INTEGRATION IN PROGRESS:

Pupils with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools

Barbara Lee and Zenta Henkhuzens

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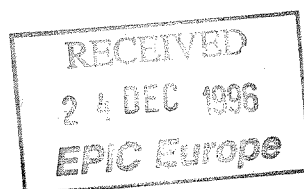
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CHAPTER 1
SETTING THE SCENE

1.1 Background

Research into the integration of pupils with special educational needs into ordinary schools has been carried out over a significant number of years and in many countries. In Britain, work took place both before the implementation of the Education Act 1981 (see, for example, Hegarty *et al.*, 1981 and 1982) and has continued since then, looking at the changes resulting from the Act, which imposed a statutory requirement that pupils with special educational needs should be educated in ordinary schools wherever possible. There is thus considerable knowledge of the optimal conditions for effective integration and widespread practical experience of a variety of integration initiatives. Data from studies in the UK are supported by those from international studies (for example, Meijer *et al.*, 1994 and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1994).

However, effective practice has now to be implemented in a changed educational context brought about by the requirements of the 1988 Education Reform Act, in terms of allocations of resources (through Local Management of Schools (LMS)) and the implementation of the National Curriculum and its assessment and the associated uses of results.

The issues arising as a result of LMS and changing patterns of resourcing are of great importance for pupils with special educational needs. Control over the allocation of resources and decisions about their use is gradually shifting from the Local Education Authority (LEA) to schools themselves, with inevitable consequences for the type of practice that is encouraged. For example, some of the facilitating conditions underpinning the effective integration of pupils with special needs into ordinary schools identified in a previous NFER project (Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 1992) clustered round the local authority's supportive strategies and provision, particularly in relation to staffing and other resources. With budgets now being delegated to schools, decisions as to whether to buy in support service provision or INSET which would equip teachers to meet the needs of pupils with special needs are made at the institutional level. Area policies are increasingly threatened and an individual child's chances of integration may be dependent on institutional, rather than local authority, policies.

A further factor which must be considered in this scenario is the increased choice regarding school placement that has been extended to parents of pupils with special educational needs under the terms of the Education Act 1993. This choice may mean, on the one hand, that a greater proportion of pupils with statements are integrated into ordinary schools and, on the other, that special school provision may have to be provided despite the availability of integrated placements, according to the wishes of parents. In some cases, schools may have to provide for a greater number of pupils with special educational needs and, also, a greater range of special needs than before, thereby requiring significant additional resources. On the other hand, some parents may reject a placement at an ordinary school which has been planned and resourced to meet the needs of children such as their own. The 1995 report by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA), *Reviewing Special Educational Needs* suggests that this may lead to *'conflicting pressures, requiring authorities to respond to different kinds of preference with which they will find it difficult to comply'* (para 21).

In addition, evidence suggests that the implementation of the National Curriculum and its assessment may be having an effect on schools' willingness to admit pupils whose results might not be perceived as making a positive contribution to league tables (see, for example, AMA report 1995, para 25, and comments from the London Association for the Teaching of English (LATE) reported in the TES, 16 Feb., 1996).

Another area of research which relates to the integration of pupils with special needs is that which centres around issues of school improvement. Ainscow (1995), for example, argues that, *'by improving overall conditions a school develops a wider range of responses to pupils who experience difficulties in their learning'* (p.73). Lewis, (1995), however, expresses concerns about this approach and suggests that *'Moves towards developing inclusive schools need to be examined in terms of the multi-faceted impact on individuals, especially all the pupils in whose interests, ostensibly, the changes have been made'* (p.6).

Finally, any long term effects of the *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs*, (GB. DFE, 1994a) on integration policy and practice are as yet unknown, but at the time of the NFER research described in this report, its impact in schools was significant. An NFER project on the implementation of the Code took place concurrently with that based on integration (see below), so any links have been noted and explored in one or both of the projects.

In the light of this changed policy context, therefore, previous studies of integration have to be viewed from a fresh perspective in order to establish ways in which the principles of good practice can be maintained and developed.

This report does not attempt to argue the case for or against integration as an appropriate approach to meeting the needs of pupils with special needs. The project looked at some existing practice for pupils in ordinary schools and attempted to draw out the features which appear to lead to positive outcomes for pupils.

1.2 The NFER research

Two research projects, funded by the Council of Local Education Authorities, through the NFER's Membership Programme, were carried out by NFER from summer 1995 to autumn 1996. This report describes the work of the project on the *Integration of Pupils with Special Educational Needs*. A further publication on the other project, on the *Implementation of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* is also now available (Derrington *et al.*, 1996).

The integration project was set up to investigate the position for pupils with special needs in the climate of the 1990s, taking account of all the policy changes referred to above. The research had two main aims:

♦ **to map the present position regarding the integration of pupils with special educational needs in all LEAs in England and Wales;**

♦ **to examine the impact of recent educational and resourcing strategies on the integration of these pupils.**

The issues to be investigated in detail included:

● resourcing – both the amounts available and the mechanisms by which schools can access and use resources;

● parental preference of school – the reasons for parents wanting to send their child with special needs to a mainstream/special school;

● attitudes of schools and parents to inclusive policies and practices;

● the effect of the National Curriculum on schools' ability or willingness to provide appropriate support for the needs of all pupils.

The research comprised two main phases.

Phase 1

The questionnaire survey

In Phase 1 (July – December 1995) a questionnaire survey of all LEAs was carried out to elicit information on their policies and practices with regard to integration. Questions focused on:

- LEA policy on integration;

- implementing LEA policy;

- placement of pupils;

- parental choice of school;

- monitoring and evaluation.

The questionnaire was completed and returned by 55 LEAs and, after analysis of the responses, 21 LEAs were selected for follow-up interviews.

These LEAs represented a range of types (metropolitan and non-metropolitan), geographical locations and levels of integration (as measured by the data in the questionnaires and that provided by the Audit Commission for 1995; further details are provided in Appendix 1). The LEA officer, adviser or educational psychologist who had responded to the questionnaire was asked to participate in an interview in which further details about the situation in the LEA were elicited and other relevant issues were discussed.

The detailed findings from the LEA questionnaire and interviews in 21 LEAs were reported in the *Interim Report* (Lee, 1996) and will not be duplicated in the current report. However, a summary of the findings is provided in Appendix 1 and selected findings and data will be referred to where relevant.

Phase 2

The case study LEAs

From January 1996 case study work was carried out in schools in five of the LEAs in which interviews had been conducted (details of the LEAs are in Appendix 2). In the five case study LEAs, integration had been encouraged in different ways. In two of the LEAs, most special schools had been closed and the majority of pupils with special needs were in mainstream schools. In another LEA, a large metropolitan area, a wide variety of school types was available to parents, and LEA staff were working hard at introducing

measures to encourage parents to choose mainstream places for their children. In the two remaining LEAs, there was a commitment to retain a continuum of provision, which would include special school places, but here too, there were moves to increase the numbers of pupils with special needs in mainstream schools. These background differences will be considered in reporting the features of practice in the case study schools.

Choosing the case study schools

Within each of the five LEAs the LEA contact person was asked to suggest two mainstream secondary schools which might be interesting for case study work (defined as schools which demonstrated some good practice in meeting the needs of a wide range of pupils and/or those which catered for groups of pupils with particular special needs). The decision was made to focus on mainstream secondary schools for the following reasons:

- the inclusion of pupils with a wide range of needs is perceived as more problematic in secondary schools than in primary schools;

- if inclusive policies are to be implemented successfully, it is the strategies to support pupils adopted by mainstream, rather than special, schools, which need to be developed and sustained;

- although the case studies were based in mainstream secondary schools, information on links with primary schools and special schools was elicited from secondary interviewees.

The schools were not intended to form a nationally representative sample but rather, the emphasis was on choosing schools which would provide some positive models within at least some aspects of their practice. The issues discussed in the report are derived from the particular situations in those schools but it is hoped that the problems identified and the strategies adopted in one set of circumstances will be recognisable and applicable to other, similar circumstances.

The particular criteria used to select schools varied according to the LEA and discussions between the LEA contact and the research team. For example, in the two LEAs with high levels of integration, two schools with different kinds of practice were requested, whereas in another LEA, two different models of resourcing were used as a way of choosing the schools. The presence of units or enhanced resources to support pupils with particular kinds of difficulties was also a factor. Details of the schools chosen are given in Appendix 2.

It was decided that the project should focus on schools which were supporting pupils with learning difficulties (both with and without statements), rather than those specialising in meeting the needs of pupils with physical disabilities or sensory impairments, since other research indicates that schools perceive the integration of the latter groups of pupils as less problematic than the former, (Riddell and Brown, 1994). Needless to say, some of the schools chosen did include pupils with mild physical or sensory impairments, but their needs were not a main focus of the enquiry. Pupils with severe difficulties or profound and multiple difficulties were also not a central focus of the study, although at least two of the schools described pupils whose difficulties were thought to be bordering on the 'severe'.

So with which pupils was the project concerned? According to Allan (1994) it is pupils with moderate learning difficulties who '*constituted the group for whom functional integration provided the greatest challenge for education*' (p.162). Going on to explain the reasons for this view, she suggests that '*teachers faced a major task in making adaptations to the curriculum to try to take account of their difficulties*'. In the NFER project, the interviews with teachers and pupils and the lesson observations took the needs of pupils with mild and moderate learning difficulties as the linchpin of the research, as these are the pupils who are increasingly being placed in mainstream schools rather than special schools (Audit Commission, 1992), and who are most affected by the implications of the Code of Practice. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties were often referred to by teachers, in the course of interviews, and some data on their needs have been collected but the situation for such pupils in mainstream schools is very complex and could not be investigated within the scope of the present project. However, an NFER project on disaffection (see Kinder *et al.*, 1995 and 1996) and a forthcoming one on effective behaviour management have a contribution to make to this debate.

Methodology

The first round of interviews took place during the spring term of 1996 in eight of the case study schools and at the beginning of the summer term in the remaining two schools. These interviews were carried out with a wide range of staff, including:

- heads/deputies;
- special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs);
- heads of department of mathematics, English and science;
- other subject teachers;
- learning support staff, both teachers and assistants;
- a small number of parents.

In one school, an interview with a member of the governing body had also been arranged. Documentation relating to policy and practice was collected from the schools and interviews were held covering the following issues:

● school policies on and attitudes to special needs and inclusion;

● arrangements to support pupils with special needs in school, particularly those with learning difficulties;

● LEA support and training provided to learning support and other school staff;

● parental preferences and attitudes.

In the second round of school-based visits, carried out during the summer term to the eight first-round schools visited in the spring term, a range of lessons was observed and the teachers of those classes were interviewed (for details see Appendix 3). Where possible, learning support staff who had been present in the classes were also interviewed. A small number of pupils from those classes were also interviewed, either individually or in small groups. The focus of this school visit was on the practical implications of teaching and learning for pupils with learning difficulties. Issues covered in the teacher interviews included:

● specific points about the lesson observed;

● arrangements to support pupils;

● strategies for teaching pupils with learning difficulties;

● training and support;

● policy and attitudes to integration.

The aim of the lesson observations was to see the strategies used by teachers to meet the needs of pupils in their classes and any difficulties encountered. It was intended that any lack of understanding on the part of the observer could be clarified in the interview with the teacher. The classes suggested by the team were: a mixed-ability Y7 class, in, for example, English, containing pupils with learning difficulties and a Y8/9 science class which was designated a 'lower' or 'bottom' set (for discussion of the issues related to setting, see Chapter 4). Although not all schools were able to provide this on the days of the visits, roughly comparable classes were selected (for details see Appendix 3).

Interviews with pupils were carried out to attempt to elicit their perceptions of their experiences at school, the support they were getting, and their views on their own progress. No broad conclusions can be drawn from these interviews as the pupils were selected by the teachers, often on the grounds of their ability to participate in the interview, but they do provide some interesting insights into pupils' views of effective teaching.

In the summer and autumn of 1996 the final analysis of all the data from interviews and observations, as well as the documents collected, was carried out and the final report was written.

1.3 Introduction to the report

The project was set up to investigate 'integration' practice at a time when the terminology of integration and 'inclusion' was much discussed. This report does not attempt to debate the issue and both terms are used, according to the usage of questionnaire respondents and school and LEA interviewees. On the whole, 'integration' is used to describe the policy and practice at LEA level, as it implies movement, whereby some pupils, formerly segregated, are transferred into a mainstream setting, and learn alongside their peers in ordinary classrooms for at least part of the week. At school level, there could be individual pupils moving from a special school to a mainstream school. 'Inclusion' seems to imply a different starting point, whereby all the pupils are in the same school, (although this may lead on to the possible 'exclusion' of some pupils, as opposed to them not having been included in the first place). Much of the case study work of this project was based on the notion that schools were including most of the pupils in their area, and it attempted to investigate how they were providing an appropriate education for all the pupils in their school.

The focus in each phase of the work was different: in interviewing LEA staff, the emphasis was on the broad picture of how and where pupils were placed in schools across the LEA. The attitudes of LEA staff to the provision made were examined in the light of national and LEA policy statements and initiatives on special needs and other issues.

In the second phase of interviewing, however, 'integration' was not frequently used. At school level, teachers were more concerned with the provision made for pupils with special needs and the interview schedules took account of this. Interviews with senior management focused on questions of resourcing and school image, whilst those with SENCOs concentrated on the ways in which support was provided to pupils. Questions put to subject teachers were more concerned with the impact for teachers of having pupils with learning difficulties in their classes, and the best ways of meeting their needs, whilst learning support staff were asked about their role in ensuring that individuals or groups of pupils were coping with the demands of the lessons in which they were participating. In all the responses elicited, there was little reference to 'integration', apart from one or two references to

individual pupils spending some time at local special schools for part of the week; no overall programmes for integration were referred to. At an individual level, most pupils were in mainstream classes for most of the time, with separate teaching provided flexibly (as is reported in Chapter 4). For this reason the term 'integration' is little used in the school based discussions.

Other terminology used in the report may also need explaining: 'special needs' is used to include pupils with the full range of difficulties who might be in the school, but 'pupils with learning difficulties' are distinguished from the larger group, as their needs are the main focus of the study. 'Specific learning difficulties' and 'dyslexia' are mostly used according to the usage of the interviewee.

The aim of this report is to document some of the procedures used by schools to provide support to pupils with special needs, and the teaching strategies used. There is some discussion of the procedures and practice which appear to be effective, and the approaches used to meet some of the difficulties encountered by teachers and pupils. The training and support needs of teachers and learning support assistants are discussed and the monitoring and evaluation procedures in place are also reported. At the end of each chapter there is some discussion of the appropriateness or effectiveness of the procedures and practice described. Finally, the report attempts to draw together the findings and consider the implications for future practice.

CHAPTER 2

POLICY ON AND ATTITUDES TO INTEGRATION

In this chapter the policies on special needs devised by LEAs and schools and informants' attitudes to those policies and their implementation are discussed.

2.1 LEA policies

In the LEA questionnaire survey respondents were asked whether their policies made a specific reference to increasing the integration of pupils with special needs into mainstream schools. Of the 55 LEAs responding to the questionnaire, 41 indicated that this was the case. However, only 18 LEAs indicated that their policies listed approaches for implementing the policy.

On examination of available policy statements and through discussion with LEA staff in 21 LEAs it was clear that all the LEAs were formally committed to integration, as required by both the 1981 and 1993 Education Acts. However, their methods of implementing the policy varied according to local circumstances.

Most of the LEA policies stressed the need to maintain a continuum of provision which would include special schools but a small number also emphasised the importance of increasing integration and a commitment, as one LEA statement indicated, 'over a period of time, to redistribute resources away from specialist provision and late intervention towards early identification and support in ordinary schools'. One LEA interviewee referred to the fact that his LEA was a signatory to the Integration Charter produced by the Centre for Studies on Integration in Education (CSIE), and that its long term aim was to have all children in mainstream schools.

A number of LEAs pointed out that they were revising their policies, often as a response to the publication of the Code of Practice, but also to reflect the current situation. The principles embodied in the policies, however, appeared to differ little from those reported in earlier NFER work (Fletcher-Campbell with Hall, 1993), although the emphasis on integration was perhaps more explicit.

2.2 The implementation of LEA policies

The basic approach to implementing policy was common to all the LEAs, that is, they looked first for a mainstream place for pupils with special needs, and only if an appropriate place could not be found would a special unit or special school placement be considered. Views on what was 'appropriate', however, depended on LEA interpretations of the balance between the factors referred to in the Education Act 1993, namely:

● the needs of the child;

● parental wishes;

● the suitability of the school for the child;

● the efficient use of resources.

The relationship between the availability of supported mainstream places and special school places, the wishes of the parents, the needs of the pupil and the allocation of resources is complex but some broad differences between LEAs with high integration and others, can be identified. According to the data obtained from LEA interviews, it would appear that in LEAs with high levels of integration (see Appendix 1), the expectation from parents and schools was, generally, that the majority of pupils would go to mainstream schools, apart from children with very significant difficulties whose needs had been discussed from an early age; they would be most likely to go to a special school. In LEAs with a more diverse pattern of mainstream and special provision, there was a tension between:

● the need for LEAs to use places in schools (either mainstream or special) which had been funded to support pupils with particular kinds of difficulties;

● the wishes of parents who wanted the 'best' school for their child, which, in some cases, was represented by a particular special school, and in other cases, by a particular mainstream school;

● the needs of pupils requiring particular kinds of support to be funded and provided according to the school attended.

Despite this range of issues affecting the extent of integration, all the LEAs were implementing a variety of strategies to enable more pupils with special needs to be educated in mainstream schools. Strategies included:

● appropriately targeted resources (to improve mainstream expertise and facilities and develop links between special and mainstream schools);

- a redistribution of school places, according to the existing provision, whereby pupils would be placed in special units rather than special schools, units were transformed into resource bases, and expertise was located across as many schools as possible, rather than in area centres.

Most importantly, LEA staff felt that a change in attitudes had been crucial in fostering a belief that pupils with special needs could be well supported in mainstream schools. More parents appeared to be taking it for granted that their children would attend the same school as other local children and many teachers, especially in primary schools, were prepared to meet the needs of all the pupils in their classes.

On the other hand, LEA staff identified barriers to integration, in terms of limited resources and in some areas, an overall shortage of school places. According to LEAs, the attitudes of some parents, teachers and schools were also not favourable to integration. Perceived barriers were identified as:

- parental pressure for special school places;

- concerns by special school staff that their schools would close, leading, in some areas, to threats to apply for Grant Maintained status;

- lack of confidence or job satisfaction experienced by special school staff in carrying out a different role, such as working in mainstream schools to support individuals or groups of pupils;

- mainstream schools' reluctance to increase the numbers of pupils with statements in their school, because of the perceived effect on their image within the community (particularly for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties) or their effect on league tables (particularly for pupils with learning difficulties);

- mainstream schools' reluctance or unwillingness to allow the LEA to establish a unit or resource base within their sites (particularly for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties);

- schools' reluctance to lose unit provision if it entailed a loss of expert staff or additional funding.

It was noticeable from the interviews that LEAs with medium or low rates of integration perceived far more barriers to fuller integration than those with already high levels (see Appendix 1 for definitions). For example, the question of the mainstream school's image within the community and the effect of league tables as deterrents to taking in (more) pupils with statements, was seen as a minor issue in LEAs where all schools had the expectation and

acceptance that they would provide for all the pupils in the area. The only pupils towards whom this inclusive attitude was no longer held so generally, were those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This change was relatively recent and therefore interviewees in the high integration LEAs were reluctant to suggest that it necessarily constituted a trend.

In the LEAs with lower levels of integration there was a clear tension between the aspirations of the LEA staff, often towards much more inclusive practice (although there was not always agreement on this between staff within an LEA), and the preferences of some parents for special school places and the views of mainstream and special schools themselves, as listed above. For example, the head and learning support staff in one mainstream school expressed concerns about the LEA's commitment to increasing the numbers of pupils with special needs being educated in mainstream schools, as they feared that the mainstream schools would not be able to cope and that the expertise of staff currently in special schools would be lost. They were also aware that colleagues in special schools felt threatened by the proposed changes.

2.3 School policies

Documents supplied by schools included statements of policy for pupils with special educational needs. Within the policy statements there were generally several sections on areas such as:

● principles, aims, objectives;
● identification, assessment and support for pupils with special needs;
● links with parents and outside agencies;
● staffing, resources and materials;
● the role of the SENCO.

Only three of the policies available to the researchers listed criteria for evaluating the success of the special needs policy and practice, despite the requirement (referred to in the Code, section 2:12.) to do so. This reflects the findings from the NFER project on the Code (see Derrington *et al.*, 1996).

Some of the policy statements made some reference to 'integration' or 'inclusion' of all pupils and indicated how that might take place within the arrangements of the school. The first principle of one policy stated the school's commitment as:

To aim to match the demands of the National Curriculum to the individual needs of the student and to provide inclusive education for all students.

Four of the case study schools did not provide copies of policies as these were in the process of revision but interviewees made general comments about their policy.

2.4 Views on school policy and practice

Staff interviewed in schools were asked for their views on the school policy and how it worked in practice. Given the LEA comments on barriers to integration, it was important for the research to investigate whether staff felt that schools might be affected by the current emphasis on competition between schools, with league tables and school 'image' playing a part in encouraging schools to see some pupils as more or less desirable than others. The main comments made by interviewees related to:

- competition between schools;
- the reputation of the school;
- attitudes of staff;
- resource implications.

2.4.1 Competition between schools

Since the Education Act 1993 in which parents were encouraged to express a preference for the school their child would attend, there has been increased competition between schools to market themselves and to advertise their achievements, most notably, at secondary level, for example in terms of their results in GCSE league tables. Pupils with learning difficulties might be thought to perform less well than other pupils in external examinations, and might therefore, be considered a liability, in those terms. However, in the case study schools, this did not appear to be an issue for heads, when questioned. In one school, the head felt that all the heads in the LEA had a strong commitment to special needs and although there was competition between schools this did not affect pupils with special needs. In his school, he said, *'We have held on to the desire to keep special needs children'*. In other LEAs, heads were glad to have pupils with special needs and would not see it as a competitive issue, as long as it looked as though other schools in the area were taking their share of pupils with special needs.

2.4.2 Reputation of the school

In the schools visited, the proportion of pupils with statements of special need ranged from 0.5 per cent to 5.6 per cent of the total roll, and the image of the school, in terms of its provision for pupils with special needs, may have been affected by whether such pupils formed a small or larger proportion of the school population.

Staff views

In about half the case study schools, heads felt that their reputation for providing effective support to pupils with special needs was a very positive factor in their attractiveness to parents. They stressed the comprehensive nature of their intake. Some felt that their popularity was partly because they also demonstrated that pupils of all abilities were encouraged to achieve at the school. These positive attitudes did not seem to be related to the number of pupils with special needs in the schools, but seemed to be shared within LEAs. In two LEAs, one with high integration and one with relatively low integration but a commitment to increase, attitudes were most positive.

In the other case study schools, pride in their reputation for success with pupils with difficulties was tempered by worries that if the schools admitted more such children, staff would not be able to cope or staff and/or governors would worry about the effect on the parents of children without special needs. However, no heads had evidence of any negative effects on their reputation.

SENCOs generally shared their heads' views that the school had a good reputation with both parents and other professionals, for providing support for pupils with special needs.

About half the SENCOs were very positive about their reputation for special needs, whilst the others, in common with their heads, qualified their comments with worries about how the school should avoid receiving an intake which was *'skewed to the bottom end'* and perceived as such by parents. One SENCO, in an area with a number of popular independent schools taking local children, said, *'Unfortunately, I fear that we have a good reputation [for working with pupils with special needs]'*, as this might affect their intake which was already *'weighted too much towards the bottom'*.

Subject teachers interviewed felt that their school had a 'caring' image and gave good support to pupils with special educational needs.

As an illustration of how special needs was perceived by parents, learning support staff in several schools described the high levels of interest in their work expressed at open evenings. They felt that many parents were worried about whether their child would get enough support and were reassured to see what was available. In one school a learning support assistant explained that, *'In terms of general perceptions of the school I think a lot of parents now see special needs in quite a positive light and they want to have anything that they can get as an extra.'* On the other hand, she also described some parents *'fleeing from the room'* once they realised they were in the learning support area.

Parents' views

Of the small number of parents interviewed most seemed satisfied with the provision the school was making, despite one or two reservations. Some had seen the school as the obvious choice, for example because it was the neighbourhood school; others had chosen it because they were satisfied that it would meet their child's needs.

One parent indicated that she was not dissatisfied but wondered whether her child might have benefited from a smaller school. She thought that a special school might be more geared to developing living skills for older pupils and she was worried that nobody in the mainstream school had expertise in her child's language disorder. On the other hand, in a special school, she feared that he might have picked up undesirable habits from other pupils.

In another school, a parent felt that in many schools there was too much emphasis on exam results which was detrimental to children with special needs. In the other schools which her son had attended, attitudes to pupils with special needs were negative, unlike in the present school.

