



ACT Down Syndrome Association Incorporated

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Sub 185

9 May 2002

The Secretary
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations
and Education References Committee
Suite S1.61
Parliament House



Dear Sir

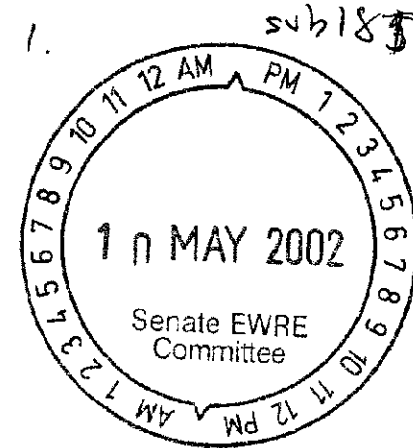
Please find enclosed, on behalf of the above Association, three copies of our submission (including two anecdotal examples and attaching Appendix A) to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee re its inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities.

We trust that the information we have provided will be beneficial to your committee's inquiry. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

(Mrs) Evelyn Scott OAM
President
(Home phone 6288 8829; work phone 6277 2945)

Submission on behalf of the
ACT DOWN SYNDROME ASSOCIATION



to the

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
REFERENCES COMMITTEE**

re Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities

Background:

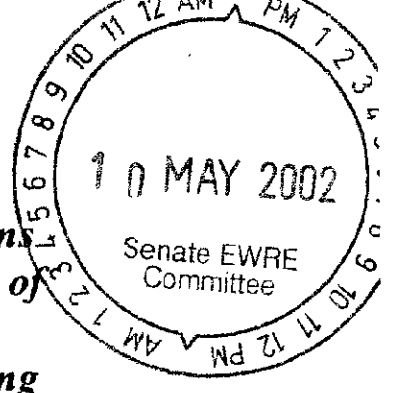
The ACT Down Syndrome Association (ACT DSA) was formed in 1987 by a group of interested parents. The ACT DSA receives no government funding and is therefore dependent upon the support of community and business groups and individuals, supplemented by fundraising activities. The ACT DSA aims to provide support and information to families with a member who has Down syndrome, to promote improvements in the quality of life with persons with Down syndrome, and to stimulate within the wider community an awareness of the very real abilities and needs of people with Down syndrome.

An early focus of the ACT DSA was the wish on the part of parents to have their child with Down syndrome integrated at their local primary school. In the ACT this was then by no means a common practice but has now become more so – but not without considerable intervention, input and involvement on the part of the ACT DSA and many other individuals and associations within the ACT. Education has remained of the utmost importance to the association. Due to a perceived lack of services, the association regularly organises (some with sponsorship, some without) speech camps, personal development camps, literacy skills classes, etc. Whilst the ACT DSA does not endorse or recommend either integrated or segregated educational settings to member families, many of our families have chosen to go down the ‘integration road’ and are aware of the pitfalls and shortcomings of that system. However, anecdotally, those families would generally consider that the social, behavioural and much broader range of educational topics available make the effort (and there’s no doubt that’s what it is!) worth while.

Summary:

The education of students with disabilities will not be effective (let alone successful) until appropriate resources are allocated – whether it be toward community acceptance, teacher commitment, teacher training, school information sessions, physical restructuring for ease of access, student focused support, peer support, and appropriate therapy and behaviour management resources, etc. And these areas need to be addressed in both integrated and segregated school environments.

Inclusive education (or ‘inclusive communities’) have long been recognised as a societal responsibility and benefit. Marsha Forest and Bruce Kappel in *Labels are the Handicap* wrote:



Families around the world have the same kinds of hopes and dreams for their sons and daughters. Families of children with special needs are no different. The role of the school is to support families in the fulfilment of these hopes and dreams. As communities, schools are responsible for fostering, encouraging and promoting relationships among members of school communities, acting as a mirror of the larger community. As places of education, schools are responsible for promoting positive values about the global community, about children, about unique gifts and needs, about the future. Our schools should inspire a view of the future based on the finest values of mankind.

