individual styles of learning and levels of ability are not taken into account when curricula are devised and implemented some children will inevitably be condemned to constant failure. This is not to suggest that meeting the intellectual needs of all children is easy. To offer alternative or modified curricula to children who appear to be struggling raises issues of equality of opportunity, internal segregation, labelling, under-expectation and mistaking a specific, remediable difficulty for a chronic general deficiency. The alternative solution, now being attempted by some schools, is to rethink radically the whole curriculum, teaching strategies and learning support systems so that all children can benefit from an integrated programme which takes account of diversity but does not consign any child to a rigidly limited educational programme.

4.5

Conclusion

We are almost in the position of saying that the needs of all children are special and that if we cater for the individual we shall eliminate unmet needs. That is appropriate if we are thinking in terms of individual tutorial work but is not attainable when we think in terms of groups of learners. It would be impossible, and perhaps unwise, to cater solely for the individual when we live in a society which requires us to live and work in groups. Within that constraint, however, we need to give every child a fair opportunity to make the most of whatever talents s/he has and that means making every effort to meet the special educational needs discussed earlier—needs which, whether arising from within the child or the environment or both are likely to block that opportunity. In meeting special educational needs, however, we have to work for a flexible and informed system of support which is open to constant re-appraisal and change, which can respond quickly to emergencies but also respond in a stimulating way to long term needs. For this reason any one style of provision or any static remedy is likely to be inadequate.

4.6

Study suggestions

This chapter acknowledges that the former categories of 'handicap' were a poor basis on which to plan for special educational provision. It does suggest, however, that the component parts of special educational needs do have to be understood in all their diversity if an appropriate response is to be made. It also raises issues of severity and persistence of need and proposes that most needs arise from a mismatch between the pupils' capabilities and the school environment.

Activity 4.6 may be undertaken by an individual teacher, a group of teachers (e.g. a year team) or by a whole staff.

A

ACTIVITY 4.6

Consider any group of pupils identified as having special educational needs and try to be explicit about the nature of each pupil's needs.

The following checklist taken from the chapter sections may provide guidelines:

- mild learning difficulties;
- moderate learning difficulties;
- severe learning difficulties;
- specific learning difficulties;
- physical or sensory handicaps;
- chronic medical disorders;
- emotional or psychological disorders;
- outstanding ability;
- social disadvantage;
- English as a second language.

For each pupil consider the following questions:

1. Does the 'label' explain the child's difficulty at school?
2. Does the 'label' immediately suggest a remedy?
3. What part does the school (curriculum, teaching styles, buildings etc.) play in the situation?
4. Is the 'need' mild, moderate or severe?
5. Is the 'need' likely to be short-lived or chronic?
6. Are there factors raised which require further investigation or training in order to answer the question fully (e.g. educational implications of a particular physical disability)?

When you have considered each pupil ask yourself whether you have used some 'labels' heavily or others not at all. If so, is this a true reflection of the population or is it a reflection of traditional patterns of thinking about special needs which may have more to do with existing provision and expertise than with the children?

5

Identification and diagnosis procedures

5.1 Introduction

Identification and diagnosis are components of the process which enables the school to make the right sort of special needs provision available to the right pupils. Identification is essentially a screening process through which pupils who have special educational needs are singled out from those of their peers who do not. Diagnosis is the process through which the nature of the needs of each identified child is explored. 'Identification' identifies the pupils, 'diagnosis' identifies the need.

5.2 Identification

a The need for identification

In his introduction to 'TIPS' (the Teacher Information Pack), Dawson (1985) quotes teachers as saying 'We don't need to be shown which of our pupils have special needs. What we want help with is i) how to identify more precisely what those needs are and ii) how we, as class teachers, can meet those needs more efficiently.' The request for advice on diagnosis and provision stimulated the production of the TIPS material and is also reflected in much of the content of the books in the present series. However, are teachers right to be certain that they know which pupils have special needs?

It is certainly an understandable position, as many pupils with special needs do identify themselves by their behaviour or their difficulty with school work. However, there may be other pupils who deserve special attention but who do not make themselves known so easily. For example, an extremely able pupil may be sufficiently disenchanted with school that she does not demonstrate her high ability and goes unnoticed and unstimulated by appropriate teaching. A child with significant hearing problems may be sufficiently adept at lip reading that he can 'get by' in school. He might, nevertheless, be able to achieve a great deal more if his problem were recognised and steps were taken to reduce the need for him to devote a lot of his attention to overcoming his hearing loss. There may also be pupils who are using strategies to reduce their reading difficulties, or other specific learning difficulties, who are successful enough to avoid recognition as pupils with special needs but not successful enough to enable them to reach their potential.

There is, therefore, a need for a process of identification. Pupils do not always identify themselves.

b

The likelihood of errors

The end point of this identification process is a list of names of pupils thought to have special educational needs. If the process is completely effective the list will contain all the pupils who have special needs and none who do not. In practice, however, identification processes will make errors: some pupils with special needs will be overlooked and some who actually do not have special needs will be placed on the list. These two types of error will not necessarily be equally serious. Being identified when they do not have special needs may be a relatively unimportant error if the pupils are then involved in the subsequent stage of diagnosis and if this diagnostic investigation can reveal that no special provision is required. However, it can lead to serious problems if the diagnostic process is omitted and pupils are straight away placed in some distinct form of provision (e.g. a remedial set) from which they cannot easily 'escape', or if they suffer considerable loss of self-esteem as a result of insensitive treatment. The other sort of error in identification, that of pupils being overlooked when they do have real difficulties, can be relatively unimportant if there are later occasions when the pupils' needs are re-assessed. However, it can be serious if this does not happen and if pupils' needs thereafter go unsupported.

c

A diagnostic process for all?

Given that we cannot rely on children to identify themselves and that procedures designed to reveal the less obvious cases may still overlook some individuals, why not go through the diagnostic process with all children?

Some diagnostic information will arise from the normal record keeping procedures of the school, and opportunities should be taken to develop these procedures to improve the value of this information. However, if they are to produce findings which are sufficiently detailed to be useful in the more complex cases, diagnostic procedures are likely to be carried out by teachers and pupils working together on an individual basis, sometimes with formal or informal input from external professionals such as the educational psychologist or the school doctor. A full scale diagnosis will therefore be expensive, not least in terms of the time of pupils and teachers. Though it may provide vital clues to the best form of help for children with quite complex special needs, it may have little that is useful to offer to pupils who do not have any difficulties, so that for these pupils it is a waste of time. Diagnosis for all is therefore neither practicable nor desirable. An identification stage is needed so that diagnostic resources can be directed to where they will have greatest effect.

Unfortunately, the development of really precise identification procedures is itself time consuming, sophisticated procedures may take a considerable amount of teacher and pupil time to administer and to interpret and, anyway, totally error-free systems are probably impossible to achieve (at least in practical terms). Clearly, there has to be a compromise between the sophisticated and highly effective system and the simpler but more error-prone approach. It should be remembered that the diagnostic stage will provide an opportunity for teachers to pick out pupils who were identified in error but that pupils who are overlooked at the stage of identification are not put through the diagnostic process, which can therefore do nothing to compensate for this kind of identification error.

d

The need for repetition

A final point, in this general discussion of identification, is that the identification process should not be something which takes place on a single occasion. Repeated identification is important because it can minimise the effect of the error in the identification process and, more significantly, because changes in the demands of the curriculum, in teaching style, even (for pupils with physical handicaps or medical problems) changes in the timing of activities in the day can create problems for a pupil who had not previously been at risk. Also, as some special needs are short-lived, there may always be individuals who are beginning to experience a need for support for the first time even when there are not any obvious changes in what is being done by the school.

e

General recommendations

We therefore recommend that identification procedures should be fairly simple and should err on the side of over-inclusion so that there is less chance of pupils being overlooked. The process should be sensitive to the whole range of special needs and should not be exclusively concerned with the identification of, say, children with low general ability or poor reading. What is more, identification should either be a continuous process or it should be repeated at intervals so that changes in pupils' circumstances can be noted, and those who were originally overlooked can be picked up later.

5.3

Diagnosis

There is much that is appropriate in the use of the medical term 'diagnosis', and much to be lost by giving too little attention to this stage of the school's response to special needs pupils. However, the term 'diagnosis' does have the unfortunate connotation that the pupils' difficulties arise entirely out of problems within the pupils themselves. We would suggest that an important perspective on special needs, to which we have already drawn attention, is that special needs arise out of an interaction between pupils and their environment (see [Chapter 1](#)). Whilst continuing to use the term 'diagnosis' we would therefore want to make the point that both the pupils, and the environment—the general school environment and the precise nature of the lessons in which the pupil has difficulty—should be subject to investigation at the diagnostic stage.

The purpose of diagnosis is to reveal the nature of the problem which individual pupils are experiencing and bring to light any pupils who were included in the list of identified pupils in error. Diagnosis should not be restricted to the investigation of, say, reading problems but should be flexible enough to explore other learning difficulties, to explore the characteristics of a disruptive pupil (see *Classroom Responses to Disruptive Behaviour* in this series) and to explore the educational impact of a physical handicap or medical condition.

It is important that the information generated at the diagnostic stage is helpful in structuring provision. For example, the various sub-scores of the WISC IQ test, which is often administered to pupils with moderate to severe learning problems by educational psychologists, may be quite helpful in mapping some of the strengths and weaknesses in a pupil's cognitive functioning. However, if these results are not interpreted (either by or for the teacher) in ways that are related to that pupil's learning in science, modern languages and so on, then the information is not being put to best use. In designing the diagnostic stage of the special

needs support system, those responsible should check that the information derived from the process is useful in guiding the mainstream and 'special needs' teachers who work with the pupils. Examples of procedures which fit this specification in the area of learning difficulties, can be found in *Classroom Responses to Learning Difficulties* in this series.

General recommendations

We recommend that diagnostic procedures should be designed on a two or more stage basis. The first stage should be quite straightforward so that any inappropriately identified pupils can readily be sorted out. The detailed information which is provided by the later stage(s) which are carried out with the pupils who do indeed have special needs must be relevant to the teachers who will have to make use of it, and should therefore be geared to the kinds of work which the pupils do in mainstream classes and in any special session which they might have with special needs staff. For this reason, and because diagnostic assessment should include assessment of the environment as well as the pupil, some part of the diagnostic process should involve observation of the pupil in the mainstream (and/or special) classroom. This might be the responsibility of the mainstream teacher, suitably briefed, or of a special needs teacher who might go into mainstream classes with a pupil to make the assessment. Where external professionals are involved in diagnosis someone on the school staff should have the responsibility of liaising with them to ensure that the *educational* implications of their advice are clear.

These two tasks of identification and diagnosis will now be discussed in greater detail.

5.4

Current identification procedures

In 1982/3, as part of the research programme in which we were engaged, we interviewed the headteachers of 31 of the 32 Oxfordshire secondary schools which dealt with pupils in the 11–16 or 11–18 age range. The purpose of the interview was to find out about the special needs support system in each school. This survey was followed up by a questionnaire in 1985 which enabled us to enquire about any changes in the approach of each school.

The 1982/3 survey revealed that in 77 per cent of the secondary schools teachers made use of primary school records as a means of identifying pupils with special needs. In just over half these schools they supplemented this information by making personal visits to the partner primary schools, and in one school they had arranged that primary teacher colleagues would fill in a detailed referral form on any pupil whom they felt might need support. There was little doubt that this information was highly valued by the secondary headteachers and one remarked specifically on its accuracy.

In 61 per cent of the schools teachers made use of a screening test which pupils took at the time of, or soon after, entry to the secondary school. A further 23 per cent had arranged with their colleagues in primary school that a screening test would be done before the pupils transferred to the secondary school. The timing of these tests was often regarded as problematic. There was a case for testing at primary school or in the very early days of the pupils' secondary career so that any support that was needed could be provided before the pupil began to experience difficulty in the new school. There was also a case for delaying the testing so that pupils would be spared the trauma of a test soon after arrival in their new school. Of the schools which did set a test after transfer, five used the Gapadol Test of Reading Comprehension, four the Daniels and Diack Test of Reading Experience, and others used verbal reasoning, non-verbal reasoning and numeracy tests from NFER. A third of the schools used a battery of tests.

Two headteachers specifically referred to the fact that the tests were useful sources of information but that they were not treated as infallible. One said that the staff could always override test results on the basis of their own judgement; the other said that the tests were useful in encouraging staff to take a second look at pupils with unexpected results.

In 19 per cent of the schools, parents were asked to contribute to the identification process.

In 62 per cent of the schools an important component of the identification process was the nomination of pupils by their secondary school teachers. One headteacher commented that this was crucial: as the system of provision gave a good deal of responsibility to the mainstream class teacher, that teacher *must* have the last word in referring a pupil to the special needs department. It also seemed to the interviewer that this reference to staff opinion was the main way in which any repeated identification took place. There did not appear to be repeated testing sessions for the purpose of updating (and possibly correcting) identification information.

In the follow-up survey, of the 20 schools responding, 12 reported no change in their process and 8 reported increased emphasis on one or more of these techniques. Only three of these eight schools reported any decrease in emphasis (two placed less emphasis on tests, one on secondary teachers' judgements) so one must assume that there was an overall increase in the effort expended on identification in at least five schools.

The overall picture was, therefore, that in recent years most schools were making use of different kinds of information which included information from primary schools, from screening tests of general ability, literacy and numeracy, and from the opinions of the subject teachers in the secondary school.

5.5

Developing an identification system

The survey which is summarised above indicated that it was not unusual for schools to combine test results and teachers' judgements to make up a special needs identification system. Such a combination could be a good starting point for a system that fits with the recommendations in [Section 5.1](#), though hopefully schools would also take account of parents' views and of nominations made by other professionals (for example doctors, speech therapists and the like). The test-based element in such a system could provide sensitivity to pupils' difficulties which have not yet made an impact on teachers. The use of the views of parents and of other professionals, and especially the inclusion of a teacher-based element, could ensure that the system was sufficiently wide ranging and that there was an element of continuous monitoring built in. However, to make such a system as effective as it might be, some development work will be needed.

The problem of including parents' views in the process of identification is largely an organisational one. The school needs to let them know how it tries to identify and provide for pupils with special needs, and to tell them that, if they suspect that their child might have special needs, their comments would be welcomed, and to ensure that they know to whom to make their comments. The same sorts of points apply to the involvement, in the identification process, of professionals who are not school-based. (More will be said about the involvement of these groups in diagnosis in a later section.) However the matter of the use of tests and of teachers' judgements in identification calls for some quite basic development work within the school, and some suggestions for this are made below.

a
Tests

Where tests are used as part of an identification process, care must obviously be taken in their selection and interpretation. In selecting tests there has to be compromise between comprehensive testing and testing that is realistic in terms of the time and costs involved. A reasonable compromise giving good coverage of a range of cognitive abilities might be achieved by the use of a test of reading, a test of mathematics and a test of non-verbal reasoning.

Maths and non-verbal reasoning tests

The NFER tests that were often used in the schools we surveyed could certainly cover the maths and non-verbal areas of a screening programme for pupils at the time of transfer to secondary school. The NFER maths tests (for example *Basic Mathematics Test DE*) cover a range of mathematical abilities which will not only be challenged by secondary school maths teaching, but also by work in other curriculum areas. Pupils with low scores on such tests are therefore likely to have learning difficulties in secondary school that go well beyond any difficulties which they might have in mathematics classes. Some of the NFER maths tests can reveal diagnostic detail as well as serving as a screening tool.

Non-verbal reasoning tests (for example *Non-verbal Test DH*) test such things as how well pupils can reason with geometric shapes when words and written instructions have been deliberately excluded. This kind of test can be useful diagnostically, especially in revealing whether a pupil with reading difficulties (or with English as a second language) has general learning difficulties or whether other aspects of his or her thinking are more highly developed. As a screening tool they might reveal areas of potential difficulty for a pupil who gets by in reading and maths tests because of particularly good teaching or support with these basic skills from home.

These NFER maths and non-verbal tests each take under an hour to administer, and can be given to groups of pupils. A range of similar tests is available in each area. Each one is designed for a specific age range and tends to have slightly different emphasis in terms of content. Inspection of the catalogues of NFER or other test publishers should enable a school to select the non-verbal and maths tests which best suit its needs.

Reading tests

Both of the reading tests that we found to be in common use (the Gapadol and the Daniels and Diack *Standard Reading Tests*) are discussed by Vincent and colleagues (1983) in their critical review of reading tests. Gapadol is described as a 'quick general guide to reading ability' but the reviewers point out that it ignores the variety and specialisation of written material in secondary education. The *Standard Reading Tests* series is described as 'a useful approach for screening pupils entering the secondary stage' but its theoretical basis is criticised and its typography is described as 'among the least satisfactory of such tests'. In testing pupils' reading ability, it would therefore seem that some reassessment of appropriate instruments might be called for.