A governor's view

A governor interviewed expressed similar views to those of the head and other staff in the school. The governor stated that the school was fully committed to taking pupils with any disability, although, regrettably, they had inadequate provision for pupils with physical difficulties and there were no funds available to remedy the situation. On the other hand, the governing body, as a whole, was concerned about taking too many pupils with special needs because of the effect on other pupils. On being pressed, she admitted

that there was no evidence of negative reactions from parents and felt that this was because they had a good reputation for all their pupils. *'We would try and take pupils if their parents want them to come here but it's not always in the best interests of the child.'*

2.4.3 Attitudes to the integration policy

A range of views was expressed by heads, from those who stressed the comprehensive intake of their school, through to those who were worried about the effect on staff or other pupils of having children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The heads themselves had positive views of taking a wide range of pupils, and were in favour of integration but felt that not all their staff shared their views.

Staff in all the schools visited claimed that they would have difficulty catering for pupils using wheelchairs or with severe mobility problems as the buildings were not appropriate and would require significant modifications. In one LEA this was not seen as a problem by the case study heads because there was a school in the area which had been specially adapted for pupils with physical disabilities.

Most of the SENCOs interviewed felt that they could cater for a wide range of needs but would discuss with parents and child the kind of support required. Apart from the difficulties of physical access referred to above, SENCOs expressed some concern about individual pupils' experience of mainstream. They felt that some individuals might be better in the smaller surroundings of a special school, where they might be less subject to low self esteem or bullying (although, of course, this would depend on the particular special school). On the other hand, they felt that pupils with special needs gained from being in a mainstream school because of the opportunities for social interactions with ordinary pupils and because they avoided the stigma often associated with attending a special school. In one school, the SENCO explained how some of their pupils would go to a special school at 16 as there was little prospect of employment or suitable FE courses and she wondered whether these pupils might benefit from moving to the special school at an earlier stage.

Subject teachers were generally supportive of the school's policy of taking the full range of pupils although individual members of staff expressed concern about a number of factors:

● Teachers were worried about the levels of resources available to meet pupils' needs.

- Some subject teachers felt that schools should not take on pupils who were highly disruptive or violent because they could not cope with the difficulties created.

- Some subject teachers thought that mainstream schools could cope with most pupils but were not equipped for those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, who would be better off in a special school.

- There was a view that some pupils with learning difficulties might be better off in a special school because they might not have such low esteem; on the other hand, parents were often against the idea of a special school, because of its negative associations.

- Some subject teachers worried that they did not have the necessary skills/expertise to deal with some pupils and therefore the pupils would not learn. Some felt that the pupils should therefore go to a special school or be withdrawn whilst others saw the need for more staff training to enhance their skills to work with pupils with special needs.

In one school, with special provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, some subject staff were concerned about the perception amongst other pupils that the pupils in the special provision could misbehave and still get given treats. Some ordinary pupils (and some staff) found it hard to understand the approaches taken.

The range of views expressed by learning support staff was similar to that of the subject teachers, with an emphasis in one school on the success they had had in keeping pupils in mainstream and, in others, on their worries about the experience of mainstream for some pupils who may have had learning difficulties or problems in their social relations with other pupils.

2.4.4 Resources

Two issues assumed prominence with regard to resources: on the one hand, heads showed how they had allocated funds over and above those specifically identified for special needs as a sign of their commitment to supporting special needs. On the other hand, several heads stressed that although they were committed to taking pupils with a wide range of difficulties and disabilities, they would need to ensure that appropriate resources were made available to support those pupils (see Chapter 3).

Two heads pointed out that making the SENCO a member of the senior/ middle management team (on appropriate salary levels) was an indication of the importance they placed on special needs provision.

2.5   Discussion of policy and attitudes

Heads appear to have the most positive attitudes in terms of taking in the full range of pupils but several factors might explain this: first, some heads might feel it was inappropriate to reveal their less positive views to a researcher, despite the guarantee of confidentiality, in case others (such as the LEA, their colleagues, or parents) were to find out; second, if their policies stated a firm commitment to open access then they would not wish to appear inconsistent or to be not fulfilling the policy; third, their views might be wholeheartedly in favour of integration as they were not fully aware of the difficulties perceived by some of their colleagues in actually teaching pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties. In fact, the impression given by the heads was that they were genuinely committed to a comprehensive intake of pupils but understood the potential problems involved and were concerned that sufficient resources should be available to ensure that pupils benefited from the experience and that staff were given sufficient training and support to teach the pupils effectively.

Some of those more engaged in working on a daily basis with pupils with special needs held more ambivalent views. Learning support staff were worried that some pupils were not making appropriate progress, because their individual needs were not being fully met, and that particular individuals might gain more from being in a special school. Some subject teachers shared this view but their concern was that pupils were not making sufficient progress because subject staff did not have the knowledge or expertise to teach them effectively. A small number of the teachers interviewed were not in favour of integration and felt that pupils with learning difficulties would be better served in special schools.

There did not seem to be any clear link between the LEA policy on integration and teachers' attitudes to their own school population, as within each school and LEA some teachers expressed positive views and others indicated doubts, usually concerning individual pupils. The schools were, of course, nominated by the LEA for the research but they were chosen for a number of different reasons (see Chapter 1) and not necessarily because of positive attitudes.

2.6 Summary points

LEAs

♦ LEA policy statements referred to their commitment to integration but not all gave explicit information on how the policy was implemented.

♦ Most LEA policies stressed the need to maintain a continuum of provision, which would include special schools, but a few emphasised their plans to reduce gradually such provision.

♦ In LEAs with relatively high rates of integration both parents and teachers had the expectation that the vast majority of pupils would attend a mainstream school, preferably near to where they lived.

♦ In LEAs with more mixed provision there were tensions between the needs of pupils, the wishes of parents and the allocation of resources.

♦ LEAs were attempting to increase the numbers of pupils in mainstream schools by targeting resources and gradually moving pupils from more specialised to less specialised provision.

♦ The barriers to increasing integration were perceived by the LEAs as related to: limited resources, a shortage of mainstream places (in some areas), unfavourable attitudes by parents and teachers in both special and mainstream schools.

Schools

♦ School policy statements generally conformed to the requirements of the Education Act 1993 (except for the lack of success criteria) and some made reference to their commitment to integration or inclusion and the arrangements made to facilitate it.

♦ Heads, on the whole, did not seem to feel that having a good reputation for supporting pupils with special needs was detrimental to attracting the full ability range to their schools, but some were concerned about maintaining an appropriate balance of pupils with special needs.

♦ Staff seemed to feel that parents viewed their provision positively as they were keen to investigate the support available.

♦ Most SENCOs and other learning support staff felt that their school could cater for pupils with a wide range of difficulties (although not pupils with significant physical disabilities) but expressed concern about individuals who might be better placed in a special school.

♦ The views of subject teachers were more mixed, with most giving support to the principle of including the full range of pupils but, at the same time, expressing concerns, related to:

   – the levels of resourcing provided to support pupils

   – the need for appropriate professional development to enable staff to teach pupils appropriately.

♦ Some subject teachers felt that their school was not equipped to teach pupils with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties or those with significant learning difficulties.

♦ Heads felt that they had demonstrated their commitment to special needs by allocating more resources than those provided by the LEA for that purpose but stressed the need for sufficient resources to support pupils.

♦ It would appear that heads are genuinely committed to integration, with the qualification that appropriate resources should be available, whereas other staff have some doubts either about their own ability to provide appropriate teaching or about the benefits to pupils.

CHAPTER 3
RESOURCING

One of the most contentious aspects about local management has been that relating to resourcing for special educational needs. Since 1988, schools have had an increasing degree of control over the considerable budgets which previously had been retained by local authorities to fund centrally organised learning support teams (see Evans and Lunt, 1993 and Vincent *et al.*, 1995 for further discussion). The actual composition of the resources available to schools to meet special educational needs varies considerably across authorities. The factors listed below may apply, according to the particular local authority arrangements.

- an allocation with the Age-Weighted Pupils Unit (AWPU). This may either be unspecified or specified (any amount up to five per cent) (GB. DES, 1991); in both cases, schools will normally be expected to provide for, at the very least, pupils at stage 1 of the Code of Practice, from within the AWPU;

- a specified amount within the 20 per cent of the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB) (GB. DES, 1991) which is not driven by pupil numbers; this may be for all 'additional needs' or a distinction may be made between 'social need' and 'special educational need';

- resources with respect to pupils with statements. Money to meet the needs of pupils with statements may be delegated to schools to spend as they wish, or it may be granted in the form of 'human resources' – e.g. a proportion of a support teacher or support assistant; the latter may be either provided 'in person' by the LEA or the school may appoint someone of its choice;

- time from the central support services (including the educational psychology services); Time may be available 'free' on delivery (though limited by available resources); in the majority of cases, these services will, in fact, be purchased by the school from the LEA, often via a service level agreement;

- outreach support from special schools in the area; this may be 'free' (in that the special schools are funded to provide this service) or it may be purchased by the mainstream school.

Only the first and third of these factors will be common to all schools. Some authorities do not specify an additional amount for special educational needs outside the AWPU and some have retained minimal support services.

As far as integration is concerned, the extent to which schools can use their funding flexibly, to meet needs as they arise, may be a key factor. In this chapter, the ways in which schools are allocated resources and the uses to which the resources are put, are discussed, as well as staff perceptions of how appropriate the mechanisms and uses are.

3.1 LEA allocation of resources

In the LEA questionnaire survey, respondents were asked to indicate the strategies implemented or being planned, to increase integration in their area. Most of these strategies had cost implications, such as the introduction of more 'additionally resourced' schools, the transfer of funds or staff from special to mainstream schools, and adaptations and extensions to school buildings. Full details are provided in the *Interim Report*, (Lee, 1996). LEA respondents identified three major difficulties in implementing all the changes they would like to make:

- There were no spare resources to establish new provision for pupils so LEAs found themselves in a *'Catch 22 situation'*, whereby, for example, in order to bring back pupils from out-of-authority schools, they needed to build up appropriate provision within the authority; as the money was tied up in funding the original placements or in places in special schools, it was difficult to provide increased places in mainstream schools. LEAs, therefore, found it a problem to find the necessary funds for this transition phase.

- The funding for (re)integration was not sufficient or was not used appropriately.

- The delegation of significant amounts of funding to schools, leaving much reduced central resources, decreased the scope for LEAs to provide support to schools.

Resourcing problems were shared by all LEAs, as the AMA report pointed out:

> ...without extra funding, progress will necessarily be slowed because of the problem of expanding special needs provision in mainstream while still paying for a segregated system. So, completing a planned transition from segregated to integrated provision needs investment which it is hard for constrained council budgets to support. (AMA, 1995, para 14).

In the five case study LEAs, different funding mechanisms were in place. In two LEAs, the funds to support pupils with statements were allocated according to banding systems of incremental levels of need, whilst in the other three, individual needs determined allocations. Of the five LEAs, in two the budget for statements was delegated to schools for them to use in the most appropriate ways but in the remaining three, the picture was more diverse: in one, budgets for statements were, at the time of the research, delegated to secondary schools but retained for primary schools in order to provide a central team of support staff. This was due to change, however, and from April 1996, primary schools, too, were to receive a delegated budget. In a further LEA, funding for statements was retained centrally to employ a pool of learning support teachers who each worked in a number of schools, supporting individual pupils with statements. In the fifth LEA, a similar system was used, although a pilot scheme whereby funds were delegated to schools was being trialled in a small number of schools, with apparent success.

Funding for general special needs was allocated according to formulae based on the numbers of pupils taking free school meals (FSM), and, in at least two LEAs, on the results of numeracy and literacy 'screening' tests. In one LEA, there were plans to move to an auditing system, partly linked to the stages of the Code, and partly still associated with the free school meals take-up.

There was some concern expressed by LEA staff that the demand-led nature of the statementing procedure was resulting in a diversion of resources away from general special educational needs provision. Over half of the LEA case study officers commented that they had been forced to make cuts to their general special needs budget to compensate for over-spending on statemented provision.

A paragraph from the Criteria for Statutory Assessment of one case study LEA is a clear reminder of the effects of substantial spending on statements:

> *It should be remembered that the resources allocated for the production and provision of statements draw their funding from the same overall budget as schools' funding through AWPU. Thus, large numbers of costly statements will tend to reduce schools' funding and damage the curriculum differentiation and preventative measures being pursued in schools.*

3.2 School views on the allocation of resources

Obviously, schools' views on the amount of resources they received and the flexibility with which it could be used, must be seen in the light of the mechanisms used to allocate the funding in their particular authority. The main areas of discussion below can be separated into those referring to the funding for pupils with statements and those referring to pupils with special needs but without statements.

3.2.1 Funding for pupils with statements

One of the major worries for schools was the amount of funding which they were allocated to support the needs of pupils with statements. There was a feeling that LEAs were trying to reduce the spending on statements, as well as making cuts to their general special needs provision, by tightening their criteria for statutory assessment.

Over half of the case study heads and SENCOs interviewed mentioned that statements were becoming increasingly difficult to obtain and they were generally aware of an overspend by their LEA in this area.

A SENCO working in a school in a highly integrated authority (as defined in Appendix 1) felt that the general level of need of pupils with statements had increased in recent years as a result of the movement of 'goal posts'. He commented that to obtain a statement for a pupil in 1996, the need had to be much greater, so that pupils who would formerly have been given a statement were now left in a position where the school had to provide for them without the resources accompanying a statement.

In addition, two further factors appeared to be affecting the allocation of funds. First, as described by the LEA criteria cited above, schools were worried that the balance between funding for pupils with statements and those without was creating difficulties, but at the same time felt that they needed the funds for both groups of pupils. One head commented that in his school, many of the pupils at stages 1-3 of the Code of Practice were in need of individual support but there was not enough money to meet this demand because the school's resources and staff were largely directed at the pupils with statements. He also felt that parents often put pressure on the LEA to issue a statement for their child in order to ensure adequate funding when, in fact, in a small number of cases, statements had been issued but with no additional resources provided by the LEA. A SENCO in another LEA described similar instances in her school, and explained that the resources had not been attached to the statements of two pupils as the authority had 'run out of money'.

Both these interviewees seemed to assume that the issuing of a statement should automatically attract additional resources, whereas LEAs can argue that the statement is provided as a means of identifying pupil needs and as a monitoring tool, and that the school already has the resources to meet the pupil's needs. This would, at first, seem a little unfair, if other pupils in the school with similar needs identified on a statement are supported through extra resources, but schools may currently have more resources than before, through different mechanisms and could reasonably be expected to support the needs without extra resources. In some LEAs there is a policy that the needs identified on the statement are not directly linked to resources, and therefore the LEA could justify such an event, but in the case study LEAs this was not the approach used.

The second factor which seemed to be increasing the numbers of pupils with statements was parental pressure from articulate, well-informed parents of pupils with certain kinds of learning difficulties. (Similar findings are apparent in the work of Lunt and Denman, 1995 and Gross, 1996.) A large proportion of SENCOs mentioned an increased amount of pressure for statements in recent years from parents of children with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD).

A SENCO in one case study school described how parents sometimes pursued independent assessments which resulted in a diagnosis of need more severe than that identified by the school and this was accepted, in preference, by the Tribunal. Concern was expressed that outcomes such as these often resulted in the allocation of a high level of resources for those individuals compared to pupils with different special needs.

On the other hand, a SENCO in another authority mentioned that educational psychologists there were refusing to assess pupils for specific learning difficulties, at present, and that the school was having to meet the needs of these pupils with their own resources.

In one case study authority there were difficulties arising from the fact that in the authority's schools there were pupils with statements issued by another authority. Because of differences in funding mechanisms, the units of resource allocated to statements were less than those for comparable statements issued by the case study authority. Furthermore, the school received no money in respect to the statement during the financial year in which the pupil transferred to the school. The school was in debate with the LEA at the time of the research.

3.2.2 Funding for pupils without statements

In the case study LEAs, allocations for funding the general special needs of pupils were based on the use of proxy indicators such as the numbers of pupils taking up free school meals (FSMs) and reading scores (see Fletcher-Campbell, 1996). However, their use appeared to be contentious amongst some of the heads. Interviews with heads in case study schools suggested that they were aware that different indicators highlighted the needs of different groups of individuals which was not always to their advantage. For example, one head in an LEA using FSMs as a proxy indicator felt that the formula should account more for academic ability of pupils. He was, however, aware that not all schools in the area would benefit as much as his because their intake was less comprehensive.

A head of a school in an authority which allocated a proportion of the Potential Schools Budget on the basis of FSMs commented that there was a certain amount of policy confusion amongst schools in that area. Schools were unclear whether the purpose of the funding was to compensate for disadvantage or to meet the needs of pupils with particular difficulties. In fact the Criteria for Assessment of this particular LEA state quite clearly that the allocation of this budget to mainstream schools was to support non-statemented special educational needs. This confusion was also found to be widespread in schools in a recent NFER project which focused on the resourcing of special educational needs (Fletcher-Campbell, 1996).

Approximately half of the SENCOs interviewed said that they had overall control of the special needs budget for their school, which included funding for pupils with and without statements. In general, they had a clear understanding of how the funding for pupils with statements had been allocated but many were unsure of the derivation of the sum of money allocated for the support of pupils without statements. Concern was expressed by a small number of LEA officers that this confusion in schools over the allocation of funding for non-statemented support might lead to less money being spent on special needs than had been identified at the LEA level.

Indeed, a SENCO from one authority expressed concern that SENCOs in other schools were apparently struggling to obtain money for special needs which had been fully delegated to schools but which was being spent in areas other than special needs. On the other hand, a SENCO in another authority said that she felt sure that more money had been spent by the school than had been allocated for special needs by the LEA.

Not surprisingly, over half of the heads interviewed felt that the money allocated for the support of non-statemented pupils with special needs was not enough to meet the needs or demand. Evidence gathered during the NFER project on the resourcing of special needs (Fletcher-Campbell, 1996) suggests that many schools are using more than the amount nominally allocated by the LEAs for special educational needs.

The effectiveness of proxy indicators as a method of allocation of resources for the support of non-statemented pupils with special needs was under review in a number of authorities. Alternative methods of allocation such as an audit, or proxy educational indices, such as the results of National Curriculum assessments, were on the increase. What is clear is that even where LEAs were using the same indicator, both the levels of funding allocated and formula used were different.

Staff in schools in two case study authorities said that they would like more resources to reduce class sizes. Others mentioned that they would like more money to increase the level of additional support in the classroom, carry out preventative work and meet the needs of the National Curriculum.

Concern was also expressed by at least one head in each authority about the effects of general LEA cuts in resources on levels of funding received by schools and the knock-on effect that this had on the funding for special needs.

One head felt that legislation such as that relating to the 1993 Education Act (with which the Code of Practice is linked), whereby change and investment are required had been inadequately funded. A head from another authority feared that a cut of 1.3 per cent to the general education budget would lead to bigger classes and less support.

3.3   Use of resources

As described earlier, there were different mechanisms in place for allocating resources in each LEA with varying degrees of control of the budgets to support pupils with special needs. Some of the comments below illustrate how the different mechanisms affected the ways in which schools provided support.

At one end of the continuum was the authority which retained the funding for all pupils with statements and used a central pool of trained teachers to go into their schools and provide support to individual pupils, as agreed on the statements. Staff from a Behaviour Support team also worked in this way with pupils who had reached stage 3 as described in the Code.

Another authority with a similar system was piloting an alternative approach as it had, for some time, recognised the limitations of this method for allocating support for pupils with statements and had established the pilot scheme, 'in order to develop a model of support that was more flexible and equitable.' With this approach, the money was allocated to schools directly for pupils with statements enabling them to plan to use support when it was needed and not when it was simply made available. In an evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the scheme, the schools were asked to note how they had allocated the resources on areas such as assistants, materials and SENCO release time. A head of one of the schools participating in the scheme commented that, 'We have got more control than most schools; it is quite liberating in some ways.'

In authorities which delegated the funds for pupils with statements, the schools felt that they had more flexibility over how they used them, and this was particularly useful when considering the most effective deployment of learning support staff. Some examples of the benefits of this approach are described below.

The head of a school with special provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties commented that the funding for those pupils was still separate and issued on a monthly basis. He was able to use some of the funding to employ support assistants rather than teachers, which he felt was very important in meeting the demands of the pupils and the curriculum as the greater number of adults meant that support could be put into a greater number of classes (see Chapter 4).

A SENCO who was in charge of the budget believed that the delegated budget allowed for greater flexibility and, with appropriate planning, staffing allocations could be used to provide coherent timetables for support assistants rather than having a number of different assistants covering occasional hours at different times of the day.

The head of a school in another authority mentioned that the school had a high proportion of pupils with low reading ages. The LEA gave the school a reasonable level of autonomy in their use of statemented funds and they were able to use some of their resources to fund an intensive reading programme. This was funded from the budgets for pupils with and without statements.

Most of the resources allocated to support pupils with special needs were used to pay for the time of learning support staff. Some schools employed qualified teachers for this purpose, whilst others employed a combination of teachers and classroom assistants (see Chapter 4 for details). In some authorities the number of hours' support for each pupil with a statement was strictly specified whilst in others it was not. The ways in which the support was actually provided are described in detail in Chapters 4 and 5 but, in general terms, when pupils were supported in class the learning support staff would give priority to their needs but might also help other pupils in the class. The exception to this appeared to be in situations where the Tribunal had insisted that a child have individual attention for the designated number of hours, whether in or out of class.

Heads of the case study schools where assistants were employed (all except two schools in one authority) regretted that such staff could mostly not be given permanent contracts because their continued employment was dependent on the presence of sufficient numbers of pupils requiring support. Contracts often ended when the pupils to whom assistants were attached left the school or the statements were terminated. In the latter case, heads expressed some resentment at the irony that when their pupils made significant progress, the school lost some of its resources. Some schools employed a number of assistants from their general special needs budgets to support non-statemented pupils. These assistants were in addition to those funded by statemented resources.

Within the present climate of LMS and delegation of resources, schools are ever more aware of issues of accountability and demands made by LEAs. This was quite clearly expressed by the head of one case study school: *'The whole thing is very difficult because if your philosophy is pro-integration it seems odd that you have to unpick it all for financial purposes.'*

3.4   The appropriateness of resourcing approaches

LEAs which had delegated all or most of the funding for special needs to the schools, had, on the whole, had to disband any centrally based teams of learning support staff, unless they were able to set up a system whereby schools would buy in the support of such teachers or assistants. In some areas, many of those staff obtained posts in LEA schools but some of this expertise must have been dissipated and schools no longer had a comprehensive learning support service on which to depend. Schools with experienced learning support staff may not see this as a problem (see Thomas, 1992 for further discussion on the perceived benefits) but other schools may feel that they are not sufficiently supported in dealing with the multitude of special needs with which they are faced. Issues surrounding the move towards increased school-based training of staff are discussed further in Chapter 6.

Since the key expenditure item to support pupils with special needs is staffing, the different ways in which schools used their special needs budgets are mostly reflected in their deployment of staff. As is shown in Chapter 4, schools' staffing varied considerably from one which had a SENCO and 10 learning support assistants, through to another with a SENCO, five teachers and three assistants, as well as schools which had a SENCO but no other internal learning support staff. It is not possible in this report to look at how budgets were actually spent, since data on the details were not available to the researchers. In addition, since schools had different numbers of pupils with special needs, used different approaches to providing support, including having smaller classes for pupils with learning difficulties, or employing a range of staff, it is very difficult to identify exactly which funds were used to support which pupils. Presumably, however, governing bodies will, from time to time, be asked to decide on staff appointments and deployment and will require the relevant data to be able to evaluate alternative approaches in terms of both effectiveness and cost.

The deployment of learning support assistants, rather than teachers in some of the case study schools provided support to a wider range of pupils in a higher number of classes. However, the lower cost of assistants compared to teachers has to be balanced against their relative lack of expertise and their need for further training and guidance (see Chapter 4). Such support for the professional development of assistants is usually provided by SENCOs or by means of external courses, both of which have to be funded, in terms of the SENCO's time or the cost of external training. However, schools may be saving on this aspect by not allocating timetabled time for meetings between SENCOs and assistants or by expecting assistants to attend courses in their own time and at their own expense (see Chapter 6).

3.5 Summary points

LEAs

♦ LEAs were attempting to place more pupils with statements in mainstream schools than in special schools but were hampered by insufficient funding or difficulties in funding the transition from one type of school to another.

♦ In the case study LEAs, pupils with special needs but without statements were funded according to proxy indicators such as the numbers of pupils taking free school meals and test results.

Allocation of resources

♦ Teachers felt that the LEA criteria for statutory assessment were becoming stricter, thereby reducing the numbers of pupils eligible for extra support by means of a statement.

♦ Both schools and LEAs were worried about the balance between funding for pupils with statements and funding to cover the needs of pupils without statements, as the more statements that were issued, the less money was available to support other pupils.

♦ Some statements were being issued without extra resources; this resulted in discussion between schools and LEAs as to how funding was being provided.

♦ One of the factors which appeared to be increasing the numbers of pupils with statements was pressure from parents, particularly those whose children had been diagnosed (often by independent educational psychologists) as having specific learning difficulties.

♦ The level of funding received by schools for pupils without statements was dependent on the method used by LEAs to allocate such funding. Some heads felt that the use of free school meals as a proxy indicator disadvantaged their schools.