Re Terms of Reference

(1)(a)i):

Policies and programs for students with disabilities do not determine the adequacy of educational services to students with disabilities. They can ensure 'bottom line' spending and minimal service levels, but they cannot ensure the level of commitment required to make education work for any particular child. Criteria defining disability and differentiating between levels of 'handicap' are negative by implication. When students are assessed on the basis of 'ability' rather than 'disability' their strengths can be maximised and their weaknesses can be addressed. This can only happen when support is student-focused. Too often in the past disability groups with strong lobbying/financial resources and perhaps a more socially acceptable 'disability' have attracted greater support. This, too, has enabled some children from specific disability groups to receive in-school support from more than one source, therefore creating a resource funding inequity based on disability type. This has meant that resourcing is often not directly linked to a support package funding an individual child's educational program but is purely based on that child's 'label'.

(1)(a)ii):

It appears that there is great variation in the manner and type of assessment used across Australian educational systems. It is interesting to note that the United Kingdom has a Special Educational Needs Code of Practice which, amongst other things, strengthens the rights of a child to be placed in a mainstream school; promotes greater involvement of children and their parents in the decision making processes; reduces the amount of paperwork for practitioners and extends guidance to cover all early years educational settings. Importantly, it requires that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) focus only on what is additional to and different from the remainder of the curriculum. A link to some of this exciting work can be found at www.dfes.gov.UK/sen and a photocopy of an article discussing the Code of Practice is attached as Annexure A.

It is the belief of the ACT DSA that a student's academic support needs and resourcing should be measured by their ability to access the curriculum and reach their individual educational goals (which are also based on the curriculum).

(1)(a)iii):

On the basis that 'ability' rather than 'disability' is determined to assess student-based educational support, whether a student is from a low socio-economic, non-English speaking or Indigenous background or from rural and remote areas becomes irrelevant.

(1)(a)iv):

Early intervention is crucial in the development of a child with Down syndrome. The ACT model, the Child Health and Development Service (CHADS), is now education based rather than health based, as it was for many years. Anecdotally, it would seem that most families accessing CHADS would wish to have more time with some of the specialist services provided – e.g. physiotherapy, speech pathology, fine and gross motor development – but again this comes back to resourcing. In many cases families are forced to supplement the service provided by CHADS with private therapy. It has to be recognised, too, that there are families who are happy with the services provided, although these reasons could include family/work commitments, a reluctance to accept the level of disability their child may have, etc. The ACT DSA has very recently been approached to raise with the ACT Minister for Education and Community Services (Mr Simon Corbell MLA) the problems some parents are having when their child with Down syndrome turns two and is not able to access the playgroups designed for these children due to waiting lists, shortage of places, etc. Services exist for children with Down syndrome, but it is all too common a problem that staff shortages, staff turnover, resourcing shortages and administrative delays cause these children to not be able to access the early intervention that is a major determinant in their ongoing development.

It is essential that early intervention therapy services be continued after children reach school age and that all therapy be provided in the most appropriate setting, which in some cases will be the school environment.

(1)(a)v):

Due to departmental requirements, resourcing is only allocated after a school-based process has been followed. Lead times do not give much advance notice of allocations; therefore planning of support arrangements are done in haste – or late. With student-focused resourcing, these delays can be eliminated.

(1)(a)vi):

The ACT DSA is currently trying to develop a resourcing model for students with disabilities. Models presented by the Department of Education to date have been unsuccessful as parents have been strongly opposed to the ‘deficit’ based models presented. Again, it is ‘ability’ that should be the focus; not ‘disability’. Models generally preferred by the ACT DSA are based on those currently used in the UK and NZ. These models are based on the principle that the school, in close consultation with the family and the student, identify the social and academic goals to be achieved in any one year. A resourcing package is then developed to provide the support necessary to meet these goals/outcomes.

A model of IEP linked funding does offer the student the opportunity to have their specific learning needs met in a flexible and cost effective way. Funds are targeted to areas of greatest need and resources are not provided for unnecessary services which may otherwise be imposed upon a student. This type of flexibility of service is essential in mainstream settings where the standard curriculum needs to be adapted so it becomes accessible to students with often very high learning/physical support needs.

(1)(a)vii):

The ACT DSA believes it is essential that all teacher training courses contain compulsory units in Special Education and Curriculum Adaptation.

In the past few years students graduating with qualifications in primary education teaching do possess some training to assist them to educate students with additional needs. However, this is not the case for graduates in secondary teaching. Much of the training undertaken by secondary teachers is in their subject matter area with little or no training in curriculum adaptation/special education. As all students have varying skills and abilities, it is widely acknowledged that skills in the area of curriculum adaptation will benefit all members of the classroom and not just a child with identified learning difficulties.