The *London Reading Test* (published by NFER) is designed specifically as a screening tool for use at the stage of secondary transfer. It aims to test pupils' ability to comprehend material of a kind that is used in secondary teaching, it uses cloze procedure as well as questions designed to test higher order comprehension skills that are often required of pupils in secondary teaching situations, it is particularly discriminating at the lower end of the ability range and it uses material that pays attention to the

multicultural context of schools. Another interesting test series is the *Effective Reading Tests* written by Vincent and de la Mare (published in 1986, by Macmillan). This series asks questions based on specially written texts. Relatively quick 'Progress Tests' are designed for screening purposes. These are in an objective and multiple choice format and are easy to administer and mark. There are also related 'Skills Tests' which provide diagnostic information covering reading skills such as skimming and scanning, critical awareness of content and use of indexes. The 'London Reading Test' and the 'Effective Reading Tests' would seem to be well worth considering as alternatives to the older tests which still seem to be in use.

The interpretation of the test results requires some decisions to be taken. One must, for example, choose the cut-off scores below which pupils are considered to be in need of diagnostic investigation. Test manuals may give useful advice on this and initial decisions can be monitored and modified in the light of experience. Decisions have also to be taken about what to do if there is disagreement between the tests, or between teachers and tests, as to whether or not a child has difficulties. In the light of our recommendation that identification procedures should err on the side of over-inclusiveness we would suggest that a child who is regarded as in difficulty by any one test or by his or her teachers should be investigated. If this approach leads to the identification of too many pupils who later prove not to have special needs, it might be modified by saying that any two indications of difficulty would serve to identify the pupil as one who needs diagnostic assessment or that, where teachers and tests disagree teachers would carefully review their decision before making a final judgement about the need for assessment. Certainly there is no logic in saying, for example, that 'teachers automatically overrule tests'. In such a regime the tests are serving no purpose and the time devoted to them is being wasted.

As elsewhere in the special needs field there are few hard and fast rules about interpretation that can be provided and that will apply equally well in all situations. What is needed is a serious enquiring approach in which decisions are monitored and reconsidered in the light of experience.

b Teachers

Teacher opinion is an important complement to the test-based screening that has been described above. As a headteacher in our survey pointed out, a mainstream teacher is, at least in part, responsible for helping pupils with special needs so that teacher must be able to refer pupils for diagnostic assessment when s/he is worried about their learning or behaviour. It would be ridiculous if this referral could only take place if the pupils happened to score below some cut-off point on one or more of the tests. Furthermore, a teacher will be well placed to identify emotional and behavioural difficulties and may be the first to notice the effects of some physical handicap or medical condition. These aspects of special needs are not directly screened by the sort of test battery outlined in the previous section. Teacher-based identification is also important as it can be a regular process. It can therefore complement the use of a test battery which might be feasible only at transfer and at perhaps one later stage in the pupils' secondary school career.

If a school seeks to develop this sort of role in the identification process for its teachers, it should be certain to provide opportunities for all staff to discuss the nature and purpose of their proposed role and to understand how it fits into the system of identification, diagnosis and (especially) provision. There should be opportunities to consider the importance of regular or continuous monitoring, and to clarify the range of difficulties which the teachers are being expected to identify. Finally, teachers should be clear that identification *will* be followed by a more detailed investigation of the pupils' difficulty before decisions are taken about provision, and that therefore the identification stage itself need not be highly sophisticated. All

that is necessary at the identification stage is that teachers indicate that they are concerned about a pupil to the extent that they feel that a diagnostic investigation might be useful.

These points apply equally to primary school staff if they are involved in identifying pupils who may have special needs at the point of transfer. If it is intended to involve primary teachers in the identification process for new entrants to the secondary school then the staff of that secondary school might do well to involve their primary colleagues in discussions of this kind.

Although teacher-based identification need not be sophisticated, the gradual improvement of teachers' abilities to identify appropriate pupils is a worthwhile aim if pupils with special needs can then be identified earlier, thus being saved from the experience of repeated failure which might be a consequence of later identification. Also, the number of pupils who are put up for diagnostic assessment but who then prove not to have any significant difficulties will be reduced, with consequent savings of time and resources. One way in which teachers' abilities can be improved is to help each teacher to understand what it is that he or she tends to notice about the pupils s/he teaches, and thus to look for gaps that might be filled by more structured observation of pupils in class or more structured assessment of their written work. One way in which this increased awareness can be obtained is outlined in [Activity 5.5b](#).

This exercise can be done by any individual teacher working alone, but is better done by a pair, one of whom acts as interviewer to encourage the other to describe the pupil characteristics in ways that are clear to others. Questions like 'What do you mean by "writes badly", do you mean it's a matter of handwriting or that sentence structure or prose structure is weak?' can do much to clarify thinking and to make the resulting list of dimensions more valuable to colleagues at the stage of comparing individual teachers' results.

In work on the identification of more able pupils in Year Three, one of the present authors used this sort of technique and discovered that physics teachers tended to produce lists that contained a high proportion of attitudinal, motivational and behavioural characteristics, whereas English teachers tended to produce lists with a higher proportion of characteristics that were related to specific abilities in English (Denton & Postlethwaite, 1985; Postlethwaite, 1984). The value of this finding is clear from the fact that English teachers were also more accurate than physics teachers in identifying pupils with high ability in their subject, and that physics teachers' abilities to do this task improved when they were encouraged to look for specific scientific abilities amongst their pupils. (This 'encouragement' consisted of asking them to complete, for each pupil, a checklist of science behaviours that might be expected to be indicative of high ability in the subject.) Therefore, the technique described above provided information that was useful in explaining the limited accuracy of physics teachers' judgements and in indicating ways of making improvements.

In the present context we can expect such an exercise to alert teachers to the nature, and possible shortcomings, of their personal approach to identifying pupils who may have special needs of any kind, and to reveal for a school any common problems where joint in-service work might be helpful.

5.6

Current diagnostic procedures

In the survey of practice in Oxfordshire which has been referred to above, we found that 97 per cent of the schools recognised the importance of a diagnostic stage in the special needs identification and provision process. However, ten per cent of the schools regarded this as appropriate only in cases of severe or complex need and therefore regarded diagnosis as the exclusive domain of the educational psychologist.

A

ACTIVITY 5.5B

What do you notice about pupils?

1. List the names of all the pupils in one or two classes that you teach in a particular age range.
2. By randomly selecting three pupils at a time from this list make up fifteen to twenty groups of three.
3. Take the first group of three pupils. Ask yourself to divide the group into a pair who are in some way alike and yet different from the other pupil.
4. Write down what it is about the pair that makes them alike.
5. Write down the contrasting characteristic of the single pupil.

For example:

The randomly chosen group of three is John, Sarah and Susan. Your view is that John and Susan are alike and different from Sarah. This distinction is based on your perception that John and Susan are lazy whereas Sarah is hardworking.

6. Check that this dimension (e.g. 'Lazy—Hardworking') can be applied to the other pupils in your class. That is, can you place most of the rest of the group somewhere on a scale from lazy to hardworking?

If not, this dimension is something that you have noticed about these three pupils but which is rather idiosyncratic to these individuals and may not play an important part in your general thinking about pupils. If so, this is something that you tend to notice about the whole group of pupils in your class.

7. Go back to 3 and repeat the process with the other groups of three pupils until you can no longer find new ways of characterising the differences.
8. List all of the dimensions which you were able to apply to most of the pupils in your class. These are the things that you notice about pupils and within this range of things will be the pupil characteristics on which you are likely to be basing your judgements, e.g. about their likeability, their attitudes to school and whether or not they have special needs.

Not all the dimensions you have listed will necessarily be involved in all the decisions you will make, but if 'Good orally—Bad orally' is *not* one of the dimensions you have listed then it is unlikely that you are responding to differences between pupils on this dimension however much you may, in theory, feel that it is an important characteristic of pupils.

9. List the dimensions which emerged which seemed to apply to only a small number of pupils in your list.

These are pupil characteristics which you notice about some individuals and which could be influencing your judgement of some pupils.

10. Compare your lists with those of colleagues to see if there are general areas of which you are all aware or areas which most of you overlook.

This procedure is based on Personal Construct methodology. For more details see Fransella and Bannister (1977).

In 13 per cent of the schools diagnosis was based on inspection of pupils' work in class, reports from teachers and, when these approaches gave no useful information, a psychologist's report.

However, in most schools diagnostic tests were used, with the educational psychologist as the 'back stop' if these gave no clues, or if the clues were contradictory. The range of tests which were in use was considerable, though most of them dealt with aspects of literacy. The Aston Index, the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability and the Schonell test were frequently mentioned but other tests were in use in individual schools. In seven schools (23 per cent) this test-based diagnostic information was supplemented by discussion with the usual teachers of each pupil being assessed.

5.7

Developing a system of diagnosis

As indicated above, schools (at least in one LEA) tended to base diagnosis on teachers' judgements, on test results and on the comments of educational psychologists. These are clearly important sources of data. If the child's needs are sufficiently severe as to call for a multi-professional assessment (an MPA) under the Education Act 1981, the views of medical practitioners, and on occasion those of other professionals such as social services staff, were also sought. However, one might expect there to be informal contact with these groups in less severe cases, just as there were some informal contacts with educational psychologists even in cases where an MPA was not in question. One might also involve parents in the diagnostic process both because they may have valuable insights into their child's difficulty and because their involvement should strengthen the concept of partnership between the home and the school without which support from the school can run into difficulty.

In this section we will therefore discuss aspects of diagnosis based on teachers' opinions, on test results, on parents' views and on the views of professionals outside school. In relation to this last category we will concentrate on the informal stages of assessment rather than the formal stages involved in a multi-professional assessment.

a

Teachers

Context-related assessments

It would seem that the unique contribution that each teacher can make to the diagnostic procedure is that s/he can assess the pupil's difficulties *in relation to his or her own teaching*—which is, of course, an extremely important context for at least one part of the pupil's learning. There are, perhaps, two important elements in this context-related assessment. First, the teacher can assess the pupil against the demands made by the content of the subject on which they work together. A science teacher, for example, can assess the pupil's strengths and difficulties in practical work, in using mathematical processes, in following detailed instructions, in learning and applying science concepts: all of which might give important clues to any general learning problem which the pupil might have, all of which will be areas in which the pupil may need support if s/he is to be successful in science, and some of which will be insights which are available only to the science teacher. Secondly, the teacher can assess the pupil's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the different teaching styles used by the teacher, the different learning activities required of the pupil and the different kinds of material to which the pupil is exposed.

Learning difficulties—the use of checklists and subject-specific profiles

If the teachers are clear that these are the kinds of assessment that they are expected to make, then their ability to do the job could be improved by use of a checklist to systematise the recording of information about pupils' responses to different teaching and learning styles, and to different materials. It could also be extremely valuable to develop criterion referenced, subject-specific profiles to help teachers to record their observations of what a pupil can and cannot do in their subject. To serve as diagnostic information such profiles would need to be interpreted in terms of a list of things which a pupil of that age needs to be able to do to cope with mainstream lessons in that subject. Ainscow and Tweddle (1979) discuss the general principle of criterion-referenced diagnosis at some length. Subject-specific guidelines in science and mathematics, as well as discussion of general principles and of the assessment of reading, can be found in the series *Guides to Assessment in Education*, edited by Wrigley.

Although no-one should underestimate the *time* that might be needed for the development of highly sophisticated versions of a subject-specific profile, the *expertise* needed to undertake such development is very much that of the subject teacher. Such teachers are therefore well placed to make a start on the production of criterion referenced assessment instruments, which can then be refined through use.

Detailed subject-specific, criterion referenced, diagnostic assessment can be based largely on observations of pupils in class and on the assessment of their normal written work. When called for in the case of a small number of pupils, it need not necessarily impose an enormous extra load on teachers. It is worth remembering, however, that although the costs in terms of teachers' time are not vast, they will exist. In particular, teachers may find that they need to spend a little time with the pupils on an individual basis to clarify some points about which they cannot be certain on the basis of routine observation. Some evidence on this point in relation to the assessment of able pupils has been provided by Postlethwaite and Denton (1985).

One further point about this style of diagnostic assessment is that, perhaps in a somewhat less detailed form, it is relevant to the question of record keeping for all pupils. It could provide teachers with far better assessment of all pupils than the more usual 'marks out of ten' approach which often provides nothing more than an indication of one pupil's overall performance in relation to that of his or her classmates. Certainly two pupils with 'six out of ten' could have had very different difficulties with the work concerned—differences which would be revealed by assessment of the kind we have been discussing. If a school is using a criterion referenced profile as part of its normal assessment routine, then the somewhat greater detail of the diagnostic assessment of special needs pupils would certainly not impose undue demands on teachers' time. This is an important consequence, but saved time is not the only advantage of this suggested match between routine and special needs assessment. The similarity would serve to emphasise that special needs pupils are indeed on a continuum with other pupils, that good practice for them is likely to be good practice for all, and that responsibility for them should not be shifted entirely on to the shoulders of a small number of special needs staff.

These comments apply to the assessment of all aspects of special need. The kind of teacher-based assessment outlined above would help to show up the educational implications of a medical condition and to reveal any learning difficulties that might be associated with behaviour problems, as well as providing details about any learning difficulty that was not apparently associated with problems of these kinds.

Behaviour problems

In considering teacher-based assessment of a pupil who was identified in the first instance as having behavioural problems some further points do apply. For example, it might be particularly important for

teachers to note the kinds of teaching and learning situations in which undesirable behaviour occurred in their lessons. It might also be important to try to assess whether the pupil has poor social skills with adults and/or a poor academic self image. In the part of our research programme that was concerned with disruptive behaviour in classrooms, Gray found that these two characteristics were associated with disruptiveness and that pupils who had both characteristics tended to be very disruptive. These characteristics are therefore relevant to an understanding of disruption and of considerable importance as the implications for intervention of one or other problem could be rather different.

Initial assessment of pupils in these terms need not be complex, for Gray also found that pupils whom teachers regarded as 'malicious' or 'rude' were pupils who often had poor social skills with adults, whereas pupils whom teachers regarded as 'lazy' or as having 'short attention span' tended to have poor academic self-image (Gray, *et al.*, in press). Re-interpretations of subjective assessments such as 'rudeness', could therefore be a way of making a simple assessment of the characteristics of a pupil. However, if one wanted to go further, there are more objective instruments that could be used to measure pupils' social skills functioning and their academic self-image. These instruments, and details of the technique of sociometry which might also be valuable in some cases, can be found in handbooks of educational research such as that compiled by Cohen (1976). The relationship between the characteristics of disruptive pupils that are mapped by these assessments and the response which can be made to the pupils in school is discussed at length in the book on disruptive behaviour in this present series.

Finally, it should be remembered that once some specialist support is in place for a pupil, the work that the pupil does with the special needs teacher, be it in ordinary lessons or in withdrawal situations, will give further clues to the nature of his or her problem. Thus diagnosis can continue after a start has been made on provision.

b Tests

Much of the test-based diagnosis that was reported to us in our survey of schools in Oxfordshire was concerned with diagnostic testing in the area of literacy, and especially of reading skills. This is clearly a necessary area for exploration because difficulties in literacy can be the source of difficulties in all subject areas. One might, however, also hope that diagnosis of pupils' difficulties with numeracy and more general aspects of mathematics would be undertaken because of the possible influence of these skills on pupils' understanding of a wide range of subject content.

Before deciding upon the use of diagnostic tests of literacy and numeracy, teachers should note that diagnostic information can be obtained from some of the literacy and numeracy tests which are primarily used for identification purposes. A close look at the answer sheets of identified pupils (e.g. at sub-scores for different parts of the test) can yield information that reduces the need for further testing.

It should also be remembered that there are some subject-specific diagnostic tests (for example *Science Skills* published by Macmillan) and tests which can diagnose weaknesses in pupils' ways of working (for example the *Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes* published by NFER). Diagnostic testing need not, therefore, be limited to the areas of literacy and numeracy.

Perhaps the most important advice relating to the selection of diagnostic tests is that teachers should decide what is missing from other aspects of the diagnostic process and where they might need confirmation of information from other sources. They should then consult recent catalogues from the test publishers because many fairly new tests are intended for diagnostic use. Selection of diagnostic tests is also perhaps an area in which general advice from an educational psychologist might be very helpful.

c

External professionals

In our survey it was clear that schools made considerable use of educational psychologists (EPs) in diagnosing the difficulties faced by some special needs pupils. This often involved asking the EP to assess a pupil with severe or complex difficulties or to assess a pupil about whom the school's diagnostic process had produced little useful information. These will always be important aspects of an EP's work, but we feel that psychologists could also be asked to give general advice about the identification, diagnosis and support of pupils with special needs. This might be done through general INSET activities so that teachers' own procedures can become more effective. This use of EPs would be in line with advice given by Mittler (1985) who argued that psychologists should 'demystify what they do and "give psychology away" in a systematic and orderly fashion'.