♦ SENCOs generally had a clear understanding of how the funding for pupils with statements had been allocated but were less sure of the derivation of the sums of money allocated for the support of pupils without statements.

♦ There was concern amongst heads that general cuts in LEA budgets were affecting the levels of support that could be provided to pupils with special needs, thereby creating problems for the schools.

♦ Heads felt that an increase in resources was required both to implement new initiatives, such as the Code of Practice (with its requirements to set up a register and develop individual education plans), and to meet the demands of the National Curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties.

Use of resources

♦ Authorities were using different methods of allocating funds to support statements, with some retaining central control and others delegating the full amounts to schools.

♦ Schools which were able to control the funds preferred this approach as they could allocate support more flexibly to meet pupils' needs.

♦ Where the funding mechanism allowed, schools were employing a mixture of teachers and assistants to provide learning support, thereby providing appropriate levels of expertise and coverage.

Appropriateness of resourcing approaches

♦ When LEAs delegate a high proportion of funds to schools they no longer have the capacity to maintain a comprehensive central support team, unless there is a system for schools to buy back such expertise, so schools have to develop much of their expertise within their own staff.

♦ In two schools without delegated funds for statements, the ability to support the needs of pupils without statements appeared to be limited and the policy was to place pupils in smaller classes rather than employ support assistants. However, this approach was not viewed as particularly effective by SENCOs.

♦ Employing assistants rather than qualified teachers would appear to be more cost-effective but schools will need to take into account the costs of training and supporting assistants and the quality of support that can be provided.

CHAPTER 4

ARRANGEMENTS IN SCHOOL TO SUPPORT PUPILS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

All the case study schools could be classed as 'integrated' as all had pupils with special needs in mainstream classes. However, in order to support those pupils a variety of arrangements was in place. In this chapter the approaches used by schools to provide support are looked at in terms of:

● the organisation of subject groups;

● the extent of in-class and withdrawal support;

● the deployment of staff.

Teachers' and parents' views of these approaches are also reported.

4.1 Subject organisation

All the case study schools used a system of setting pupils for some or all of their lessons. In this section the different arrangements are described as they give an indication of how pupils with special needs were catered for. Table 4.1 shows how the ten case study schools arranged their classes and groups (for the core subjects of mathematics, English and science), according to the information available to the research team.

As the table shows, in Y7 at least half the schools were using mixed-ability groups for mathematics, English and science but its popularity declined rapidly in Years 8 and 9 in science and mathematics, and more gradually in English.

Seven of the case study schools had banding or blocking systems from Y7 (whereby the year group was divided into two) and another from Y8. In some cases, the bands appeared to be have been organised as an administrative convenience, related to the demands of the timetable, and within them pupils might be set for some subjects but not for all. In other cases, the two bands

were seen as hierarchical, with an upper band and a lower; pupils with special needs were most likely to be found in the lower band. Exceptions to this might be pupils with dyslexia or those with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Table 4.1 Grouping arrangements for core subjects

Year	7	8	9
Subject	No. of schools using arrangement		
Mathematics			
mixed ability	5	1	-
sets	1	1	2
sets (bands)	4	8	8
English			
mixed ability	6	4	2
sets	2	3	3
sets (bands)	2	3	5
Science			
mixed ability	5	1	-
sets	1	3	2
sets (bands)	4	6	8

N.B. 'sets (bands)' refers to systems whereby a year group is split into two bands and subject sets are organised within each band.

Mixed-ability groups, particularly in Y7, were seen as a way of making a fresh start with pupils as they began their secondary schooling. Of course, the primary reports had been used by relevant staff to form the mixed-ability tutor groups, in the first place, and were available to subject staff, but despite the development generally of strategies to improve continuity and progression between phases (see, for example, Lee *et al.*, 1995), some teachers preferred to make their own judgements, as the following quotation from a mathematics teacher illustrates:

> *It's important that children come up from the primary school and get an opportunity to shine and flower, even though it creates problems because you might get quite a wide range of ability in one group.*

Another benefit of mixed-ability classes for pupils with learning difficulties was identified by some teachers of English (and other subjects such as history): the pupils would be *'exposed to brighter children'* who would give direct help, when working in pairs or groups, and who, more indirectly, would inspire the less able children by expressing a wider range of ideas.

In subjects like mathematics and science pupils were tested at various points during Y7 and, in many cases, (see Table 4.1) were then grouped into ability related sets. Teachers seemed to like the idea of mixed-ability in Y7, for the reasons given above, but at the same time, many felt that it was not appropriate to continue it into other years because the gaps between the highest achieving and lowest achieving were becoming too great.

Setting, which was used in all the schools by Y9 was done in different ways:
● completely hierarchical across the year e.g. sets 1-7;
● within bands, giving parallel groups e.g. sets 1-3 within each band;
● in broad groups e.g. one top set, two middles and a bottom set;
● any of these methods but with a designated 'special needs' group containing a small number of pupils with the most difficulties.

The benefits of setting for pupils with learning difficulties, in particular, were identified by teachers as:

● it enabled pupils with difficulties to be grouped together so that learning support staff could be targeted at relevant groups;

● it allowed for each class to be taught using appropriate methods and materials;

● it enabled lower sets, in which most of the pupils with learning difficulties would find themselves (except for those with dyslexia, for example), to be kept to a smaller size than upper sets.

The first of these reasons was related to the limited amount of support time which was available in any school: since support could not be provided to all classes at all times, it had to be used in the most efficient and effective way. As one teacher said, *'We have too many pupils who need support compared to the number of people available to provide that support'.* Schools which used predominantly mixed-ability groupings in Y7 tended to focus the support on classes which contained pupils with statements or those known to contain several pupils with difficulties. In higher year groups, when setting was used, learning support teachers and assistants were

generally allocated to the lowest sets or, where these were kept small, to the sets above the bottom (for details see section 4.3). The limited resources also meant that schools were unable to allocate support to their top or middle sets even though this was perceived as a desirable strategy.

One SENCO felt that the benefits of setting and banding, whereby pupils with difficulties would be in 'bottom' sets, were that support could be targeted at those groups and their needs could be directly addressed. He felt that: *'It's important to make a distinction between having a "sink" group and meeting pupils' "needs".'* In this school, flexibility was seen as the key, and although the school used setting and withdrew pupils where necessary, there was a great deal of movement of pupils, since once they had benefited from the focused help at a particular point, they could be easily reintegrated.

As well as the benefits identified by teachers there were certain difficulties associated with setting. For example, a 'bottom' group, containing several pupils with learning difficulties and associated behavioural difficulties, might start being seen as a problem class. As a head of English explained about one such class,

> *... the teacher feels that if there had been mixed-ability groups, as there would have been formerly, it would have been easier. The pupils with the problems would be spread around more evenly whereas at the moment there are lots of problems in that group.*

In several schools, teachers described how the sets had been organised, and sometimes this did not favour their own subject, as they used the same groupings for different subjects because of timetabling (e.g. pupils allocated to modern foreign language sets which were then used as sets for mathematics).

Other difficulties with setting included:

● classes were not always small enough (ranging from about 12 pupils through to 29 in a Y7 bottom set) to be manageable, in that teachers could not give pupils the degree of individual attention they required;

● the range of ability was too great;

● pupils with learning difficulties were sometimes difficult to motivate and their behaviour was often problematic;

● pupils with behavioural difficulties were sometimes put in lower sets because of the learning support presence, even when their achievement levels were potentially higher.

In two schools in one LEA, where there were no classroom assistants, and limited learning support in the school, the policy was based on smaller classes:

> *Special Educational Needs are responded to in some subjects through the policy of setting. This allows, in most cases, for three tutor groups to be split into four teaching groups, set according to ability. The lowest ability group is often the smallest number to allow for more individual support.* (School policy statement)

This approach also required all teachers to take responsibility for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. However, in one of these schools, the SENCO expressed reservations about this approach, feeling that it was more effective to have larger groups across the year but to put learning support staff into relevant classes to provide in-class support, as this would enable some one-to-one teaching/support to take place, within the context of the classroom work. Similar concerns were expressed in the other school as teachers were worried that overall cuts in their budgets meant that even bottom sets were not as small as they had been. Here, under a previous system, subject teachers had been timetabled to support in other lessons, but that system no longer operated, although it was commented on by a science teacher as having been a good idea, since, '*in Y7 (mixed-ability classes) there are the ones who struggle and you go round as much as possible, but you can't help them all at the point at which they need it.*

4.2   In-class and withdrawal approaches to support

All the case study schools provided support to pupils predominantly through in-class procedures (details of which are provided in Chapter 6), but most also operated some system of withdrawal for individuals and, in some schools, for particular groups of pupils.

In four schools, the pupils most likely to be withdrawn for individual teaching or counselling were those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, whilst in the others, sessions were more likely to be focused on the particular learning difficulties identified on the pupil's statement or individual education plan. There was some group withdrawal, which tended to take place within English lessons, to allow for particular skills to be emphasised or within other subjects, to allow for a small group of pupils who were struggling to be taught separately, at a slower pace or using different approaches. This could take place within mixed-ability situations or setted classes, with the emphasis on extracting individuals from any class, if they

needed particular help. This latter system was almost a variation on the setting systems described in section 4.1 whereby 'bottom' sets were created to allow support to be targeted there.

Most teachers, both subject teachers and special needs staff, felt that their school had got the right balance in terms of providing support to pupils in class and extracting them for individual or small group work. In-class support was the main approach adopted and those in favour felt this was right because it:

● allowed pupils to benefit from specialist teaching and facilities (e.g. science laboratories);

● allowed pupils to feel part of the class, even if they had attention from an assistant;

● enabled the subject teacher to monitor the progress of all pupils in the class;

● enabled the learning support teacher to know what was happening in the mainstream classes.

A mathematics teacher in one school felt that in-class support was *'definitely the best way forward'* but she acknowledged that withdrawal was appropriate at times. For example, she felt that if pupils were withdrawn to improve their reading this could only be beneficial in the long run, because it would give them greater access to the curriculum generally, and they would also be able to cope better with the mathematics.

However, some teachers expressed reservations and felt that it would be better if pupils were withdrawn from classes to a greater extent. This was particularly the case where pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties were perceived as creating difficulties for the teacher and disrupting the other pupils.

The views of parents varied according to the experiences of their own children, although all would have liked more than was being provided. Two parents who were generally in favour of in-class support felt that their children would benefit from more support, in more lessons, as the pupils achieved little in the classes in which they received no extra support. Another parent felt that her son would achieve more if he were in small, withdrawal groups for most of his lessons, instead of for just a few. All were, however, resigned to the situation as they knew that resources were limited and that the school and the SENCO were providing support to the best of their ability.

4.3 The deployment of learning support staff

It could be argued that the use of learning support staff to teach and support pupils with special needs is the area in which successful integration stands or falls, since the staffing budget is the largest area of expenditure, in most schools. It is therefore of interest to look at the ways in which schools deploy this expensive resource and to examine whether certain approaches to their employment and deployment appear to be more effective than others. It has already been discussed in Chapter 3 how heads have a certain amount of flexibility in the ways in which they provide support for pupils with and without statements and in this chapter the diversity between schools is clearly visible(see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Availability of learning support staff

	Pupils with statements		SENCO	Other learning support staff	
School	No.	%		Teachers	Assistants
A	38	3.5	1	3.25	5
B	30	5.6	1	2.8	4
C	30	2.7	1	5	3
D	30	2.4	1	1.7	8
E	19	2.7	1	-	4+
F	19	2.0	1	-	10
G	18	2.2	1	>1	8
H	17	1.3	1	1	2+
I*	10	1.1	1	(1)	-
J	5	0.5	1	(1)	-

*This school also had a unit which was staffed separately.

Numbers in brackets represent LEA-based teachers working in schools.

N.B. Numbers of staff are given as full time equivalents, where this could be calculated.

Table 4.2 shows, for each case study school, how many pupils there were with statements (and the percentage of pupils in the school which this represents) and the numbers of learning support staff available to work with them. Staff have been divided into those who are qualified teachers and those who are non-teaching assistants, referred to hereafter as 'learning support assistants', to cover the range of titles adopted within different

support assistants', to cover the range of titles adopted within different schools and LEAs. The numbers of learning support teachers and assistants should be treated with caution, as the ways in which schools calculated this support varied.

It was anticipated that the data expressed in Table 4.2 would show an association between the number (or percentage) of pupils with statements and the numbers of learning support staff available in the school. However, no clear-cut relationship can be seen, as other factors have to be taken into account, such as the grouping arrangements, or situations where other subject staff were available to support colleagues.

The table does reveal something, however, about the balance between teachers (including the SENCO and LEA-based staff) and assistants: in four schools there were more learning support assistants than teachers, three had roughly equal numbers of teachers and assistants, and three had more teachers than assistants. In three authorities, each of the two schools used the same approach to staffing, whether the emphasis was on teachers or assistants. In the two remaining authorities, each school used a different approach.

4.3.1 The role of the SENCO

The role of the SENCO has changed in many schools since the implementation of the Code of Practice and a detailed analysis of the role is provided in the accompanying NFER report on the Code (Derrington *et al.*, 1996). In this report, however, the role of the SENCO is examined in terms of the areas of responsibility and activities which are undertaken and their effect on the successful integration of pupils with special needs.

SENCOs who were interviewed about their role within the school chose to answer the question in a wide range of ways. Some explained about their areas of responsibility as well as describing the arrangements to support pupils, whilst others focused more on the latter than the former. For this reason, information about their role was patchy. Nevertheless, some common aspects of the role emerged, as is discussed below.

Most of the SENCOs had the status of head of department and one was a member of the senior management team. Another was on the middle management team (consisting of the head of language and communication, the head of humanities, the head of mathematics and science, the head of technology and the SENCO), whilst a third was described by the head as '*a sort of "super" head of department'*, although she was not on the senior management team.

In their role as SENCO most people had teaching and support commitments as well as their coordinating and managerial role but there was some variety in the ways in which the teaching and support commitments were fulfilled.

Teaching

All but one of the SENCOs were providing some specific teaching to pupils with learning difficulties using one or more of the following approaches:

- teaching whole classes, either mixed-ability groups often in Y7, or bottom sets in higher year groups, in a range of subjects;

- teaching smaller groups for English or other subjects, usually pupils extracted from the main class, often with a focus on literacy or the particular demands of the subject area;

- teaching individuals or pairs of pupils away from the main class, with a focus on the particular learning difficulties of the individual pupils.

In addition, several SENCOs had regular one-to-one teaching or counselling sessions with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, although this role was sometimes carried out by LEA support service staff.

One SENCO was also head of another subject department, which had helped to raise the status of learning support in the school (she was no longer perceived by other staff as the 'remedial teacher') and taught for some periods a week on this subject. Another SENCO was not a learning support teacher at all, although she provided some alternative teaching for KS4 pupils not following full GCSE courses. She taught a two-thirds timetable of a National Curriculum subject and her post was therefore designated as that of coordinator and manager of special needs only.

The extent to which SENCOs had timetabled teaching varied considerably from the SENCO referred to above, through to another who was timetabled for 13 per cent to work with withdrawn pupils and who spent the rest of the time in-class or working with other pupils or staff. One SENCO described how she taught a full timetable and was responsible for a tutor group, a duty which she hoped to be losing in the following school year.

In-class support

The majority of SENCOs also provided support to subject colleagues in a range of lessons but this role was more often provided either by other learning support teachers or classroom assistants. The SENCO might attend lessons in more of a monitoring role (although s/he would, of course, provide

support if needed), to look at, for example, how particular pupils were coping with particular subjects or the approach being taken by the support assistant, or as a prelude to discussing difficulties identified by subject teachers needing guidance.

Other support

Other staff in the schools visited reported the helpfulness of the SENCO in responding to requests for help with individuals or groups of pupils. They described how the SENCO would discuss with them appropriate strategies for dealing with the difficulties identified.

Coordinating, liaising, managing

Although the interviews did not ask directly about the activities carried out as a result of the introduction of the Code of Practice (because of the NFER project focusing on this area specifically), nevertheless, it was clear that SENCOs were busily engaged in implementing the procedures and practices recommended by the Code. A particular focus of their tasks had been the development and completion of IEPs for pupils at stages 2 and 3 of the Code, the establishment and maintenance of a register of pupils with special educational needs, and the monitoring of progress of pupils at those stages.

In addition to those tasks, SENCOs referred to the following activities and areas of responsibility:

● circulation of information on pupils to all members of staff and regular updating of the information;

● liaising with other staff in school (e.g. year heads, SMT, head of unit (where relevant) support teachers and assistants, departmental representatives);

● monitoring of resources;

● providing INSET on special education issues and ongoing advice and support to colleagues throughout the school;

● meeting other professionals (e.g. LEA support service staff, Educational Psychologists);

● meeting parents;

● liaising with feeder primary schools concerning pupils with identified difficulties;

● planning Y7 tutor groups in conjunction with the Y7 head of year;

● establishing and maintaining links with special schools.

Of course, the particular tasks carried out by SENCOs themselves depended, to some extent, on the availability and skills of other learning support staff - see sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 below. An important part of their role for most of the SENCOs (except for those in one LEA) was organising the work of other learning support staff (teachers and assistants) in terms of:

- allocating them to work with particular pupils or classes or departments;
- guiding them on the ways in which they could provide support;
- asking them to carry out certain administrative tasks;
- providing specific training or support on aspects of special needs.

Several SENCOs commented on the skills and expertise of their learning support assistants and the strengths they brought to their posts.

One head commented on the importance of the SENCO having the necessary skills to be able to delegate responsibility to the support assistants and he and several others praised their SENCO's ability to liaise with subject staff on the deployment of assistants (or support teachers) so that everyone felt that the arrangements were satisfactory.

4.3.2 Learning support teachers

In five of the case study schools the learning support departments included qualified teachers as well as learning support assistants, in addition to the SENCO. In another two, both in the same authority, support for pupils with statements was provided by external, LEA-based staff. In the remaining three schools, the support was provided by the SENCO and the assistants with a little part-time teaching support helping the SENCO in two of those schools. In one of these schools there were also several teachers for bilingual pupils, provided by Section 11 funds (money allocated for the support of pupils whose first language is not English).

The activities carried out by learning support teachers comprised three main types:

- teaching individual pupils on a one-to-one or one-to-two basis;
- teaching lower sets or small(er) extraction groups within certain subjects;
- supporting pupils and colleagues within subject classrooms.

In addition, those with responsibility for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties might carry out individual counselling sessions with the designated pupils on a weekly basis.

In three schools, learning support teachers had particular areas of responsibility within the department. For example, in one school the SENCO and the two teachers divided up all the areas of support in terms of year groups and types of difficulties. In another, two staff had main responsibility, respectively, for: pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties; pupils with learning difficulties (moderate and specific). In this school, two part-time teachers (equivalent to one person) were also mainly involved in working with pupils with dyslexia.

4.3.3   Learning support assistants

In eight of the ten case study schools learning support assistants (LSAs) were employed to carry out a range of tasks. As Table 4.2 showed, the ratio of teachers to LSAs varied and the particular activities carried out by the LSAs were affected by how many teachers were available and how they, too, were deployed.

The main tasks carried out by assistants were as follows:

● supporting an individual pupil in some or most lessons;

● supporting a number of pupils in lessons;

● teaching or counselling individuals or groups of pupils outside the classroom;

● providing support to a whole class, which might include individuals for whom the assistant had a particular responsibility;

● providing support to the teacher by teaching or working with a small group within the class;

● providing support to the teacher by preparing or contributing to the production of additional materials, either for individual pupils or whole classes;

● providing support to the teacher through providing information on the content of IEPs and the needs of individual pupils.

These tasks are much the same as those identified by Fletcher-Campbell with Hall in 1993, with the main difference being the impression given by some of the assistants themselves, SENCOs and subject staff, that when an individual assistant demonstrated significant competence and confidence, he or she was given more responsibility and greater autonomy in deciding what was appropriate to support relevant pupils. Unlike the ancillaries described by Hegarty *et al.* in 1981, the assistants in the current project were

primarily employed to give support for learning rather than physical care, as there were few pupils in the case study schools with significant physical disabilities.

In-class support

In all eight schools, LSAs were involved in providing support in class both to individual pupils, usually those with statements for learning or behavioural difficulties, and to others within the class. In one or two cases, individual pupils received one-to-one support for most of their lessons, but in most classes the LSAs described how they would start by working with the targeted pupil or group of pupils and then they would help others in the class as and when appropriate. In a few cases, the LSA would deliberately avoid working too obviously with a targeted pupil (especially in KS4) in order to foster greater independence or to avoid the pupil being embarrassed.

Allocation of LSA support/time

Most of the SENCOs described how they looked first at the classes in which there were pupils with statements and allocated LSAs to those classes according to the needs (and entitlements) of those pupils. Then they allocated LSA time to other classes in which there was a clear need for support, such as Y7 mixed-ability groups, or lower sets in some subjects. In some schools, depending on how subjects were organised in terms of setting and grouping (see section 4.1 for details), LSAs might be allocated to the classes above the 'bottom' sets as those groups had been reduced to a very small size, and it was the next set up, which might have more than 30 pupils in which the support was needed.

Continuity in the work of LSAs

In most of the schools there was a system of allocating LSAs to subject departments (or faculties), and/or year groups. In six schools, LSAs were either formally attached to a subject department or primarily working in a particular subject, although with either approach, LSAs often worked in other subjects as well. The advantages of this arrangement were pointed out by SENCOs, LSAs themselves, and subject staff, namely: the LSAs became familiar with the subject area and how each topic would be approached, thereby allowing them not only to feel confident about the subject and helping pupils to understand but also (with the subject staff) to develop a bank of appropriate materials. It was also sometimes possible to allocate LSAs to the subject areas in which they already had the most confidence, expertise or interest. Where these links operated, LSAs were also seen, to a greater or lesser extent, as members of the subject department and were invited to departmental meetings, subject related sessions on INSET days and, sometimes, departmental social activities.

In one school with some nominal attachment to departments, learning support staff pointed out the disadvantage of having to attend not only their own departmental meetings but also those of their associated subject department. In other schools with links of this kind, learning support staff were welcomed to department meetings but not obliged to attend.

In most of the schools, there were attempts to maintain continuity by moving LSAs with the class from one year to the next. In at least three schools LSAs also tended to work within particular age groups, for example, in Key Stage 4 or Y7.

In all the schools using LSAs, whether attached to pupils, year groups or departments, there were concerns about the lack of continuity in the support. Despite the best efforts of the SENCO, the timetable, and the teachers, not all lessons had a support person and when they did, it was not always the same person. This lack of continuity reduced the effectiveness of the support, as described by one assistant,

> *You need the same person to go to the lessons; otherwise, if you haven't been for a week, you can spend 20 minutes picking up on what they have been doing in the past week so you can't really help the child as much as you would like. They also need consistency as they need you to be giving the same messages that the teacher has given and if you haven't been there, you might not do that.*

4.3.4   Other support

In addition to the use of learning support staff to work with pupils with difficulties or to discuss strategies and materials with staff, in some schools, there were instances of subject departments organising the timetable so that, for example, four subject teachers might be available to teach three classes. This enabled a range of strategies to be employed: team teaching; one teacher focusing on the pupils with difficulties or on those needing to be extended; one teacher taking out a small group to work on particular aspects of the topic. In most cases, the additional member of staff was from the relevant subject department although occasionally a teacher from another department might be involved.

In six schools, information was received on the system which they had established of each department having a special needs link person who would attend termly meetings run by the SENCO. At these meetings, a range of matters would be discussed such as:

● the progress of individual pupils;
● incidents relating to particular classes;

- the development, completion and use of IEPs;

- broader issues such as the development of policy or meeting particular kinds of needs.

The other case study schools may have also had this system in place but it was not referred to in the interviews.

This system was perceived as useful by the SENCO and by subject staff who often saw their link person as a valuable first point of reference. The role of the link person varied from that of the contact point for exchanging information to that where they were involved in providing support and guidance to colleagues in the department.

4.4 Appropriateness of approaches to support

The ways in which schools choose to use their resources to support pupils with learning difficulties may affect the extent to which pupils benefit from their school experience. In this section there is some discussion of the appropriateness of the different approaches reported above.

The organisation of subject groups

The arrangements made by schools to produce small lower sets for pupils with learning difficulties, whereby support could be targeted and appropriate methodology chosen, would seem at first glance to be beneficial for such pupils. However, some qualifications can be made:

- If you have a group of pupils with learning difficulties (and maybe associated behavioural difficulties) all together, there are no positive role models available, the teacher may be the only source of ideas and information, and the group may be perceived as difficult to teach.

- Although 'bottom' sets were intended to be 'smaller' they still might contain up to 20 pupils, thereby inevitably containing pupils with a wide range of abilities and needs, so making it more difficult for teachers to select materials and methods appropriate to all the pupils. Even in smaller groups of, say, 15 pupils, the extent to which teachers can provide the individualised support needed by pupils is inevitably limited.

This would indicate that setting, *per se*, may not be sufficient to ensure that pupils are gaining access to the curriculum and making appropriate progress.