More resources need to be targeted towards the training and professional development of teachers in the area of 'inclusive communities' and in the value of this for society at large. This will provide a strong value base on which to foster school environments that reflect these principles.

(1)(a)viii):

The ACT DSA is not qualified or in a position to respond regarding the legal implications and resource demands of current Commonwealth and state and territory legislation.

(b):

In commenting on the proper role of government and states and territories in supporting the education of students with disabilities, the ACT DSA would like to draw the committee's attention to the Salamanca Statement and the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education which emanated from the UNESCO world conference on Special Needs Education held in 1994.

The principles/objectives expressed in the Statement are:

- Every child has a fundamental right to an education and must be given every opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning;
- Every child has unique abilities, interests and learning needs;
- Education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the diversity of these characteristics and needs;
- Those children with special educational needs must have access to mainstream schools which should project a child centred pedagogy able to meet their individual needs;
- Mainstream schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective way of eliminating discriminatory attitudes and creating welcoming communities. They provide an effective education for the majority of students and improve the efficiency of the entire education system.

In addition, the Statement calls on all governments to give the highest budgetary and policy priority to the improvement of their educational infrastructures, thus enabling schools to include all children, regardless of individual difference.

It is 8 years since that Statement was made. Australia is an affluent and egalitarian country, yet children who are not as able as others are still discriminated against in our educational settings. Bricks and mortar are one thing. Policies espouse high-flown principles. But the reality on the ground – in the schools – for students with disabilities and their families is lagging well behind. To achieve their maximum potential and to go on to take their rightful place in the Australian community means that there must be a wholehearted commitment on the part of the Australian government, through legislation, to nurture its young (those with disabilities and those who are 'normal'). Education is the key.

Anecdotal examples

Example 1 – Kylie Scott, now aged 22, with Down syndrome, daughter of Evelyn and Gary; sister of Linda:

Kylie was born in Melbourne in 1977 and had access to weekly early intervention at a centre known as EPIC at Preston run by Graham Clunies Ross until the age of 18 months when the family moved to the ACT. Kylie then attended early intervention at the Therapy Centre (as CHADS was then known), again on a weekly basis. My then husband and I regarded neither service as adequately funded so as to be able to meet the needs that parents saw for their children with Down syndrome. When Kylie was turning 3, the meeting to decide her future schooling options did not intend to include her parents as participants. With considerable lobbying this was changed, and our wish to have her attend Malkara Special School (as it was then known) and enrol also at her local preschool was acknowledged – with great caution. Kylie then attended both part time until, at age 5, she attended Weston Preschool only and then, at age 6, phased into Weston Primary School.

My then husband was on the Weston School board, partly with a view to progressing Kylie's integration. I did the usual voluntary school activities so as to keep in touch with what was happening. Also, because no classroom support was forthcoming, we employed a friend, a school teacher not working due to having young children herself, who went into the classroom for several periods during the week to act as Kylie's aide and to liaise between the teacher and ourselves. This continued for several years until, as we see it, the ACT education system was 'shamed' into providing support. Teachers were sometimes hesitant and lacking in confidence – we encouraged them. Children were sometimes mean – we taught Kylie to stand up for herself. Teachers worried about Kylie not achieving the class standard – we reassured them that whatever Kylie learned was a bonus. Kylie sometimes behaved badly – we suggested that teachers apply the same behavioural approaches as they would to others. The school had difficulty getting support – we lobbied the education authorities. With the transition from primary to high school we facilitated 'links' and visits of aides between schools, and did so again with the transition from high school to college – and then to CIT (ACT's TAFE).

When, very late in Kylie's schooling, the resourcing, the staffing and the COMMITMENT started to become apparent we were able to step back somewhat and let Kylie fend for herself. And that she did.

Kylie completed, with assistance, several computing/office skills subjects at CIT and worked for a year part time as assistant to the Office Manager of the ACT DSA which enabled her to acquire 'real working world' skills in an 'understanding' environment. Her job agency found her a part-time position (8 hours per week) on contract with Environment Australia at the beginning of 2001 and, in February 2002, she became permanent part-time. Kylie also has undertaken a considerable amount of volunteer work in the community.