Where a physical or sensory handicap, or chronic medical difficulties are involved in a pupil's problems, the school might ask for diagnostic advice from the school doctor. This would not be diagnosis in the normal medical sense, but a detailed assessment of the educational implications of the pupil's condition. Schools could help to make such an enquiry more profitable by providing the doctor with information about the contexts in which the pupil is expected to work in school. Thus one might remind the doctor that the pupil may be involved in the use of tape recorders and computers, in laboratory work, that both boys and girls will use workshop and domestic science equipment and that pupils will be involved in a number of sporting activities and educational field trips and excursions. Indeed, whatever the school usually organises for pupils of the appropriate age might be listed. A request for information about any of these situations in which the pupil's health problem may have significant repercussions might then generate specific and useful guidelines.

d

Parents

Parents may be able to provide crucial information about the problems which their child is experiencing at school. They may know that there are particular activities or kinds of work which are especially troublesome for the child, or special times of day when his or her difficulties have greatest impact. They may wish to tell the school about home circumstances which are relevant to the problem, or about aspects of the child's previous educational history which might help to explain present difficulties. It therefore seems wise to invite parents to contribute to any diagnostic process. This also prepares the ground, in what should be an informal and co-operative way, for their formal involvement in the assessment and statementing procedures of the Education Act 1981, should it prove necessary to go this far in order to meet the needs of their child.

Of course, what is true of parents is to a considerable extent true of the child too. At some stage in the diagnostic process (and in some sense at all stages throughout that process) the child should be encouraged to talk generally about the difficulties which s/he is experiencing.

5.8

Organising the system of identification and diagnosis

The most obvious organisational need is for someone to act as the co-ordinator of the identification and diagnosis process both at the stage of planning and developing the system in association with colleagues, and at the stage of running the system on a day to day basis. We suggest that this co-ordinator will often be

the school's head of special needs, who, as in other aspects of his or her work, may need to be supported by an advisory group made up of a small number of staff representing both the senior management and classroom teachers.

Details of the work of this co-ordinating team will inevitably be very specific to individual schools. In this final section all that we will try to do is to raise some general questions which might be asked in order to ensure that a well organised and well co-ordinated system is put in place.

a

Decisions on details

Decisions will clearly have to be made by the co-ordinator and the advisory group about all kinds of detail, such as:

- Who will administer and mark tests? (the co-ordinator? special needs staff? form teachers?)
- When will screening tests be done, and when will teachers be asked to identify pupils?
- How can teachers refer pupils for assessment at other times?
- How will parents and external professionals be invited to identify a pupil as someone who might have special needs?
- How will written records from previous schools, or from external professionals be used to identify pupils with possible difficulties?
- Who will initiate the diagnostic process for those pupils who are identified as possibly having special needs?
- Who will be asked to contribute to the first stages of a diagnostic assessment? (just the teachers who referred the pupil?, these teachers and the parents?, this group plus teachers of English and maths?)
- In what circumstances will the decision be made to ask all teachers of a pupil to make a diagnostic assessment and to ask the pupil to do some diagnostic tests?
- Who will decide to draw in external professionals in any given case?
- Who will contact parents for diagnostic information?

b

Broader issues

The co-ordinator should also give attention to broader issues such as:

- How to ensure that the identification and diagnosis system is always closely linked to the system of special needs provision in the school, (a widely based identification system of the kind we have been discussing will be of no use if the only support available to pupils is, say, remedial reading).
- How to bring into line the normal assessment procedures used by the school and the special needs procedures that we have been discussing, so that there is a minimum of wasted effort, (for example, the teacher-based identification system might be as simple as the inclusion in any regular pupil reviews (half-termly reviews, internal reports, internal copies of reports for parents etc.) of a question such as 'Do you think this child has learning difficulties, behavioural problems or other characteristics which suggest that a more detailed special needs assessment might be useful?')
- How to provide feedback for teachers, parents and external professionals on the outcomes of an enquiry about a pupil (which, certainly for teachers, could lead to improvements in their ability to identify pupils

and diagnose problems and for everyone could lead to increased confidence in the value of the system from the pupils' points of view).

- How to keep the identification and diagnosis system under review so that it continues to be sensitive to special needs of any kind, at whatever stage of the school year they should first arise.
- Who should have access to the information which is generated? (special needs staff, form teacher, subject teachers, parents, pupil?)

Even from these lists of examples it is clear that co-ordinating the system of identification and diagnosis is by no means a straightforward task. It calls for expertise and for the skills of management. The system itself calls for some active involvement from everyone in school and from people who are outside it—even though the extent of this involvement may sometimes be quite limited. Nevertheless, pupils can only be helped to achieve their best if those who have difficulties are known and if their difficulties are sufficiently understood that appropriate intervention can be made by their class teachers and by specialist staff. The energy invested in a good identification and diagnosis system could therefore be repaid by increased standards of achievement by pupils who might otherwise get little out of their time in school.

6

Provision for pupils with special needs in mainstream schools

The focus of this chapter is on the ways in which mainstream schools can organise their responses to pupils who have special educational needs. The chapter is therefore complementary to the other two books in this series which discuss some of the practical techniques through which teachers may be able to help pupils who have learning problems, or behavioural difficulties in their own classrooms.

6.1

What is being done?

a

Reflecting on experience

In [Chapter 4](#) we introduced the idea of a range of special needs which could be understood in terms of three largely independent dimensions—the nature of the pupil’s difficulty; its severity; the temporary or long-term nature of the difficulty. It can be quite enlightening to look at the provision made by a school (a school you know well, the school to which you are attached for teaching practice, or the school in which you work) in the light of this model of special needs. [Activity 6.1a](#) on page 56 is designed to help you to do this.

We will return to the issues raised by this activity at various points in this chapter, but it might be useful at this stage to compare your notes on your school with some results from the survey of Oxfordshire secondary schools that we conducted in 1982/3. The results from this survey are discussed below.

b

Work of special needs departments

Thirty-one of the thirty-two Oxfordshire schools covering the 11–18 or 11–16 age range were involved in our survey. Not surprisingly, special needs departments in all 31 schools were described as being responsible for the special provision required by pupils with learning difficulties. In 14 schools the range of learning difficulty with which departments had to deal was extensive: some pupils had fairly minor problems, others were pupils who, in the past, would have been classified as ESN(M) and might well have been placed in a special school by some LEAs.

In 21 schools, pupils with behavioural problems were regarded as the responsibility of the special needs department, though sometimes only in a limited way. For example, some schools regarded pupils with long-term behaviour problems as clients of the special needs department but did not expect that department to respond to ‘emergency referrals’; some schools limited the responsibility of the special needs department to

A**ACTIVITY 6.1A**

Provision for pupils with special needs

Fill in each cell of the table to show the ways in which your school generally responds to each type of need, e.g. what is the response to a severe, long-term behaviour problem, or the response to a mild short-term physical disability?

Type of difficulty	Long-term difficulties		Temporary difficulties	
	Mild	Severe	Mild	Severe
LEARNING				
BEHAVIOUR				
PHYSICAL/ MEDICAL				

Some points to consider

1. If there are cells which you were not able to complete, is this because you did not know what the school's system was?
(Might it also be the case that other staff do not know the system?)
2. Is it because these are areas for which no agreed form of support exists in your school?
(What could be done to fill the gaps?)
3. What do you think of these approaches? Are there alternative forms of support which might better serve the needs of pupils in each cell?
4. Is there one support strategy that could be expected to serve all special needs pupils properly?

the provision of diagnostic information or advice to mainstream staff; some schools regarded the pupil with behaviour problems as the responsibility of the special needs department only if that pupil also had learning

difficulties. Although ten schools did not regard behaviour problems as part of the work of the special needs department, most of them did make explicit reference to other support systems for these pupils. These usually involved the pastoral system of the school. In two cases there was also a separate unit for children with severe behavioural problems.

In ten schools, pupils with physical handicaps or chronic medical conditions were the responsibility of the special needs department. In the remaining schools, the headteacher's perception was often that very few pupils with this kind of difficulty attended the school, though three heads said that there was a separate system of support for such pupils based either on the services of a school nurse or on the pastoral system of the school.

In nine schools the special needs department had some role in relation to a wide spectrum of special needs including learning and behaviour difficulties, and physical/medical conditions of varying severity. Therefore, it would seem that, in these schools, some response was being made to pupils from many of the cells of the model of special needs that we have been discussing. In other schools, however, there was (in 1982/3) considerable emphasis on pupils with learning difficulties, to the exclusion of those who had other types of special need. In those schools a change in name, from remedial to special needs department, seemed not to be accompanied by a significant change in philosophy.

Of the twenty schools that replied to a follow-up survey in 1985, eight reported no change in the kinds of pupil that they tried to support through their special needs departments. Only one of these schools had responded to the full range of special needs in 1982/3 so, in seven schools, a rather narrow approach to special needs seems to have persisted, at least until 1985. However, the other twelve schools who replied to the survey revealed an increased tendency to include behavioural difficulties and/or physical handicaps in the brief of their special needs departments. Their approach seemed, therefore, to have moved at least some way towards the model which we have outlined. Schools also reported an increase in the severity of learning difficulty with which they had to deal. Perhaps there is some evidence here of increasing integration of pupils with learning difficulties into mainstream schools, or of a tendency to defer decisions to refer them out to special education.

c

How is provision organised?

In the Oxfordshire survey, we found that provision for pupils with special needs was made in a variety of ways. In one approach pupils were taught in mainstream classes for some lessons but, at other times, were withdrawn for individual or small group work with a special needs teacher. In another method pupils with special needs were supported in mainstream classes by arranging for a special needs teacher or non-teaching classroom assistant to accompany the pupil into the class to work alongside the pupil and the mainstream teacher. Another approach was to make indirect provision by giving advice to the mainstream teacher on the selection and design of materials, on teaching styles and on broader curriculum issues. In some schools, provision for pupils with learning difficulties (but not for pupils with behavioural or physical/medical problems) was also made by placing the pupils in small remedial sets or special classes.

In some schools only one of these strategies was used. However, in many schools several, or all of these strategies were used in support of pupils. For example fourteen schools used a three-tier system consisting of advice to the mainstream teacher, in-class support for some pupils and withdrawal of some pupils from mainstream classes.

The twenty schools who responded to the follow-up survey in 1985 provided useful information on the ways in which their system of provision for pupils with learning difficulties had changed in the intervening

years. (In this follow-up, changes in their provision for pupils with behavioural or physical/medical problems were not explored.) Seven schools reported 'no change'. Eight reported less emphasis on the use of 'separate special classes or small remedial groups where some pupils receive most of their academic education'. Only one stated that there was increased emphasis on this style of provision. Five schools said that they were now placing less emphasis on 'long-term withdrawal for a part of the academic curriculum', though two were placing more emphasis on this approach. Five schools were making more use of 'short-term withdrawal for all or part of the academic curriculum', though one school was placing less emphasis on this approach. Eleven schools reported greater use of in-class support from a special needs teacher or classroom assistant, and nine mentioned increased use of the strategy of advice to mainstream teachers. No school reported decreased emphasis on in-class support or advice. Therefore, there would seem to be a general tendency to make greater use of these approaches and to reduce the extent to which pupils with learning difficulties were segregated into separate provision for most of their time each week, or for a long period of time.

This same range of provision has been described in other research such as that by Clunies-Ross and Wimshurst (1983) and by Kerry (1978). Kerry, for example, tabulates the extent to which the comprehensive schools in his sample made use of special classes and individual or small group withdrawal in support of pupils with learning difficulties, and comments in this text that 'one can also trace a trend for a specialist teacher to work with slow learners within the mixed ability class and alongside the class teacher'. Hyde (1984) also maps a similar range of provision with special classes and withdrawal being common forms of support, and in-class provision being used in four of his thirty-six schools. However, Hyde also comments that 'many respondents expressed surprise and shock at the idea of a remedial teacher being involved in the lesson of another teacher'.

6.2

Developing a system of provision

In discussing the development of a system of provision, the strategies which we have described above would seem to be the key things to consider. Clearly, these strategies are in use, and can therefore be regarded as sufficiently practicable to be worthy of discussion and development. However, they are not universally used and opinions about them differ. Things are not, therefore, so clear-cut that discussion is unnecessary.

We will therefore begin this section with some discussion of these individual strategies. We will then move on to the question of the development of a coherent system of provision and of the management of that system.

a

Advice to the mainstream teacher

In [Chapter 1](#) we discussed the size of the special needs group, the fact that special needs can arise in any teaching group—be it a top or bottom set, a mixed ability class or a sixth form group—the temporary nature of some special needs and the concept of special needs being part of a continuum of learning ability with no objectively determined dividing lines to separate pupils with special needs from others without such needs. All these points imply that mainstream teachers will inevitably work with pupils who have special needs in many, if not all, of the classes they teach. They will be involved in the provision of support for almost all the pupils who have special needs; they will be the only source of support in some cases. Since this is

inevitable, we would argue that it must be recognised by the system which the school establishes to support pupils with special needs. One way in which this recognition can be given is by making advice on special needs available to all teachers.

Pre-service courses

This advice should certainly begin at the stage of pre-service teacher training. The topic of special needs should be on the curriculum for all students following pre-service courses. This point is made in Circular 3/84 (DES/WO, 1984c) and in the report of the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Training of Teachers (ACSET, 1984), both of which provide some interesting guidelines on the nature of the required training. Our own view is that pre-service special needs training for all teachers should raise their awareness of general issues and help them to develop relevant, practical classroom skills. Certainly our experience of monitoring the opinions of PGCE students over three years in Oxford would suggest that students are not satisfied with an input which concentrates mainly on questions of awareness. We feel (like ACSET) that all teacher training staff have a role in this process, that it should not be the sole responsibility of special needs 'experts', that it should feature in all aspects of students' school experience during their training, that it should permeate many sessions on the course and not be a topic which is covered in a small number of special needs lectures or seminars. Indeed, one purpose of this series of books is to provide resources that might be useful in such a training context.

In-service training

We also feel that similar elements should be apparent in in-service courses of all kinds, not just those organised by special needs advisers. We have some recent experience of this taking place, for example through input on special needs to 4/84 and 3/85 in-service courses for heads of science departments and through liaison between subject-based INSET planning groups and a special needs INSET planning group in one LEA.

Continuous advice

As the two previous sections have indicated, in the area of advice to mainstream teachers, individual schools are not left entirely to their own devices. Nevertheless, mainstream teachers do need a system of 'consultant advice' within their individual school which should be organised as part of the special needs support system. This can be more situation-specific than advice given in pre-service and in-service training. It can be more closely related to the circumstances of an individual pupil. Because it can take account of the detailed arrangements in the school for other sorts of special needs support, it can be more effective in helping a mainstream teacher to know how and when to seek more direct help for a pupil from these other forms of support. It can also be more continuous, so that effective suggestions can be further developed and ineffective suggestions can be followed up with advice on alternative approaches.

Several forms of advice should be available. In connection with learning difficulties, mainstream teachers may need practical, but generalised, 'tips' on how to help pupils over a given problem (such as spelling). It may also be possible to give more far-reaching advice on teaching methods which in effect extends the range of techniques available to the mainstream teacher and may therefore help in situations where it is general aspects of the classroom circumstances (rather than just a problem internal to the pupil) which generate the special need. Such advice could come from special needs staff, but heads of subject

departments may also have an important contribution to make—especially if special needs topics have been included in INSET courses which they have attended. Another important form of advice is more specific to an individual pupil with learning difficulties. The mainstream teacher may find it of great value to be told of the details of that pupil's difficulties: for example, to be taken through the results of any diagnostic assessment of the pupil. This is clearly an area where special needs staff are likely to be the main agents in giving advice. The educational implications of physical and medical conditions is a further area in which advice is required. Special needs staff might again be particularly well-placed to give advice of this kind as they will not only have knowledge of the general condition (or have easy access to those with expert knowledge in the LEA) but they should also have specific information about the individual pupil. Finally, advice should be given on when and how to refer a pupil to the special needs staff, or to other agencies if the pupil's difficulties are sufficiently complex that they cannot be dealt with by the mainstream teacher alone. This is essential if the mainstream teacher is not to feel isolated in his or her work with pupils who have special needs, and if the needs of pupils with more complex difficulties are to be fully met.