Support in-class and withdrawal

The data suggest that those schools which have fewer learning support teachers and more assistants are less likely to do group withdrawal, than those with a balance in favour of teachers. This is not surprising, since when pupils are withdrawn for specific teaching this is usually carried out by qualified teaching staff and if such staff are not available, the approach cannot be used.

The reasons in favour of in-class support have been discussed in section 4.2 above, although most teachers seemed to accept that some withdrawal might be appropriate, for specific purposes. It is argued by some that pupils benefit both socially and academically from being in class with their peers but the current research suggests that in classes where there are no support staff, pupils with learning difficulties may struggle to keep up (see Chapter 5). If those pupils are withdrawn for more specialist teaching, then work can be targeted more closely to their needs, but several problems with this approach can be identified:

● pupils in small withdrawal classes may not be sufficiently challenged and inspired to the extent that they would be in mainstream classes with specialist subject teachers;

● pupils may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to be in separate classes (see Chapter 5);

● schools may not have sufficient learning support staff to extract pupils for separate teaching;

● learning support staff may not be able to provide the subject expertise needed to teach pupils outside the main lessons.

The conclusion might be that pupils should be in mainstream classes for the majority of their timetable with extraction only for specific skills teaching (usually literacy or numeracy related) which might best be timetabled to take place whilst their peers are also studying English and mathematics. On the other hand, pupils may learn basic skills more effectively in the context of a wide range of classroom activities, (see, for example, NCC, 1989) and should not be excluded from poetry, drama and speaking and listening opportunities. It is clearly essential that the SENCO or another designated person should examine the opportunities provided for pupils, both in class and in small groups, and ensure that pupils are exposed to the full range of experience in each curriculum area.

Deployment of staff

There are clear benefits from having learning support staff in classrooms, since pupils with difficulties have (at least) two adults to whom they can turn for help, but are there differences between having a learning support teacher or an assistant in the classroom?

From the case study data, it would appear that the roles of the two kinds of learning support staff were not identical. The teachers, obviously, had more specialised skills and knowledge and, in some senses, had a much more autonomous role than the assistants. Several of the teachers referred to had gained qualifications in particular areas, such as dyslexia, and when working with individual pupils, tended to use a range of teaching techniques. When providing in-class support, there were instances cited of the learning support teacher sharing the main teaching of the lesson or taking over a section of the lesson to ensure that pupils had fully understood. However, there were fewer teachers available than assistants, and their time was allocated to the pupils and classes with the greatest needs, and they were very often not available to provide support to pupils with less significant difficulties.

Assistants, on the other hand, could be found in greater numbers and in some schools, as Table 4.2 showed, were the main or only source of support, in addition to the SENCO. Their role was seen as valuable by teachers, pupils and parents, and many appreciative comments were made. How they fulfilled their role varied greatly, according to their own skills and confidence, the system in place for using their time and the attitudes of subject staff.

In terms of the first of these factors, it would appear that the system of allocating LSAs to subject areas was the most beneficial in terms of enabling them to develop familiarity and confidence in the subject. In particular, this became clear when subject staff admitted that they often had little time to discuss in advance with the LSA the content of forthcoming lessons; this was less important when the LSA already knew what to expect. In addition, their knowledge of the topics combined with their knowledge of the pupils they were supporting enabled them to ensure that appropriate materials were available. On the other hand, it might be better for individual pupils if particular learning support staff were attached to them and followed them through all their lessons, as the LSA would then be completely familiar with those pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

The system in place for using their time obviously affected their role, in that if they were attached to a specific pupil (rather than a department or class) their task was to provide support to the pupil rather than to the teacher, and therefore, the opportunities for them to work with other pupils or prepare materials of benefit to other pupils were much reduced.

Subject staff were generally very pleased with the support provided by the LSAs (in each school, it was reported that there were only one or two teachers who did not like having LSAs in their classes) and wished that more such support were available. They seemed to welcome in particular the presence of LSAs who worked with the whole class rather than with one or two designated pupils, although they were aware that the system did not always allow for this, or that some assistants felt less confident about playing a more general role within the classroom. This broader role was identified by interviewees as being more challenging for LSAs, requiring them to call on a wider range of skills, but at the same time, it was seen by some LSAs as more rewarding, for precisely that reason.

In general, it would appear that where there were more LSAs and fewer teachers the role of the former was more proactive and viewed as more professional whereas where there were relatively few LSAs their role was seen very much as supportive or even subordinate to that of the teacher.

In the schools visited, senior staff, the SENCO and subject staff felt that the LSAs they were currently employing were a valuable resource, as described elsewhere, but it was also made clear that it took time and appropriate guidance and support (from the SENCO and more experienced LSAs) for them to develop the expertise and confidence which would allow them to perform so well. In two schools with little experience of using LSAs and thinking of introducing them, there would perhaps be an interim period in which the SENCO and other staff might find them an extra burden, because of the need to guide and manage them, rather than a positive support.

Although several different approaches to deploying staff were found, with some appearing to provide greater job satisfaction and enhanced skills than others, the greatest concern from learning support staff and subject teachers (and parents) was that there were insufficient resources to allow for support to be provided to all the pupils who needed it whenever they needed it.

4.5 Summary points

Subject organisation

♦ In the case study schools, most pupils with learning difficulties were in mixed-ability classes in Y7, and then placed in lower ability sets from Y8 in some or most subjects.

♦ Setting was perceived as a useful arrangement as it allowed pupils with difficulties to be grouped together and support provided to those classes.

♦ Teachers felt that they could select more appropriate materials and methods for pupils with learning difficulties when they were grouped together in lower or bottom sets.

♦ On the other hand, sets could lead to a number of pupils with behavioural difficulties associated with their learning difficulties being grouped together, making the class difficult to manage.

♦ Bottom sets, even when the number of pupils was small, could still contain a wide range of ability, making it difficult to target work appropriately.

♦ In schools without learning support assistants, pupils with learning difficulties were in small sets, and class teachers had sole responsibility for meeting the needs of their pupils.

Approaches to support

♦ All the case study schools provided support to pupils predominantly through in-class procedures, although most operated some system of partial withdrawal.

♦ In-class support was favoured as it allowed pupils to benefit from specialist teaching and facilities and to feel part of the class. It also ensured that both subject teachers and support staff were aware of pupils' progress and needs.

♦ Pupils tended to be withdrawn from mainstream classes on a temporary basis, either for part of a term, part of a week, or on occasions when the need arose.

♦ Some subject teachers felt that some pupils should be withdrawn to a greater extent, especially those who had behavioural difficulties.

The deployment of learning support staff

♦ Apart from two schools which had only a SENCO and LEA support teachers, all the others had support teachers and/or assistants in addition to the SENCO.

♦ The role of the SENCO is key to ensuring that pupils with difficulties are supported in school and the job descriptions of staff in the case study schools were demanding.

♦ SENCOs had responsibility for teaching, supporting, managing and coordinating within the school, and both internal and external liaison.

♦ Learning support staff were greatly appreciated by most subject teachers and requests for their presence outnumbered the available staff hours.

♦ Problems of continuity, whereby different staff covered lessons with the same class in the course of a week, were cited by both subject teachers and learning support staff, but all recognised that this was due to limited resources.

♦ When allocating learning support staff, SENCOs tried to provide continuity by attaching them to departments or year groups, so that they could familiarise themselves with the subject areas to be covered.

Other support

♦ Other support was provided in some departments by the allocation of extra subject staff to teach classes, allowing smaller classes or a focus on group work.

♦ In six schools, each department had a special needs link person who attended regular meetings with the SENCO and other departmental representatives, at which individual pupils and broader issues were discussed. These designated staff acted as a valuable liaison point for subject colleagues and learning support staff.

Appropriateness of arrangements for support

♦ Using sets to group pupils with learning difficulties together may make it easier to target methods, materials and support staff, but can lead to classes which may be difficult to manage, given the range of needs pupils may have.

♦ Most of the schools seemed to have adopted an appropriate balance between mostly mainstream participation for pupils with learning difficulties, with some withdrawal for some pupils, for specific teaching.

♦ Learning support staff appeared to gain in confidence and competence when they were attached to a subject department; through the development of experience and expertise in the area, they could provide more effective support to pupils.

♦ Teachers and parents wished that more support were available for more pupils for more of the time, to enable greater participation in the curriculum.

ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM FOR PUPILS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

In the previous chapter there was discussion of the ways in which subjects were organised and staff were deployed to support pupils. In this chapter, the discussion focuses on how staff provided support in terms of the strategies they used, and how successful this appeared to be for pupils. The main focus is on the approaches used in mainstream classes. The data in this chapter are drawn from the visits to all ten case study schools in the spring term, 1996 and visits to eight of the schools during the summer term of 1996.

5.1 Subject teacher support for pupils with learning difficulties

5.1.1 Use of information on pupils' needs

Teachers had received information on Y7 pupils (the majority of whom were in mixed-ability groups), from the learning support staff, as well as pastoral staff, as reported in Chapter 4 but indicated that they preferred to make their own judgements in the course of the first term. This might imply that the work set might be inappropriate for a proportion of the class, until the teachers had had time to confirm their judgements, but no teacher identified this as a problem.

In addition, although most subject teachers had seen or had access to individual education plans for pupils at stages 2 and 3 of the Code (and information related to statements), their comments in interviews suggested that they did not use them in any systematic way. When questioned about their usefulness, subject teachers' responses included the following:

● IEPs were read and taken note of when received but less so subsequently;

● since learning support staff knew the individual needs and targets there was less need for the subject teacher to be fully aware of them;

● as experienced teachers they were able to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses fairly rapidly without needing to refer to the IEP;

- when pupils were in sets by ability all the pupils in the lowest sets had similar needs, such as literacy and numeracy problems, so it was not necessary to have detailed information on individual pupils.

These findings were reflected in the Code of Practice project, in which secondary teachers reported similar reactions to the value of IEPs, despite their relatively enthusiastic reception in primary schools (Derrington *et al.*, 1996).

A (secondary) teacher of mathematics explained some of the practical difficulties:

> *With the numbers of pupils that teachers have across all their classes it is very difficult to remember what each pupil's needs are and what you are supposed to give them in terms of what they need. For example, a particular pupil may need to be given only one instruction at a time, so you have to try and keep going back when they have finished one task to tell them what to do for the next task. But you don't always remember to go back because you are involved in working with another pupil, so that causes problems.*

In only a few of the schools visited had subject teachers been personally involved in contributing to the IEP in terms of identifying how pupils' needs could be met within their subject. The staff who had been involved in this way tended to be those who had responsibility for special needs within the department and who attended link meetings with the special needs staff. The development and use of IEPs had commonly been discussed at such meetings.

Subject teachers accepted their responsibility for pupils with difficulties, but when learning support staff were present in lessons, teachers often depended on them to mediate and enable pupils with learning difficulties to gain access to what was presented in the lesson. Using the learning support staff in this way was the most common strategy for helping pupils, referred to by teachers. Details of how learning support staff carried out this role, and their contribution to the production of differentiated materials are provided in sections 5.2 and 5.3.

However, when no support was available, teachers recognised that additional strategies were required. A small number of teachers identified the more general features of their practice (described below) which they thought were of benefit to pupils with learning difficulties (and which can be seen to be of benefit to all pupils). These comments were mostly elicited in the course of the second case study visit to eight schools from teachers who had allowed

the researcher to observe and participate in a lesson (see Appendix 3). The comments came mainly from teachers of English and science as the majority of classes observed were in those subjects, although a small number of lessons in other subjects, including mathematics, were observed and teachers interviewed. Classes observed tended to be mixed-ability in Y7 and setted (i.e. the lowest sets) in other year groups, in order to observe different kinds of approaches. The outcomes of these observations have also contributed to the discussion below on strategies.

5.1.2   Teaching strategies

As well as differentiating materials, such as worksheets or tests (see section 5.2), teachers realised that their teaching style needed to be appropriate to the differing strengths and weaknesses of the pupils in each class. The kinds of strategies put forward by teachers for the benefit of pupils with learning difficulties fell into two main categories: those which related to the interpersonal dimension and those which related to specific aspects of classroom practice. Although the comments were made in relation to the most effective ways of meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, it is clear that the strategies are equally appropriate for meeting the needs of all pupils.

Interpersonal strategies

- Teachers stressed the need for pupils with difficulties to be given lots of encouragement and praise.

- Humour was seen as an important component of a lesson.

- Respect by the teacher for all pupils was seen as crucial by one teacher.

- The need to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem was widely recognised and this could be facilitated by setting appropriate tasks and providing appropriate support for pupils to complete the tasks successfully.

- Teachers needed to be flexible and adaptable so as to meet pupils' needs as they arose, and amend the lesson if necessary.

General classroom strategies

- Pupils with difficulties could be put into pairs or groups with pupils who were more able (e.g. in English, in one school, pupils worked with a 'writing partner' for looking at drafts and discussing amendments); this was seen as especially beneficial in mixed-ability classrooms.

- Instructions and explanations needed to be clear and precise and, wherever possible, backed up by written versions (on the board or on worksheets). This also applied to the setting of homework.

- Question and answer sessions with the whole class needed to be tailored to the capabilities of different members of the class.

- Lessons needed to be pitched at a level which challenged pupils but at the same time allowed them to succeed.

- Lessons needed to concentrate on the fundamental components of topics and not become over-complex.

- Opportunities needed to be provided for pupils to indicate that they had not understood.

Although most of the strategies listed above applied across subjects, some more specific approaches were described by a small number of teachers. However, as the lists below illustrate, some of these approaches are applicable to other subject areas.

English strategies:

* guiding pupils to choose appropriate texts;
* ensuring that all pupils get an opportunity to answer questions;
* getting pupils to work in pairs or groups first to prepare for whole class discussions;
* rote learning of, for example, grammatical rules, where appropriate;
* work on drafting and redrafting writing before producing the final version;
* for lower sets, teacher reduction of texts (e.g. Romeo and Juliet) to a manageable summary;
* use of word processors or lap top computers for pupils with dyslexia.

Science strategies:

* making clear at the beginning of the lesson what is to be covered;
* guiding pupils through experiments, stage by stage, rather than letting them work alone;
* giving time limits for the completion of tasks;
* careful phrasing of questions;
* allowing the least able pupils to use worksheets for written work, thereby providing them with support and reducing the amount of writing required or the need to reproduce diagrams;

* providing pupils with summaries of topics, highlighting the key scientific terminology;
* ensuring plenty of repetition and reinforcement of material;
* when looking at pupils' written work, concentrating on developing accurate spelling of scientific terms rather than other words;
* providing a mixture of whole class and individualised teaching to enable the teacher to respond to individual needs.

Mathematics strategies:
* using appropriate course materials and schemes;
* getting pupils to read questions aloud to the teacher;
* getting pupils to describe their processes of working verbally rather than insisting on written explanations;
* encouraging pupils to 'have a go' and emphasising that making mistakes is helpful as that is how we learn;
* giving pupils opportunities to self-correct work before teacher marks it;
* using a computer programme to develop numeracy skills.

In general, the strategies required to teach pupils with learning difficulties in mixed-ability classes did not appear to differ from those needed for pupils in lower sets, although their application varied according to the particular context. Views on the appropriateness of mixed-ability versus setted classes are discussed in Chapter 4 but, on the whole, teachers appeared to find it easier to teach pupils in setted classes.

However, despite the apparent advantages of having sets, some teachers still found it difficult to meet the needs of all the pupils in the class. The reasons for difficulties identified varied according to the subject but included:

Science
* it was not always easy to reduce topics, particularly the more abstract ones, to a level at which they would be meaningful to lower ability pupils;
* pupils were required to carry out investigations as independently as possible yet many pupils in lower sets lacked the confidence and the skills to do this and needed a well structured and supported approach; it was not always possible to provide this in larger groups of pupils;
* many teachers were still not confident and knowledgeable about the most effective strategies to use for pupils whose levels of achievement were well below what they were accustomed to.

> **Mathematics**
>
> * School Mathematics Project (SMP) materials specifically targeted at the least able, were not always appropriate for the whole class, even where the group was setted;
> * courses such as SMP could be disruptive when pupils were carrying out investigations or experiments;
> * pupils who were not very skilful at mathematics liked doing 'sums' but were not able to cope with the demands of 'problems';
> * pupils were not encouraged to listen carefully at primary school (as they were used to 'switching off' during multi-activity lessons) and needed to be taught to do so.

A more encouraging finding, however, was that many of the teachers taking the 'bottom' sets or other classes containing several pupils with learning difficulties were those with experience of, or an interest in, teaching those classes. This was particularly the case for the teachers who took responsibility for special needs within their department. Of course, this practice was not comprehensive, but it does suggest that the conditions were favourable for the development of further strategies for dealing with some of the identified difficulties.

An illustration of the experience of pupils being taught by a subject teacher without learning support staff present is provided below. It exemplifies some of the positive strategies employed by teachers and some of the difficulties found.

> **Situation**
>
> *This was a science lesson with Y9 pupils in the bottom set of three, in a half year group. The teacher was the SENCO, a former science teacher. Twenty two out of 25 pupils were present. Several pupils had special needs, one with a statement.*
>
> *The lesson took place in a science laboratory, with no support staff.*
>
> *The broad aim of the lesson was for pupils to develop their skills at carrying out investigations and the specific objective was for them to try to understand how to carry out fair tests, by investigating the absorbency properties of different materials.*

Positive strategies

The teacher gave clear explanations and instructions at the beginning of the lesson, explained the use of the worksheet and identified the materials and equipment they would be working with. The whole class discussion was important but not maintained for too long, and pupils appeared to be attending.

All the pupils had the same task and the same worksheet and recording sheet but the teacher circulated and worked with pairs and groups of pupils, not just checking that they were carrying out the task, but questioning, discussing and explaining the issues.

Halfway through the activity the teacher stopped the class, asked all the pupils to listen and went through the work. She elicited from the pupils two appropriate methods, discussed them further and then asked all pupils to try out one of these methods for their remaining tests. This resulted in even those pupils who had been somewhat lost, being able to complete the task more appropriately.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher collected in the worksheets and then kept back two pupils who had done little work (as they clearly preferred playing with the materials to measuring their absorbency), in order to agree a time for them to come back and carry out the investigation under her direct supervision.

Difficulties

With 22 pupils carrying out investigations in a laboratory, there was plenty of scope for pupils to appear engaged in the task whilst actually doing very little work; several pupils appeared to take advantage of this (although the teacher was aware of this and took appropriate action later, as described above).

The teacher had explained beforehand that the National Curriculum requires that pupils learn to carry out investigations as independently as possible, but when the pupils lack confidence as well as relevant skills, and are used to being guided and supported in their work, there is an inevitable tension. She felt that the teacher had two options: either to provide a very structured task with a

demonstration from the front and pupils working in lockstep, or to take the approach she had adopted, and be prepared for some pupils to struggle.

It was not clear to the observer whether pupils had grasped the concept of a fair test, although most appeared to have drawn accurate conclusions about the absorbency of the different materials. The broad aim of the lesson was fulfilled, but further work on the specific objective would presumably take place in subsequent lessons.

In a number of schools, pupils with learning difficulties were put into small groups for English or mathematics, either for an intensive period or for some of their lessons, so that appropriate teaching of basic skills could be provided. An illustration of one such lesson is provided below.

Situation
This was a Y7 English lesson with the lowest set. Twelve pupils were taught by a member of the learning support team. Two pupils had statements whilst all the others were on stages 1 to 3 of the Code. A support assistant for the two pupils with statements was also present.

The pupils were working on a programme of basic literacy skills development, to raise their ability in reading, spelling and phonic understanding.

Strategies
The pupils were completing phonic worksheets. A list of words was on the board, all with final consonant blends 'nt/nd or mp'. The support assistant sat near the two pupils with statements and provided reassurance to them. All the pupils seemed to be able to complete the sheets with minimal assistance, and they were able to collect a new sheet once they had completed the previous one, ensuring that there was no time wasted waiting for others. The tasks themselves were designed to match the needs of older pupils with low-level literacy skills.

The teacher mainly remained at the front of the class and intervened in any disagreements between pupils or provided help when required.

At the end of the lesson pupils were asked to read a word from the board before they left the room. The pupils (all boys except one) seemed quite confident about this and appeared (to the researcher) to be implying that the work was easy for them. This suggested that their self-esteem was high.

Difficulties

The class appeared to be quite difficult to manage and interactions between pupils were potentially confrontational. The teacher, therefore, needed to keep tight control of the class and had to restrict her role.

The work set, although at an appropriate level, did not appear to be particularly challenging or stimulating and, from the way pupils were seated, it appeared that there were few opportunities for pupils to interact with each other. However, these pupils were only in this small group for three out of five periods a week, so perhaps in the other two lessons, more varied activities were carried out, and the researcher was not informed of how this lesson fitted in with other activities.

The two examples show contrasting approaches to working with pupils with learning difficulties. In the first, opportunities are provided for pupils to explore and develop their thinking in new areas, but some may struggle or deploy avoidance tactics; in the second, pupils can gain a feeling of achievement through their successful completion of tasks, but may not find the activities very motivating. Given the benefits and disadvantages of each approach, both may have a part to play within a range of strategies and organisational arrangements established to cater for the differing needs of individual pupils.

5.2 Differentiation

Since many subject teachers indicated that even with setted classes, they were still expected to teach pupils with a wide range of abilities, the obvious strategy required was to differentiate the tasks, materials, and teaching and learning styles, according to the differing needs of the pupils in the class. This is not a new situation and 'differentiation' has been a focus of training courses and published guidance for some years (see, for example, Stradling *et al.*, 1991; *Special Children* resource packs throughout 1994 and 1995). Despite this emphasis, subject teachers interviewed and observed appeared to address it in different ways, with the main approaches to differentiation as follows:

- to use the LSA, where present, to provide support to those pupils who needed it (see section 5.3);
- to give individual help to pupils when they were engaged in tasks;
- to provide 'simpler' activities or worksheets for some pupils;
- to expect less in terms of the outcomes of the activities.

The kind of approach adopted depended, to some extent, on whether the class was mixed-ability or a lower set. Differentiation in terms of materials and activities at different levels was more common in mixed-ability groups, to cater for the wide range, whereas in setted groups teachers felt that differentiation had already taken place by having placed the pupils in a group with similar levels of ability.

The vast majority of interviewees indicated that they saw the responsibility for differentiation as being shared between subject staff and learning support staff, although the formal responsibility was the subject teacher's. In practical terms, some subject teachers described how they would prepare the materials but ask the learning support staff to comment or amend them; others admitted that they tended to leave it more or less to the learning support staff, who knew the individual needs of pupils better. One science teacher felt that *'ideally it is the learning support person who takes responsibility and prepares the materials'*. This was in a school where the learning support staff comprised several qualified teachers as well as assistants, whereas in other schools, in-class support was provided by assistants, who might not be able (or required) to take such responsibility.

Several teachers regretted that fact that they did not have time to plan ahead and prepare appropriately for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, but felt that this was compensated for by the work done by the learning support staff. For the effect of this on the work of learning support staff and their views on differentiation, see section 5.3.

Across the schools, it was clear that not only the setting and grouping arrangements but also the particular subject area affected the way in which differentiation was addressed. Some examples of approaches to differentiation, taken from teachers' comments on both mixed-ability and setted situations, are provided below.

English

Differentiation by outcome was seen as appropriate in English, with a typical lesson comprising an initial whole class introduction and input by the subject teacher followed by individual or paired/grouped tasks. These tasks or activities might be set at different levels of difficulty but, more commonly, differentiation was provided by:

- the amount of support given to pupils (by the teacher or the learning support person), in terms of:
  * further explanations;
  * more detailed questioning;
  * a class reader put on to tape for pupils with difficulties so that they could play it several times.

- the achievements expected, for example:
  * pupils with reading difficulties read aloud much shorter sections of text than their more able classmates;
  * in a writing activity, pupils with difficulties would be expected to produce much shorter pieces.

Simpler tasks might be provided, although in one Y9 lesson observed, such a task was perceived by the researcher as neither challenging nor interesting.

In one class (the bottom set), materials and methods were tailored to small groups, as the class was regularly split into two or three smaller groups, according to the number of LSAs present.

One teacher referred to 'differentiation by attendance' by which she meant that the poor attendance of some pupils in lower sets resulted in pupils having covered different areas and having reached quite different stages, so when they were present they needed individually targeted teaching.

Science

Teachers of science in four schools referred to the fact that their materials were differentiated at three levels. This was expressed as the 'must/should/ could' approach (whereby some topics **must** be covered by all pupils, some **should** be covered by most pupils and others **could** be covered by some pupils) or alternatively, as basic/core/extension work. Two teachers mentioned the 'Spotlight Science' materials which provided 'help' and 'extension' sheets as well as useful teacher notes.

However, as heads of department in two of these schools pointed out, having the materials is only the first step: the big challenge is how to manage differentiation in class.

When referring to a mixed-ability science class, one teacher explained that she had insufficient time to give appropriate levels of support to either the weakest pupils or the brighter ones, and that she found herself forced to teach to the middle, an unsatisfactory approach. She thought that having a learning support assistant in the class would have been valuable but the school had none.

In one school, a difficult low set Y7 class, with 29 pupils, had been split into two, with two science teachers, thereby enabling those with the most difficulties to be given teaching more precisely matched to their needs. However, this strategy could only be adopted because two scientists were available; had the support been provided by a learning support assistant, a different strategy would have been needed.