There is no doubt that Kylie's ability to take her rightful place in the work force, to look toward living independently, to lead an active life out and about in the world, and to be recognised as a positive, outgoing individual, has largely been due to the education she received. If this can be achieved by one individual without the necessary educational resourcing, what can be achieved if people with disabilities can get the resourcing and support at school that is commensurate with their needs?

Example 2 - Daniel Connaughton – now aged 12, with Down syndrome, son of Karen and Michael, brother of Sean.

Daniel was born in Canberra and spent his first 5 months on a ventilator in Canberra Hospital. On his release it was 3 months before her parents were able to access any therapy services at what is now called CHADS. From that time until he was 3 Daniel attended monthly appointments for speech, physio and occupational therapy. At 3, Daniel was assessed for a 'school placement'. It was recommended that Daniel attend a 'Level 5' setting of which Malkara was the only one available.

As his parents believed an inclusive setting was more suitable for Daniel, they lobbied the department to have a Level 5 setting established at a nearby preschool. This provided Daniel the opportunity to interact with children who had skills which Daniel could emulate. Daniel's preschool year was spent part time at this 'unit' and part time at his local preschool where the staff integrated Daniel very effectively without support (but with a lot of additional work and patience).

When deciding which school was most suitable for Daniel his parents decided that his local primary school offered the best opportunities. Daniel was enrolled in kindergarten and from that time has been supported in this setting by the Department of Education. This support is provided by a Special Teachers Assistant (STA) for half the day, and the class size has been reduced by 4 students (down from the average of 30 students to 26).

The years at Gordon Primary School have been extremely rewarding for Daniel and his family. His parents believe that, because Daniel attends school in the local area with the local children, he has been given the opportunity to be recognised as a valued member of his community, not as a 'visitor', which would have occurred had he caught the 'little white bus' that took him 10 kilometres away to school every day. Daniel is well recognised at the local shops and playground, acknowledged wherever he goes, and, as a result, has high self-esteem and self-worth. Daniel has friends who come to visit, sleep over and to celebrate special occasions with. Sean's friends have always known Daniel (from school), which has meant Sean has not been put in a position of needing to explain or defend his brother, something that could be difficult for a young child.

While all of this is extremely positive it has not come about without a lot of hard work. Years of being on the Parent and Citizen Council, the school board (just to see what is going on), going on every school camp and excursion (so teachers do not feel it is all too difficult) and numerous nights of lost sleep when 'the school bully decides Daniel is an easy mark'.

Many of these difficult times could have been alleviated, his parents feel if teachers were better trained in 'inclusive practices', if STA's were provided with professional development re the education of students with special needs, and if the department were more flexible in its resourcing model to schools.

Regardless of all this, his family are currently in the position of choosing a high school for Daniel. He has chosen the local area school as that is the one his friends will be attending. Again, it is the local school that his parents believe will offer him the most opportunities.

Appendix A
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Practice makes

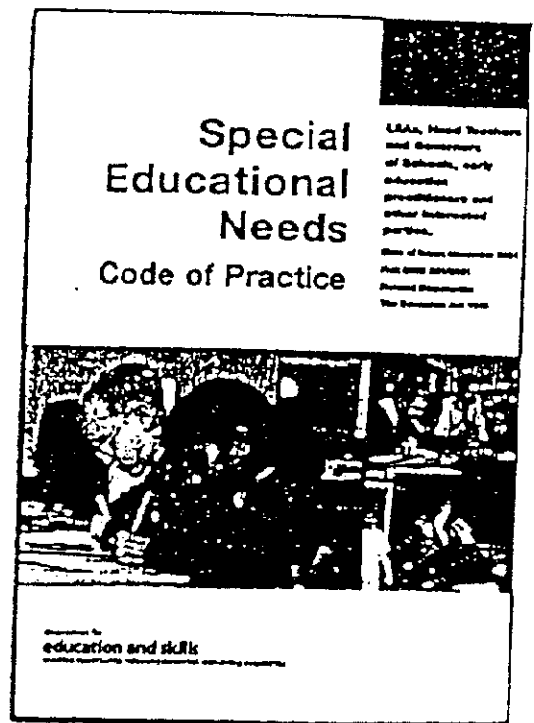
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The revised SEN Code of Practice

From this month, the long-awaited revised Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice will be implemented, strengthening the rights of a child to a place in a mainstream school, promoting greater involvement of children and their parents in the decision making processes, reducing the amount of paperwork for practitioners and extending guidance to cover all early years settings. This summary provides a quick guide to the major principles and implications for practice, embodied in the Code, and highlights key points for SENCOs. Readers are advised to refer to the documentation sent out by the DFES in December, for more detail.