It is worth noting that mainstream staff may need advice both in their roles as subject teachers, and their roles as form tutors. This might especially be the case if the form tutor is regarded as a key person in the management of pupils with behavioural difficulties, physical handicaps and medical conditions.

Teachers' reactions

In addition to our survey research to which we have referred before in this chapter, we conducted detailed case studies of four schools. In one part of these studies we interviewed a sample of fourteen mainstream teachers and asked their opinions of different forms of special needs support. The reaction to support via advice to the mainstream teacher was generally favourable. This is confirmed by a separate study of staff opinion in four other Oxfordshire schools where 47 out of 60 staff felt that it was important or essential that a head of special needs should give advice to mainstream teachers (Paton, 1984). Despite this generally positive reaction, some concerns were expressed during our case study interviews. For example, three teachers questioned the effectiveness of advice from special needs staff on subject-specific teaching problems. Here, perhaps, well-informed heads of subject departments may have an especially important part to play. A further very interesting point made by one teacher was that advice on teaching methods and materials should take the form of training for the mainstream teacher and not of special needs staff involvement in production of actual teaching schemes or worksheets. The teacher argued that training on the principles of worksheet design of pupils with learning difficulties would allow mainstream teachers to develop the advice they had been given, whereas joint development of specific worksheets could so easily result in a fossilised system lacking in regular review and improvement of what was being done. A more general concern expressed during the interviews was over the problem of finding time for effective conversations. This problem was alleviated in one school by making time available during staff meetings for the discussion of individual pupils. This provided a means whereby some of the aims of 'advice to mainstream staff' could be met without making further demands on the time of individual teachers.

In summary, we feel that advice to mainstream staff can be a powerful and all-pervasive element in the special needs support system of a school. It should certainly not be ignored, as mainstream teachers may be the only source of support for some special needs pupils, e.g. those with needs which are temporary and for which there is not time for other support services to be deployed, and will be the main form of support for others whose needs are sufficiently mild that any other support is available for only a small part of the week. It is an approach which seems to have general support from staff involved in the two studies which we have referred to above. However, there are possible drawbacks. Some were raised in the interviews

which we have already discussed. There is the additional point that advice may be given and received, but not acted upon. There is a risk, therefore, that pupils will not be getting the help they require nor some system of monitoring, however informal. Another possible problem in some schools is that special needs staff may not have sufficiently high status or appropriate training to carry off this complex and demanding role. This has implications for the selection of teachers for special needs training, and for the content of that training. This is especially relevant in the case of teachers aspiring to become heads of special needs departments in schools.

b

In-class support

In-class support is provided by a second adult, often a special needs teacher, or a classroom assistant not trained as a teacher, who works alongside the normal teacher of a mainstream class in support of a special needs pupil in that class. The details of what goes on in such a system can obviously vary considerably. In-class support can be used as the general method of support for individual pupils with special needs, the expectation being that the second adult will attend the mainstream class on a regular long-term basis. Alternatively, the in-class support can be less regular, and can be designed to enable the second adult to keep in touch with the difficulties of a pupil in mainstream classes, so that more effective support for these difficulties can be offered elsewhere. Again, we have been told of situations in which the second adult has the specific aim of helping a pupil who has been withdrawn for special help to re-integrate into the mainstream class. The expectation in such a case would be that the in-class support would be offered on a fairly short-term basis and that it would be phased out as the pupil began to settle back into mainstream classes. Finally, in-class support from a special needs teacher (though not from a classroom assistant) could be seen as an extension of the system of giving advice to the mainstream teacher. In this case in-class support would represent a form of in-service training: the special needs teacher could identify the kinds of strategies that might be helpful to the pupil with special needs, could introduce the mainstream teacher to these strategies, could monitor their use and effectiveness in the early stages and could then gradually withdraw, leaving the mainstream teacher better able to meet the needs of the pupil.

One feature of the in-class system which has frequently been mentioned to us in our survey and case study interviews is that the second adult, though nominally attached to one or two pupils in a class, effectively offers help to a wider number of pupils who might need some assistance at a time when the mainstream teacher is otherwise engaged. Thus, support is more widely spread and the process of getting help from the extra adult becomes part of the normal routine of the classroom. This can be seen as normalising the experience of the special needs pupil without removing the support which he or she needs to succeed with the demands of the lesson.

In-class support can be used to help pupils with most kinds of special need. The second adult can take notes by dictation from a pupil who has difficulty in writing; s/he can read instructions to a pupil who has a reading difficulty; s/he can help a physically handicapped pupil deal with practical work; s/he can provide an immediate response to a medical difficulty; s/he can give one-to-one attention to a pupil with behaviour problems to avoid unacceptable incidents in the classroom. Though the approach may be of limited value for children with very severe difficulties and is clearly inappropriate where it has been decided that a pupil needs an alternative, rather than mainstream curriculum, it can be used for difficulties covering a wide range of severity. When a second adult is already assigned to a class, s/he may be able to respond to a new need as it arises, though generally the in-class approach is unlikely to be helpful in the case of temporary difficulties because of the length of time that would be needed to set up a response.

Teachers' reactions

Attitudes to in-class support amongst teachers appear to be mixed. Paton (1984) showed that a third of the sample of teachers in his four schools felt that it was important or essential for a head of special needs to be able to work as a second teacher in a mainstream classroom. Since it is possible that they saw value in this approach for the special needs department in general but they did not necessarily see it as one of the things in which the head of department must be active, one should perhaps interpret this as support for the system from *at least* one third of Paton's respondents. In our own case studies, two of the fourteen teachers interviewed gave whole-hearted support for the system, seeing benefits for the mainstream teacher, the pupil with special needs and the rest of the class. Other teachers generally felt that the system could work well if certain preconditions were satisfied. For example, they felt that there needed to be a match between the personalities of the mainstream teacher and the second adult, the roles of both needed to be carefully negotiated and the second adult needed to be present in all lessons with a given mainstream teacher. (This last point seems to presuppose certain aims for the system. It would seem to us that some aims listed above could be met without this full-time involvement of the second adult.) However, there was certainly no sense of unconditional rejection of the system on the part of any teacher, even though advantages and disadvantages were sometimes closely balanced in a teacher's responses. One teacher offered no opinion on the in-class system as he had no experience of working in this way.

Among the advantages which teachers saw for the system were that it gave opportunities for closely guided group work involving the special needs pupil; it enabled a member of staff to provide immediate feedback to the pupil on his or her work; it allowed a wider range of activities to take place (e.g. oral assessment of course work); it helped to maintain a more relaxed atmosphere; it enabled the staff to diffuse disruptive incidents before a crisis point was reached; it kept lesson continuity going for a pupil who did not have to be held up over what was perhaps a minor stumbling block; it provided the second adult with a full understanding of what went on in the lesson so that s/he could be more helpful to the pupil with special needs in connection with homework; it could help to protect the pupil against any possible social 'nastiness'; it was less stigmatising than a system which withdraws the pupil from the classes attended by his or her peers.

Among the disadvantages of the in-class system teachers mentioned were that it could be more stigmatising of special needs pupils as it could emphasise the difference between them and the rest by making it easier, on a day-to-day basis, for pupils and teachers to compare the work and progress of the two groups; that it was too expensive of staffing so that the service could not be offered to all who needed it; that some teachers felt threatened by the presence of a second adult in their classroom; that it would be unfair to rely on this approach because some teachers were not prepared to have a second adult in their lessons and a pupil would then be denied the support s/he really needed; that the pupil with special needs could be confused about whether s/he should be listening to the mainstream teacher or to the second adult; that the mainstream teacher and the second adult may have different aims for the enterprise; that the mainstream teacher and the other adult, even where this other adult was a special needs teacher, often adopted hierarchical roles with little true sense of joint planning and team teaching; that the mainstream setting was inappropriate for some pupils who did not need help in coping with history, say, but who needed something quite different from history if they were to be prepared to play a part in society.

Perhaps the most revealing comment about the system was made by a head of special needs in one of our case study schools. She argued that the use of the in-class system of support challenged the appropriateness of the whole-class approach to teaching and was therefore revolutionary for some teachers. She also stated that, despite quite extensive experience of the approach, there was still much to be done in her school before

colleagues were really clear about how to work together and that this was an area in which 'exciting developments' were possible.

This view of in-class support as a system which, at present, is by no means fully developed is consistent with the findings of Ferguson and Adams (1982) who discuss the team teaching role of the remedial teacher and raise many of the points which we have listed above. Their paper also makes a number of valuable general points about provision for pupils with special needs and we will return to it in more detail in the last sections of this chapter. Bines' (1986) in-depth study of the accounts given by special needs teachers and teachers of mainstream curriculum subjects of their differing and shared responsibilities for pupils with special educational needs is also very pertinent.

c

Withdrawal

Short-term

In this system pupils are withdrawn from all, or from some, lessons for a limited period of time after which the expectation is that they can be re-integrated into normal mainstream classes. Pupils may be withdrawn from a single lesson each week for a few weeks, from all lessons in a given subject for a short period, or even from all mainstream classes for the short time that support of this kind is being given. Some schools also operate a system of withdrawal for remedial reading which removes pupils from 10–15 minutes of a mainstream lesson on a regular basis. In any of these arrangements, work during the withdrawal sessions can be on an individual basis, or pupils can be taught in very small groups. Re-integration after short-term withdrawal can be without support or, as we have discussed above, it can be eased by in-class support. This subsequent in-class help may be organised on a long-term basis or as a short-term exercise to help the pupil over the transition back to mainstream classes.

Pupils may be withdrawn because of a learning difficulty which is handicapping their progress in a mainstream class. This could, for example, be a difficulty with reading or spelling or numeracy, a problem with some general cognitive process such as setting up or using categories, a problem of delayed intellectual development (perhaps a pupil is having difficulty with third form physics because he or she has not met the experiences which encourage the development of the various conservation rules that Piaget highlighted—conservation of volume, for example), or a difficulty arising simply out of a transfer from another school and another syllabus. The fact that, in our survey of provision in Oxfordshire in 1982/3, support during withdrawal sessions was shown to be focused mainly on literacy and, to a lesser extent, on numeracy should not close our eyes to the possibility that withdrawal could be used to help pupils over other learning difficulties of these kinds.

Short-term withdrawal can also be used to provide some specific help for pupils with behavioural difficulties (e.g. a series of social skills training sessions could take the place of some lessons for a short time). It can also allow a pupil with physical or medical conditions to overcome a 'bad patch' before continuing with normal lessons.

Teachers' reactions

In Paton's (1984) survey 40 out of a sample of 63 teachers in four schools favoured the inclusion of short-term withdrawal on a part-time basis in the overall system by which the school responded to pupils with special needs. 24 of the 63 teachers favoured short-term withdrawal on a full-time basis as at least a

component of that system. Teachers' views, as expressed in our own case study interviews, were mixed. Some teachers saw an advantage in short-term withdrawal in that it allowed a specific response to be made to a specific difficulty. These teachers argued that, in the mainstream class situation, the general activities of the class and the requirement to keep the lesson going for the class as a whole, might make it impossible for this well-targeted help to be delivered even if a second adult was available to work with the pupil. One teacher argued that short-term withdrawal was appropriate when pupils' difficulties resulted from some gap in their previous learning. However, withdrawal was also seen negatively as it caused problems of re-entry, it was disruptive of the relationship between the pupil and the mainstream teacher, and it was potentially damaging to the pupil's social relationships with his or her peers.

A further view of withdrawal, which raises interesting issues, was offered by one headteacher who was interviewed in our 1982/3 survey. He was sceptical of its value and wary of the kinds of problems outlined above. However he argued that it was necessary to have a withdrawal system as a safety net if mainstream staff were to be encouraged to develop in-class support as a major component of the school's special needs system. He felt that mainstream teachers would be more comfortable with such developments if there was always the possibility of referring a pupil out of a mainstream class if his or her own needs, or those of the other pupils in the class, were being jeopardised. Without the safety net of withdrawal, confidence may be reduced and the in-class system rendered less effective. These comments would seem to apply equally well to withdrawal on a long term basis that we discuss later in this chapter.

Effectiveness

The implication behind all forms of short-term withdrawal is, of course, that something can be done that will remedy the difficulty that the pupil has in the mainstream class. In some cases of special need this may well be possible, although one might be tempted to ask how many pupils have a specific difficulty which can be remedied in this way. For example, it is logically possible that a pupil may need special help to understand how to set up and use categories and that, having received specific help on this point, the pupil is better able to deal with normal lesson demands. However, one may speculate that the circumstances which place a pupil in this position, be they environmental circumstances at home or in previous schooling, or circumstances internal to the pupil, are likely, in many cases, to have an impact on other aspects of cognitive functioning and it may be naive to think that the pupil will benefit significantly from short-term withdrawal focused on this one problem. Certainly, research experience of remedial teaching via withdrawal does not reveal it to be a highly successful strategy, either in improving pupils' performance or their attitudes. (See Ferguson and Adams (1982) for a brief review of this work.) It may well be that, at least for pupils with learning difficulties, short-term withdrawal is a strategy with much narrower application than is usually imagined. It may help a pupil who needs to catch up with work after hospital treatment, or a pupil who has transferred from another syllabus, but it may be relatively rare to find pupils with other learning difficulties that can really be remedied by a short period of specific treatment.

Even where the pupil's learning difficulty or behavioural problem creates a situation which is susceptible to remedy by short-term withdrawal, the approach may be less successful than might be hoped. This may be because the withdrawal setting is so different from that of the mainstream class that what is learnt in one setting is irrelevant to the other, or it may be a result of the fact that, by concentrating on 'treatment' of the pupil, and doing nothing about the mainstream situation itself, only one side of the cause of the difficulty is being attended to. For example, a pupil may, in a short series of withdrawal sessions, be helped over some difficulty of reading to extract meaning from text and yet continue to have difficulty in a mainstream class because of the totally inappropriate selection of texts by the mainstream teacher, or because that teacher

tends to use text in unhelpful ways. These two possible causes of the relative ineffectiveness of attempts to remedy difficulties through withdrawal are clearly related. Both may be rendered less damaging if in-class support is being used in connection with withdrawal. For example, the support teacher could attend the mainstream class before the pupil is withdrawn to get a clearer understanding of the difficulties that the pupil has in the particular circumstances of that class. Work in the withdrawal setting may then be more relevant to the mainstream situation. Also, the support teacher might attend the mainstream class before the withdrawn pupil is re-integrated so that some discussion of helpful developments in the mainstream situation can also take place. Finally, as mentioned earlier, a support teacher may accompany the pupil back into mainstream classes and thus help the pupil to make the links between what was done in the withdrawal setting and what is needed to thrive in the mainstream.

These issues of liaison between the teacher working in the withdrawal setting and the teacher of the mainstream class are equally applicable to the situation where short-term withdrawal is being used to provide sanctuary for a pupil, rather than remediation.

Long-term withdrawal

This approach can be used to provide a longer period of remedial support on the same model as short-term withdrawal—that is, with the expectation that the pupil will be reintegrated into the mainstream curriculum. Of course, if a pupil is withdrawn from a specific subject for a long period, the problems of re-entry that we discussed above are likely to be even more acute.

In another use of this approach, pupils are withdrawn from mainstream classes without there being any strong expectation that they will be re-integrated later. Long-term withdrawal of this kind might be organised on an individual basis, or a small group of pupils might be withdrawn together and be taught as a separate ‘special class’. Such classes might exist throughout the school and the group of special classes may be regarded as a special needs unit.

Teachers’ reactions

Long-term withdrawal from part of the mainstream curriculum was reasonably well regarded by Paton’s sample of teachers, 27 out of 63 feeling that it had a place in the overall special needs system of a school. However, only 16 teachers in this sample favoured long-term withdrawal from all mainstream lessons. In our case study interviews opinions were very mixed. Some teachers were strongly opposed to the segregation and labelling problems seen to be associated with this approach; others felt that only by having special classes, or individual long-term withdrawal, could the needs of some pupils be met and the situation of their potential classmates be protected.

Curriculum implications

When long-term withdrawal is used with no expectation of re-entry to ordinary classes, this form of special needs provision takes on some unique characteristics. For example, there is no imperative to plan the work done in the withdrawal sessions with the details of the mainstream curriculum in mind. Long-term withdrawal can therefore be used to provide a mainstream curriculum at a much reduced pace or with very different teaching methods. It can also be used with, and is perhaps particularly well suited to, pupils who need an alternative curriculum, rather than support in attaining the objectives of the mainstream curriculum. Under these circumstances the arguments about long-term withdrawal revolve less around the effectiveness of the

system in relieving pupils' difficulties, and more around the desirability of alternative curricula (see [Chapter 3](#)) and the social divisiveness of separating one group of pupils from the rest of the school.