Mathematics

In mathematics, schools tended to have already produced differentiated materials or to be in the process of developing them further. In one school, the LSA supporting in Y7 was spending a proportion of her time on developing appropriate materials for that year group. In another school, differentiated modules and homework activities were available, giving, for example, approaches to carrying out investigations which would have more limited aims or offer pupils more structured support. This school also mentioned using computer programmes for revision (for all pupils, but especially those of lower ability) and extension (for more able pupils).

In several schools, pupils with significant difficulties in mathematics were taught in separate, 'numeracy' groups until they could rejoin the main class, but the materials used were linked to those used in the main class. In one school the mathematics department had prepared 'should know' and 'could know' materials for use by the learning support department.

One type of mathematics scheme was used in at least two schools but had been abandoned by others; this was the SMP course. Those who liked it referred to its approach to individualised learning, thereby enabling pupils to work at their own pace, whereas those who no longer used it explained that the individualised approach was no longer appropriate when pupils were working within the National Curriculum. As with the other subjects, there was a view that once pupils had been allocated to appropriate ability groups, the main need was for the teacher and learning support staff to help individuals as and when required.

In one class that was observed, pupils were working through computer programmes, at their own pace, but the observer felt that the level of the exercises was too low (KS1/2 material) whilst the language required to read and understand the instructions was too high.

In terms of subject differences, therefore, in English, differentiation was more by outcome (achievements expected) and support given; in mathematics and science, both those approaches were used but there was more emphasis on differentiated materials and activities. In all subjects, the lower/bottom set was mostly treated as a homogenous group in terms of materials and methods, with any apparent lack of access by individuals met by the adults present.

However, the extent to which the one-to-one support was provided depended on whether learning support staff were present, and if so, whether their prime responsibilities were to a specific pupil or pupils, or to the whole class. If the individual support depended on the teacher, classroom observations would suggest that this was not done systematically and that when teachers are 'going round the class' whilst pupils are working on tasks, the particular support given may not necessarily correspond closely with the identified needs of the pupils.

Also, the effect on pupils of being given different worksheets or tasks has to be considered. Some teachers stressed that the worksheets looked identical even when there were differences (although it is not clear how this worked, in practice), whilst others expressed doubts about the appropriateness of having pupils in the class who were carrying out very different tasks. An example from one school is given below.

In a home economics lesson the teacher had prepared a different task and accompanying worksheet for 'John', a boy with moderate learning difficulties. The rest of the class was studying the chemical properties of nutrients whilst John was being asked to cut out labels for parts of the body and stick them on to a picture of the body. The LSA accompanying him eventually withdrew him from the class at his request, as he had felt embarrassed doing it in front of the rest of the class.

Both the teacher and the LSA thought that the task was suitable, in terms of his level of working, and neither appeared to have tried to find an alternative activity, in the light of John's reaction.

Where such situations arise, or where some pupils spend most of the time carrying out tasks which are substantially different from those completed by the majority of their classmates, there have to be questions about whether those pupils are functionally integrated. According to Allan (1994) who found evidence of similar types of differentiated activity in the Scottish context, *'Official documents appear to recognise examples of this kind as appropriate means of differentiation (SCCC, 1993; SOED, 1993) within mainstream classes in general'* (p.163).

5.3   Support provided by learning support staff

As reported in Chapter 4, learning support staff were expected to fulfil a number of different roles in the classroom (and outside it). In this section the details of their work to support pupils with difficulties and their relationships with pupils and subject staff are reported.

Although in some schools there were both learning support teachers and assistants, many of the tasks carried out by them were similar. The main distinction was in terms of the amount of specific teaching provided to individual pupils on a withdrawal basis, which was more likely to be carried out by teachers than assistants (though not exclusively). In this section, therefore, the support provided by all learning support staff to pupils, particularly in mainstream classes, will be considered together. Obvious differences arising from the status of the person will be noted.

In most of the schools visited there was an emphasis on support being provided in-class wherever possible, with pupils withdrawn for specific teaching or small group work to focus on basic skills. The main tasks of the learning support staff were described in Chapter 4, but in this chapter there is discussion of how they carried out their tasks.

5.3.1   Main functions of learning support staff

Learning support staff were asked to identify the main aspects of their role and, despite some variation in the expressions used, the key functions were common to all. They consisted of:

● providing pupils with emotional support, giving encouragement, and helping to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem;

● befriending and counselling pupils, and providing pupils with the opportunity to talk to someone other than the teacher, which many pupils found easier;

- teaching, helping and guiding pupils on particular tasks or with particular skills;

- producing differentiated materials for targeted pupils or providing instant support in terms of simplifying materials or tasks for pupils to understand and perform activities;

- helping maintain good discipline either by their presence (that is, two adults in the room) or through specific attention to pupils who might be disruptive.

How they actually carried out these functions varied according to several factors:

- the school policy on whether they worked with individual pupils, several pupils or were available to help the whole class;

- the ways in which teachers preferred them to work (see below);

- the personalities of the pupils they worked with;

- the mood of the pupils, the teacher and the support person on any particular day.

In some schools, the policy was for learning support staff to be attached to individual pupils whereas in others they were attached to departments, year groups or specific classes, with a more wide-ranging brief. The nature of the policy obviously determined to some extent how subject teachers and learning support staff worked together, but where there was some flexibility, the teachers' own preferences took priority. This meant that some teachers wanted them to work with designated pupils (usually those with statements) whilst others liked having general support to the whole class. Some teachers saw the role of support staff primarily as dealing with the pupils with special needs so that the teachers could work with the rest of the class.

Unless this latter approach was prescribed by school policy, most learning support staff seemed to prefer the more flexible role whereby they could provide support to other pupils, as long as designated pupils were achieving appropriately. They gave three reasons in support of this view: it was important for the targeted pupils to develop some independence and not rely on the support person, whilst at the same time, knowing that the support was there; if support staff were seen to work with all members of the class it made it more acceptable for the pupils with special needs to be seen to receive support; they felt that teachers viewed their presence more positively when they supported across the class.

Both subject teachers and learning support staff stressed the need for the latter to be flexible, and this was particularly the case for adopting appropriate strategies with the pupils. As several LSAs pointed out, they had to take account of pupils' personalities, which meant that some required an 'assertive' approach whilst others responded well to coaxing and persuasion. In addition, pupils responded differently in different classes, affected by the teacher, their peers and their own particular mood on the day, so the LSA had to take that into consideration and revise plans if necessary.

It is, of course, helpful for support staff to plan their work if they have advance knowledge of the content of the lesson but, as shown in Chapter 4, this was not always the case. It was a common problem, as is discussed in section 5.3.4, but of less significance in certain circumstances: when support staff were attached to departments they became familiar with the syllabus, schemes of work and timing of activities; support staff with experience of the school over several years also had a good idea of what to expect in particular lessons and could prepare accordingly; some teachers organised and introduced work in ways which made it easy for the support staff to know what to expect. One SENCO also pointed out that if support staff had too much advance information there was a danger that subject teachers would not take full responsibility for the pupils with special needs but would leave them to the care of the support staff, which was inappropriate.

5.3.2 Main strategies used

In section 5.1 the strategies employed by subject teachers to provide support for pupils with learning difficulties were discussed. The strategies used by support staff were complementary to those strategies and depended to a great extent on the approaches adopted by the teachers. The strategies listed below are drawn from the comments of support staff themselves and from the lessons observed. The list is, by no means, intended to be comprehensive, but gives an idea of the possibilities.

Interpersonal strategies
- building good relationships with pupils in order to help them effectively;
- providing support, guidance and confidence building;
- responding to their individual needs, personalities and moods;
- developing a good relationship with teachers so that they will value the support and allow support staff to work effectively.

Specific strategies

- providing simplified worksheets and other materials (either self-generated or guided by the teacher);
- explaining teachers' instructions more slowly and simply;
- reading passages or questions more slowly;
- reinterpreting work to make it more accessible;
- circulating round the class to provide help where needed;
- making notes for pupils or helping with writing or reading;
- asking teachers for help when not clear about something, thereby enabling pupils to receive further explanations or clarification;
- helping pupils with organisational skills, particularly those in KS4 who were approaching examinations.

5.3.3   Limiting factors

The extent to which support staff were able to employ the strategies they found most useful depended on the particular characteristics of the pupils and teachers with whom they were working. The limiting factors identified are drawn mostly from interviews with support staff but also, in a few cases, from subject teacher interviews. The factors can be grouped into two: preparation and planning issues, and interactions with teachers and pupils.

Preparation and planning issues

As stated previously, support staff were frequently given little advance notice of what would take place in the lesson thereby limiting the amount and type of preparation they could carry out. The reasons for this lack of notice are described below.

- Non-teaching periods for subject teachers and learning support staff did not coincide, and LSAs were not generally available after school (and not paid to be), so it was difficult to find opportunities except just before the lesson.

- Teachers were afraid of putting too much responsibility onto the support staff by expecting them to make advance preparations or spend time discussing pupils with the teacher (comment from a teacher).

- Teachers did not have enough time to plan well in advance or to prepare differentiated materials themselves.

The lack of continuity in terms of who supported which classes meant that subject teachers were not able to discuss on-going concerns and support staff missed important elements of the lessons.

Interactions with teachers and pupils

- Some teachers were not very skilled at catering for pupils with special needs and seemed unable to deal with a wide range of ability.

- Some teachers were not very skilled at targeting their methods or materials to take account of pupils with learning difficulties.

- A small number of subject teachers were not comfortable with support staff in their classes or used a teaching approach which rendered the presence of the support staff superfluous (such as teaching the whole lesson from the front, with no individualised work), leading support staff to stop attending.

- Some LSAs were seen by subject teachers as 'superb' and would take the initiative but others were too lacking in confidence and expected direction. It was not always easy for subject teachers to broach the issue.

- Support staff noticed that pupils behaved differently in different lessons, making their job hard, and would have liked to extract pupils during certain lessons. They were unable to suggest this, however, as they felt that they would have to explain the reason to the subject teachers and that this was too difficult.

- Support staff had varying degrees of knowledge of the subjects in which they were supporting and there were instances (reported by subject teachers) of errors being made in the explanations or help provided to pupils. Subject teachers felt this was a worry but that they could usually give the correct information in a tactful manner. However, a LSA felt that lack of subject knowledge was sometimes an advantage as it gave insights into pupils' difficulties.

- A relatively inexperienced LSA found that it was not always clear whether it was appropriate for her to deal with disciplinary issues with pupils.

- One LSA pointed out the difficulties sometimes encountered with aggressive pupils and said she had learned to stand firm and make it clear what behaviour was acceptable; developing this relationship was necessary in order for her to respond to the pupil's learning difficulties.

- Several staff reported their worries about differentiated work: pupils know that they are being given different work and may feel embarrassed. In order to avoid this they may misbehave or sit quietly copying others' work with no understanding.

- Pupils' self-esteem may be very low as they are constantly made aware that they are 'at the bottom of the pile' thereby reducing their motivation to try.

In the two schools where there were no school-based learning support staff, apart from the SENCO, each subject teacher was responsible for ensuring that work was suitably targeted and differentiated for each class. In one, departments had produced or were in the process of developing their own policies for supporting pupils with special needs, within the context of the school's policy. Although no lessons were observed in these two schools, and the numbers of pupils with special needs were relatively small, it might be thought that if the full responsibility was taken by class teachers, with little or no in-class support, that some of the functions fulfilled by support staff and the strategies they employed, would simply not be there. This could leave pupils with learning difficulties struggling to cope.

Of course, even in the schools where support staff worked in-class, not every pupil with a learning difficulty was supported in every lesson, so most subject teachers would, at times, be dealing with classes containing pupils with difficulties and would need to meet the challenge that provided. In interviews, as reported earlier (see section 5.1.1) most subject staff fully accepted that responsibility but were very happy to have the extra support provided by the learning support staff, for the benefit of the pupils.

5.4 Pupils' perceptions of the support they receive

In seven of the case study schools there were opportunities to interview pupils either individually or in small groups. Altogether, 35 pupils were interviewed, mainly from the classes which had been observed by the researcher (see Appendix 3). For this reason, most of the pupils were from Y7 (18 pupils) or Y9 (14 pupils), with two from Y8 and one from Y11. There were 11 girls and 24 boys. The SENCO in each school selected the pupils who would be interviewed, using two main criteria suggested by the research team: pupils with learning difficulties, particularly those with statements; pupils who would be able to cope with being interviewed.

In order to obtain some idea of the pupils' situation, information was elicited from the SENCOs on pupils' difficulties; this information was provided in different ways, so it is not possible to indicate more than broad groupings of the types of difficulties experienced, but at least 13 pupils had statements for

learning difficulties, mainly for moderate learning difficulties (MLD) or specific learning difficulties (SpLD). Pupils on stages 1 to 3 of the Code of Practice mainly had problems with reading, writing and spelling. Other difficulties included: hearing impairment, visual impairment, cerebral palsy, borderline severe learning difficulties, social problems, autism, speech and language difficulties. The pupils interviewed, therefore, although not necessarily representative on a national basis, were representative of the main difficulties found in the schools visited.

Interviewing pupils is not a straightforward activity (see, for example, Morrow and Richards, 1996 and Wade and Moore, 1993) and the results of the interviews should be treated with caution. Nevertheless they do provide some insights into pupils' perceptions of their school experience. Pupils were asked about their views on the school, the lessons they liked and disliked, the things they found most difficult, the support they received, their relationship with other pupils, their progress, and any outside help received.

5.4.1　Subject preferences

When asked about what they liked about school and which subjects in particular, not all pupils mentioned specific subjects and some mentioned several, but it is interesting to see that, of all the subjects, science was the most popular (9 references) with mathematics close behind (7 references). The reasons for the popularity of science related to it being fun, interesting and practical, with pupils clearly enjoying their involvement in experiments. Those liking mathematics said it was because: *'I can do it'*. English was reasonably popular (6 references), particularly in one school where two pupils did 'special English' which involved games, competitions and prizes, as well as work on spelling, letter sounding and reading. The pupils who liked art, music, PE/games and technology (including cookery and IT) cited the practical nature of the subjects or the fact that they were *'good at it'* as reasons for their enjoyment.

The most disliked subject was French (12 references) with the reasons related to pupils' difficulty in understanding, and in learning words. Two of the pupils interviewed did not even attend French lessons but were withdrawn for extra work on their literacy skills. Mathematics was disliked by nine pupils, mainly because of its difficulty. Science was not popular with five pupils, but mainly because of the particular teacher who took the class. In one school a pupil compared two teachers: *'Mr X makes science more fun. He makes science easier to learn, he does drawings and diagrams. He explains it better. He gives you worksheets.'* On the other hand, *'the other*

teachers just tell you what you're doing, give you a few explanations and you're told to get on with it.' Other subjects disliked by a few pupils, such as English (5 references), history (1 reference) or geography (3 references) related to the fact that they required pupils to do large amounts of reading and writing. Copying off the board was mentioned by several pupils as causing them difficulties as they could not copy quickly enough or had difficulty reading what was written.

Nearly all the difficulties encountered by pupils related to their own identified areas of difficulty, that is, their problems with reading and writing, especially where there was a great deal of either to be done. Understanding the content of certain lessons was also not easy for some pupils and when this was compounded with the need for reading and writing skills which they did not have, they were left struggling.

The other comments made by pupils related to teachers rather than specific subjects, with pupils liking those teachers who were *'human'*, had a sense of humour, treated pupils with respect, explained things and were sympathetic to pupils making mistakes. In contrast, some teachers were perceived as dull, their lessons were difficult to follow, and they shouted or *'ranted and raved'*, as one pupil expressed it. Several pupils also commented on the *'unfairness'* demonstrated by some teachers who would punish a whole class for the misdeeds of individuals, or pick on individuals. As one pointed out, *'... the teacher doesn't like me. I get the blame for everything. I get picked on'.*

5.4.2 Support provided

The extent to which pupils felt they could cope within a lesson depended somewhat on whether they had extra support from another adult in the classroom (that is, a learning support teacher, an assistant or another mainstream teacher). Pupils were asked about the support they received.

The extent to which lessons were covered by support staff varied but the main focus was on the more literary subjects, requiring reading and writing, or science, where support was needed for pupils to be able to carry out the practical activities (several SENCOs explained that this was part of the rationale for allocating staff). According to pupils' comments and observations of lessons, the kind of help given consisted of:

● writing down homework tasks for the pupils;

● reading out questions to the pupils;

- copying from the blackboard on behalf of the pupils;
- giving lists of key words and sentences to the pupils;
- helping with spelling of words;
- explaining things further;
- providing sentences with blanks for pupils to fill in the words.

Most of the pupils interviewed were very pleased to receive help from the support teachers or assistants. They liked the fact that there was another adult present who could explain things to them and respond to their requests for help. Several pupils felt that they achieved more when the support staff were there than when they were not, as one boy said, *'When she's not in the lessons I find it harder to cope. She does things like come and read for you or she might write things down in my book.'* A Y7 girl explained, *'[If there is someone there] you know how to spell the words and it helps you to follow what the teacher is talking about but [when there is no one there] it's much more difficult.'*

For most of the pupils interviewed, the support staff were seen as being there to support all the pupils in the class, and not just themselves and they found this less embarrassing than if they had been exclusively targeted. In some lessons the support person sat with or near to targeted pupils but also helped others if they put their hands up, so again, it was not seen as too awkward. Several pupils expressed their initial reservations about being seen to get help but realised subsequently that they could deal with the embarrassment because they were getting help and making progress as a result. One girl described her feelings as, *'I didn't like it when people came and helped 'cos I thought, "Oh, I'm thick, and all that"'* but as she had seen an improvement in her reading and experienced increased self-confidence she now felt that the support staff were very valuable: *'They talk to you and tell you where you are going wrong, instead of just shouting at you'.* Two boys felt that although they liked getting help on the whole, at times it became *'too much'*; it was not clear exactly what was meant by this but perhaps it refers to the phenomenon whereby pupils may need some time alone to sit back from their work and reflect, rather than being kept relentlessly on task.

Naturally, some support staff were viewed more positively than others, and the characteristics liked by pupils were the same as those they liked in subject teachers, listed above. Most of all, they liked the fact that support teachers explained more thoroughly and in an appropriate language register, as one boy commented: *'She'll explain it like how we speak, not like how teachers speak'.* Pupils did not like support staff who embarrassed them by

singling them out or treating them *'like a baby'* or who treated them insensitively; as one girl pointed out, *'Sometimes they hurt your feelings'*. Personality clashes were also inevitable at times and one boy described a support person who had *'a way of looking at you which makes you feel picked on'*.

Depending on their particular needs, many of those interviewed also received support in special literacy classes either during the school day or in early morning sessions. Reference was also made to lunchtime opportunities for pupils to go to the learning support area for extra help with homework or classwork. Most of those interviewed seemed to find the special classes helpful, apart from three girls in one school who would have preferred support in class. One of these did not like being parted from her friends and also felt that the work they were given was too easy, whilst another had feared that she would be picked on, *'because I was going into a remy (sic) class'*, although this had not materialised. However, two of the three felt that, on balance, they had gained from the special classes and this may have been attributable to the different support staff working with the girls.

Where there was time, pupils were asked whether other pupils knew of their learning difficulties and if so, whether this was a source of bullying or teasing. Of those who commented on this, eight pupils said that there was no problem, two explaining that this was because their friends or the whole class also had difficulties and two declaring that they were *'too hard'* for anyone to dare to pick on them. Five pupils mentioned some instances of teasing: one, a boy with a hearing impairment, had suffered in the past but by Y11 this was no longer the case. He said that if comments were made his friends would say, *'Shut up and leave him alone. He may be deaf but he's not stupid.'* Two pupils felt that there was some sniggering at their expense or snide remarks, such as, *'Oh, can't you even spell that?'* but both felt that they could cope with this. One boy found some pupils in his class helpful but others would tease him; when this became too much he would ask his brother to speak to those teasing him or his father would contact the school.

All the pupils who were asked felt that they were making some progress, particularly with the areas in which they had the most difficulty, such as reading and writing. Several pupils attributed their improvements to the extra help they had received either in special classes or through having support in class. They felt that their parents were also pleased with their progress. None responded negatively to this question, which is perhaps to be expected.

Finally, in an attempt to investigate whether the LEA support services or other agencies had been involved with them, pupils were asked if they had had any outside support or help. Several mentioned the help given by family members and one pupil was receiving help with spelling. The only pupil who was aware of receiving specialist outside help was the boy with the hearing impairment who was visited at regular intervals by a member of the LEA's hearing support team. No pupil mentioned having attended an annual review meeting, although about a third of those interviewed had statements. Pupils may not have fully understood this area of questioning as evidence from the Code of Practice project indicated that it was '*common practice*' for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 to be invited to annual review meetings (Derrington *et al.*, 1996).

5.5 Parents' perceptions of the support received by their children

Five parents (mothers) from four schools were interviewed. Each talked about the needs of her child and how they were being met by the school.

The parents were asked initially why they had chosen the school their child was attending. Two parents (at different schools) had seen the school as a good choice because they knew something about it; for one it was the local school while the other knew other parents who were pleased with it and she would not have liked her son to attend a special school. One parent had only been offered the current school although she had later discovered a special school which might have been suitable. She was considering moving her son to this school in KS4 or from 16 as she felt he would benefit from its emphasis on basic skills.

Two parents had had more difficulty in choosing the right school. One of these had moved to the area shortly before her son was due to transfer to secondary school and she had searched the area to find one suitable for her son. She did not feel that the LEA had provided her with as much information as she would have liked. Finally, the fifth parent described the difficulties she had had in finding a suitable school for her son: he had attended another secondary school from age 11 but after very negative experiences, leading to his exclusion, she had learned about the present school.

Apart from the parent who was considering moving her son to a special school, the parents were generally very happy with the school and felt that

their children were making progress. All described the level and type of support being provided by the school, which ranged from in-class support, to small group teaching, to one-to-one counselling or teaching. There was general appreciation of the support being provided, although some comments were made about the balance between in-class and out-of-class support (see Chapter 4). However, all the parents felt that their child was receiving less support this year than in previous years. As all the children were in Y9 or Y10, the parents acknowledged that this was partly designed to foster some independence from the support staff but were nevertheless concerned, as they felt that their children coped less well in lessons without support. One parent felt that her child got nothing from such lessons. Another parent stated that she would have liked her child to receive more support but she recognised that it was not happening because of financial constraints.

The parents' descriptions of support corresponded with those given by staff and pupils. The parents made particular reference to their child being given help in participating in tests. One parent explained how her son had been embarrassed at first to be getting help but now was quite happy with the situation. He had made good progress with his reading and writing, no longer receiving extra help with reading, to his great pleasure, and he was now able to accept the fact that he had learning difficulties and welcomed support. Another parent praised the support provided by the teacher in charge of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties; she was a resource to whom her son could turn for help and she was able to provide that help.

Homework was also seen as a difficult area as some pupils were given little or no homework because of their difficulties, but other children in the class sometimes found this hard to understand.

Two of the parents described how their child had been bullied. Both felt that the school had tried to help but one felt that more should have been done. Her son was bullied particularly on his way to school but the county would not pay for him to travel by taxi; lunchtimes were also a problem as although he had access to the learning support area, he was sometimes disruptive and then ejected, to be left without a 'safe haven'. The other child was bullied in places like the changing rooms, and his mother felt that the problem was exacerbated by his lack of communication skills.

Given the age of the pupils whose parents were interviewed, there was some concern about the pupils' future steps. The options for KS4 were not always seen as suitable, although in one school a basic skills course was on offer.

5.6   Effectiveness of support strategies

The strategies employed by subject teachers clearly go some way towards enabling pupils to gain full access to the curriculum but certain limiting factors can be identified.

It is fair to say that some subject teachers working with pupils with learning difficulties were developing more appropriate methods and materials as a result of their own experience, support from colleagues with relevant expertise (both from staff in their own subject area and from learning support staff), and, occasionally, from external courses (see Chapter 6). As discussed in sections 5.1 and 5.2 they were trying to select methods of teaching and materials and activities which would be suitable for the interests and capabilities of their pupils and taking advantage of the knowledge and expertise of the learning support staff. Most of the strategies they described using could equally well be considered appropriate for other pupils, reflecting the view that good practice for pupils with special needs is good practice for all pupils.

Pupils' own views of the teaching they received clearly demonstrated that some teachers recognised the need for particular kinds of approaches (well documented in both research literature and teaching handbooks) such as practically-based lessons, a variety of well-structured activities, the use of pictures and other visual aids and quizzes, games and competitions. Some teachers also adopted modes of behaviour which enabled pupils to feel confident about trying and not worrying about mistakes, also well recognised as crucial if pupils are to meet new challenges and move forwards in their learning.

On the other hand, despite the commitment of heads of department (in the case study schools), not all class teachers were confident that they were achieving much with their 'bottom' sets. Since most took the view that once pupils were setted, little further differentiation was necessary, and relied on appropriate interventions when required, it could be argued that they were not meeting the needs of some or most of the pupils in the class. In addition, although the Code of Practice formalised the production of written information on pupils' areas of strength and difficulty through the introduction of IEPs, most class teachers seemed either unaware of their contents or took very little notice of them.