While the basic principles of the old Code have not changed, the process leading towards statutory assessment has been streamlined and timetabled, making it clearer to professionals what their responsibilities are. The new Code also acknowledges that each child and each setting is unique and that the professional judgement of practitioners is an important and key element in decisions made about the individual child's needs.

- It recognises that the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) has a serious responsibility and should be allocated time to fulfil the duties required, as well as being given, where possible, some status in the setting by becoming part of the Senior Management Team.
- There is a much stronger emphasis on the involvement of the child in the decision-making process on their educational future, even at the Foundation Stage. This acknowledges children's right to have their opinions considered, and their deeper involvement, together with that of their parents, goes some way to ensuring this. Parents have new rights of appeal against decisions made by the authorities



regarding their child's educational provision. The new Code strengthens both their involvement and their rights.

- A further welcome change is a reduction of the paperwork involved in the Code's implementation. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) should focus only on what is **additional to and different from** the rest of the curriculum. The old five-stage model of intervention has been replaced with a clearer, three-stage plan of action: essentially, the formats are identical whether being implemented in a nursery or a secondary school

Early Years Settings

The most important change for Early Years settings is that children with special needs will now be included in **all** types of Early Years provision, meaning formal educational settings, private establishments and approved networks of childminders. Previously, only state provision had to have regard to the Code of Practice. Every Early Years setting must nominate a member of staff as a SENCO, whose main responsibilities will be organising the planning of the special needs policy and the monitoring and coordination of the implementation of the Code within the setting. If at all possible, the SENCO should be trained in identifying and managing special needs.

There is a three-stage model of intervention: *Early Years Action*, *Early Years Action Plus* and *Statutory Assessment*. As with the original Code, the child's main practitioner and the SENCO must work closely together with the child's parents, to plan and monitor the IEPs. The child must also be involved in this planning and implementation where possible.

Early Years Action

Early Years Action is the first stage of concern about a child's difficulties. The practitioner should

- discuss with the child's parents the SENCO's involvement and ask them about any health or physical problems
- provide the SENCO with as much information as possible about the problem, including, for example, baseline assessments or test results
- observe the child's behaviour and performance and record as much about these as possible
- liaise with the child's parents, the SENCO and, where possible, the child, to plan and implement an IEP
- make sure that the IEP focuses on a maximum of three or four targets and records only strategies that are additional to, or different from, the normal differentiated curriculum

Practitioners in voluntary settings, including approved childminding networks, should join the local education authority's (LEA's) Early Years Partnership scheme, to share best practice and resources, as well as standardise provision within the local area.

The SENCO should

- make sure the child's parents are aware of the LEA's Parent Partnership Service
- collect all known information about the child, including any new, relevant information from the parents
- liaise with outside agents, such as health or social services, that may already be involved with the child, and collect any relevant information from them
- liaise with the educational psychologist (EP), making sure that the Child Psychology Service gives appropriate advice and support to both parents and colleagues
- decide with the child's practitioner and the parents on the targets of the IEP and the teaching strategies
- arrange review meeting, at least once a term, which involves everybody who has been working the child

Early Years Action Plus

Early Years Action Plus is the stage when the child continues to have difficulties and it becomes necessary to involve outside specialists who can support and help with advice on new IEPs, provide more specialist assessment, suggest new strategies and possibly offer specialist support or activities.

At this stage, the practitioner should

- discuss the situation with the child's parents and the SENCO at a review meeting arranged by the SENCO
- collect any relevant information, such as assessment results, the IEPs and records from other professionals who may be involved such as social workers or medical staff
- plan a new IEP with outside specialists, the SENCO, the parents and the child where possible, agreeing appropriate targets and teaching strategies.
- set the next review date making sure that the parents and all the involved professionals are invited and involved.

The SENCO should

- make sure the parents are still completely involved with and informed about their child's IEP
- make sure that all relevant records and information are up to date and available for the external specialist to use
- liaise with the external specialists

(including the EP) and make sure their advice and support are made available to both the early years practitioner and the child's parents

- work with the specialist agent(s), the child's early years practitioner, and the child's parents to decide on a new IEP, the targets, and the teaching strategies
- arrange a review of the IEP, at least once per term and involve everybody who has been working with the child.