Long-term withdrawal seems inevitable if a pupil needs some input which is not part of the normal curriculum: for example, if a pupil with quite severe learning difficulties needs a substantial programme of work on social and self-help skills in order to prepare for becoming an independent member of the adult community. This follows because opportunities for this sort of programme are very unlikely to arise in the contexts of the normal secondary school curriculum. Long-term withdrawal may also be essential in the interests of all concerned if a pupil is extremely disruptive of lessons over a substantial period of time—though hopefully the possibility of reintegration would always be kept in mind in such a case. Finally, this strategy may be desirable if, despite the best endeavours of all concerned, little success is being achieved in work related to the mainstream curriculum, for the pupil may benefit more from the experience of some success on a new curriculum than from repeated failure on the old.

Long-term withdrawal from all or some of the mainstream curriculum may therefore be an essential element in a school's special needs system. In the most extreme cases it may even involve withdrawal from the school to a separate special school. However, use of this strategy in a school, even though it may be necessary in some cases, should be regarded with caution for it carries one very significant risk. Once there is some long-term withdrawal system in a school or acceptance of the need for referral to special schooling, some teachers may regard it as an easy answer for pupils who could, in fact, have benefitted from further experience of mainstream work. In consequence, there is the risk that pressure to look critically at mainstream procedures will be reduced. This point does not magically reduce the need for long-term withdrawal, but it does suggest that its organisation and management must be carefully planned and monitored.

6.3

Organising a system of provision

It will be clear from all that has been said so far in this chapter that the task of organising a system of provision is not one of weighing the pros and cons of the various approaches and selecting the one which best suits the school, but rather it is the task of moulding together the various approaches into a multifaceted system and of ensuring that the appropriate strategy is employed for each pupil.

Our own view is that advice to mainstream teachers and in-class support are essential components of any system for only in these ways will attention be given to both the pupil with special needs and the circumstances in which that pupil is taught. The strategy of advice to mainstream teachers also seems to be the way in which response can be sufficiently widespread to cover the whole special needs group and sufficiently flexible to make provision when it is needed for pupils who have a short-term difficulty. We feel that short-term withdrawal is a difficult strategy to use well, that it may generally be used too widely, but that it may, nevertheless, be appropriate for some pupils. We do feel, however, that where it is used it should be linked to in-class support either before or after withdrawal, or both. Long-term withdrawal, including withdrawal to special schools, would seem to be an option that must be considered for those whose difficulties are most severe, though we would hope that further development of the mainstream curriculum and of the methods and materials used to deliver it, would reduce the number of pupils for whom this option becomes a necessity. We suggest that the use of long-term withdrawal is particularly appropriate when it is thought necessary to provide an alternative curriculum.

In reflecting on the design of systems of provision, we have been much interested in one aspect of the comparisons we have made between two of our case study schools. In many respects (e.g. size and overall

structure) these schools are similar but their approach to special needs is markedly different. One has no special unit, a considerable amount of in-class support for pupils, a system for liaison between subject departments and special needs staff, and a withdrawal system using some short-term withdrawal and some long-term, but part-time, withdrawal. The other school has a separate unit for pupils with quite extensive learning difficulties, some short-term withdrawal and long-term, part-time withdrawal, but very little in-class support. What is fascinating is that the IQ distribution of pupils in the two schools is not significantly different. Both have similar numbers of pupils who would have been classified as ESN(M) in the past. Clearly, what is regarded as impossible or undesirable in one school is being done in the other. The point of this is not to try to prove that one or other school is right, but to stress that the options really are open—that a school could consider the issues and make its choice without fearing that it was heading for a totally impracticable system.

a

Choosing a strategy

If you are charged with the planning of a school's support system you might begin by identifying the pros and cons of each approach to special needs provision. Next you might try to differentiate between different types of advantage and disadvantage. Ferguson and Adams (1982) draw attention to the fact that some features of an approach are fundamental characteristics of that way of doing things, whereas others are pros or cons which are likely (but not certain) to be present when that approach is used. For example, the fact that in-class support is limited by the normal curriculum of the class is inevitable. To do social skills training, say, in a normal geography lesson would be impossible, not only because of the geography teaching that would be going on, but also because of the social context of the mainstream classroom. However, there is nothing inevitable about the lack of relationship between work done in a short-term withdrawal session and the work of the class into which the pupil will be re-integrated. There is a risk that a problem of this kind will happen but it can be avoided, and indeed some ideas for doing so have already been discussed.

It seems to us that the proper response under such circumstances is to use the inevitable characteristics of each approach as a guide to the sorts of pupils who should be given support in that way. We have already given the example of the particular suitability of long-term withdrawal in circumstances where a pupil is thought to need an alternative curriculum. That decision exploits a basic characteristic of long-term withdrawal: namely that, if re-integration is not envisaged, the support does not have to be tied closely to mainstream curriculum objectives. On the other hand, the proper response to the things which are often associated with a given system of provision, but which are not inevitable characteristics of that approach, is to think about ways in which the likely advantages can be encouraged and the likely disadvantages overcome. [Activity 6.3a](#) is designed to focus some thinking of this kind. Ideally it would be done by a planning group involving mainstream and special needs staff.

This exercise might give some important clues as to what the component parts of your school's system of provision should be, what each part should be expected to do, and how the parts should be inter-related and related to mainstream planning and procedures in order to make the whole as effective as possible. It might be useful at this stage to go back to [Activity 6.1a](#) which began this chapter and to see how the proposed system caters for pupils of each kind. A combination of these two activities should help to refine the proposals.

A

ACTIVITY 6.3A

Designing a coordinated system A

1. Go through the present text and, for each method of provision, underline advantages in blue and disadvantages in red.
2. Go through the text a second time and draw a blue box round any advantage that is an inevitable characteristic of the approach being discussed. Repeat the exercise drawing a red box round any disadvantage which is an inevitable characteristic.
3. For each approach, list the inevitable pros and cons (those now boxed).
4. Consider what these lists imply in terms of the suitability of each approach for pupils of different kinds. All kinds of pupil listed in the table that formed [Activity 6.1a](#) on page 56 should be considered.
5. For each approach, list the pros and cons that are likely to be associated with that response (those now underlined but not boxed).
6. Consider how the advantages can be exploited and the disadvantages minimised.
7. Consider how the system that you are beginning to map out in Steps 4 & 6 relates to the identification procedures you use. Should these be changed? Which ideas in [Chapter 5](#) help?

Note

You may wish to do a similar exercise on other texts which discuss provision.

b

Implementing the strategy

In trying to put the proposed approach into practice, it is important to think about the likely reaction of colleagues to the ideas. This chapter will give some broad indications of what you might find. However, you might need to investigate these in more detail in your own school. One approach may be to charge someone on secondment to investigate the problems as their research project, for in-service courses often involve a research element for the secondee.

It may then be that you need to engage in some attitude change activities. Visits with key mainstream staff to other schools doing what you would like to do may be particularly effective. Certainly Deans (1983), surveying teacher opinion in twenty-five schools, found that visits were thought to be the most effective form of in-service training in raising awareness about the possibilities for provision. Other methods regarded as valuable by teachers as forms of INSET were workshops on materials and in-class support from specialist teachers. The method thought to be least effective was a series of weekly lectures.

Once you know what you want to do, and have generated support for the approach by activities of these kinds the problem becomes one of managing the system and monitoring it. A final suggestion—ask the pupils their opinion. In our case studies we found that pupils with special needs had a considerable amount to say about what was done with them, and for them. Their ideas were perceptive and potentially of great help in checking on the system.

7

Integration

7.1

The context of integration

One necessary factor in the impetus to integrate handicapped children is the existence of segregated forms of special provision. Segregation can occur at very many different levels and it is important to remember that within any school there may be groupings and divisions which effectively bar some children from a full mainstream curriculum. This may be through rigid streaming which reduces options or through various forms of special needs provision which separate out some children for at least part of their education. Even in some special schools there may be groups—such as special care classes—whose educational diet may be very different from the rest. The attempts to reduce this kind of internal segregation through in-class support are discussed in [Chapter 6](#). In this chapter our chief focus is the more widely acknowledged segregation which takes the form of completely separate schooling for some pupils and on the issues which need to be examined when these pupils become candidates for integration into ordinary schools.

Special schools have been in existence for well over a hundred years. In the nineteenth century the special schools were mainly for children with obvious sensory and physical handicaps. The motives for creating such schools were a typical Victorian mixture of benevolent humanitarianism and expediency. If children with disabilities could learn skills, not only would they be able to lead more satisfactory lives but they might cease to be a burden on society.

As universal education became established at the end of the century children with learning difficulties were increasingly identified by their failure to meet the demands of the payment by results system. Consequently other schools were opened which supposedly catered for their needs but also allowed the mainstream system to forge ahead unencumbered by ‘slow’ or ‘difficult’ children. The Open University Course E241 offers an interesting overview of the historical development and changing status of special education.

In recent years approximately 2 per cent of children have been educated in day or residential special schools. In the latter case fees will almost always be paid by the child’s own local authority. These schools have tended to specialise in particular disabilities and although the 1981 Act has introduced the notion of ‘special educational needs’ instead of the old categories of handicap, nevertheless the special school populations still tend to a special bias. The table in [Figure 7.1](#) gives the number of schools according to the old categories in the period 1972–1980.

Figure 7.1

	1972	1980	Change
Blind	17	16	-1
Partially sighted	19	17	-2
Blind and partially sighted	2	2	0
Deaf	20	24	4
Partially hearing	6	6	0
Deaf and partially hearing	22	21	-1
Deaf and partially sighted	1	1	0
Physically handicapped	77	102	25
Delicate	56	48	-8
Delicate and physically handicapped	71	60	-11
Delicate and maladjusted	4	6	2
Maladjusted	142	208	66
ESN	897	983	86
Epileptic	6	6	0
Speech defect	3	6	3
Autistic	0	10	10
Multiple handicaps	3	15	12
Hospital	155	141	-14
	1501	1672	171

Reproduced with permission from Hegarty, Pocklington and Lucas, (1981) *Educating Pupils with Special Needs in the Ordinary School* NFER-Nelson.

Several points should be made about [Figure 7.1](#).

1. By no means all pupils with the named handicaps are in special schools. Many are in the mainstream schools as members of ordinary classes or in special classes or units in ordinary schools.

2. The ESN (Educationally Subnormal) category includes pupils with moderate learning difficulties (ESN [M]) and those with severe learning difficulties (ESN[S]). The latter group were deemed educable and became the responsibility of Education Authorities in 1970. In most cases there are separate schools for the old (M) and (S) groups but in some areas they share schools.

3. Within the same authority children with similar handicaps may be in different settings, e.g. in Oxfordshire children with moderate learning difficulties may be in segregated schools, in special classes or units in mainstream schools or in ordinary classes, largely according to accidents of local history and geography and policy differences from school to school in the mainstream sector.

4. The change figures demonstrate that the major increase in segregated provision in recent years has been for children with problems of learning or maladjustment. Later figures produced by Swann (1985) confirm this trend and show that the decrease in segregated provision lies mainly with children with physical and sensory disabilities.

a

How do children enter special schools?

If children are obviously severely handicapped they may be referred for admission to a special school from the beginning of their school career, others may be referred after some time in the mainstream sector. The

assessment which precedes special placement has to include educational, psychological and medical input. Since the 1981 Act the assessment and placement procedures are much more clearly elaborated. The nature of the child's educational and associated needs has to be spelled out clearly and a statement of the appropriate provision made. Parents are consulted at each stage and asked to contribute their assessment. The period of assessment may be lengthy. It may not lead to a binding statement, but when a statement is made, it may, though not necessarily, state that the pupil should be placed in a special school, except in a few circumstances, e.g. for short periods of educational assessment. Pupils should not be placed in special schools without the formal assessment and statementing procedures of the 1981 Act.

b

What do special schools offer?

It may be fashionable to stress the main advantage of special schools as being a convenient receptacle for the rejects of the mainstream system but that would be too superficial. These costly establishments can maintain extremely favourable pupil-teacher ratios (e.g. 7:1 for maladjusted pupils). The teachers may have special qualifications (although this is mandatory only in the case of teachers for the visually handicapped or hearing impaired). In addition there is often further support from classroom assistants, special equipment and the advice or aid of outside agents such as educational psychologists, speech and physio-therapists. The external support, however, is patchy and thin on the ground even when concentrated in a relatively small number of schools.

As far as the curriculum is concerned, children may benefit from very specialist input—especially in the case of the sensorily impaired when all the school's resources are geared to making the most of their ability despite their particular limitations. In recent years too there have been considerable advances in developing modified or alternative curricula for children with learning difficulties.

When the Warnock Committee examined the educational provision for handicapped children they found many excellent special schools as well as many which were less satisfactory, a finding which could no doubt be made about any sector of education. The debate about integration or segregation, however, is not really about the quality of individual schools, just as the debate about the introduction of comprehensive schools was not about school quality. It began many years ago and incorporates many strands of thought. It became apparent that the categories of handicap under which children were assigned to special schools might have no bearing upon pupil's educational potential or needs. The clearest examples of the unsatisfactory nature of the arrangement were perhaps pupils with physical handicaps whose intellectual level was average or above but whose special school placement denied them access to a mainstream school curriculum and ordinary academic attainments. Their physical needs were probably very well met but their intellectual needs might be stifled.

The pressure for integration also has its roots in the growing criticism of the segregation of or discrimination against any groups because of factors like ethnic status, disability or gender. Equality of opportunity and human rights arguments are also invoked, as is clear from this statement by Peter Newell of the Children's Legal Centre: 'We see ending segregation not first as a complex educational and professional issue, weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of two settings for meeting special needs, but first as a social and political issue, pursuing the human right not to be segregated outside the mainstream' (1985). This movement was particularly strong in the United States and their education law (PL94 142 The Education of All Handicapped Children Act) predated the British one by several years. In this same period most western countries also had an integration debate and tried varying ways to resolve what has proved to

be a difficult problem. Sarason and Doris (1979) present a fascinating account of this experience in the United States.

It was in this context that the Warnock Committee reported on the educational provision for handicapped children and that the 1981 Education Act was introduced and later implemented. Although the Warnock Report was not about integration per se, that was how it was anticipated and received. In fact, although the Report made clear that many children were unnecessarily segregated it also claimed that some segregated provision would continue to be necessary. The Act too, while urging the education in ordinary schools of children with special educational needs, has a number of caveats that certainly allow for the continuation of separate special schools.

The continuing debate therefore is perhaps not about the wholesale closure of special schools, although that is certainly on the agenda for some (e.g. Booth 1985) but about which children with special needs should be in mainstream schools and how those mainstream schools are going to meet their needs. In some ways this is less threatening, but it also implies a long term uncertainty about the nature of a school's population as individual candidates are considered. It also implies considerable variation in the provision according to the wills and wishes of different schools and local authorities.

The rest of this chapter considers the arguments that are advanced for and against integration, the different meanings of integration in general terms and how one local authority has managed integration. It also gives some idea of the prerequisites for success. A role play exercise is included to enable teachers to identify their own reactions to the idea of integration and to rehearse with colleagues their contribution to the discussion.

7.2.

Arguments for and against integration

The arguments for and against integration are very mixed and made from different stances and on behalf of different interest groups.

a

Arguments for

On behalf of the children to be integrated

- They have a basic right to education in the mainstream sector.
- They will have access to a wider curriculum or to the common curriculum deemed appropriate for all our children and to the publicly recognised qualifications which attend such curricula.
- They will have access to a wider range of teachers including subject specialists.
- They will have increased opportunities for social interaction with peers.
- They will be able to attend a neighbourhood school rather than be taken on special transport to a distant special school.
- They will remain members of their local community and will be accepted as such rather than viewed as outsiders.
- They will lose the stigma attached to special schooling.
- Their disability will be understood and accepted.

- They will learn at an early stage to live in the 'real' unprotective world and make a better adjustment than at the age of 16 or 19.

On behalf of other children in mainstream schools

- They will learn to understand and accept the diversity of human ability and disability without developing prejudice or fear of the unknown or misunderstood.
- They will have the opportunity to develop caring and sharing skills and attitudes at school that are not only worthwhile in themselves but may help to shape aptitudes for future work.

On behalf of special school teachers

Those that move with pupils into the mainstream sector will be able to extend their own skills in teaching a wide range of pupils and will be able to contribute their particular expertise to pupils and teachers in the ordinary sector.

On behalf of mainstream teachers

In meeting the challenge of children with difficulties they will not only gain in new skills in relation to those pupils but with adequate support will learn to offer more skilled and finely graded teaching to many more pupils.