The evidence demonstrates clearly that without the presence of the learning support staff, particularly in mixed-ability classes and lessons with an emphasis on reading and writing, many pupils were struggling to understand

and complete the tasks set. This reflects the OFSTED (1996) finding that, *'where support is not available, or where it is insufficiently well-informed, both the standards of achievement and the quality of education suffer;'*

A number of pupils interviewed described their difficulties in reading and copying from the blackboard within the time allocated, and their relief when the support assistant was there to do it for them. Observation of lessons would also suggest that in classes without support pupils with learning difficulties may achieve very little, because the teacher has insufficient time to give them individual attention. Two different strategies were observed: some pupils sat quietly and unobtrusively doing nothing in particular; others began to behave in ways which drew attention to themselves, distracting other pupils and often leading to criticism from the teacher. When this was discussed with teachers afterwards it appeared that opportunities for such behaviour were less likely to arise when the support assistants were present, as they had responsibility for ensuring that pupils understood the tasks and were able to fulfil them.

In-class support was mostly viewed very positively, and some support assistants were seen as 'superb' at their job. However, the role is not an easy one, and assistants who have formerly been confident about supporting an individual pupil may need time to adjust and guidance or training when they are asked to provide support within a whole class or to another pupil. Some teachers used the assistants very effectively by taking into account the strengths and preferences of the assistant, the needs of the pupils, and the content of the lessons, when discussing the role they should play. Such joint planning was found by OFSTED (1996) to be *'the most influential factor on the effectiveness of in-class support.'* Others appeared to view the role as more limited and were reluctant to see the assistant as more than an extra pair of hands (see Fletcher-Campbell, 1992), although staff with these views were becoming rarer in the schools visited. The need for the SENCO and heads of departments to manage the workload of the assistants and the liaison between assistants and subject staff was critical, as without this overview, the support provided was unlikely to be as effective. The research showed that, as with any workers, assistants who had been given opportunities to develop their role, within a supportive framework, had developed new skills and enhanced confidence which were then exploited in their work with the pupils.

Several teachers felt that they could cope with pupils' learning difficulties but were not always sure of how to deal with pupils displaying challenging behaviour. Interviews and observations would suggest, however, that inappropriate behaviour was, at least sometimes, the result of pupils being

unable to complete the tasks set and so trying to distract attention from their inability (see also Kinder *et al.*, 1995 and 1996). It should be noted, however, that some teachers were referring to pupils with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties, present in their schools, who were following specific programmes to help them develop appropriate behaviour. These pupils may have had learning difficulties in addition, but sometimes were placed in lower sets not because of their learning difficulties but because of the availability of extra support staff in those classes; this seemed to compound the perceived difficulties for some teachers.

5.7　Summary points

Support provided by subject teachers

◆　Subject teachers received information from the learning support department on pupils' individual needs and targets but few seemed to make any systematic use of the information in planning their teaching.

◆　Subject teachers acknowledged their responsibility for pupils with special needs but relied on learning support staff (where present in lessons) to ensure that pupils understood and could carry out appropriate activities.

◆　Some subject teachers' had developed appropriate strategies for meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties.

◆　Subject-specific strategies demonstrated an understanding that tasks needed to be carefully structured with appropriate support at each stage.

◆　Subject teachers found it easier, on the whole, to teach pupils with learning difficulties in homogenous groups or 'sets' but some teachers were still doubtful of their ability to provide appropriate teaching and learning approaches for some pupils.

Differentiation

♦ Most teachers and support staff saw the task of differentiating materials as a shared responsibility, with the lead taken sometimes by the subject teacher and sometimes by a learning support teacher or assistant.

♦ In English, differentiation tended to be by outcome and, at times, pupils were extracted for intensive work on basic literacy skills.

♦ In science, differentiation tended to be carried out by means of schemes of work set at three different levels.

♦ In mathematics, schools either used individualised schemes or were producing differentiated materials. In addition, some pupils were extracted for intensive work on basic numeracy skills.

♦ Once these broad approaches to differentiation were in place, many teachers expected that any further differentiation would take place by means of the teacher or support staff providing extra help to pupils who needed it, in the course of the lesson.

♦ When pupils with learning difficulties were given activities or materials which were substantially different from those given to other pupils there were questions about whether such pupils could still be considered to be integrated.

Support provided by learning support staff

♦ Learning support staff worked with individual pupils, groups of pupils, within whole classes or with extracted individuals or small groups.

♦ Although some staff worked exclusively with one or two pupils in a class, most would provide help and support to all pupils in a class, once they had ensured that any target pupils were on task. Most teachers and support staff, though not all, preferred this more flexible approach.

♦ Support staff were not always provided with advance information on the content of a lesson and often had to respond to situations as they arose. However, when support staff were attached to a subject department or had experience over several years, they often knew what to expect and could prepare accordingly.

♦ The main strategies employed by support staff related to the development of good relationships with both pupils and teachers, and specific activities of explaining, simplifying and helping with reading and writing.

Pupils' perceptions of the support received

♦ The subjects pupils liked best were science, mathematics and English. Pupils liked science, and subjects such as art, music, PE/games and technology because they were practical.

♦ The most disliked subject was French, because of its perceived difficulty; some pupils disliked mathematics for the same reason. Pupils who disliked science tended to do so because they disliked the teacher. Other subjects were disliked for the amount of reading and writing required.

♦ Pupils had strong views on teachers, liking those who were fair, treated pupils with respect and were sympathetic to their learning difficulties. They disliked teachers whose lessons were dull or difficult to follow, or who shouted and were unfair.

♦ Most of the pupils interviewed were very positive about the support received in class from learning support staff and several were concerned that they achieved less in the lessons in which such support was not provided.

♦ Although some pupils had initially been embarrassed to receive help, most had recognised its value. Nevertheless, they preferred it when the support staff were seen to be helping all the pupils in the class and not just themselves.

♦ Some pupils also received help in special classes, either during the school day or in early morning or lunchtime sessions. These were mostly viewed as beneficial.

♦ Pupils felt that they were making progress, especially in the areas in which they had the most difficulty, such as reading and writing, and felt that their parents were pleased with their progress.

Parents' perceptions of the support received by their children

♦ Parents were generally satisfied with their children's progress and the support that was being provided.

♦ Specific reservations about the support related to the balance between in-class and withdrawn support and the reduction in support received.

♦ Two parents were worried about the bullying suffered by their children. Incidents tended to occur on the journey to school, at lunchtimes or in the changing rooms, and parents requested more supervision or places of safety at these times.

Effectiveness of support strategies

♦ Some teachers were tailoring their teaching methods and materials to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties although attention to the detail on pupils' IEPs was not common.

♦ The strategies employed by subject staff to ensure access to the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties were basically those which would be seen as good practice for teaching all pupils

♦ A small number of subject staff relied on differentiated schemes of work and the presence of support staff to provide access to the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties and did not appear to adapt to the needs of individual pupils.

♦ Learning support staff were mostly viewed as a valuable source of information and expertise by subject staff and by pupils but when they were not present in classes, pupils' achievements tended to suffer.

♦ Some pupils tended to behave in a disruptive manner when were not given the support or guidance they needed, especially when support staff were absent.

CHAPTER 6

TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHING

This chapter aims to clarify the present position of the training and support provided for staff in schools in the light of the introduction of recent legislation and the local management of schools. It focuses on two main areas of discussion, that of LEA provision and school based training. Data are included from both phases of the project.

6.1 The LEA overview

The effects of the Education Reform Act 1998 and the introduction of local management of schools (LMS) have had major implications for the levels of support that local authorities have been able to provide to help schools provide for pupils with special educational needs. At the same time as resources have been reduced, the introduction of initiatives over recent years such as those relating to the National Curriculum and the Code of Practice has led to an inevitable increase in the amount of training required.

There has been growing concern amongst professionals in recent years that the provision for training and support has been inadequate in meeting the needs of those working with pupils with special educational needs (see for example, Thomas, 1994; Landy, 1995; Mittler, 1995). The recently published report by the Special Educational Needs Training Consortium (SENTC, 1996) highlights the need for a more 'coherent approach' to the provision of training for a wide range of professionals including SENCOs, teachers, governors, trainee teachers and assistants, in their work with pupils with special educational needs.

The delegation of special needs budgets to schools within a purchaser-provider model has resulted in a reduction in central support services, and LEA support for schools is often provided via 'service level agreements' or 'pay-as-you-use' schemes, with only a limited range of training or advice being offered at no extra cost in a few authorities. LEAs retain this small proportion of funding, at present, to meet priorities and target specific training which, most recently has covered the implementation of the Code of Practice (see Derrington et al., 1996 for more details).

This change at LEA level has led to an increase in school-based provision and the development of in-house expertise in many schools. Most of the special needs training in case study schools was carried out by school staff. However, a core of central support services existed in each of the five case study LEAs and made some contribution to the development of special needs provision and support of staff and pupils in the case study schools, as will be reported in section 6.6.

Although it appears that training sessions and support provision rarely focused on integration explicitly, there was a general agreement amongst LEA and school staff interviewed that it often underpinned other topics.

In the questionnaire to LEAs, a list of strategies for support and training which might affect integration policy was provided. Respondents were asked to indicate which were planned and which had already been provided. The list of training activities provided in the questionnaire and the LEA responses are provided in the table below:

Table 6.1   LEA support and training for integration

Strategies	Implemented	Planned
Support/training for SENCOs	47	16
INSET opportunities for support assistants in mainstream schools	39	15
INSET opportunities for mainstream teachers	38	14
INSET opportunities for special school teachers	31	10
INSET opportunities for support assistants in special schools	31	14
Support for development/maintenance of links between special and mainstream schools	23	23
Extension of LEA support services	18	12

Based on 55 LEAs

In the interviews held during the initial phase of the project, LEA staff were asked to give further information on their strategies.

Most of the LEAs had been providing INSET for mainstream and special school staff for many years on issues related to the support for pupils with special educational needs. This had covered two main areas:

● information and training to address the needs of pupils with particular difficulties or disabilities, usually aimed at learning support coordinators;

- general awareness raising, usually aimed at a broad range of mainstream staff, especially when a new unit or 'enhanced' provision was being established.

Interviewees felt that the emphasis in more recent training for special needs had been on teaching and learning strategies (related to the National Curriculum) and the implementation of the Code of Practice (in particular for SENCOs).

Other LEA support was provided to assist teachers in the organisation of teaching and assessment strategies related to the educational experience of all pupils. Centralised LEA teams often provided this support for primary schools whereas secondary schools were more likely to use their own staff, who often had their own particular expertise.

The reduction in LEA central teams over recent years was perceived by some LEA interviewees as a beneficial contributory factor to the increase in the number of permanent members of school staff with specific expertise. This was felt to be a more consistent and therefore effective means of support than providing peripatetic support to a number of schools. On the other hand, interviewees in some authorities felt that they now had insufficient staff on central teams to provide all the support which they would have liked to provide and which schools had previously found helpful.

The difficulty arises when the school is unable to provide the expertise or obtain it from anywhere else, such as a special school. As Vincent et al., (1995) have pointed out, some schools have been able to develop in-house expertise and reap the benefits of standing alone, whilst others have been left in need of support.

During the case study visits, staff were asked if they had participated in any training run by either the LEA or the school and for their views on the effectiveness of any such training. The overall impression given was that teachers were attending fewer external courses and were more likely to be involved in school-based training.

Although there were no explicit comments related to cuts in budgets and their effect on support, there was an overall awareness amongst staff of the constraints placed on resources. Often training offered by the LEA was being taken up only if it was considered necessary to the school, and if it fitted into the targets set out in the school development plan. However, the use of the development plan to manage training of staff was not explored further here.

6.2   Training for SENCOs

SENCOs interviewed made very few comments concerning their own professional development probably because most of them were experienced professionals and had been involved in training for some years. Most of their comments on training related to school-based courses they themselves had delivered although one SENCO did mention that she had received training in meeting the needs of pupils with visual and hearing impairments. There were very few comments on the use of LEA special needs INSET or advisory services and in one particular authority, a SENCO felt that the LEA-provided INSET was of poor quality. As a result, she had in the past used courses run by two institutions of higher education. The use of institutions of higher education in the training of school staff was not explored further here but, there has been in recent years, a growth in the links between LEAs and such bodies in the development of training courses (Johnson *et al.*, 1994; Visser, 1994).

Although SENCOs were not asked specifically about any training on the Code of Practice it is surprising that they made no comments on it in relation to their own training, since data collected from the NFER project on the Code indicated that all 55 LEAs provided training for SENCOs on the Code (see Jowett *et al.*, 1996).

6.3   Whole school training and support

A range of in-house sessions on special needs had been held, according to heads and SENCOs of case study schools. These were designed mainly to meet the needs of the individual school and were delivered by the SENCO or senior learning support staff. Sessions were made available to all staff in the school. Often twilight courses replaced daytime sessions due to a lack of funding for teacher cover. Examples of such courses were a seven week IT course, consisting of a session held once a week after school; and a two week course on differentiation, also after school. Once again it is clear that while integration was not an explicit focus of a course, it was often an underlying theme.

Other courses were carried out on a much larger scale (across the whole school) and focused on special needs issues such as the Code of Practice, the role of assistants and general awareness raising (in particular, in schools with units).

Sessions were most frequently delivered by the SENCO or the whole special needs department. In one case study school, the deputy head had delivered

sessions on teaching approaches as part of the school's general special needs programme. The head of a case study school with provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties said that a large amount of special needs training had been carried out by the SENCO and another learning support teacher, who both had special school backgrounds.

The SENCO of another school with special provision for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties said that the teacher responsible for those pupils had no specific teaching timetable and was therefore available to support both staff and pupils as the need arose. She had delivered a number of INSET sessions focusing on strategies for dealing with pupils with such special needs.

As these examples illustrate, there was an increase in the level of expertise of special needs school staff and a development of in-house training provision in many schools. The introduction of the Code of Practice had also increased the demands put on the SENCO as a source of support and liaison between school staff and outside professionals (Derrington *et al.*, 1996). Almost all of the SENCOs interviewed said that they had organised and delivered training sessions in school but the extent to which they could do so depended upon the provision made for such activity in their own teaching timetables and the relevance of their backgrounds.

6.4   Training for subject teachers

Not all the subject teachers interviewed were able to give their views on LEA training courses, but amongst those who did, there was a range of different views, related to teachers' subject areas.

Science
Over half of the (eight) science teachers interviewed mentioned that they had made use of some subject-specific LEA training although the majority had reservations regarding the effectiveness and availability of such courses. Courses that were mentioned by science staff covered differentiation, language access and learning support and these had been attended by heads of departments or departmental special needs representatives. Often courses were attended by a small number of staff who then went on to disseminate information to other school staff. Heads of departments in three of the case study authorities felt that they had received inadequate support from the LEA but senior LEA staff from one of these authorities commented that the take-up of these courses was often poor and they had to chase up responses to encourage attendance.

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A head of science who said that the LEA offered a considerable amount of INSET via a science support service commented that although there was GEST money available to send staff on courses, there was often no time to take up courses which were on offer. In contrast, a science teacher/special needs representative from another authority said that the LEA did not offer subject-specific courses. She had attended a training session on stage 1 of the Code of Practice which she felt had been too general and commented that all the other attendees were primary school teachers.

The majority of staff who had attended LEA courses felt that there was often a lack of practical advice and one head of department attributed this to the lack of classroom experience of the professionals delivering training sessions. Another teacher felt a great deal of time was wasted by presenters giving out handouts on the day rather than issuing them beforehand. She felt that the time spent on the course could have been better spent in talking with her SENCO. However, she recognised the benefits of meeting colleagues from other schools to share concerns. This view was held by many other professionals from head teachers through to classroom assistants.

English
Comments on training were elicited from heads of departments in three case study schools and each had a very different perception of LEA provision.

One head of English mentioned that (as departmental special needs representative), he had been able to use specific material (such as developmental work on spelling) collected from training courses. A colleague in another school commented that there was much competition within her school to bid for GEST funding and she was, therefore, rather selective in her choice of courses. She believed that the experience and close working relationships between staff in the department were sufficient to provide support and so did not push for individuals to go on courses.

The other head of department claimed not to have had any support from the authority. He wanted more courses on differentiation and individual learning and the development of a rolling programme whereby all staff were released to attend courses but he was aware that funding was limited.

Mathematics
Mathematics teachers in two schools mentioned that they had been on subject-specific special needs courses which they felt had been very useful. One such teacher mentioned that she and the SENCO from her school had attended a special needs mathematics course, which had focused on the production of worksheets.

Staff interviewed in two different schools said there had been no special needs training specifically for mathematics teachers although one teacher mentioned that the department had worked with the LEA learning support service in designing materials.

Quite clearly, there was a feeling of dissatisfaction towards LEA training amongst many core subject teachers. The majority of teachers interviewed felt that courses had been *'disappointing'* or *'inappropriate'*. Many staff expressed a desire to receive more practical, classroom-focused training on a regular basis. Indeed, this had been recognised by LEA staff in three case study authorities who mentioned that although much of the recent training for teachers had primarily covered the Code of Practice, they were now moving towards more curriculum-focused work as demands dictated. One of these authorities mentioned that they had already carried out subject-specific training led by the head of learning support. Although they felt this had been well received, there was concern that it had not been implemented in all subject areas.

All of the subject teachers who were interviewed made some reference to school-based special needs training and support. Heads of mathematics and science departments in three of the case study schools mentioned that they had organised departmental training sessions themselves and these were regarded as a cost-effective and productive means of developing working relationships and raising awareness.

For example, the head of science in one case study school had organised a five hour course consisting of five evening sessions (GEST funded) in which he disseminated to his department information from an Association of Science Education (ASE) course on differentiation which he had previously attended. This school had, in addition, organised a whole school training day on differentiated learning as part of an overall special needs programme.

Where whole school INSET days had taken place (delivered by SENCOs or learning support teams), staff were often split into departmental groups which included departmental assistants, in some schools). These sessions had covered issues such as the Code of Practice and differentiation. A head of science commented that although school-based INSET had been useful in the past, he had often experienced difficulty putting it into practice because of the time lapse between training sessions and consolidation work.

The head of English in another case study school said that he would have liked extra time to address the whole question of language policy and make use of the whole school training provision to develop and raise awareness amongst staff of the present policy.

In addition to school-based training sessions, subject teachers received a core element of advice from their special needs colleagues in school. The support provided is discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5 but a brief indication of this support is given below.

Half the case study schools had identified departmental special needs representatives whose brief was to liaise with the SENCO and develop and maintain special needs provision within their department. A small number of these representatives were heads of departments. LEA staff in one of the case study authorities mentioned that the LEA had made a conscious decision to encourage schools to have departmental special needs representatives and felt that this had worked well in practice.

The science special needs representative in a school in this authority had been allocated one free period a week to talk to her SENCO and both had found this most helpful. Other special needs representatives mentioned that they had attended meetings with their SENCO and colleagues from other departments (see section 6.7). A head of science in another school mentioned that the SENCO had offered much support through team teaching within the science department and informal discussion as well as addressing the whole school on special needs.

6.5   Training for learning support assistants

There has been little research into the subject of the support and training of non-teaching classroom assistants (Balshaw, 1991; Fletcher-Campbell with Hall, 1993).   However, many of the heads in schools were becoming increasingly aware of the importance of the professional development of these individuals.   There was general agreement amongst senior staff in schools that assistants should have the opportunity to attend external courses and meet with other colleagues and this was considered useful as staff development and as a means of raising the profile of the assistant.

When questioned about the effectiveness of LEA training for assistants, heads and SENCOs expressed the following concerns:

● There were insufficient opportunities provided for external training.

● Courses for further development were often inadequate. Induction courses were repeated each year with no opportunity for further training for experienced assistants.

● Courses were not providing value for money, given that school training budgets were subject to competing demands.

- There were difficulties in attending full day courses due to assistants being employed on part time contracts.

The person with responsibility for pupils with moderate learning difficulties in one school commented that the county courses were too expensive and as a result, the school had organised its own training day and opened it up to other schools and this had been most successful. She thought that coordinators' courses were too infrequent (one a year) and should be made available to others in the learning support department.

The use of City and Guilds courses for assistant induction purposes was mentioned by senior LEA staff in another authority. In this authority as in others, courses were not well-attended due to part-time contracts and assistants being unable to attend whole day training courses. Assistants in two schools had attended such classes. One of these had been funded via a Training for Work programme and the second through the school. One of the assistants commented that although the course had not directly affected her classroom practice, it had helped her to consolidate her practical experience and raise her general awareness of the running of the school.

Clearly, the external provision for the training of assistants varied across the case study authorities. While many of the assistants said that they could (in theory) attend any courses which became available, staff in two authorities claimed to have had no opportunity to attend such training provided by the authorities. One member of the learning support team in a school commented that although there had been occasional days of training organised by LEA professionals, this was not enough and there was a need for regular input.

There was some concern expressed by a governor responsible for special needs in a school that the changing role of support assistants was leading to a need for increased levels of training. She mentioned that responsibility for provision, such as speech and language therapy, which used to be held by the authority, had been transferred to the school. She felt that this was placing increased pressure on learning support staff to develop existing skills and knowledge.

A high proportion of heads and SENCOs interviewed felt that it was important that school-based training courses were made available to all school staff including assistants, although this was not always practicable for the assistants. Although there were no comments from assistants regarding any school-based training that they had received, a number of other staff in schools made reference to their inclusion in such activities.

The deputy head of one school commented that assistants were a *'valuable resource which deserves in-house training'*. Provision had been made in the school for INSET once a month for the schools' six support assistants and this was led by the LEA adviser for special needs . A SENCO in another school commented that training focusing on issues of integration had taken place in the school and this had involved assistants working with the teachers whom they supported. Some had led group discussions and this had been most successful.

The inclusion of assistants in training provision was enhanced further when assistants were attached to specific departments. This was the case in three of the case study schools. One assistant who was attached to the mathematics department of her school commented that *'it's very positive in terms of doing everything together'*. A head of mathematics in another school commented that the attachment of assistants to particular departments enabled them to attend much more focused training sessions on both special needs and subject-specific issues.

6.6   LEA support services

A range of central support services existed in each one of the five case study authorities and these provided support for schools and individuals through training, teaching and consultation meetings. When questioned about the value of such services, senior LEA staff felt that they were important in:

- offering advice and sharing a wide range of expertise amongst schools;
- supporting pupils and staff across all stages of the Code of Practice;
- providing teaching and school-based, as well as off-site, support.

Staff in each of the case study schools made some reference to the use of LEA support services. The most common of these were:
- Educational Psychologists
- Education Welfare Officers
- Behaviour Support Services

Other services mentioned included:
- English as a second language support for both parents and pupils
- Reading Centres
- Speech Therapy
- Health Authority Psychiatric Support

The demand for the development of behaviour management was prevalent in half of the schools and this was reflected in the growth in the number of LEA support teams and extensiveness of existing services. The SENCO in one school described how the Home Hospital Transfer Service in that particular LEA had progressed from providing home visits to pupils towards behaviour management in schools. She made the further comment that the service was free if used to carry out counselling with non-statemented pupils but operated at a cost for pupils with statements.

The head of another school mentioned the pupil referral unit which offered support for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and represented a valuable means of continuity in the lives of the pupils transferring between schools, as well as informing school staff of case histories. He also mentioned, however, that he had encountered difficulties in dealing with the differences in the structures of social services departments across two authorities both of which were used by the school due to its wide catchment area. The issue of inter-agency collaboration for young people with special educational needs is complex and not addressed in detail in this report as the primary focus of the research was on educational practice. However, two related NFER reports (Derrington *et al.,* 1996; Fletcher Campbell, forthcoming) explore the issue in greater detail (see also Maychell and Bradley, 1991).

The role of the Educational Psychology Service in INSET training has diminished in many authorities as a result of increased pressures from statutory assessments. However the SENCO in one school commented that the school Educational Psychologist had carried out all the staff training on the Code of Practice and other relevant areas.

The head of one of the four case study schools with specialist provision said that there was a high level of support from the LEA given to the school during the establishment of the unit. This had covered general awareness raising and the establishment of pastoral liaison meetings with external professionals, as well as a review of the school special needs policy.

6.7　Meetings

A common form of LEA support mentioned by SENCOs was provided by inter-professional meetings. Half of the schools held regular meetings consisting of such professionals as the school Educational Psychologist, a Social Services representative, an Education Welfare Officer, a Youth

Service representative, the SENCO and senior school staff. Meetings focused primarily on individual pupils and their needs and were perceived as a useful forum to express concerns and exchange ideas.

Staff in schools in three authorities mentioned authority-wide meetings of colleagues. These gave opportunity for SENCOs or heads to meet with other and discuss issues and share ideas. This 'networking' was felt to be invaluable and one head teacher commented that the meeting of his colleagues within the authority was a unifying factor which in his opinion had almost replaced the central role of the LEA officers. Although schools were in competition with each other for pupils, they were still able to share good practice and concerns. The meetings covered a wide range of subjects, including special needs, but often focused on such issues as the transfer of pupils between schools.

