



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Education Standing Committee

Inclusion in schools: benefits and challenges



The Education Standing Committee agreed to include in its programme of work a review that would focus on the benefits of inclusion for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and consider if the policy is in the best interests of all children, young people and staff in schools. It would identify areas for future improvement of educational outcomes for all pupils and explore alternative and new ways of working that have been or could be developed

What we did:

- discussed with officers the inclusion policy in schools
- considered what the authority does to promote inclusion
- visited primary and secondary schools and discussed issues with practitioners
- considered best practice in inclusion for pupils with a SEND in mainstream schools
- discussed behaviour and behaviour support services in schools
- considered the role of the Nottinghamshire Learning Centre.

The Committee undertaking this review met between June 2010 and March 2011.

The review was carried out by County Councillors:

Liz Yates (Chair)
Vincent Dobson
Mel Shepherd
Mrs Stella Smedley
Brian Wombwell
David Richards, (Statutory co-opted member)

Scrutiny reviews depend on the involvement of a number of different people and we would like to thank the following for their contribution:

Chris Harrison, Head of SEN Strategic Services
Alison Holloway, Head of Performance Standards and Business Support
Oona Oakland, Support teacher, Inclusion Service
Irene Richards, 'Achievement for All'
John Bradley, Principal Educational Psychologist
Geoff Read, Head of Nottinghamshire Learning Centre
Jo Mitchell, Educational Psychologist

Schools visited:

Bowbridge Primary
Bruns
Carlton Digby Special School
Dukeries Community College
Fountaindale
Hawtonville Junior
John Clifford Primary School
Mornington Primary School
Nottinghamshire Learning Centre

Summary of Review

1. We recognise that Nottinghamshire County Council makes provision for the majority of pupils with a special education need in mainstream schools. The increasingly complex needs of some of these young people present many challenges for schools who adopt a whole range of differing strategies, teaching methods and curriculum, modifying the physical environment to accommodate them. Support and advice from centrally managed support services underpins this. Many pupils with a special educational need, who are now educated in mainstream schools, would have formally had their education provided in separate specialist accommodation. However, because of the training, experience and expertise in mainstream schools these pupils are now able to have their needs met within the typical classroom setting.
2. Mainstream schools are committed to including these young people. Schools adapt more easily to those children who have physical or sensory conditions. Increasingly pupils on the autistic spectrum, or who have problematic behavioural issues, present the biggest challenge.
3. Schools use a graduated response of provision offering levels of support, individually personalised to meet the needs of each pupil in a range of settings. Each school has a Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) who is responsible for planning and supporting the provision for children with special educational needs. These teachers are highly skilled in identifying children who need intervention and are able to address many of these pupils needs within school. This process and support is also available for children in early years settings.
4. Those pupils whose needs cannot be met in this way, who have multiple and complex disabilities are given a statement of special educational need. Nottinghamshire compared to other local authorities issues a smaller number of statements and unlike other authorities does not use them as a mechanism for allocation of funding for pupils with special educational needs. Statements are used to access provision in special schools where more complex interventions are available.
5. We consider that the inclusion policy adopted in Nottinghamshire is working well. Schools actively and effectively support the policy providing additional and different support/resources for the benefit of children and young people who have a special educational need. We do however have concerns regarding the group of pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social disabilities (BESD) and have been excluded. In addition we consider that the loss of some of the services for those pupils who have specific identified additional needs, and who formally received specialist health support in a school setting, may result in some parents requesting special school placements in order to have these needs met.

Policy and Strategy for Inclusion and Special Needs Education

6. The term special needs incorporates an array of medical conditions and physical disabilities in addition to a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This includes:

- behaviour emotional and social issues
- language and communication difficulty
- hearing impairment
- visual impairment
- multi sensory impairment
- physical disability
- autistic spectrum disorder

Because of the range and complexity of conditions and individual needs provision of services for these young people has to be adaptable and personalised.

7. We learnt that the current SEN and Inclusion Strategy for Special Educational Needs in Nottinghamshire was developed after an extensive review and consultation exercise in 2009. The review considered ways in which a more effective service could provide a graduated, integrated, localised and personalised service for children young people and their families. The review identified four priorities and key areas for action:

- Behaviour – introducing a balanced and graduated provision and response that meets the need of a range of children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social needs (BESD)
- Financial resources – targeting resources to meet the need of those young people with the greatest need
- Graduated responses - including specialist, targeted and universal support
- Integrated locality teams – to develop an integrated, locality based support service that responds to individual, family and locality need.