On behalf of the parents of handicapped children

- They will have access, like their children, to a mainstream neighbourhood school. In this way they share the experience of local parents and are more likely to be able to make easy and regular contact.
- It is likely that all their children will be in the same group of schools as in most families.
- Because of the close contact they will meet with increased understanding and support from the community and lose any family stigma attached to the special school.

On behalf of other parents

They will gain directly, or indirectly through their children, in the understanding and acceptance of disability.

On behalf of other agents

Resources once concentrated in an exclusive and expensive way in a special school may be used for the benefit of a wider range of pupils in the mainstream schools.

On behalf of society

This would be the culmination of the comprehensive ideal—an opportunity to provide a good common education for all children.

b
Arguments against

On behalf of the children to be integrated

- They may lose out on specialist teaching and educational resources because of inadequate funding or personnel.
- They may suffer from too thin a spread of support therapies, like speech or physio-therapy, which are not likely in current circumstances to be increased to meet the needs of a more scattered population.
- They may be more isolated in a mainstream school than in a special school and their difficulties may be more obvious.
- They may be exposed at a vulnerable age to the harshness and prejudices and misunderstandings of society.

On behalf of other children in the mainstream schools

Their general progress might be slowed by the presence of children with difficulties who may need a disproportionate amount of teacher attention.

On behalf of other children in the special schools

- Their peer group would narrow and offer less stimulation.
- They might end up in a ghetto of the 'hard to place'.

On behalf of teachers in special schools

- Their experience and expertise would be either dissipated or underused by a move to a mainstream school.
- If they stayed in a special school the job satisfaction would decrease as their client population narrowed to the very 'hard to place'.

On behalf of teachers in mainstream schools

At a time when their resources are stretched very tight and increasing demands are made concerning different innovations they would be asked to manage more 'difficult' children with no guarantee of extra resources or training.

On behalf of parents of integrated children

They might need to fight constant battles to procure or retain for their children the kind of education appropriate to their special needs.

On behalf of other parents

They might resent the apparent erosion of resources to meet the needs of a minority of pupils and fear a deterioration in their own children's chances of progress.

On behalf of other agents

Visiting support agencies such as speech and physio-therapists would find it difficult to give the same support to a scattered population as was possible when children were concentrated in a few schools. Much of their time would be spent in travel rather than in working with teachers and children.

On behalf of society

The ideology of equality of opportunity might seem to be superseding the best interests of pupils with and without difficulties.

c

Can we reconcile the arguments?

If resources are scarce should they be concentrated for efficient use with the risk of segregating those who need the resources? Or are the arguments for integration so strong that we should not be deterred by lack of resources? We have to bear in mind that the 1981 Act, while encouraging integration, allows for no extra funding. Is 'integration on the cheap' either possible or desirable?

Education for personal development and education for life in society are as important for children with special needs as the rest. Is integration likely to improve education for them and their fellows? Is it a goal worth pursuing whatever the consequences?

Can one compare a broader curriculum available in the ordinary school with specialist individual teaching which may only be possible in a special school? Is membership of the local community school worth more than regular speech or physiotherapy? Can isolation in a small school be compared with possible isolation in a large ordinary school? Almost inevitably children will lose out on something but are the gains sufficient to compensate?

How do we take account of all the interests of the children with special needs and those without; of teachers in ordinary schools whose training, experience and expectations may have little to do with special needs and teachers working in segregated provision whose expertise and status may seem under threat; of parents of all children; of administrators who decide on placements and allocate resources? If their interests clash, who will arbitrate?

There is now considerable documentation of integration practices (e.g. Hegarty [1981], Hodgson [1984], Booth and Potts [1983]) and the Centre for Studies of Integration in Education was set up specifically to monitor progress nationwide. As yet, however, there is no clear cut picture of a solution to the questions raised here and each authority and school has to come to its own individual decision. According to a CSIE survey conducted as the 1981 Act was implemented, many authorities had been unable to decide on a coherent policy.

Obviously the most constructive action would be joint planning and policy making by all the parties whose interests are represented above, although no-one would suggest that that is an easy solution.

7.3.

Are there limits to integration?

Pupils with every kind of disability have been integrated, at least on a locational basis, in some area of the country. Does this mean it could happen everywhere? How much depends on personal commitment? How

much can be enforced? Are there particular problems with some groups of children? Mention is made of the profoundly deaf, the blind, the severely mentally handicapped, the severely disturbed. Can a dividing line be drawn, and if so, who will draw it?

7.4.

What is happening elsewhere?

Most western countries have been involved in the integration debate and many have legislation which urges integration. In the U.S.A. the system is probably the most elaborate and legally complex and has been well funded. Most segregated provision is closed but children may still receive much of their education separately from their peers according to individual programmes. In Italy segregated provision has also been largely abandoned but efforts are being made to educate most children in ordinary classes with support staff and reduced class size. In Scandinavia much of the integrated provision is locational only. In Britain at present it would be difficult to generalise.

7.5.

Different models and levels of integration

When integration is debated it is important to distinguish the different models which may be implied. One is sometimes described as the 'limpet' model in which the host school, while itself remaining more or less unchanged, takes in children with problems as an addition to its normal population (Jones 1983). The onus for integrating seems to lie with the children with difficulties who will somehow adapt to the existing system. In another 'whole school' model the formerly disparate parts fuse to become a new whole in which all children are regarded as natural clients of the school and adaptation may need to be made on all sides (Sayer 1983).

In either model, but perhaps particularly the 'limpet' model, there may be different levels of integration. The Warnock Report described three levels of integration, often overlapping and representing progressive stages of association. At a 'locational' level the children with special needs share the same site as other children, but any other sharing will depend upon the wish and will of individual staff and pupils. If there is a 'social' level of integration the children will share recreational space and facilities, and usually dining arrangements. At a 'functional' level there is a sharing either full or part-time in educational, pastoral and extra-curricular programmes.

Another dimension to be considered, and in operation around the country, is the possibility of part-time integration or short-term integration, an example of which is discussed in the next section.

7.6.

The example of one authority

This example is presented to demonstrate the diversity of practice that may be present even within a single authority. Oxfordshire still has special schools and still sends some pupils (although in smaller numbers than in earlier years) to residential schools outside the county. It also, however, has children with all kinds of difficulty integrated in ordinary schools.

Some are integrated as individuals and they may have support from specialist visiting teachers for the visually handicapped or hearing impaired. Some will be allocated welfare assistance support, particularly if they have physical disabilities. Others will be supported in class or in withdrawal sessions by the remedial or

special needs arrangements used in that school. Their timetable may be completely normal or they may have considerable adjustments and adaptations. There is often extra support for two terms in the transitional period to allow the pupils to have individual attention either from the support teacher or the regular class teacher.

Children who have been segregated for reasons of maladjustment are being reintegrated on an individual basis into neighbourhood schools after an elaborate reintegration programme when their attendance at the ordinary school is carefully staged and supported by a liaison teacher from their special school until it is felt that the pupil and the school can cope. Children with autistic behaviours are also integrated on an individual basis from one of two autistic units and again there is a support system emanating from the special unit which may be gradually phased out as the pupil and the school gain in confidence but remains on 'emergency' stand-by if the pupil's behaviour should cause undue concern.

There are also other instances of integration in which groups of children are integrated into ordinary schools but remain technically on the roll of the special school. In these circumstances teaching staff are moved with the children. In the case of a group of physically handicapped children they are scattered among the ordinary classes of a county secondary school and the special school teacher and classroom assistant work with them as and when needed and provide specialist support and advice to the other teachers. In the case of children with severe learning difficulties the groups tend to stay for most of the time with the special school teacher but as the experience develops more and more opportunities are taken to enlarge the 'ordinary' experience of individual children and blur the divisions between groups.

Some of the instances of integration are full-time, others are part-time, including attendance at ordinary schools for particular courses which are unavailable in the special school. At the moment the experience of pupils with similar difficulties around the county may be very different because a good many examples of integration have sprung from the commitment of individual schools and teachers rather than an overall county policy.

7.7.

Evaluation of integration

There remains a good deal of work to be done on the evaluation of integration initiatives and this will not be easy. Just as the arguments for and against integration are very mixed so are the aims and objectives and consequently the balance of outcomes is very difficult to assess. It is, however, possible to say that there are prerequisites for apparent success. One is adequate preparation before the integration takes place with a good exchange of information and visits; another is adequate resourcing so that the ordinary teacher does not feel overwhelmed by the new demands and the pupil is not immediately deprived of the benefits found in the special schools. Thirdly the good will of all concerned seems to be paramount. It is unlikely that everything will go smoothly in every respect and obstacles, however short-lived or minor, will fuel the fire of those who are not convinced of the wisdom of the exercise. Good will and optimism, however, can usually sustain people over these periods.

That is not to say, however, that ultimate success is always assured. There are times when the integration process breaks down and recourse is again made to the segregated system. While the two systems co-exist it is inevitable that some schools will be reluctant to change dramatically but the growing body of successful experience may encourage many to accept the challenge and decide for themselves the merits or otherwise of integration.

Another implication of the, as yet, unclear effects of integration is that schools monitor carefully their own integration experience.

7.8. Role play exercise

For the purposes of the role play, you are members of staff of Mulchester Comprehensive attending a special staff meeting at which decisions are to be taken about the integration of three children at present in special schools. The following sections provide the necessary background information. [Activity 7.8](#) then sets out some ideas for structuring the role play itself.

Background information

Mulchester Comprehensive

This is a school of 1500 pupils aged 11–18 situated on the edge of a Midlands industrial town. It is on a split site. The Upper School building is a three storey block. All pupils have to go to the Upper School for science. Its catchment area includes a large 1950s council housing development and a number of villages in the surrounding countryside which are popular with professional families. The school has a good academic record and a strong tradition in community service. It is firmly committed to mixed ability grouping for all pupils in years 1–3.

The school, which has a staff of 90, has a special needs department of 3 teachers which provides a remedial reading service on an extraction basis for 10 per cent of the pupils. A very small number of pupils (8) are withdrawn from most academic lessons and, on an ad-hoc basis, the special needs staff have developed an alternative curriculum for these pupils. This is not popular with many staff as it cuts across the mixed ability policy of the school.

As a response to the 1981 Act the LEA is asking the school, together with all other schools in the area, to accept pupils who, to date, have been educated in special schools. Cases to be considered at this meeting are given below. (It is likely that the LEA will be suggesting other names in the near future.)

The candidates for integration

Jane Wilson

Age 10.06

IQ (NFER group test) 105

Jane is wheel-chair bound and is presently attending a school for children with physical handicaps where she has been a pupil since the age of 3. She is of average ability and is making progress consistent with that ability. Although secondary age pupils attend this special school we feel that Jane is significantly limited by the lack of facilities here (particularly in science, where we have only rudimentary laboratories; and in modern languages, where we have no specialist staff). She is popular with her peers and has a mature attitude to her abilities and disabilities.

She may need help with her toileting and will need to return to the special school for physiotherapy for one afternoon a week for at least the next year.

John Williams

Age 13.00

IQ (group test) 68 IQ (Wise) Verbal 60, Performance 90. Full score 75.

Reading age (at 12.06)8.06

John is at present attending a day school for children with moderate learning difficulties where he has been a pupil for four years. Reading has improved considerably over the last six months with careful one to one teaching for two twenty minute sessions each day. Once things have been explained to him carefully his number work is good. but left to manage on his own he is repeatedly let down by his lack of reading ability. He makes excellent use of the very limited craft facilities in this school. John is shy about his reading difficulties and tries to hide them from peers and teachers.

His parents are not particularly supportive of school.

Bill Johnstone

Age 14.00

NEER CE 115

Bill was referred to this school for maladjusted pupils after repeatedly disrupting lessons. Referral was precipitated by an attack on another pupil when he was 10.

In a tightly structured 'behaviour modification' setting, he has improved his behaviour considerably, but has achieved little academically. Even now he seems to have some difficulty in relating to male members of staff.

A

ACTIVITY 7.8

Role play activities

1. Ask colleagues to read the material in 7.8.
2. Hold the role play discussion, Shape the discussion of each candidate in the form of a case conference. Ask colleagues to take on the role of teachers at the comprehensive school, parents of the candidates, representatives from the special schools, LEA officers or advisers, and the candidates themselves. Put forward the possible views of the different participants. Record the different arguments for and against integration and any proposed action.
3. Encourage colleagues to reflect on what was said. After the discussion decide what kinds of arguments have been used. Are they in direct conflict? Are there obvious ways of resolving differences? Are there critical elements in the discussion which suggest that there are insuperable objections to integration or criteria which must be met before agreement is reached?
Are the arguments the same for each candidate? If not what are the distinguishing features?

Note

Of course colleagues in an individual school may prefer to consider the candidates in the context of their own schools.

8

Liaison

As is clear from earlier chapters the primary responsibility for making provision to meet special educational needs has to rest with individual schools and the teachers within those schools. On a day to day basis it is the teacher's job to decide how best to help particular children within the educational setting. Giving that responsibility to another institution—the special school—is still possible but is likely to be less common as the move towards integration increases. Giving that responsibility totally to a small group of specialist teachers within a school is also possible but also less common if our research data are representative of current trends. It now seems far more likely that the responsibility will be shared between the ordinary class teacher and the specialist.

This increase in responsibility may seem oppressive, particularly at a time of scarce resources and a myriad other innovatory schemes. It is for this reason that we must emphasise the supportive network available to teachers in their enterprise. Information, advice and practical help are available, but teachers need to know how best to gain access to this support and how best to use it. In this chapter we shall examine support resources coming from outside the secondary school. Extra support within the school in the way of advice to mainstream teachers from special needs departments and direct support to pupils from welfare assistants and specialist teachers is discussed in [Chapter 6](#).

The areas for discussion are primary/secondary transfer; parents and other community members; special schools acting as resource centres; and the professional external agents.

8.1.

Primary/secondary transfer

The transition from primary to secondary school can be traumatic for any child but there are particular problems for children with special needs. Previous difficulties in the context of the primary school may have been alleviated to some extent by the security of being known by all staff and knowing all staff, by familiarity with the regime and by consistency of management. There will also have been advantages in interacting with a relatively small number of teachers on any day and in a relatively flexible timetable, maybe an integrated day, in which individual needs may be met unobtrusively. Most primary schools adopt mixed ability groupings so that even if a child has separate remedial sessions the regular base for work is an ordinary class or year base where diversity of ability and disability is the norm. This is not to suggest that children with special needs are automatically happy and secure in primary schools. All children recognise failure and difficulties and are unlikely to relish their special needs status but nevertheless there is usually sufficient relaxation and informality in the primary school to enable them to gain some satisfaction from school.

The average secondary school presents some marked contrasts. The establishment is much larger and children are not known to all teachers. In their turn they have to get to know and work with a considerable number of teachers in a week who will work in different styles and will inevitably need time to appreciate individual differences and needs because contact time with any class is relatively short. Although there may be a good deal of mixed ability teaching in the lower years of the secondary school almost inevitably there will soon be moves to band, set, or stream according to ability and the pupils with special needs are likely to gravitate to lower sets and streams and to encounter differences in curriculum and exam access in comparison with academically more successful peers.

The following suggestions are based on ideas adopted in a number of schools in our research area. Some arise from the main research study described in the introduction. Others were investigated in a separate Oxfordshire study of primary/secondary transfer in relation to children with special needs (Jones 1984).

a Records

Although teachers are generally wary about the transfer of prejudice through written records and wish children who have been a cause for concern to have a fresh start there do seem to be some items of information which should be exchanged. These include:

- persistent learning difficulties, their nature and the way they have been managed at primary level;
- persistent behavioural difficulties and any record of serious home difficulties or involvement with psychiatric, psychological or social services;
- any physical handicaps, sensory handicaps or chronic medical disorders together with recommended management techniques;
- a note of lengthy or persistent absences from school which may have led to gaps in learning.