Statutory Assessment

If a child continues to have problems, the parents, maintained schools and/or nursery schools can request the LEA to make a statutory assessment. Other Early Years providers, such as childminders or private nurseries, can bring a child to the attention of the LEA, which then decides whether a statutory assessment is required.

Progress

Adequate progress is demonstrated when:

- There is a reduction in the attainment gap between an SEN child and his peers
- The child's previous rate of progress is maintained or improved
- There is evidence of improved behaviour
- A higher level of independence is achieved

For the majority of youngsters, adequate progress will lead to some kind of accreditation and participation in further education, training and/or employment.

The revised Code stresses the importance of the involvement at this stage, of the child's parents. The Early Years provider must supply the LEA with all the relevant records, and they must obtain information and advice on health-related matters from the appropriate agents.

When the LEA is considering an assessment, it asks what difficulties were identified by the provider, whether IEPs were implemented, through *Early Years Action* and *Early Years Action Plus*, whether outside advice was obtained regarding various aspects of the child's development and whether parental views have been considered.

From this evidence, the LEA will decide if the child should be made the subject of a Statement of Special Educational Needs and the whole process should take no longer than six months. A Statement must be reviewed every six months if the child is under five years, or annually if he is older.

It is likely that most children will be beyond

Early Years provision before getting to the stage of needing a Statement, but professionals at this level must be aware of the whole process and the new legal obligations.

Primary and Secondary Settings

Apart from small, logistical differences, the new stages of the Code of Practice are almost identical for Primary and Secondary schools. The original five-stage model has been replaced with a three-stage procedure. The old Stages 1 and 2 are now *School Action* and Stage 3 is *School Action Plus*. The old Stages 4 and 5 are now referred to as *Statutory assessment*.

School Action

As with the procedures at the Early Years level, this is the initial stage of concern about the pupil's progress. The pupil's main teacher should

- discuss with the pupil's parents the SENCO's involvement and provide the SENCO with as much information as possible about the problem. This should include records and/or IEPs from the Early Years setting, if appropriate, or records of the pupil's progress in the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies (primary) and National Curriculum (secondary), and any standardised test results
- liaise with the pupil's parents, the SENCO and the pupil to plan and implement an IEP. The pupil should be actively involved in discussions about the IEP, and be encouraged to share in the recording and monitoring of their progress
- make sure that the IEP focuses on a maximum of three or four targets and

New arrangement for Transition plans

Process to start in Year 9
Headteacher responsible for arranging review meeting (in practice, this may be delegated to SENCO)

Connexions service representative to attend review meeting

Headteacher (SENCO) responsible for drawing up a Transition Plan in consultation with personal Adviser from the Connexions Service

Connexions Service responsible for new assessment procedures in final year of schooling and for overseeing the implementation of the Transition Plan

Principles

- Every child with special educational needs should have their needs met. (*Early years settings must nominate a SENCO. There are implications for liaison between schools and playgroups, nurseries etc; children who need formal assessment should be well on the way by the time they arrive at 'formal schooling'.*)
- Children with special educational needs should be provided with a broad, balanced and relevant education - usually in a mainstream setting. (*The question is more likely to be 'Why not a mainstream school?' than 'Why a mainstream school?' However, parents and their children can still opt for a special setting.*)
- The views of the child, and parents/carers should be sought and taken into account.

records only strategies that are additional to or different from the normal differentiated curriculum

- review the IEP and the pupil's progress at least twice a year, but preferably once a term, together with the pupil, the parents and the SENCO.

The SENCO should

- make sure the pupil's parents are aware of the local education authority's Parent Partnership Service and, for secondary pupils, the local Connexions service
- collate all relevant records about the pupil, including National Curriculum performance records, standardised test results and any new, relevant information from the parents
- liaise with external agents that may already be involved with the pupil, and collect any relevant information from them
- liaise with the EP, making sure that the Child Psychology Service gives appropriate advice and support to both parents and colleagues
- decide with the pupil's main teacher(s) and the parents on the targets of the IEP and the teaching strategies
- arrange review meeting, at least twice a year,

but preferably once a term, which involves everybody who has been working the pupil

The SENCO is also responsible for managing the Learning Support Assistants and, in secondary schools, the SEN teaching team; organising and/or contributing to the in-service training of staff and overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy. In secondary schools, the SENCO must liaise with the local Connexions service.