8. A school's own systems will identify those children who are not progressing well and who require additional help and intervention. If the school is able to meet these needs from the resources and staffing within the school and they do not require additional support a child is described as School Action.

9. If a child is identified as School Action + a school is concerned that they cannot meet the needs of the child in school and they can ask for advice and support from a variety of school service such as the Education Psychologists and the Behaviour and Attendance Service.

10. Nottinghamshire is different from many local authorities as it does not use a statementing process to allocate funding for pupils with a SEN. Consequently it issues a lower number of statements than many other local authorities; it does however use them when a child needs to use special school provision or where there are particularly complex needs that need additional specialist support and monitoring. We learnt that the expertise and confidence in mainstream settings has increased opportunities for pupils who would

previously have been in special schools and by not using the statementing process schools are able to decide how best to use resources rather than have them prescribed. Schools have named teacher/teachers Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) who have responsibility for coordination of arrangements within the school.

11. For those pupils who do have a statement of special educational needs Nottinghamshire currently maintains eleven special schools. These provide education for pupils 3 to 19 years with moderate and severe learning difficulties and physical disability. Some local authorities provide special schools for specific categories of SEN. Nottinghamshire special schools include pupils from all three categories of need, offering personalised teaching arrangements. Pupils in these schools have a wide variety of a combination of needs and these schools offer child centred and diverse experiences, to allow them to progress to their own potential, meeting medical as well as educational needs
12. Some children who were able to be accommodated in primary school, where classes are smaller, where children tend to be with one teacher in one classroom, will transfer to a special school at Key Stage 3 to enable their needs to be more suitably met. Special schools can offer speech and language support, physiotherapy and nursing assistance.
13. There is a small number of pupils with very complex needs who are placed outside the county, this type of provision is typically very specialised residential care and is usually very expensive. There are no residential places available in Nottinghamshire. Some special schools in Nottinghamshire do take pupils from outside the county for specialist day care and education.
14. This continuum of School Action, School Action+ and Statements is currently subject to a four month Department of Health Consultation. The intention is to make the support system less confusing and simpler for parents, allowing them greater control over their child's budget. The consultation reflects concerns that the term special educational needs has included too broad a range of need and has lost focus on those children and young people needing specialised support.
15. The inclusion of children and young people with a diverse range of special needs in main stream setting is sometimes viewed as diverting resources away from other pupils. The schools we visited all told us that the inclusion of children with special needs, and the different methods of teaching and learning adopted has benefited all children in the school. Other pupils may benefit indirectly from the impact of external specialist staff and the different techniques developed by the use of a broader and enriched curriculum. In addition it helps children and young people develop understanding and tolerance, raising awareness in the wider community.

How schools address Special Educational Needs provision

16. We found it very useful to visit schools and see how inclusion policies are working and are adapted to meet need and to address individual pupil requirements. Schools generate their own experts to meet local need and work to ensure that each child realises his/her full potential, not only intellectually but also emotionally and socially, using personalised learning and differentiated curriculum to achieve this.
17. Schools admit pupils with a wide range of special needs, sometimes very complex and set in place personalised curriculum and teaching plans, to enable these young people to participate in the school community. There is an expectation that these pupils will achieve and demonstrate progress.
18. There is a graduated system for the distribution of the Special Educational Needs budget. £14 million is allocated to school budgets, £7 million to families of schools with SENCOs identifying which children need additional funding and £4 million is allocated to special schools for those children with the most complex needs.
19. Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) have a key role in assessing need and advising other members of staff, developing teaching practices to meet the needs of these pupils. The SENCO ensures that the parents or carers are informed about their child's needs and makes sure that an individual education plan which is used for planning the special help required and how parents can be involved in this process. SENCOs also have a role in bidding for additional funding to aid provision of the staffing, facilities and equipment required to meet the needs of these young people. Family SENCOs work across families of schools supporting strategies and programmes to assist this process.
20. Newark has been developing a different, whole town, approach for the allocation of SEN funding and planning which includes more than one family of schools. The Newark families of schools employ a SENCO who takes responsibility for the allocation of funding according to school and pupil need as opposed to schools bidding for funding for individual children. This allows for uniformity of allocation and allows for consistency throughout schools, enabling a smoother transition from primary to secondary schools as the funding stream is attached to the child rather than the school. The coordinator is funded by the Newark schools, and this overarching strategy has been acknowledged as having benefits not only for the young people but also for schools. This approach is not just about funding it allows a lead to be taken for SEN practice and brings schools together to share expertise and best practice.