All this information is potentially valuable to all who teach the children and should be easily accessible—particularly to form tutors as the first line of referral when difficulties are identified. The issue of confidentiality is inevitably raised at times but the handling and management of such information should perhaps be seen as part of the professionalism of the teacher.

b Visits

Exchange visits are usual—both by secondary pastoral staff to the primary schools and by the primary children to the secondary school. It is also helpful if special needs staff can visit primary schools and flesh out for themselves the profile of children who are most likely to need special support and also for all children on school visits to be introduced to any special needs base or resource area as an important part of the school's facilities. When parents too visit the secondary schools it may be sensible to introduce them from the outset to this part of the school's resources.

c

Curriculum continuity

The most usual point of contact in transfer arrangements is through the pastoral staff but there is now evidence that more schools feel the need to develop curriculum links so that some continuity is achieved between primary and secondary work. This seems appropriate for all children but has particular relevance for children with special needs who may have more difficulty in assimilating radical changes in content and style. In some cases teams of teachers between the schools work together to plan their work across the age sectors so that unnecessary and frustrating duplication is avoided and so that children may feel a sense of development rather than abrupt and unexplained change. In some schools the first year after transfer is organised in some ways on primary lines with pupils taught for up to half their timetable by one team of teachers who are usually first year tutors. In these circumstances the pupils gain in security from a more familiar routine and fewer teacher changes while beginning to come to terms with a more differentiated timetable.

d

Liaison teachers

In one of our research areas we were introduced to the idea of teachers who worked between sectors with particular responsibility for children with special needs. They were, therefore, familiar to the children long before transfer and could maintain that link when necessary in the secondary school—often working through consultation with the teachers rather than directly with the children. On a similar model some of the area support teams which are principally concerned in supporting teachers in the primary schools have now extended their role to the secondary schools. There is always a potential risk that such liaison work might confirm a child's reputation unnecessarily, because we know that some children who have caused concern at primary level thrive on the change. The risk, however, seems very slight, especially when the liaison teams are always pushed for time and under-resourced and unlikely to proffer support when it is no longer needed. And the risk is more than balanced by the benefits of a prompt and ready grasp of an obvious difficulty and knowledge of how it has been handled before.

e

Grouping policies

The final point is not at all new. All schools have policies for easing transfer when they group children in their basic tutor groups. Friendships and antagonisms are discussed and efforts made to make the children feel comfortable in those first anxious stages. The only point to be reinforced is that such considerations may be especially important for children with special needs who are less likely than others to be confident in their ability to adapt to new circumstances.

8.2.

Help from parents

At primary level there tends to be fairly close contact between parents and teachers and information can easily be exchanged about difficulties, especially since for each child there is usually only one key teacher to consult at any time. Parents are also often to be seen in school in the role of volunteer helpers, preparing resources, escorting swimming groups, hearing children read, helping with cooking or sewing. In the

relatively small community of the primary school the opportunities for consultation and co-operation are considerable. This in no way guarantees good collaboration over children with special needs but is helpful in promoting that collaboration.

At secondary level the complexities of most secondary schools militate against this ease of communication. Although pupils will have a form tutor as a key link person he or she may know the child in only a limited way compared with the primary teacher and the parent may not necessarily be able to ensure speedy contact with other key teachers or even know them at all except for very brief exchanges on parents' evenings.

There are, however, ways in which parents and teachers may establish a partnership over children with special needs to the benefit of all.

a

Parents as information givers

When children have special needs the parents often have information which is very important for the school in planning and evaluating its provision, e.g. details of physical or medical problems, drug therapies, family crises. Teachers need to understand these factors if the educational implications are to be grasped and tackled effectively. These may, however, be seen as sensitive areas and so a basis of trust has to be built up between school and home so that the parents recognise the value of their knowledge about their children and recognise the teachers' dependence upon their co-operation and that the teachers wish to use that information solely for the benefit of the children. The children's educational welfare has to be seen as a joint enterprise.

b

Parents as participants in assessment procedures

Parents were given more control over their children's special educational provision by the 1981 Act. They are to be consulted at every stage of a formal multi-professional assessment procedure and enabled to contribute their own views. There is also a clear expectation that parents will be involved in and consulted about earlier assessments of their child's educational difficulties. Consequently schools have an obligation to keep parents well informed of any steps taken to make special provision and to make them true partners in the decision making.

c

Parents as educators

There is a growing body of evidence that parents may be able to play a very important role in the education of their own children while at school. This emanates mainly from the primary sector and concentrates largely on experiments in shared or paired reading. Since many children with special needs are identified through their poor literacy skills it seems reasonable to suggest that even at secondary level parents might be invited to help their own children in this way so that the children may experience consistency of interest and support. Materials and approaches from the adult literacy movement may help to overcome the natural reluctance of young people to be seen as poor readers.

d

The need for good communication

In order to achieve these valuable links with parents it seems essential to have very clear lines of communication. Parents may get to know the key teachers in their child's school through planned initial visits and parents' evenings but there is also a need for visits, telephone calls and written communication at any crisis or stress points. This means, of course, that tutors must be given time to perform this valuable function and that a clear line of responsibility exists if there is to be a resolution of difficult circumstances. Further discussion of work with parents may be found in Wolfendale (1984) and Cunningham and Davis (1985).

8.3.

Help from other members of the community

a

Adults as helpers

The advent of the community school era makes it easier to envisage an education system which has a give and take relationship with many sectors of the local population. The unemployed, part-employed and retired have much time to contribute to education and in turn can find a renewed purpose in their own lives. Children with special needs tend to flourish on a one to one basis with a sympathetic adult even though that adult may not be highly qualified as a teacher. It is possible to deploy such voluntary help in a number of ways:

- To work on resource materials, such as helping youngsters with literacy difficulties write and produce their own books, perhaps with the use of tape recorders or with computer programmes.
- To read to and with children, as well as oversee the children's own reading. At the teenage stage an outside helper may be more acceptable to some pupils than parents, and teachers will rarely have enough time to give to this task.
- To work with children who are integrated into ordinary schools, e.g. giving assistance with practical tasks, accompanying them on visits, supervising swimming or cooking. Although welfare assistants are sometimes available from the LEA their time allocation is often limited.

These examples are of community members acting as teachers' aides and assistants but there are examples of their being educators in their own right, bringing particular skills into the classroom which would otherwise be missing. Such extra expertise may be particularly valuable on short or modular courses. Examples could be first aid, child care, various crafts.

b

The pupils as helpers

Community schools often play host to groups such as the disabled and local pensioners, offering meals and hospitality. If children with special needs are able to establish good relationships with these visitors and to learn to meet their needs it can be a source of confidence and enhanced self-image. For once they are not on the receiving end of extra support but can offer it to others.

c

How easy is a community programme?

The potential benefits of enlisting the support of parents and the community are immense for all pupils and have a particular significance for children with special needs. The potential hazards are not insignificant. At a superficial level schools may want to consider insurance and other financial implications of help from persons other than members of staff. More seriously, those who volunteer are not always suitable helpers; some will want to take over from the teacher, others may work against the prevailing style and ethos of the school, some may become unhealthily attached to pupils, others may be unreliable; some will subconsciously be seeking support for themselves and put additional burdens upon overpressed but sympathetic teachers.

It is obvious that diplomatic management and co-ordination skills are needed by any teachers wishing to embark on these suggestions and co-ordinate voluntary help. If such skills are available the effort may be amply rewarded.

d

Community and work experience

So far we have considered help coming into the school but the experiences pupils with special needs have outside school as they prepare to leave may be just as important. Teachers who arrange work experience placements or community projects may be able to foster contacts where they know that children with special needs will be supported and valued and able to gain some of the self-confidence that is often lacking in children who are apparently failures.

8.4.

Special schools

In an age when any segregated provision is being closely scrutinised and questioned the special schools are trying to develop a new role in their educational communities. Very few have closed because the need for very special placements still seems to hold. Nevertheless, some are losing pupils to the ordinary schools and attempting to expand their client population indirectly by becoming an area resource. This changing role may bring several benefits to the secondary schools who are trying to make adequate provision for their pupils with special needs.

To revert to the question of work or community placements, secondary schools may well receive good advice from special schools who perform are constantly in the business of trying to place hard-to-place youngsters.

There has always been an overlap of populations between special and ordinary schools and, where integration is popular, that overlap will have become greater. In some areas it is now becoming more common for teachers in ordinary schools to ask for advice on curriculum matters and management techniques from special school teachers whose efforts are totally geared to meeting special educational needs. In recent years special school staff have given a good deal of time and energy to rethinking and planning curricula, with particular attention to behavioural objectives and step by step learning.

Their efforts have been spurred on and supported by research reports and training schemes often initiated in higher education departments and research centres. These techniques certainly have relevance for a much wider population than the pupils in special schools—the general principles are relevant for all teachers. It is now possible for the special schools to offer a variety of services to colleagues in ordinary schools in the

confidence that they have something worthwhile to say and give. This may be as practical as detailed curriculum materials or advice on the management of particular disabilities. It may be an offer of experience beneficial to both sides when teachers can exchange roles at times. Some special schools offer a direct service to some pupils through part-time participation in courses not available in the ordinary school. Some have intensive support classes for pupils from neighbouring schools.

When children are being integrated into ordinary schools the direct support of the special school before and during integration and the continued link afterwards may be one of the keys to success. More special schools now make this liaison work a post of special responsibility so that all parties can benefit from earlier mistakes and successes and develop guidelines for good practice rather than treating each candidate for integration in an ad hoc manner.

These collaborative links between ordinary and special schools are not necessarily well advanced in any area and even when there is enthusiasm and good will it can be thwarted by lack of time and resources. Nevertheless, it seems only sensible for any school considering how it may improve its special needs provision to look on any local special provision as a possible source of support and advice, even of inspiration. The freedom from conventional academic goals may enable special schools to be particularly imaginative and innovative.

8.5.

External agents

Finally we must discuss the roles of external agents and the ways in which liaison between them and the schools may best assist children with special needs and their teachers. Some of these agents have educational qualifications—such as the educational psychologists and special needs advisers and peripatetic advisory teachers—in addition to a specialist training or experience. These should, therefore, be in a good position to understand the myriad pressures and demands placed upon teachers as well as the needs of the individual child. The other agents are less likely to have that educational bias and their work may well extend to other age groups than the school child. Their interest is primarily in managing and alleviating disability and disadvantage.

In some ways this distinction suggests different ways in which the groups might be approached. The para-medical and social services will usually only have time to concentrate on particular individuals with particular needs although they may be persuaded occasionally to talk in more general terms, e.g. at a staff meeting, about their work and how best they can be incorporated into a school's regime. The educational psychologists and advisers, however, may be able to enter a more general dialogue with schools which will give a forum for issues that go beyond the particular needs of a particular child and may lead to general changes and developments in schools to the benefit of many more children with special needs, and to the personal and professional development of many teachers.

There is a wide range of external agents who might have a part to play in helping to meet special needs. There are differences in the way they work between different areas, even between individuals within the same area but the following section indicates some of the functions that might be expected or negotiated by schools.

a

Officers of the LEA

Issues of administration in the special needs area may centre upon one officer or be spread among several area officers. These issues may include: multi-professional assessment procedures and statements and any subsequent appeals by parents; the appointment of welfare or classroom assistants or other special staffing; the adaptation of buildings and the allocation of special equipment and arrangements for special transport.

b

Special needs advisers

Advisers may be closely involved in the issues above but will also have a more general advisory role for teachers managing children with special needs, such as giving careers advice to those teachers, and will have responsibilities for in-service provision. Under the new funding arrangements for in-service schools will have more influence in shaping in-service provision. The identification by individual schools or groups of schools of gaps or inadequacies in special needs expertise or awareness (as illustrated in earlier chapters) may well lead to fruitful negotiation with advisers over the development of relevant courses.

c

Educational psychologists

The old image of the psychologist as a person who tests children and announces IQ scores is becoming obsolete. There is still a need for testing—particularly for official documentation as in statements and in diagnosis but psychologists usually prefer to operate on a much wider base. Some try to help children through working closely with teachers, observing children in the class and advising teachers on a variety of teaching and behavioural techniques. Others make the family the focus for their work. Both hope to effect change in children through encouraging change in those who care for them both at home and at school. Although hard-pressed, with potential responsibility for thousands of children, some psychologists still manage to visit schools on a regular basis, regardless of particular clients, so that teachers become familiar with them and are able to discuss educational issues well before crisis point.

d

Social workers

Some generic social workers will be in contact with schools because pupils and their families are clients. Others may be able to maintain a regular link with local schools so that potential problems can be discussed at an early stage. Educational social workers have a very specific role to check on attendance and in consequence may be a very useful link between the schools and families of irregular attenders. Psychiatric social workers tend to work closely with psychiatrists or psychologists when children are diagnosed as having adjustment difficulties and in need of special provision either in the ordinary or special sectors. They too may be able to bridge the gap between parents and schools at times of considerable unhappiness and stress.

e
Psychiatrists

Psychiatrists who deal with children and adolescents need to consult closely with schools when children are referred for disturbance of behaviour. The information possessed by the schools on learning and behaviour may be very valuable in assessment and treatment. In the best of practices the school will in turn receive the kind of information that helps them to understand the child's difficulties and the ways in which that child may be helped in non-medical settings. The communication between the medical and educational professions is not always easy or effective, partly perhaps because it is not part of professional training to understand each other's perspectives or needs. When, however, that understanding is there the collaboration can be extremely helpful and there are psychiatrists who will take time to talk to teachers about their work and how teachers can be alerted early on to psychiatric difficulties and take appropriate action at an early and more remediable stage.

f
Paediatricians

Much the same issues could be raised with paediatricians as with the psychiatrists although school reports may not necessarily be any part of medical investigation. However, many paediatricians who deal with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes or epilepsy, now realise the important educational implications of the disorders and are keen to disseminate helpful advice, and to receive feedback from schools on the circumstances surrounding episodes when the medical condition has had an adverse effect on the child's life in school.

g
Child health services

The child health services interact with schools at several points. The health screening tests are usually performed in schools and school medical officers and school nurses will keep an eye on children identified through tests as having actual or potential special needs. The service will also hold records centrally and in schools and usually co-ordinate any medical reports necessary for multi-professional assessments. The advice of school medical officers may also be useful when children with special needs leave school and are planning further or higher education or work applications. It is now becoming less popular to spend a good deal of time testing everyone for sight and hearing and general health but to concentrate time and efforts on identified need so that school referrals on new problems are an important element in a comprehensive service.

h
Para-medical services

There are many children with special needs who have particular physical or neurological conditions which respond to therapy and they may be visited in the schools by speech therapists, physio- or occupational therapists. These professionals are a scarce resource and may have a client population spanning all ages from birth to death, and may work in medical as well as community settings. Their time in schools is inevitably limited and there is particular concern when children integrate into ordinary schools and lose therapy time when it has to be spread rather than concentrated in special centres. In order to make the most

effective use of their time they may well work with teachers and welfare assistants so that special exercises or programmes may be pursued in the everyday timetable. More general advice may also be passed on at staff meetings on handling physically disabled pupils or on identifying and referring speech disorders which might respond to therapy. Schools might also seek the advice of para-medical professionals in decisions about aids and adaptations. Their wider clinical experience in medical settings is likely to introduce them to a considerable range of equipment not always known to advisory staff.

i

Peripatetic teaching staff

These too may be a scarce resource with responsibilities for whole authorities or a great number of schools. The most usual areas of expertise are in the education of the hearing impaired and the visually handicapped and in learning difficulties associated with low attainments in literacy skills. Teachers in the latter category are less likely to visit secondary schools than primary schools but some advisory teaching teams are now extending their work into secondary schools. Once more the amount of direct teaching of pupils may be strictly limited but the regular teachers may benefit considerably from advice on particular teaching strategies and on the use of particular equipment like radio microphones or low vision aids. Fitzherbert's book, *Child Care Services and the Teacher* (1977), is a useful source of more detailed description and discussion.

8.6.

How can liaison be made to work?

The previous sections outline different groups of people who might support schools' efforts to cater for pupils with special needs. The total list is long and many of the individuals involved are not educators so that the task of enlisting and co-ordinating such support is not easy. If, however, schools recognise the value of such links the management of them has to be taken seriously and may be achieved in the following ways:

- Co-ordination should rest with someone of high status who can give it due priority.
- The channels of communication need to be clear and known to all concerned. Failures in communication and misunderstandings could undermine interactions which are often beyond the call of duty.
- Information has to be co-ordinated and available to all who have direct responsibility for the pupils. The issues of confidentiality and open records need to be understood and agreed.
- Records and referrals should be clear and specific, based on good observations, formal or informal tests as well as intuitive judgments and easily interpreted by other professionals.
- Where possible external agents should have some clear area responsibility so that they can get to know and be known by a group of schools so that trust and confidence can be developed between different professionals.
- Regular case conferences with good referral and review systems could help to prevent crisis management.
- Regular in-service sessions, perhaps with several disciplines participating could ease the difficulties of understanding the roles of different professionals and the most effective way of working together.
- If liaison work is to improve the lot of children with special needs all parties have to be prepared to negotiate and when necessary compromise. Conflicts in management techniques and advice are unlikely to be helpful.

At first sight it might seem that we are recommending that teachers should be all things to all people and lose their professional identity. Far from that we would wish them to recognise their particular contribution to a child's total welfare but also to acknowledge and exploit the skills and concerns of others. The school can become a natural focus for a multi-faceted support network because that is the one institution that all children have to attend. How well that network can function, however, rests largely with the teachers.