School Action Plus

If the pupil continues to have difficulties and everybody involved feels it has become necessary to involve outside specialists, *School Action Plus* comes into play.

At this stage, the teacher should

- discuss the situation with the pupil's parents, the pupil and the SENCO at a review meeting arranged by the SENCO
- collect any relevant information, such as the IEPs, National Curriculum records, assessment results and other records of progress
- plan a new IEP with outside specialists, the SENCO, curriculum coordinators, the

Practice

Schools and early years settings will be catering for children with a much wider range of SEN than was previously the case, and should plan accordingly.

- Professionals and parents should work in partnership. (*Include details of the IEA's/school's parent partnership arrangements and personnel in your policy*) Parents must be kept informed from the start of any SEN provision and notified about any changes
 - The child's views should be taken into account wherever possible, according to capability and maturity. (*You may need to insert a new paragraph in your policy about 'pupil participation and how the school actively promotes it. Youngsters need encouragement and training to help them make a useful contribution to decisions about their education.'*)
 - Provision and progress should be monitored and reviewed regularly.
 - LEAs should make assessments in accordance with prescribed time limits and write statements that are clear and specific and include details of monitoring arrangements. (*Statements should be reviewed annually (every six months in the early years) and amended accordingly.*)
 - IEPs should focus on three or four key targets, identifying teaching strategies, review dates and success criteria
- There should be a high level of co-operation between professional agencies

- parents and the pupil, agreeing appropriate targets and teaching strategies
- set the next review date making sure that the parents and all the involved professionals are invited and involved.

The SENCO should

- make sure the parents are still completely involved with and informed about their child's IEP
- make sure that all relevant records and information are up to date and available for the external specialist to use. (This information should include what further advice has been sought and what support the pupil is receiving while waiting for specialist advice.)
- liaise with the external specialists (including the EP) and make sure their advice and support are made available to both the teachers involved with the pupil and the pupil's parents
- work with the specialist agent(s), the pupil's main teacher(s), and the pupil's parents and the pupil to decide on a new IEP, the targets, and the teaching strategies
- arrange a review of the IEP, at least twice a year, but preferably once per term and involve everybody who has been working with the pupil

Statutory Assessment

Referral for statutory assessment follows much the same procedure as that for the Early Years sector. The information supplied to the LEA will also include records of the pupil's progress in the National Curriculum and any standardised test results. The LEA will not request additional information, in a bid to reduce the administrative burden on schools, but for this reason it is important that schools maintain accurate and efficient records throughout the two initial stages.

The issuing of a statement should take a maximum of six months and it must then be reviewed annually and at school-transfer times.

The SEN Policy

All government-funded settings and schools are obliged to write and publish an SEN policy. Private and non-maintained settings, and registered childminding networks, are advised to draw up and publish their own SEN policy. Settings that are doing this for the first time, and registered childminding networks, could establish a working partnership with local schools, to share experience and best practice. They could then work together with their network SENCO and manager to develop the SEN policy. Some LEAs may have a development officer who liaises with registered childminder networks to help with policy development.

Meeting with the minister

In a press briefing held in London in December, Baroness Ashton (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for School Standards) spoke about the revised Code of Practice and the accompanying package of support which has been produced in the wake of the SEN and Disability Act. The aim is to ensure that every child who wants to be educated in the mainstream, can be. The toolkit has been devised with input from all agencies and sets out statutory and non-statutory guidance in detail.

The minister emphasised that greater inclusion does not mean that there is no place for special schools, but conceded that the role of special schools will have to change. The dissemination of good practice and sharing of professional expertise will be crucial. When asked about the ability of mainstream teachers to cope with the extra responsibilities engendered by a greater number of pupils with SEN in their lessons, Baroness Ashton conceded that there needs to be more input in teacher training. The Government has put £91 million into the Standards Fund for next year for SEN provision and training. She is confident however, that there is a wealth of skill and experience within the teaching profession which is not always used to maximum effect: teachers need to help each other more and mentoring schemes in schools, and between schools, could be an effective way of making this happen. BECTA also plays an important part in making information and guidance available to teachers and encouraging them to talk to each other and the CD ROM produced by the Teacher Training agency is designed to help teachers in mainstream and special schools relate their needs to the National SEN Specialist Standards.