Recommendation

Models of good practice used for partnership working and, the allocation of resources for special educational needs, (for example the Newark Town Project) should be considered and implemented by other clusters of families of schools.

Support for Schools

Inclusion Support Service

21. The inclusion Support Service works with pupils, parents and staff in school and early years settings and includes teams of specialist teachers and teaching assistants. The teams offer a range of support and include expertise on a range of disabilities.

Specialist Health Support Services

22. Schools were concerned about the loss of some of the services provided by the health services will have on children and young people in mainstream schools. School doctors and paediatricians, school nurses, community nurses, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists are included in the range of specialist services available. These services help children and young people maintain attendance in school. Reductions in speech and language support and the loss of physio and occupational therapists will impact on a large number of children with special needs. The loss of the speech and language therapists will affect children with speech, language and communication difficulties and speech vocabulary deficits may limit their ability to participate in mainstream education. Decreases in therapy services may create problems for sustaining programmes to support pupils, making them inefficient which could lead to situations where parents may request special school or out of county provision to meet needs.

23. Currently the full impact of the loss of these services in mainstream schools is difficult to assess as schools have not yet been informed of the full extent of the service reduction.

Recommendations

As a result of concerns raised by head teachers, the Chair of the Education Standing Committee should write to Health Service Commissioners and the Children Service Executive expressing concern about the impact of reductions in health service provision on mainstream and special schools.

Education Psychology Service

24. The Educational Psychology Service provides advice to schools and parents on the needs and difficulties of children with special educational needs and the assistance that is available, focusing on how to help an individual child learn and offering advice to support this. They do not provide therapy. Psychologists devise programmes and offer advice and strategies for school staff to use. Schools emphasised the importance and value of this service in supporting them school to meet the needs of some children and young people. They were concerned that any reduction of this service would have an impact on behaviour and effective support for some pupils. We feel that this service should be maintained and if possible increased to assist practitioners in school. The possibility of increasing the capacity of this service by the appointment of specialist teachers who have a particular focus on behaviour. Could be considered.

Recommendation

The level of service that schools receive from the Educational Psychology Service should be enhanced through collaborative working with specialist trained teachers

Provision for children who require specialist support for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties

Three countywide specialist teams provide education for a range of learners with the most severe complex behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. This includes working with Looked After Children awaiting placement or at risk of exclusion and the Hospital and Home Education team.

Achievement and Attainment for SEN Pupils

25. When discussing inclusion we wanted to establish that pupils attending special schools and children and young people with SEND attending mainstream schools were receiving a programme of education that meets their individual needs allowing them to attain to their potential. Special schools deliver a diverse curriculum using a range of providers too ensure that access to appropriate academic and vocational opportunities are available.
26. Mainstream schools offer differing levels of additional teaching support, developing individually personalised curriculum to meet pupil need. Schools identify and employ a range of appropriate teaching and learning strategies to enable pupils to improve outcomes and which will enable SEN pupils to participate in school. Curriculum planning, targeted support and additional resources and staffing, one to one tuition, additional monitoring of progress and modifications to the physical environment strengthens inclusive practice in schools.
27. Nottinghamshire is part of the 'Achievement for All' (AFA) pilot project which is focused on improving teaching and learning for all children and young people particularly the 20% of the school population currently identified as having a special educational need. Many of these pupils are not achieving as well as their peers, relative to their starting point and are leaving education without the skills and qualifications they need to live as independent adults. There are 45 schools from the primary and secondary sectors and one learning centre involved in the project. The project included children in School Action, School Action + and some with statements across all year groups and were selected by the schools involved.
28. The response from the schools in Nottinghamshire has been positive and an outstanding judgment was made of progress made with the project in December 2010.
29. The Achievement for All has three strands:

- improving aspiration, progress and achievement of all children
 - improving engagement with parents to support their child's learning through a structured conversation
 - improving achievement access and aspiration of children and young people.
30. This model establishes better communication and relationships with parents and a structured conversation which effectively improves partnership working between home and school. All three strands of the AFA impact on motivation, self esteem, confidence and this targeted intervention has resulted in significant progress for pupils with SEN.
31. The aim of the project is to refine and develop ways of working which will be sustained beyond the life of the project and which can be shared with other authorities. Nottinghamshire is planning for sustainability beyond July 2011 by the creation of a number of lead AFA teachers, lead schools and a set of associate schools supported by the lead schools.
32. We recognise the improvement this programme has been making in educational outcomes, raising confidence, self esteem and achievement for some young people.

Recommendation

Achievement for All has been highly successful. The learning from the project should be shared, promoted and developed with all schools.

Behavioural issues

33. We learnt that the behaviour of some young people presents great challenges in schools. Some low level disruption is able to be adequately dealt with within the school. However schools have concerns about managing extremely challenging behaviour and particularly those pupils with underlying mental health issues. Disruptive behaviour has an effect on other pupils in school. Schools adopt differing strategies to minimise the impact in class. One child with behaviour difficulties can disrupt a whole class, and schools are proactive rather than reactive in addressing issues.

There are four levels of intervention for pupils with behavioural issues:

- Individual school provision
34. Schools build capacity to deal with poor behaviour. Specialist teaching assistants focus on developing social interaction and communication skills to support children to cope within the classroom setting. Key to this is prevention through early intervention, recognition that a child is having difficulties in play group or nursery so that strategies to address and minimise future problems can be developed.

35. Issues around children on the autism spectrum which can impact on behaviour may not always be apparent at a young age. This group of children have three main areas of difficulty - social communication, interaction and imagination - are classed as being on the autistic spectrum because they are affected in different ways. We feel that there may be a lack of availability of suitable school provision for some of these extremely challenging pupils.

36. Some schools take the children out of the classroom setting and have small group sessions – sometimes known as nurture groups. These support young people with their own individual concerns with the long term aim of developing skills to reintegrate back into mainstream classes. Schools use many different strategies to moderate behaviour. Some children to have opportunity of reflecting and assessing their behaviour or observe how other children conduct themselves in class. Other schools have withdrawal rooms or alternative provision, use detentions and loss of privileges. If schools consider that pupils behaviour is too challenging and needs a more formalised solution they can opt for a fixed term or permanent exclusion.

- Partnership Provision

37. The Behaviour and Attendance Service provides statutory out of school provision, attendance monitoring and improvement support for schools. Staff work with the School Behaviour and Attendance Partnership (SBAPS) to plan and support for pupils and strategies for whole school improvement. Successful schools spread good practice by partnering with other schools providing training and introducing good behaviour practices. SBAPs allocate staff time to support behaviour improvement and plan interventions for individual pupils.

38. Some pupils as an alternative to exclusion are able to have a 'managed move' to another mainstream school if it is judged to be a viable option. This may work where poor behaviour is due to a break down in relationships between the pupil and staff.

- Short Stay Provision

39. For those young people for whom these strategies do not work permanent exclusion is used as a last resort. These pupils attend the statutory out of school provision provided by the Behaviour and Attendance Service - The Nottinghamshire Learning Centre. Four learning centres covering 3 localities cater for young people aged between 5 and 16 years although overwhelmingly it is used by pupils in the Key Stage 4, 14 – 16 years. This is intended to provide short stay provision during which time a new school is identified and a reintegration process is developed place for the young person.

40. We visited the two learning centres and identified some concerns about the provision in its present form. We acknowledge that for some young people this is an appropriate solution for tackling poor behaviour. It removes pupils from mainstream school where they are having difficulties for a finite amount of time before returning to mainstream education in a new school. However,

we are concerned that only one young person out of three returns to main stream provision. We consider that the Learning Centre is not providing that short burst of alternative provision for which it is intended but is increasing used for a group of young people who have complex needs that should be provided in a more suitable setting. As a consequence these young people are not having their individual needs met. These young people, who have complex and multiple needs that cannot be included in a mainstream school should have access to more specialist provision that will meet their additional needs. We acknowledge that staff in the Learning Centre are working diligently to educate, motivate and raise aspiration for these young people, providing valuable support. However, we consider that there is a group of young people who are in the wrong setting.