8.7. Some study suggestions

This chapter has been wide ranging in its discussion of support for special needs work which may come from outside the school. Since this aspect of school life is 'off-the-timetable' it may well be that many teachers have only a partial view and consequently may feel, unjustifiably, that they have little if any part to play in liaison. It is proposed, therefore, that each of the following topics could be a focus of discussion by a group of teachers, or preferably a whole staff so that the school's policy and practices could be identified and improvements suggested.

Primary-secondary transfer

1. What is the value of transfer documentation and other transfer procedures in the identification and support of children with special needs?
2. Which staff have access to the resulting information and how is that information used?
3. Is there any collaborative curriculum work across the sectors?

Parental involvement

1. What kind of links are made with parents, and by whom?
2. Where is contact made? always in school? in the parents' homes? on neutral ground?
3. What roles do parents play in interactions with school? clients? information givers? partners? co-educators? fund-raisers?
4. How much do parents of children with special needs feature in parental involvement schemes?

Community interest

1. List any member of the community who works in or out of the school with teachers and/or pupils on a voluntary basis. What do they bring to the work?
2. What advantages or disadvantages are there in community links?
3. How many links involve pupils with special needs?

Special schools

1. What links exist and for what purpose? integration? exchange educational visits by teachers and/or pupils? social events? community service?

2. How far do you regard a local special school or unit as a resource for advice or actual assistance in special needs provision?

External agents

1. List all those who have contacts with the school. Use the following list as a starting point:

Special needs adviser
Educational psychologist
Social workers
Psychiatrist

Paediatrician
Child health staff
Para-medical therapists
Peripatetic teachers

2. Who makes the contact? What is the referral procedure? What can and do the agents do? Are the contacts regular and ongoing or only at crisis points?
3. Do they ever address all the staff or are they available for staff consultation independent of individual casework?
4. What sort of advice and information do they want from teachers and can they give to teachers?

Overall school policy

1. Is there a teacher at senior level who can offer an overview and expertise on all these topics? Should there be? Can and should all staff share in this work?
2. How clear are lines of communication and responsibility for liaison work?
3. Is there a need for joint in-service sessions with representatives from primary, secondary, special schools, parents, community and external agents in order to understand the differing roles and responsibilities in any shared work?

Summary

The intention of this book is to provide some insights into the issues surrounding the organisation of formal special needs support systems in schools, and to discuss some ideas which might be useful in helping staff to develop such support systems in their own schools. To increase the practical value of the text, we have provided a number of activities which we hope will be useful to staff in applying these ideas in their own school contexts. These could be used by individual teachers, by groups coming together on in-service training courses, or by groups which form on an ad hoc basis within a school. A further aim of the book is to provide material which will help to raise awareness of general special needs issues amongst student teachers who are engaged in a period of initial teacher education. As such, this book complements the other volumes in this series which are both concerned with the skills which teachers need to develop in order that they can make appropriate provision for pupils with special needs in their own classes.

In this last chapter we will summarise, very briefly, some of the main points which we have developed in the text.

For example, we discuss the idea that the concept of pupils with special educational needs should be broad, encompassing, for example, pupils with general and specific learning difficulties, behavioural and emotional difficulties, physical handicaps, sensory handicaps and medical disorders, and pupils with particularly high ability. We also draw attention to the range which can exist in both the severity and persistence of any type of need, and to the fact that severity and persistence are not necessarily linked (e.g. one can have short-lived, but severe problems). We argue that a school should have a planned response to cover needs of all types, all severities and all levels of persistence (e.g. short-lived, severe behaviour problems; long-lived, moderate physical handicaps; short-lived, moderate learning problems etc.). However, at least for some kinds of need, this response may not necessarily be one which involves the 'special needs department' as currently defined.

We argue that, in planning this response, the school should recognise the interactive nature of special needs (i.e. that they arise out of characteristics of both the learner and the teaching situation).

We remind the reader of the Warnock Report's estimate that some 20 per cent of pupils should be regarded as having special needs, and draw attention to the fact that this estimate explicitly omitted pupils of very high ability. Much current activity in the 'gifted' field is focused on the top 10 per cent or so of pupils. The implication is that the special needs population is a substantial proportion—perhaps as much as a third—of a school's intake.

We point out that the Education Act 1981 encourages the integration of pupils with special needs from the special school sector into the mainstream sector, subject to various conditions being met. The implication is, of course, that some of this substantial number of pupils with special needs will have quite severe difficulties. We also point out that the Act imposes a duty on those responsible for making provision for any pupil with special needs in a mainstream school to ensure that 's/he engages in the activities of the

school together with other children who do not have special needs'—though this duty, too, is subject to conditions.

In connection with the identification and assessment of special needs, we develop the argument that identification should be simple; should err on the side of over-inclusiveness; should cover the whole range of special needs and not just reading ability (say); should either be continuous or regularly repeated (so that changes in pupils can be monitored and pupils who were overlooked at one time can be identified at another). Similarly we argue that diagnosis should be a two stage process: the first stage being simple so that wrongly identified pupils can be sifted out, the second being more detailed so that an understanding of the pupil's problems in the context of the lesson s/he attends can be determined. At this second stage we regard teacher-based, criterion-referenced, subject-specific diagnostic assessment as an extremely valuable complement to any diagnostic testing, or assessment by other experts such as educational psychologists or doctors.

In discussing curriculum differentiation we make the point that for most pupils, the aims and objectives of the curriculum should be the same and that 'great attention should be paid to the development and trial of alternative teaching styles and special resources so that (this option) can be kept open for as many pupils as possible, for as long as possible'. However, we accept that for some pupils it may be necessary to devise an alternative (perhaps developmental) curriculum and suggest that this option should always be kept in mind—even though it may not often need to be brought into play.

We point out that special needs lie on a continuum, with no clear dividing lines between those pupils who have special needs and those who do not, and we emphasise that many aspects of special needs (notably behavioural, physical and medical difficulties, but also some specific cognitive problems) are not always (and in some cases, not usually) related to low general ability. Pupils with some kinds of special need can be average or even very able in other respects.

We make the case that the proportion of pupils having special needs, the concept of special needs lying on a continuum, the fact that many aspects of special need are unrelated to overall low ability, and the idea that some special needs may be short-lived, all serve to emphasise that every mainstream teacher will have pupils with special needs in his or her classes—perhaps even in every class s/he teaches. These points therefore imply that a school's planned system of provision for pupils with special needs must include ways of enabling mainstream teachers to make a response to these needs. This might be achieved through a general commitment to include consideration of such pupils in any piece of curriculum planning in any mainstream department; through a recognition of the value of special needs staff playing a consultancy role in the school; through the availability of in-class support from a classroom assistant which can give the mainstream teacher more options than when s/he has, alone, to deal with the whole class for the whole lesson.

The importance of mainstream teachers accepting a responsibility to consider their own response to pupils with special needs is further underlined by the notion that special needs arise out of an interaction between the characteristics of the learner and those of the school structure and the individual teacher's teaching style—for to focus attention only on the learner is inevitably to address only one side of the issue.

However, we also point out that the range of severity of need suggests that, vital though this response from mainstream teachers is, more specialist support will also be needed for some pupils. The necessary specialist support might be delivered by special needs teachers working in the mainstream classroom, by short-term or long-term withdrawal, or by enlisting the services of LEA staff such as educational psychologists or specialist teachers of the hearing impaired. This range of expert support itself implies that there must be clear lines of communication between different staff, and that the skills that are needed to refer pupils effectively must be learnt.

The three previous paragraphs summarise the point that a range of different support strategies might be needed. We discuss the need for these to be used as a co-ordinated system of provision. For example, we point out that in-class support prior to a period of withdrawal could help to ensure that the most appropriate things were tackled during the withdrawal sessions, and that further in-class support after withdrawal could ensure that the problems associated with re-entry were minimised. Linking some in-class activity to withdrawal could also reduce the limitations of withdrawal which arise from the fact that it tends, by focusing only on the pupil, to pay too little attention to the possibility that some of the problems for that pupil may arise out of the nature of the teaching style and resources offered by the mainstream teacher. The general point which we seek to develop is that the different support strategies should be used by a school, not simply as alternatives for different pupils, but in a co-ordinated way so that each school, in its own unique context, capitalises on what, for it, will be the strengths of each approach and reduces the impact of what, for it, will be the disadvantages.

We discuss the integration of pupils with more severe difficulties from special schools into mainstream schools and point out some of the advantages and disadvantages of integration from the points of view of the pupil with special needs, the other pupils, the staff, and others in the community.

We discuss the importance of planned liaison with parents and with professionals external to the school (e.g. the educational psychologist, speech therapist, teacher for the visually handicapped, primary school teacher). We argue for a member of the secondary school staff to have a co-ordinating role to facilitate such liaison; for channels of communication to be clear and procedures to be known by all staff; for information obtained to be made available in agreed ways to agreed staff; for issues of confidentiality to be considered and general guidelines to be established with each external professional; for records to be clear and specific; where possible for some regular system of liaison to operate so that problems are not shelved until some point of crisis.

This brief summary, and to an even greater extent the text itself, emphasises what we regard as an extremely important comment in the Warnock Report: namely that attending to the issue of pupils with special needs, and responding to such needs within one's own classroom, provides one of the most intellectually as well as personally demanding challenges which a teacher has to face. It also, perhaps, emphasises the centrality of the special needs issue. Attention given to the challenge of meeting special educational needs will, we feel, pay enormous dividends in improving education for all pupils in school.

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Notes for tutors

Introduction

This book is intended to help students raise their awareness of the issues surrounding the design of special needs support systems in secondary schools. By 'students' in this context we mean a wide range of people:

a) they may be student teachers following a course of pre-service training who need to have some understanding of the issues in order that their work with special needs pupils in their own classroom can properly be related to the formal support structures existing in their school, and who also need such understanding so that they can make appropriate contributions to staff discussion on the special needs system of that school;

b) they may be practising mainstream teachers whose needs may be similar to those described above (though their level of engagement in the issues may well, of course, be different);

c) they may be special needs staff or members of school management teams who either work in the special needs system or have responsibility for organising it.

Such 'students' may use the book in different ways. They may work with it on an individual basis, or they may be able to join with colleagues to consider it as a group. Such groups may be set up as part of the structure of formal pre-service or in-service courses, or may arise because a number of colleagues in a given school or group of schools (e.g. secondary schools in one area of a county, or a secondary school with its partner primary schools) choose to come together on an informal basis.

We feel that group-based study has much to commend it, especially if such groups can be established with representatives from a range of subject backgrounds. This is important as the effects of some decisions about special needs arrangements can be very different for teachers in different subject areas. A good example is the issue of the integration of physically handicapped pupils which may have widely varied implications for teachers of, say, English, science, CDT and PE. Mixed subject groups have the opportunity to recognise such differences and seek resolutions of them. Students working alone, or only with colleagues from the same subject area, may not always be aware of the range of points of view.

We also feel that group study will be enhanced if groups can meet under the guidance of a tutor. Again the term can be interpreted in a broad way. The tutor may be a university or college lecturer, a special needs adviser, a head of special needs, or simply one of the group who has agreed to act in this role. The notes presented in this section are intended to provide some support for such tutors.

Structure of the text

The first four chapters of the book present some broad principles which should be taken into account in discussing practice. Chapter 1 and 4 highlight some fundamental aspects of the notion of special needs. These chapters are based on theory, and on empirical evidence. Chapter 2 concentrates on legal constraints. We feel that the principles of equality and natural justice provide a further set of ideas against which practice should be considered. The most explicit way in which we have used these principles is, in Chapter 3, to structure our discussion of the curriculum for pupils with special needs. However, we would argue that the principles have application to the whole debate about special needs provision.

Chapters 5 and 6 develop some of the implications of the background ideas rehearsed in Chapters 1 to 4. They are particularly concerned with the implications for identification, assessment and provision.

Chapters 7 and 8 discuss two specific issues, integration of pupils from special schools into mainstream schools, and liaison between mainstream staff, specialist teachers and others.

Chapter 9 summarises the text and the relationship between broad principles and recommendations for practice.

Using the text*

1. Throughout the book we have provided activities which students might undertake to explore some of the ideas which have been presented. One important set of tasks for tutors is to encourage students to carry out these activities, to make any organisational arrangements necessary to enable them to do so, and to debrief students so that individual insights can be shared and extended through group discussion.

2. Another way in which a tutor can help students is to use the text to widen the range of practice, or of opinion, which is considered during the group's discussions. Students will, of course, bring to group sessions their own experience of how special needs provision is organised in their school, and of teachers' attitudes to different approaches. These will be important starting points for discussion, but they may be limited. For example, the students in the group may have experience of only one or two schools. (This could well be the case in a school-based in-service course, or if a group of pre-service student teachers are all doing their teaching practice in one or two schools.) Under such circumstances the tutor will find it necessary to use the text to point out that there are other ways of, say, organising provision, or to show that empirical evidence on teachers' opinions does not always match with the range of opinion to which the students have been exposed.

3. A third role for a group tutor is to encourage a critical, reflective attitude on the part of students. In many ways we would see this as the most important part of the tutor's role. Such critical reflection can be of various kinds.

One approach is to focus on current practice in a school. In this approach students attempt to match the school's current practice against the various theoretical and empirical foundations, against the legal requirements, and against the notions of equality and natural justice which we have presented in the book (especially in the first four chapters). Indeed, some of the activities which we have provided in the text are of precisely this kind (e.g. Activity 2.6a and Activity 6.1a). To facilitate such reflection, tutors might need to help students:

* We are indebted to colleagues in Oxford for initiating many of these ideas.

a) to identify the key ideas in the text (perhaps using an underlining exercise such as that suggested in [Activity 6.3a](#)),

b) to make explicit what actually goes on in their school (perhaps after a short period of investigation where individual students take responsibility for finding out exactly how particular bits of their system work),

c) to discuss this practice in relation to the key ideas (e.g. to consider how far total dependence on remedial class provision can be justified given the theoretical notions that special needs are not always related to low general ability, and that they can be quite short-lived),

d) to suggest some developments in practice that seem to be desirable.

Another sort of reflection is focused upon the particular implications for practice which *we* have drawn from the theoretical ideas in the text. In this approach students might be asked to question, for example, the implications for systems of identification which we have set out in [Chapter 5](#), or the overall implications for special needs practice which we have summarised in [Chapter 9](#). They might be asked to do this on the grounds of the acceptability of the ideas to teachers, to parents and/or to pupils. (Practical investigation of the acceptability of the ideas to these groups might profitably be required of students.) Alternatively, they might be asked to do it in terms of the practicality of the ideas. Having discussed *our* ideas in these terms, students should be invited to develop their own ideas for recommended practice *bearing in mind the basic principles from which our suggestions grew* (e.g. bearing in mind the legal position, the notion of pupils with special needs being present in all classes and so on).

With some groups it may be appropriate to go a stage further and examine the basic principles themselves. This might involve discussing such things as the empirical base for the ‘Warnock figure’ of 20 per cent, or the evidence for the view that some cognitive difficulties are not necessarily related to low general ability. It might also involve scrutiny of the Education Act 1981 and related legislation to explore the validity of our summary or to see what else might need to be taken into account. It might involve discussion of our view that general notions of equality and ‘natural justice’ should have a place in guiding decision-making in this area. If such a fundamental study of principles is undertaken there should still be a stage at which students work out practical implications of their newly developed framework, and then go back to test *their* ideas against criteria such as acceptability and practicality.

4. With some groups (e.g. experienced teachers on a long in-service course), it may be appropriate to encourage students, after recommendations for practice have been discussed through the kinds of activities suggested above, to try out some of these recommendations (ours or theirs) in their own schools and to research the effects of the changes in an action research model.

The recommendations that could be explored in this way would depend on the role which the students normally played in school (or could reasonably assume in the school for the purposes of the action research study). Thus it might be appropriate for a head of special needs on a long course to decide on a desirable overall structure for special needs provision through the processes of critical reflection which we have described, to negotiate this structure with colleagues and to research the course of these negotiations and the outcome of acting upon them. It would be entirely inappropriate for an inexperienced mainstream teacher to attempt to do this. Such a teacher might, however, be able to investigate the effects of implementing some of our ideas for teacher-based identification and assessment because the changes to practice needed for such an investigation could be confined to the teacher’s own classroom.

Even these very brief notes indicate that the text can be used in a variety of ways to help to achieve objectives which vary widely in their sophistication. Perhaps the greatest value of the notes will be that they

will encourage tutors to be flexible in thinking of their own ways of using the book. If, through their ingenuity, tutors are able to use the text to support everything from awareness raising sessions for PGCE students to long-term action research studies by senior teachers working towards a substantial dissertation, we will be very well pleased.

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