In addition to authority-wide meetings of professionals, the use of meetings amongst school staff remained an invaluable source of support and effective means of communication. Half of the SENCOs interviewed mentioned that they held regular meetings with support assistants and/or special needs subject department representatives. These were generally felt to be very useful as a means of discussing both individual pupils and broader special needs issues.

Often, the information from the meetings was disseminated back to subject departments via department representatives and the minutes of meetings were circulated in the staff room. Although the extent to which this information had an effect on practice was not explored, there was an appreciation of its presence amongst senior staff, as one head of mathematics explained: *'It's very useful because there is information feeding in and information being taken back to the departments'*. Almost all of the subject staff interviewed mentioned the use of meetings as an invaluable means of support both within a department and between the learning support team and departments in the school.

Half of the heads of departments mentioned that they used departmental meetings to discuss special needs issues and/or courses which people might like to attend. There was also an opportunity for the departmental special needs representative to feed back from SENCO meetings. Often there was an opportunity to share ideas and approaches to worksheets and explore issues concerning individuals and general classroom practice.

A number of assistants mentioned the effectiveness of the team meetings between their SENCO and other assistants. Once again, they expressed how useful it was to talk to other colleagues and share concerns. One SENCO commented in particular on the usefulness of feedback from assistants concerning pupils they were working with and any others that might need help in the near future. This was thought to be an effective means of informal monitoring for both the SENCO and the assistant.

6.8   Effectiveness of training and support

According to Hegarty, (1995), there has been little evaluation either here or abroad of the effectiveness of in-service training for those professionals working with pupils with special educational needs. However, it remains clear that effective training and support, whether school based or external, should be available to all staff in schools.

The demand for practical classroom-focused training has led inevitably to an increase in school-based activities but the benefits of authority-wide meetings of professionals still provide a valuable opportunity for staff to reflect on practice away from their everyday working environment. Indeed, most of the staff interviewed recognised the benefits of contact with other colleagues, through training sessions and meetings and although they expressed dissatisfaction with many LEA courses, there was no suggestion that such provision should be curtailed.

However, the extent to which the LEAs continue to play a part in the professional development of school staff depends not only on the appropriateness of course material on offer but also on the allocation of resources to maintain the quality of training and meet the demand.

The effects on learning support staff in schools of the cuts in LEA support services have to be considered. If this provision is to be replaced entirely within schools then LEAs must ensure that appropriate training and support are provided for staff who are to take on such responsibilities. There is also an effect on the SENCOs and senior management teams within schools since these individuals will themselves need to be provided with the structures of support and resources necessary to nurture and develop their own skills before they go on to train others.

There is no doubt that all schools continue to need the advice and support of external professionals in the development of their staff. This is clearly recognised in the concluding chapter of the Special Educational Needs Training Consortium report (1996):

> *Responsibility for planning staff development now lies largely with schools, services and colleges themselves. They are expected to analyse the needs of their institution as a whole and relate these to the needs of individual staff members. However, they cannot be expected to do this single-handed. They need to work in partnership with other schools and colleges in the area, with their LEAs, with institutions of higher education and with the increasingly wide range of agencies and organisations providing training (p. 48).*

6.9   Summary points

The LEA overview

◆   **The effects of the Education Reform Act (1988) and, in particular, the introduction of the local management of schools have led to an increase in school-based training provision.**

◆   **The delegation of special needs budgets to schools has resulted in a reduction in central support services.**

◆   **Most LEA INSET on special needs in the last two or three years has focused on teaching and learning strategies related to the National Curriculum and the implementation of the Code of Practice.**

Training and support for schools

◆   **The introduction of the Code of Practice has increased the demands put on the SENCO as a source of support and liaison between school staff and outside professionals.**

◆   **Almost all of the SENCOs interviewed mentioned that they had organised and delivered training sessions in school. The time spent on training depended on the provision made for such activity in their own teaching timetables.**

♦ School based courses mentioned by senior staff included twilight specialist courses such as IT training and whole school training days covering such subjects as the Code of Practice, differentiation and general awareness raising (in particular in schools with units).

♦ Over half of the core subject staff interviewed had made some use of subject- specific LEA training although most had reservations regarding the effectiveness and availability of such courses.

♦ Courses which had taken place covered, for example, differentiation, language access, learning support, spelling and the production of worksheets. These had been attended by heads of departments or special needs subject representatives.

♦ All subject teachers made some reference to having participated in school based training for special needs. Often whole school INSET was aimed at departmental groups.

♦ Half of the schools had in place departmental special needs representatives whose brief was to liaise with the special needs team and develop and maintain provision for special needs within the department.

♦ Heads and SENCOs in case study schools felt that there were insufficient opportunities provided for the external training of learning support assistants.

♦ Senior staff in schools felt that it was important to make training available to all staff in school, including classroom assistants.

♦ Staff in each school made reference to using LEA support services, most commonly the Educational Psychology, Education Welfare and Behaviour Support Services.

♦ There was a demand for the development of more Behaviour Support provision.

♦ Inter-agency meetings in schools were generally perceived as a useful forum in which to exchange ideas and share concerns.

♦ Authority-wide meetings of professionals were felt to be invaluable.

♦ Half the SENCOs interviewed held regular meetings with special needs representatives and/or assistants (some of whom were also attached to departments).

♦ Half the heads of departments said that they used departmental meetings to discuss special needs issues and/or courses which people might like to attend.

Effectiveness of training and support

♦ LEA courses on special needs were perceived as useful to some extent but their main value was as an opportunity for staff from different schools to exchange ideas and information.

♦ If LEA courses are to be well-attended they need to cater more precisely for the needs of different groups of teachers and be timed and costed appropriately.

♦ If school-based training is to become the norm senior staff, including SENCOs, need to be given appropriate training and support in order to be able to support and train other staff.

CHAPTER 7
MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The discussion in Chapter 3 focused on the funding mechanisms of special educational provision and the surrounding issues of accountability. This chapter focuses on procedures of monitoring and evaluating the quality of special education provision as used by both LEAs and schools. Data have been used from both phases of the project.

7.1 LEA provision

The Education Act 1993 reinforces the requirements on the LEA to monitor the provision made by schools for pupils with statements (GB. DFE, 1994b). LEA monitoring of special needs in recent years has tended to focus on resource-related issues, such as the number of statements issued, the costing of school places, and the use of resources in schools to support pupils. This is not surprising when one considers the present climate of increased delegation of special needs budgets to schools and surrounding issues of accountability. In addition, a recent growth in statements and the pressures from parents in favour of both mainstream and special school places has resulted in the need for the effective monitoring of school placements (Lee, 1996) and authorities are ever more aware of further overspending (see Chapter 3 for more details of resourcing).

However, it is the role of monitoring and evaluating the quality of special needs provision which has all too often been overlooked. As a recent OFSTED report comments, *'LEAs' preoccupation with reorganisation of SEN provision in response to recent legislation has left little time to review the quality of that provision.'* (OFSTED, 1996, p.25). The project was, therefore, keen to ascertain which procedures LEAs and schools used for monitoring and evaluation, of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of provision.

In the questionnaire, LEAs were asked to indicate the procedures and documentation used in the LEA to monitor and evaluate the implementation of their policies for integration. Table 7.1 shows how many LEAs used each approach.

Table 7.1   Monitoring and evaluation approaches

LEA activities	No. of LEAs
Annual review of statements	40
Results of OFSTED inspections	34
Review of funding arrangements	33
LEA inspections	32
Regular meetings with heads of special and mainstream schools	29
Regular review of pupil placements	26
Regular meetings with educational psychologists	25
Review of performance indicators	11
Review of how National Curriculum delivered	8
Other	6
No response	7

Based on 55 LEAs.

Other approaches included: monitoring by a sub-committee of the council; a link officer for each school; a special needs audit. One LEA explained that monitoring and evaluation was seen as part of the Total Quality Management strategy. Another explained that they had no policy for monitoring integration specifically but in looking at the Code of Practice they would include discussion on integration.

In all the LEAs visited to carry out interviews it was clear that information on pupils with special educational needs was collected but in few LEAs was any specific monitoring or evaluation on integration carried out. The implementation of the Code of Practice had led many of the LEAs to reflect on the need to tighten up their monitoring and evaluation procedures but this was impeded to some extent by a lack of personnel. The kinds of approaches used which interviewees felt were particularly important in looking at integration are listed below.

● Maintaining a great deal of contact with schools on regular basis: this enabled LEA officers and advisers to get to know schools and their staff and to discuss relevant issues with them from the earliest stages.

● Monitoring the progress of individual pupils in terms of the objectives set and their achievements, usually at annual reviews or meetings between LEA and school staff.

● Using OFSTED inspections as a basis for acquiring valuable information on schools; some LEA staff, however, viewed this kind of evidence as inadequate given the relative infrequency of OFSTED inspections.

● Carrying out LEA inspections, either of particular schools or thematic: this enabled LEAs to collect a large amount of data on individual schools or groups of schools.

● Attending annual reviews: this was seen as an important approach to the monitoring of integration plans and, particularly at transition points, as providing an opportunity for discussion of school placements. However, all the LEAs expressed concern at the problems they had in finding enough staff to attend as many as they would like to attend.

● Using data collected on the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Code of Practice, since this often included references to integration, most notably on issues of policy and resourcing.

● Using data collected as part of LEA procedures for allocating and monitoring resources to pupils with special needs.

In addition to this, all the LEAs collected and collated basic numerical data such as the number of pupils with statements, the different types of school places available, and the extent to which pupils were in mainstream or special provision. Similar findings are reported in a previous NFER project (Fletcher-Campbell with Hall, 1993).

Most of the LEA officers interviewed felt that it was important to maintain close contact with schools in monitoring special needs provision. Two of the case study authorities mentioned the use of assigned inspectors who made termly visits to schools to discuss integration practices and Code of Practice issues. An LEA officer in one of these authorities did, however, mention that ultimate responsibility for the monitoring of special needs provision in schools lay with the relevant governing bodies. This was laid down initially by the Education Act 1981 and reinforced in the Acts of 1988 and 1993. In addition, school governing bodies are now legally required to report annually to parents on their special needs policies (GB. DFE, 1994b).

Two of the five case study authorities mentioned the development of special needs databases. One of these was focused on good practice on inclusion in schools across the authority and it was hoped to develop into a source of place and contact names for further information which would be made available to all schools. The second authority was looking at the use of a database to monitor the LEA special needs team's involvement in schools, such as the number of stage three assessments carried out over a particular year.

Indeed, it would seem that advancements in the use of information technology and communication systems will inevitably play an important role in the development of LEA methods of the monitoring of special educational needs provision. However, at present it appears that even where data are available, they are not always co-ordinated or collated in such a way as to inform the decision-making process.

Despite all this detailed information, it was rare for LEAs to have an overall picture which provided information on the progress of groups of pupils and the effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness) of particular schools in supporting pupils with special educational needs. As the head of learning support in one authority expressed it: *'I think we are very good at the individual level in terms of evaluation and monitoring but regarding the overall policy it's a matter of looking at groups.'* Similar findings were also apparent in the accompanying NFER project looking at the impact of the Code of Practice (Derrington *et al.*, 1996).

7.2　School provision

Information collected during the case study visits indicated that schools' views of the monitoring procedures which had taken place reflected those referred to by the LEAs. The most common procedures used were:

● OFSTED inspections;

● formal monitoring by means of special needs registers, IEPs, assessment procedures;

● informal monitoring such as meetings;

● primary-secondary transfer procedures.

Others areas monitored included resources (see Chapter 3) and changes in the numbers of pupils with statements (see section 7.2.5).

7.2.1　OFSTED

Over half of the case study schools visited mentioned that they had received an OFSTED inspection in the last two years and another was preparing for one in the near future. Most of the comments referred to by school staff indicated positive reactions by inspectors, although this is not surprising since case study schools were recommended by the LEA on the basis that they carried out some good or interesting practice.

There were few comments regarding the effects that the inspectors' final report recommendations had on practice in schools. This was partly because many of the schools had been praised by inspectors for their work in special needs, which had reassured them and encouraged them to continue with their existing practice. The SENCO in one particular school commented that the special needs department had been awarded 'excellent' and inspectors had been particularly impressed by the effectiveness of the withdrawal approaches used with pupils in Y7. They had felt that this early intervention prevented pupils from being withdrawn later on in the school. There had been very few negative comments by inspectors but, for example, the head of mathematics in one school commented that the inspector had criticised the movement of the departmental special needs assistant between groups. The head of department and his colleagues, however, felt that the approach worked well and they intended to continue with it.

7.2.2   Record keeping

The implementation of the Code of Practice has had a major influence on the systems of monitoring of special educational needs in schools. Where effective systems of record keeping were already in place, the effect may have been negligible although staff continued to struggle to meet the demands of increased levels of administration and reviewing procedures. The main documents which provided an information base for monitoring were the special needs register and individual education plans.

The special needs register is the principle document used in the recording of the details of all pupils with special educational needs. SENCOs interviewed in case study schools made some reference to their responsibility for the maintenance and distribution of the register. Often copies of the document were distributed amongst staff (most commonly to subject departments) at the start of the school year as a general awareness-raising exercise. There has been little evidence to suggest however, that subject staff made direct use of the register thereafter. SENCOs in two schools commented that the list was constantly monitored to assist in the movement of pupils between Code of Practice stages.

In addition to the special needs register, staff in each of the case study schools mentioned the use of IEPs (see Chapter 5 for further details). On the whole, SENCOs had written and circulated them to other staff either for information or for subject staff to add their own perspective on how targets could be achieved. IEPs allow SENCOs to monitor the progress of individual pupils

and the regular reviews built into the system ensure that both teachers and pupils (and parents) are made aware of progress. However, as discussed in Chapter 5, it appeared that, apart from learning support staff, others paid little attention to them and this was also evident in information gathered on the impact of the Code of Practice project (Derrington *et al.*, 1996).

7.2.3 Assessment

Some monitoring was, of course, carried out by means of various assessment procedures. A wide range of assessments, both formative and diagnostic were mentioned by staff in each of the case study schools. Tests which had been used by schools included:

- In-house subject tests;
- LEA screening tests;
- National Curriculum key stage assessments;
- Other external tests.

The majority of assessments mentioned by school staff were carried out at the start of Y7 for screening purposes or at the end of each academic year for the setting of teaching groups. Over half of the schools made reference to a screening process in Y7 to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses. This was felt to be important because often primary records were not consistent between schools. These tests were either in-house or provided by the LEA or commercially produced and most commonly, covered reading and basic mathematics. They were used to identify possible withdrawal groups of pupils with specific weaknesses. This was felt to be a useful exercise, enabling teachers to focus on identified needs in withdrawal groups before moving pupils back into mainstream classes. Tests were also used in Y7 to ensure an even distribution of pupils across mixed ability classes or, at the other extreme, for setting purposes across various core subjects (see Chapter 4 for further details).

Two schools in different authorities mentioned that they carried out screening tests with pupils beyond Y7. The head of special needs in one of these schools said that the school screened pupils twice a year using in-house tests and the results were delivered to all staff in the school including assistants. The other school carried out a general screening programme in Y7 and Y9 using verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests. They were planning to look at the differences between raw scores of the same cohorts but had not yet made provision for this work to be carried out.

The use of test results to determine setted teaching groups across the whole school was mentioned by a small number of core-subject teachers. Clearly, there was a range of testing procedures being carried out alongside more informal, teacher-pupil monitoring. The head of science in one school mentioned that all pupils were setted in science beyond Y9. He had developed common mark schemes for all science tests, allowing a cumulative result to be recorded across a whole academic year. Results were carefully monitored with the aid of computer records and the composition of groups was reviewed twice a year.

Staff in half of the case-study schools mentioned the National Curriculum tests as part of their formal assessment procedures, although they clearly had mixed feelings regarding the value of the test results. The head of mathematics in one school felt that the end of Key Stage 2 assessments (once well-established) would offer standardisation of the currently varied primary school records. The head of English in another school said that they used the Key Stage 3 test results for setting purposes. However, a number of staff in the other schools said that although all their pupils sat the tests (as it was important not to make them feel excluded), they felt that they were unable to make use of the test results.

The head of pre-vocational courses in another school expressed concern that test results did not show the strengths of many pupils with special educational needs. Indeed, it would seem that while the use of testing remains an important part in the identification and monitoring of pupils with special educational needs, there are issues concerning the validity and reliability of any formal assessment carried out on these pupils (see Fletcher-Campbell and Lee, 1995).

7.2.4 Meetings

The meetings of teachers, support staff and parents of pupils with special needs performed a key function in the monitoring of these individuals. Staff in each of the schools mentioned the use of meetings as a valuable source of information and exchange of ideas (see Chapter 6 for more details of these). A number of staff expressed the importance of meetings with pupils themselves to discuss their feelings and share concerns.

The governor responsible for special needs in one school mentioned that the school held a monthly forum for parents of children with special needs. This was felt to be an invaluable opportunity for parents to share experiences and feed back useful information to teachers on their child's progress.

The meeting of staff, parents and pupils was considered to be of particular importance during the primary-secondary transfer of pupils. Indeed, staff in all of the case study schools mentioned the careful monitoring of pupils with special needs across this stage to ensure that provision was made for the continuation of effective support and the effective identification of any further needs. Prior to the arrival of pupils in Y7, there was evidence of much collaboration between feeder primary schools and support services, and the exchange of information. Staff in over half the case study schools felt that the quality of information feeding through from primary schools had improved and a small number felt that the implementation of the Code of Practice had encouraged more accurate documentation of pupils' needs.

7.2.5   Other monitoring

The introduction of local management of schools and the delegation of special needs budgets has increased the levels of responsibility school staff have in the monitoring of special needs resources (Moore, 1993) as was discussed in Chapter 3. One of the aspects monitored by governors was the number of pupils with statements in schools. Indeed, heads and SENCOs in three of the case study schools said that their population of pupils with statements was rising. SENCOs in two case study schools said that the numbers of pupils with statements were stable and the governors were keen to maintain an optimum balance of pupil numbers (see Chapter 2). On the other hand, two schools in another authority had experienced a decline in the numbers of pupils with statements. A SENCO in one of these schools said that this was on account of the stricter application of the LEA criteria for statutory assessment which had made it increasingly difficult to obtain a statement for an individual (see Chapter 3).

Although there was no further discussion of the monitoring of the population of pupils with statements in schools, it is evident that school staff and governing bodies were aware of the importance of such information and its effect on school policy and practice.

The head of a school in one authority mentioned that the LEA had provided the school with strategic information. This was provided to all schools in the authority and included the number of pupils with statements, allowing schools to compare themselves with others. He also mentioned an authority curriculum and management consultancy exercise related to resources and the monitoring of support but felt that there was otherwise very little provision in place.

7.3   Effectiveness of monitoring

The introduction of the Code of Practice and the implementation of local management of schools have had major implications for the policy and practice of the monitoring of special needs both at LEA and school level. There is no doubt that effective monitoring and evaluation is essential if pupils with special needs are to receive appropriate levels of support and curriculum materials.

The implementation of the Code of Practice has highlighted the need for the effective monitoring of an individual child's progress and put into place the necessary structures and procedures for formal assessment at both school and LEA level. However, it would appear that even where the effective monitoring of individuals is in place, there is a lack of monitoring of the progress of larger groups. Indeed, there was very little evidence to suggest that LEAs or schools were monitoring or evaluating the practice of integration on a large scale, as has been found elsewhere (Vincent *et al.*, 1994).

The impact of the advancements in technology cannot be ignored in the practices of monitoring and evaluation. The development of databases and information systems made available to all schools may enhance the sharing of good practice. but this will only be the case if the management of such information is effective.

7.4   Summary points

LEA provision

♦   **LEA monitoring in recent years has focused primarily on resource allocation.**

♦   **The most common sources of data on which LEAs based their monitoring were annual reviews, OFSTED inspections, reviews of funding arrangements and LEA inspections.**

♦   **Specific monitoring or evaluation on integration was carried out in only a few LEAs.**

♦ The implementation of the Code of Practice had led many LEAs to improve on monitoring procedures but this was impeded by staff shortages.

♦ The advancements in the use of information technology and communication systems may play an important role in the development of LEA methods of the monitoring of special educational needs provision.

School provision

♦ Over half the case study schools had undergone an OFSTED inspection in the last two years.

♦ The implementation of the Code of Practice has had a major influence on the systems of monitoring of special needs in schools.

♦ The main documents which provided an information base for monitoring were the special needs register and individual education plans.

♦ A range of testing procedures was in place in schools to assist in monitoring. These included in-house subject tests, LEA screening tests, National Curriculum key stage assessments and other external tests.

♦ The meetings of teachers, support staff and parents of pupils with special needs were seen as an important part of the monitoring and evaluation process of these pupils.

♦ The introduction of local management of schools and the delegation of special needs budgets have increased the levels of responsibility held by school staff and governors in the monitoring of special needs resources.

Effectiveness of monitoring

♦ The effective monitoring and evaluation of pupils with special needs is essential if they are to receive appropriate levels of support and curriculum material.

♦ While the Code of Practice has highlighted the need for the effective monitoring of an individual's progress, there was very little evidence to suggest that LEAs or schools were monitoring or evaluating the practice of integration on a large scale.

♦ The development of databases and information systems made available to all schools can only support the development of good practice if managed effectively.

CHAPTER 8
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PRACTICE

The report has attempted to provide a picture of how schools are responding to pupils with special needs, especially those with learning difficulties. The analysis of data from the case study schools has shown that despite variations in contexts, certain strategies are perceived by staff as more successful than others.

This final chapter draws together the points made and issues raised in the separate chapters, and makes some suggestions for future practice. Within each section, suggestions for the way forward are printed in bold, to distinguish them from the discussion points. The final section refers briefly to the overall picture emerging from the study.

8.1 The LEA context

In reviewing the initial findings from the LEA survey and interviews (see Appendix 1) it is clear that the concerns put forward by the LEAs were generally reflected in the views expressed by teachers and parents. Although much of the detailed practice described in the report was drawn from individual schools, each with its own characteristics, there were, nevertheless, certain common threads which have been identified. In some schools more than in others, the policy and practice of the LEA on the provision of school places and resourcing methods appeared to affect, to some extent, the approaches which schools adopted. In the two LEAs with relatively high integration, schools seemed to make the most flexible use of their staffing resources for special needs, ensuring that pupils with statements were given appropriate support but also aiming to make extra staff available in as many classes as possible where there were pupils with learning (or behavioural) difficulties (although there is no evidence on whether this pattern was common throughout those two LEAs). In the other three LEAs, where resources were attached more tightly to pupils with statements (except in the pilot schools in one LEA), there seemed to be less scope for the creative deployment of staff.

8.2 Attitudes

Attitudes to the inclusion of all pupils in the same school varied, but the majority of staff interviewed felt that it was a good principle to adopt, even though they had some reservations about putting it into practice. The main concerns of senior staff tended to relate to resources: they wanted to be sure that they could provide the support required to meet the needs of all pupils, without putting an undue burden on teachers in terms of either very large classes or classes containing significant numbers of pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties.

The main concerns of learning support staff were that pupils with special needs might not be getting the support needed, because of insufficient staffing levels, or that the mainstream curriculum and approaches were just not geared to the needs of pupils who, for example, learned very slowly or could only deal with simple concepts. At the same time, learning support staff cited instances of pupils who had performed better than expected at school and had clearly benefited from the mainstream experience.

The attitudes of subject teachers were the most varied and of course, only a limited range of staff was interviewed in the course of the research (see Appendix 3). Nonetheless, it is likely that the views expressed are similar to those found elsewhere. Some spoke very positively about the potential achievements of pupils with learning difficulties if they were given the right materials and activities, and appropriate levels of support. These interviewees tended to be either teachers with a great deal of teaching experience, such as heads of department or those who had taken on responsibility for special needs, within their department. Teachers whose attitudes were more negative tended to fall into three groups: those who were inexperienced at teaching and found it hard to cope with pupils with difficulties in learning or behaviour; those who were experienced teachers but felt that they had not been adequately trained to provide appropriate teaching for pupils working at very low levels; those who felt pupils with special needs should be in special schools. Of this last group, it could be inferred from teachers' comments, that some felt that this would be beneficial because their own teaching would be less difficult, whereas others felt that the pupils would gain considerably from being in a school where the curriculum was tailored to their needs.

The small number of parents interviewed had all sent their children to mainstream schools (the case study schools) and only one had some thoughts about whether a special school would have been more appropriate. The

others were glad that their child was in a mainstream school, despite some of their reservations about the extent of support that was provided.

It was not possible to say that more positive attitudes to inclusion could be found in the highly integrated authorities, or the contrary, since the composition of pupils in each of the schools varied and the arrangements for support varied. What did seem to be the case, however, was that individual pupils were sometimes identified as 'causing problems' for teachers and in the high integration authorities, such pupils appeared to have much more significant learning or behavioural difficulties than those identified as problematic in the lower integration authorities. This would suggest that pupils with mild to moderate learning difficulties were seen to be accepted more readily in the higher integration schools than in the others.

Nearly all the schools felt that there was a ceiling to the numbers of pupils with special needs that it would be appropriate for them to take on, as they wished to maintain a comprehensive intake. Several stated that their intake was already 'skewed to the lower end' and did not wish that tendency to continue, although they were unlikely to take in more pupils at the higher end of the ability range because of the selective intake of some of the other schools in the area.