A new, multi-agency advisory group has now been set up (NAGSEN) to formulate a ten-year strategy for SEN policy, with a separate group looking at 'Improving Behaviour'.

A common complaint from schools in the past has been the failure of LEAs to complete formal assessments and the issue of statements within the prescribed six months. The minister recognises that some LEAs have a better track record than others but is confident that the overall picture is improving.

There has been a significant rise in the percentage of draft statements produced within 18 weeks: up from a very disappointing 40% in 1997, to 77% in 2001 (Audit Commission figures).

The educational landscape has changed significantly in recent years, and is continuing to evolve. There is greater differentiation in lessons, with useful guidance from the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, which in itself meets the needs of a growing range of abilities and aptitudes; schools receive recognition for 'value added', and OFSTED is evaluating inclusion as part of the inspection process. There is no room for complacency, but Baroness Ashton is quietly confident that things are moving in the right direction.

(See Comment on Page 11)

Although the responsibility for the management of the SEN policy falls to the head of the school or manager of the setting, the planning, writing and publishing of it should involve all the professionals within the setting. The day-to-day operation of the SEN policy is the responsibility of the SENCO. For registered childminders who are part of a network, the SENCO can be shared. The setting's head and the SENCO should work closely together to ensure that the policy is working effectively. All other members of staff, including teachers, classroom assistants, nursery nurses etc. will be responsible within their own area for the actual implementation of the policy.

The SEN policy must provide

- basic information about the setting's provisions for children with special educational needs

- information about the setting's policies for identifying, assessing and providing for children with special educational needs
- information about the setting's staffing policies and partnership with other establishments

and it should be

- planned by all the staff in the school or setting
- written in a format that is accessible to the parents and presented in a reader-friendly way
- constantly monitored, reviewed and, where necessary, amended
- rewritten if any of the original information changes, proves incorrect or becomes impractical. Parents should be advised how and why the policy has been changed.

Old Code 1994

New Code 2002

8 areas of SEN

- 1. Learning difficulties
- 2. Specific learning difficulties (Dyslexia)
- 3. Emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD)
- 4. Physical disabilities
- 5. Sensory impairment/hearing
- 6. Sensory impairment/visual
- 7. Speech and language difficulties
- 8. Medical conditions

4 areas of SEN

- 1. Communication and interaction
- 2. Cognition and learning
- 3. Behavioural, emotional and social development
- 4. Sensory and/or physical

5 stage approach to identification and assessment

- Stage 1 – differentiation of work
- Stage 2 – IEP in place
- Stage 3 – involvement of outside agencies
- Stage 4 – formal assessment
- Stage 5 – Statement issued outlining provision and placement

3 stage approach

- Early years/school action
- Early years/school action plus
- Statemented provision

Individual Education Plans

Varying number of targets, success/exit criteria not necessarily included

3 or 4 key, individual, short term targets with success/exit criteria

Recommendation of review at least once every six months

Review at least every six months, preferably every term

Teaching strategies to be used (additional human resources, materials etc)

6A



the
Foundation for People
with Learning Disabilities

Inquiry into Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Young People with Learning Disabilities.

From October 2001, the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities has been holding a one-year inquiry into meeting the mental health needs of young people with learning disabilities through teenage years to twenty-five years old.

Professor Barry Carpenter OBE is chair of the expert committee. Two young people from Wandsworth Rathbone, a voluntary organisation for people with moderate learning disabilities, are advisers and ensure that the voices of young people with learning disabilities are heard.

Recognising that young people with learning disabilities are at risk of developing mental health problems, the committee of inquiry is to:

- Review and report on interventions to promote the emotional wellbeing of young people with learning disabilities.
- Identify good practice and make recommendations for developments in policy and practice to promote the emotional wellbeing of young people with learning disabilities.
- Review and report on services to meet the mental health needs of young people with learning disabilities.
- Identify good practice and make recommendations for developments in policy and practice to meet the mental health needs of young people with learning disabilities.

It is examining how the needs of young people who develop mild mental health problems, as well as those who experience acute mental illness, can be met.

The report to be published in 2002 will make recommendations for policy and practice throughout the UK. It will also identify areas needing research.

Currently, the Inquiry is seeking evidence from family carers.

For further details, please visit the Foundation website at:

<http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk> or contact:

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