41. We felt that because of the length of time some young people stay in the Learning Centre that their educational needs may not be fully met, and also more complex social and emotional issues may not be addressed. If a young person has needs that cannot be adequately provided for in a mainstream setting then clear pathways should be developed that enable them to be quickly assessed and assisted into provision that will meet their needs, either in a special school or by commissioning services from a specialist provider. There needs to be a speedier resolution for those young people for whom inclusion and reintegration into main steam provision is not appropriate. Ideally young people should not be in the Learning Centre for longer than one term and challenging targets should be developed to achieve this. We conclude that as some of these young people have such complex social emotional, behavioural difficulties that they cannot be met in mainstream schools special schools may not be equipped to take them and consideration needs to be given to the provision of a more targeted appropriate service than is currently available.

42. We are also concerned about the ability of the Learning Centre to provide young people with the education that will equip them for the future, particularly for those young people who will be reintegrated back into mainstream school. We acknowledge that there is a range of provision, some off site, but felt that some of these young people were not able to continue with an examination curriculum which could make difficulties when returning to mainstream school. In discussing attainment we wanted to ensure that children with additional needs had access to basic literacy and numeracy skills, plus vocational and academic curriculum which would allow entry examinations in both mainstream and special schools.

Recommendations

No young person should remain within a learning centre for more than one term. Challenging targets for reintegration should be set to achieve this.

Alternative pathways to specialist provision should be available for those children for whom a mainstream placement is assessed as being inappropriate.

43. In addition we are concerned that the Learning Centre provision is for 5 – 16 years olds. We question the suitability of this environment for primary phase children, where older pupils who present very challenging behaviour are not good role models for vulnerable and impressionable children. Although we recognise that teaching and support staff in the Learning Centre are dedicated and proficient we feel they may not be equipped to teach such a wide age range and are not able to provide the age appropriate education for primary phase children. Staff may not be trained and equipped to teach this younger age group and mainstream schools may be reluctant to take in these younger children who probably have complex and multiple issues which led to their exclusion. There needs to be an emphasis on age appropriate quality teaching that is tailored to meet the needs of the individual child.

Recommendations

Alternatives to Learning Centre provision should be developed for excluded children of primary age.

Provision at 16

44. We recognise that all SEN pupils should receive a programme of education that meets their individual need and which will enable them to develop practical skills for life and work. At 16 this often involves partnership working with further education colleges to offer a diverse and inclusive curriculum. We are, however, concerned about a small group of young people who may have had a disrupted education and are not skilled and equipped to take up further training or employment, thus limiting their chances of a successful transition to adulthood.

Recommendation

An evaluation of the opportunities that exist for young people with SEND in employment, education and training.

Summary of recommendations

Innovative ways of working

- 1. Models of good practice used for partnership working and, the allocation of resources for special educational needs, (for example the**

Newark Town Project) should be considered and implemented by other clusters of families of schools.

- 2. Achievement for All has been highly successful. The learning from the project should be shared, promoted and developed with all schools**

Behaviour

- 3. No young person should remain within a learning centre for more than one term. Challenging targets for reintegration should be set to achieve this.**
- 4. Alternative pathways to specialist provision should be available for those children for whom a mainstream placement is assessed as being inappropriate.**
- 5. Alternatives to Learning Centre provision should be developed for excluded children of primary age.**

Specialist support

- 6. The level of service that schools receive from the Educational Psychology Service should be enhanced through collaborative working with specialist trained teachers**
- 7. As a result of concerns raised by head teachers, the chair of the education standing committee should write to health service commissioners and the Children Service Executive expressing concern about the impact of reductions in health service provision on mainstream and special schools**

Post 16

- 8. An evaluation of the opportunities that exist for young people with SEND in employment education and training.**

What happens next?

This report and the recommendations will be presented to Cabinet. A response from the Portfolio Holder will be expected by the Education Standing Committee within two months. Recommendations will then be monitored by the Committee until a recommendation has been implemented unless there are reasons why it may not be possible to take it forward.



Contacting us

email	helen.lee@nottscc.gov.uk
phone	0115 977 2258
fax	0115 977 3030
post	Scrutiny Team, Chief Execs, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP
internet	www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/scrutiny
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