Suggestions for future practice

❏ In order to encourage more positive attitudes in those teachers with doubts about integration, schools could try to meet some of the difficulties identified by providing more support and training to teachers who feel that they lack appropriate skills to teach pupils with learning difficulties.

❏ Schools could review their overall policy statements on special educational needs and ensure that staff in each department or curriculum area have discussed how they can teach and support pupils with special needs, particularly those with learning difficulties.

8.3 Resourcing issues

Not surprisingly, schools felt that they were under-resourced and several heads explained how they had spent more than the allocated amounts on special needs. LEAs were clearly aware of these views but appeared to have little capacity to change anything, as their budgets were constrained by the Standard Spending Assessment. Their need to reduce spending on special needs was leading to the adoption of stricter criteria for statutory assessment, but at the same time, pressure from parents, and the threat of the Tribunal, were producing a continuing increase in the numbers of statements issued. This then led to a reduction of the amount available to support pupils without statements, thereby putting greater pressure on schools.

If schools receive less money to support pupils without statements they may press the LEA to issue more statements, so that resources can be allocated, but if more statements are issued, the remaining funds are reduced still further. Perhaps the Code of Practice, with its requirements for the early identification of pupils' needs and the close scrutiny by schools of their support pupils without statements, will lead to a break in the upward spiral of increasing demand for statements.

Suggestions for future practice

❏ LEAs need to make clearer to schools the total amount of funds available for special needs, how it is distributed to schools and the ways in which the allocations are worked out.

❏ If LEA structures allow it, schools should look at their total funding for special needs and consider the best ways of using it for the benefit of all the pupils in the school who may need support.

8.4 Deployment of staff

One approach which would seem helpful, is to allow schools to employ and deploy learning support staff as they see fit, and according to priorities that arise, within the available funding. This would mean that assistants, for example, would not be attached to one pupil, unless there was a demonstrable need for it, but would share their time amongst a number of pupils. Of course, this already happens in a great number of schools, including some of the case study schools, but not in all. If a learning support teacher is tied to providing, for example, two hours of support to a named individual this may be less effective than if two learning support assistants were providing several hours of support to several pupils across the school week. As was discussed in Chapter 4, subject teachers were very appreciative of the support provided by learning support staff, but wished that more could be provided, so that all classes with pupils with special needs would have that extra support, thereby benefiting both the teacher and the pupils. Most schools could not afford to provide that level of support but could increase the coverage by using assistants, who earn less than teachers, to provide support more widely.

On the other hand, the role played by assistants is not always comparable to that performed by qualified teachers. The research showed that some of the assistants who had experience and had attended training courses, as well as a great deal of familiarity with the curriculum being taught, were able to provide effective support to pupils in class, in small groups or as individuals. Nevertheless, their ability to teach pupils basic literacy and numeracy skills was, necessarily, less developed than that of their teacher colleagues. Whether this distinction matters or not will surely depend on the model of support used in the school, since if almost all the support is provided within the classroom context, the assistants may be able to provide sufficient support (though not always perhaps as expert); if the approach is to withdraw pupils for specific teaching, however, there is a need for qualified teachers to carry out most of this work.

Problems may arise when there are few specialist teachers available (perhaps only the SENCO) and the assistants are not experienced and trained; the support they can give to pupils may be limited, and indeed, at times, misguided, leading to a situation where no one is benefiting. The SENCO, with the support of senior management, needs to be given time to provide training, guidance and advice to inexperienced assistants, and resources need to be available to send them on appropriate training course, if at all possible.

One of the factors which appeared to increase the competence and confidence of assistants was when they were attached to subject departments and could develop their familiarity with the topics to be covered and the teaching and learning approaches used in that subject area. This could not, however, be used in schools where assistants were attached to one or two individual pupils rather than being used more flexibly. On the other hand, assistants working closely with one pupil are able to develop effective techniques for supporting that pupil across a range of subjects as they become aware of the pupil's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, younger pupils may need the security of a relationship with one adult, although this should decrease as the pupil develops greater independence. The question of continuity is important but should it be continuity for the assistants or for the pupils? On balance, the departmental approach would seem to be more efficient as assistants can develop approaches which are appropriate for a wide range of pupils within a particular area, whereas with the other approach, the assistant may have to start again when working with a new pupil.

The allocation of assistants to departments also has implications for the extent to which subject teachers take responsibility for pupils with special needs. When assistants are attached to individual pupils, there seems to be a tendency for the teacher to delegate responsibility to the assistant, whereas when the assistants provide support more broadly, they are seen as part of a team, and as sharing the responsibility with the teacher. In addition, in the case study schools, assistants had participated in departmental meetings and sessions on INSET days, contributing their own knowledge of pupils and their needs to work on developing materials and activities. A possible danger, however, is that teaching staff will delegate complete responsibility for materials modification to the assistant in the knowledge that the assistant is capable of producing them.

Suggestions for future practice

❑ Schools could look at the balance of qualified teachers and assistants in the learning support team and consider whether a move towards increasing the number of assistants would be appropriate, thereby enabling more pupils to be supported in more classes.

❑ If assistants are to be employed in a more wide-ranging role than the support of one pupil, they need appropriate training and guidance on how to be most effective.

❑ The SENCO needs to be given sufficient time to provide appropriate levels of support to inexperienced assistants (as well as other staff).

❑ Schools could consider linking learning support assistants (or teachers) to particular subject departments, thereby enabling the development of enhanced competence and confidence for the assistants and a ready source of expertise for the subject teachers.

❑ Schools could incorporate planning and liaison time for teachers and learning support staff into the timetable.

8.5 Organisation of subjects

In most of the case study schools pupils with learning difficulties were in mixed-ability classes in Y7 and subsequently in lower sets for core subjects. In some schools, pupils were withdrawn for individual tuition or group work on basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The rationale for setting or withdrawal was that work could be targeted at the right level for the particular pupils and, if necessary, learning support staff could also be present. In addition, it was hoped that early identification and focused teaching could prevent later difficulties. Although there was a small number of comments suggesting that mixed-ability teaching might be beneficial in higher year groups (mostly from English teachers), most teachers seemed to favour a setting approach, despite some of the problems it created, of classes which were sometimes difficult to manage.

One of the worries about this approach is that when pupils are in sets, teachers will assume that they are a homogenous group and therefore no differentiation or attention to individual needs or targets is required. There is also a danger that if pupils with special needs are in bottom sets for much of their timetable they may become segregated from the other pupils This would not seem to be the case in the schools studied as pupils were in different groupings for different subjects, and although these may have included many of the same pupils for much of the time, this was not exclusively so. A range of subjects was also taught in mixed-ability groups throughout secondary schooling, so pupils with learning difficulties were not isolated from the mainstream.

It is unlikely that this approach in secondary schools will be changed in the near future, and if political statements are to be believed (see comments made by leaders of Conservative and Labour parties), the system may become more rigid, with pupils consigned to a particular set or band for all subjects (in other words, a system of streaming). This has serious implications for pupils with learning difficulties who might gradually become segregated from their peers for most or all of their lessons, something which is not currently the case in many schools.

Suggestions for future practice

❑ Schools could review their organisational practices in terms of banding, setting and mixed-ability arrangements. Systems which employ setting within two parallel bands may be most effective as pupils with learning difficulties will find themselves in one of two parallel 'bottom' groups, rather than all together in the very lowest set.

❑ Schools should be aware of the implications for pupils with learning difficulties if setting and grouping arrangements become more fixed, as these pupils could become increasingly segregated from the mainstream.

8.6 Pupil access to the curriculum

The arrangements in schools to support pupils were designed to enable pupils with learning difficulties to get full access to the curriculum and, as described in Chapter 5, a number of approaches were in use:

- extra support in class;
- differentiated tasks and materials;
- teaching strategies to make the subject more accessible.

Teachers, with few exceptions, and learning support staff were attempting to implement these approaches with varying degrees of success. The pupil interviews indicated that pupils valued the support provided by learning support staff and welcomed the approaches adopted by some teachers but resented the fact that some subject teachers appeared insensitive to their difficulties.

The observations of lessons highlighted some of the difficulties faced by teachers:

- large classes;
- several pupils with different kinds of difficulties in mixed-ability classes;
- low-ability sets containing pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties;
- teaching objectives which are too challenging for some pupils in the class;
- lack of support staff to attend to those needing individual support;
- syllabuses requiring independent work when pupils need the support provided by closely structured tasks.

In some of the lessons observed, the pupils identified as having learning difficulties appeared to be inattentive, spent considerable time off-task, and often did not complete tasks. In those situations, this could usually be attributed to one or more of the factors listed above. In other lessons observed, identified pupils were involved in the lesson, tackling the tasks (with and without support) and producing appropriate outcomes. The reasons for their success appeared to be related to some of the following:

- teachers who explained topics and tasks carefully;
- teachers who took account of pupils' difficulties but respected their efforts;

● tasks which were set at appropriate levels;

● expectations of achievements which were realistic but challenging;

● opportunities for interactive, practical tasks rather than those reliant on quantities of reading and writing.

It is fair to say, however, that in both kinds of lessons, pupils without identified learning difficulties also participated to varying extents in different lessons, probably for some of the same reasons. The other factor, referred to in pupil interviews, was the personality and style of the teacher: some teachers appeared to be well liked and their efforts appreciated whilst others were viewed as critical and unsympathetic to pupils' difficulties.

Parents interviewed wished that their children were given support in more lessons but recognised the constraints imposed by limited resources. However, it was pointed out that they would like to do more to help their children themselves, at home, if only they knew the best approaches to use.

There is a clear need for greater collaboration and liaison between learning support staff and subject departments in order that teachers and support staff can develop the most effective strategies to ensure that individual pupils have full access to the curriculum, whatever the subject or organisational arrangements for classes.

Suggestions for future practice

❑ Departmental work schemes should take account of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and should list appropriate strategies for the teacher to use.

❑ Schools could develop schemes of work and tasks which are more finely differentiated to allow for the range of difficulties encountered by pupils.

❑ Strategies such as those summarised above (and detailed in Chapter 5) could be incorporated into schemes of work and discussed at departmental meetings and on INSET days.

❑ Teachers who appear to have little understanding of pupils' difficulties (and the lack of self-esteem which often accompanies such difficulties) could be provided with INSET which would increase their awareness and guide them in developing more appropriate methods of teaching pupils with learning difficulties.

❑ Teachers with lack of experience in teaching pupils with learning difficulties could also be given more opportunities to collaborate with learning support staff.

❑ SENCOs could set up regular meetings with parents, if not already in place, to discuss ways in which they could help their own children both with homework and with skills relevant to their children's particular needs. This of course has resource implications for the SENCO's time but reflects the emphasis in the Code of Practice on developing enhanced partnerships between schools and parents.

8.7 Training and support

One way of improving the access of pupils with special needs to the curriculum, and perhaps of fostering more positive attitudes amongst teachers, is to provide more training and support to staff in schools. Some learning support staff and some subject teachers referred to training in which they had participated, either in school or at an LEA centre, but many of those interviewed felt that they had received insufficient training for the demands currently placed on them.

Learning support assistants were themselves supported and guided by the SENCO and other learning support colleagues but some felt that it would also be useful to attend relevant courses. Unfortunately, the needs of assistants, and in particular, those with some experience, were not being met by the LEA. SENCOs tended to be involved in local networks, thereby sharing useful information and ideas with colleagues from other schools; LEA staff were sometimes involved in such meetings.

For subject staff, in a sense the key group in mainstream schools, in terms of their effect on pupils with learning difficulties, appropriate training seemed scarce. In the past, the LEA appeared to have run courses on, for

example, teaching science to pupils with learning difficulties, or differentiation, but in recent years either the courses had not been held or few staff had attended them. Criticisms of courses in which staff had participated focused on their lack of practical application to the reality of the classroom although staff had valued discussions with staff from other schools.

Subject staff had benefited from discussions with the SENCO held on both a formal and informal basis but felt that there was insufficient time for regular meetings to be held. Where departments had designated a teacher as the link person for special needs, this appeared to be helpful as providing another source of information and ideas, within the department.

Suggestions for future practice

❏ In planning INSET within school, subject staff could make the development of strategies which enhance the learning of pupils with special needs a regular component of sessions.

❏ Learning support assistants could be encouraged and supported financially to attend external, preferably accredited, courses, where available.

❏ Schools could designate a departmental representative to take responsibility for special needs and to liaise with the learning support department.

❏ LEAs could arrange training courses which target the needs of particular groups of subject teachers, followed by in-school contact in which the LEA advisor could act as a facilitator of discussion between members of a subject department and as a focus for the exchange of ideas and information with staff in other schools.

❏ LEAs could arrange or facilitate area meetings for learning support staff and subject teachers to come together to share concerns and ideas.

❏ Links with local special schools could be developed or enhanced in order to exploit the expertise of special school staff in training and support for mainstream school staff.

8.8 Monitoring and evaluation

LEAs were carrying out a range of activities in this area but admitted that they needed to develop their procedures further. They were able to monitor the progress of individuals, at least in theory, by referring to the reports of annual reviews, but any overall monitoring of the progress of different groups of pupils or comparisons between schools were very limited or non-existent. Data in various forms were collected but not systematically analysed, so no comprehensive evaluation could be made of how effectively resources were being used to promote pupil progress. However, some changes were afoot as the Code of Practice was being implemented and schools were maintaining detailed registers of pupils at each stage (see Derrington *et al.*, 1996, for further details).

At school level, heads were aware of the increased need for financial accountability but did not always find it easy to explain exactly how resources were being used to support pupils with special needs, especially those without statements. This appeared to be the case particularly where schools were attempting to provide all or most of their support in class and to use funding flexibly to meet pupils' needs most effectively. The more integrated the pupils were, the more difficult it appeared to be to disaggregate the different strands of funding.

Schools' own records provided detailed information on individual pupils and SENCOs and other senior staff were beginning to look across the data collected to try to analyse them for a number of different factors, such as the value added (using entry scores on reading tests and GCSE results), the movement of pupils on and off the register and the movement of pupils through the stages of the Code.

Suggestions for future practice

❏ LEAs could discuss with schools which data should be collected and how they could be most usefully analysed to enable schools (as well as LEAs) to evaluate their own practice.

❏ Schools could look more closely at their own records and investigate the factors which appear to enhance or detract from progress of all pupils, but particularly those with special needs.

❏ In line with the guidance in the Code of Practice,
schools could review the register regularly and
evaluate the overall picture of special needs as well as
the progress and needs of particular individuals.

8.9 Concluding points

In the schools visited, most pupils with special needs were integrated in the
sense that they were in the same tutor groups as other pupils, and to a varying
extent were in the same classes as their peers. However, although in class
with other pupils for much of the time, the more significant the pupil's
difficulties, the more functionally separated they became, as they would
receive different tasks, although on the same theme, would receive one-to-
one support from a learning support teacher or assistant, and might be
withdrawn for some lessons or some activities within a lesson. Hegarty
(1981) asserts that, *'The curriculum in integration rests on two opposing
principles: giving pupils the same or similar access to the curriculum as
their peers; and providing appropriate help to meet their special needs.
Applying these principles and finding a balance between them occasioned
much difficulty'* (p.514). This still holds true, 15 years on, although some
change was noted, in that, in the case study schools, some subject teachers
were accepting their responsibility for all the pupils in their classes, and no
longer seeing pupils with learning difficulties as, *'a matter for the special
centre'*.

Interestingly, when there was a lower proportion of pupils with special needs
in the school, some individuals seemed to be seen as difficult to cater for by
some teachers whereas in schools with larger proportions of pupils with
special needs, especially in the high integration LEAs, the individual pupils
identified by teachers appeared to have much more significant learning or
behavioural difficulties. The difference may be due to the fact that schools
with large numbers of pupils with special needs have had to make structural
changes within their schools and have spent considerable time on discussing
issues with staff, in order to ensure their participation in teaching a wider
range of pupils. In schools with fewer pupils with special needs, however,
such steps may never have been taken, and the perhaps unspoken expectation
of staff is that pupils would be gradually assimilated, with the support of
special needs staff. That view would seem to suggest that some teachers still

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hold the perception that the difficulties lie with the pupils rather than the interaction between the pupil and the school structures and environment.

Some changes may have been brought about by the Code of Practice, which has raised the status of the SENCO and other learning support staff (Derrington *et al.*, 1996) and which has, in some schools, provided the SENCO with more non-contact time which can be used to provide support to staff, as well as, or even instead of, to pupils. However, the responsibility for meeting the needs of all pupils has to be taken on board by all teachers and it is clear that there is an ongoing need for increased professional development for both subject teachers and support assistants. Unless subject staff feel more confident about the experience they are providing for pupils with learning difficulties they will continue to have negative or, at the very least, ambivalent feelings about the appropriateness of teaching pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. Training and support are needed for teachers to develop more appropriate strategies to use with pupils, thereby enhancing their confidence and expertise; when they find that pupils respond well to the new approaches they will be encouraged to continue, and their attitudes may become more positive.

The other main requirement for improving pupils' access to the curriculum is that sufficient resources are available to allow schools to employ appropriate numbers of learning support teachers and assistants so that both in-class support and individual tuition can be provided when required. In order to optimise the support provided by those staff, both they and their subject specialist colleagues need to have timetabled opportunities to collaborate both on the production of appropriate materials and to discuss the progress of pupils. Although many subject teachers appeared not to have used individual education plans as a source of information on individual pupils (citing the large numbers of pupils taught and the short time taken to get to know pupils as reasons for not doing so) it is surely incumbent upon all staff to familiarise themselves with the particular needs of those individuals who may need the most support in order to benefit from the teaching and learning opportunities being provided.

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APPENDIX 1
SUMMARY OF
INTERIM REPORT FINDINGS

The first phase of the project was carried out between July and December 1995 and the findings were reported in an interim report in the spring (Lee, 1996). That report was based on two sets of data: the LEA questionnaire survey, to which 55 LEAs responded; interviews with LEA staff in 21 of those LEAs.

For the purposes of analysis, the LEAs in which interviews took place were put into three groups, according to the level of integration in the LEA (calculated using information supplied in the questionnaire or during the interview, and cross-checked against the data presented by the Audit Commission, 1995). Of course, LEA statementing rates vary and the numbers of pupils in 'mainstream' provision may be calculated in different ways, but the groupings provide a rough indicator. The approach was adopted to see if there were any differences in provision and practice between LEAs with different levels of integration. All the LEAs involved in interviews, for which data were available, had at least 30 per cent of pupils with statements in mainstream provision (including special classes or units), so the labels of 'high', 'medium' and 'low' are used with that as a basis. The three groups are as follows:

High integration

LEAs with 75 per cent or more of pupils with statements in mainstream provision (including special classes or units) (4).

Medium integration

LEAs with 50 per cent or more of pupils with statements in mainstream provision (including special classes or units) (8).

Low integration

LEAs with less than 50 per cent of pupils with statements in mainstream provision (including special classes or units) (9).

The initial findings from the first phase of the project were analysed in terms of the issues identified at the beginning of this report (p.3). They are summarised below.

Resourcing

LEAs which were keen to increase places in mainstream by removing places from special schools were hampered by having insufficient resources to fund the transition, whereby extra resources were needed to support the pupils newly in the mainstream schools whilst the places in special schools were still being funded.

Most schools now have access to all or most of their funding for special needs but in some areas there was still some central control over, for example, the deployment of learning support assistants. LEAs were concerned that when schools had complete charge of their funds, the increased flexibility provided might lead some schools to use them in ways deemed inappropriate by the LEA.

Parental choice of school

LEA staff generally seemed to feel that agreement could be reached with the majority of parents on the most appropriate placement for their child. LEAs were developing their provision to try to meet the needs of pupils in mainstream, wherever possible, and where pupils were being educated outside the LEA, they were attempting to develop equivalent support in LEA schools, whether mainstream or special.

Attitudes to inclusion

There appeared to be serious commitment on the part of most LEA staff to increase the numbers of pupils with special needs in mainstream schools, although actual strategies for introducing changes were not always indicated in documents. Where numbers were already high, the commitment was to ensure that the provision was maintained.

LEA staff expressed concern that some schools in their areas were becoming reluctant to take in (more) pupils with statements, but at the same time, some schools were, apparently, realising the benefits of including all pupils, and the resources which they brought with them.

LEAs felt that some schools were reluctant because they felt that it gave their school a certain image, which might deter parents of children without special needs; on the other hand, they described some schools which were proud of their reputation for providing well for all pupils.

The attitudes of parents towards wanting a mainstream place for their child with special needs varied, with the LEA context appearing significant: where LEAs and schools had the expectation that virtually all pupils would attend mainstream schools, this appeared to be accepted by the majority of parents; where a wider choice of school types was available, the issue could become more contentious.

The effects of the National Curriculum

As described above, some schools were thought to be resistant to increasing the numbers of pupils with special needs, and in some cases this was attributed to fears that these pupils would not score highly in National Curriculum assessments or GCSEs, thereby lowering the position of the school in league tables.

Many of the concerns about increased levels of statementing, and parents' worries about the ability of mainstream schools to cater for their children, have been attributed to the effects of the National Curriculum. In the past, schools might have provided alternative curricula for some pupils, according to a range of criteria, enabling them to follow different courses, where necessary. Some of that flexibility was reduced by the National Curriculum, since all pupils are required to follow the same curriculum, with the effect that pupils with learning difficulties, in particular, may need more sustained support than they would have needed.

APPENDIX 2
CASE STUDY LEAS AND SCHOOLS

The five case study LEAs represented a range of geographical areas and types, including two shire counties, two metropolitan areas (one large, one smaller), and a London borough. Two were characterised as 'high integration' authorities as, according to the NFER survey and other sources, they placed at least 75 per cent of pupils with statements in mainstream schools. Of the other three LEAs, two were termed 'low integration' as they had less than 50 per cent of pupils with statements in mainstream schools, and the fifth fell somewhere in the middle, with around 50 per cent of pupils with statements in mainstream.

The ten schools were all comprehensive, taking boys and girls, although the range of ability in their intake was affected by the intakes of other schools in the areas. The size of the schools varied, from around 600 pupils to 1300 pupils, and the proportion of pupils with statements for special needs ranged from 0.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent. Four of the ten schools had additional specialist provision for special needs, focused on the needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (1 school), specific learning difficulties (1 school), hearing impairment (1 school), moderate learning difficulties (1 school).

APPENDIX 3
DETAILS OF CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS

First round interviews

During the spring term 1996 and at the beginning of the summer term (for two schools) visits were made to ten case study schools. Interviews were carried out with the following people:

	Number
heads	8
deputies	4
SENCOs	10
heads of departments of mathematics	4
heads of departments of English	4
heads of departments of science	5
other teachers of mathematics	3
other teachers of English	1
other teachers of science	3
teachers of other subjects	6
learning support teachers	5
learning support assistants	7
section 11 teacher	1
Total school staff	61
LEA adviser for behavioural support	1
parents	5
governor	1
Y11 pupil	1

Second round interviews

Eight of the schools were visited a second time to carry out lesson observations and further interviews. The lessons observed have been listed below.

	Number
Y7 mixed-ability classes	8
Y7 low-ability classes	3
Y9 low-ability classes	6
Y10 low-ability class	1

Short interviews were carried out with the following staff:

	Number
mathematics teachers	3
English teachers	1
science teachers	4
other teachers	4
SENCOs	1
assistants	9

Interviews were also carried out with the following pupils:

	Number	
	boys	girls
Y7	10	8
Y8	1	1
Y9	12	2

APPENDIX 4
PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

This group provided advice on both special needs projects .

Members of the group

Christine Air	Inspector for Special Educational Needs, Warwickshire
John Bangs	NUT
Judy Bradley	Assistant Director, NFER
John Browning	SEN Policy Division, DFEE
Felicity Fletcher-Campbell	Senior Research Officer, NFER
Chrissie Garrett	Head of Learning Support, Banbury School, Banbury
Michael Hart	Head of Learning Support Services, Harrow
John Hosegood	HMI
Hazel Lawson	Head of Senior Department, Greenside School, Stevenage
Pat Mullany	Education Department, Doncaster

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INTEGRATION IN PROGRESS:
Pupils with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools

How are pupils with special educational needs being educated in mainstream schools?

Has the provision been affected by external factors such as

- pressures on resources?
- competition between schools?
- parental choice?

An NFER project was funded by the Local Education Authorities to investigate the position for pupils with special needs in mainstream schools in the mid-1990s and information and views were sought from LEA representatives, staff in mainstream secondary schools and a number of pupils and parents.

The project found that:

- attitudes to integration were mainly positive although affected by worries about resources;
- schools liked the flexibility provided by having funding for statements delegated to them;
- in-class support for pupils with learning difficulties was a common approach in the case study schools;
- subject teachers and learning support staff were developing a range of strategies to give access to the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties;
- parents were pleased with the support provided but would have liked more;
- teachers working with pupils with learning difficulties wanted more closely targeted training and support to develop new approaches;
- monitoring and evaluation approaches used by LEAs and schools were in need of further improvement.

In the final chapter the evidence is discussed and a number of suggestions for future practice for schools and LEAs are outlined