The Inclusion and Every Child Matters agendas

This chapter sets the scene for the rest of the book. It explains how:

- the inclusion debate has developed to encompass the notion of all schools being part of a flexible continuum of provision
- the Every Child Matters agenda is unfolding alongside inclusion
- the chapters in the book are set out to illustrate how an inclusive education service is being developed across schools and services

The convoluted path of inclusion

After many years of argument about what inclusion should mean with regard to pupils who have special educational needs, there is a growing consensus about how the concept of inclusion should be defined. In the past, the debate has centred almost entirely around a small percentage of pupils who have the most significant needs and where their education should take place. This is ‘inclusion’ in the narrow sense of ‘placement’. After a quarter of a century of unproductive and heated argument, there is, at last, widespread agreement that inclusion is not about a place at all, but describes a process.

All schools need to work hard at making pupils feel they are part of the school community and have something to contribute. This is particularly necessary where, for a variety of reasons, including having special educational needs, pupils may find it harder to be accepted by their peers and appreciated for what they have to offer. Any type of school may or may not be an inclusive school, depending on the ethos of the school, and how staff try to accommodate and value all pupils. Special schools, in common with mainstream schools, have encountered the challenges of being asked to take on pupils with needs that are outside their experience, and have had to find ways of making sure the school adapts to provide for such pupils, as well as it does for the rest of its population. This means that special schools do not stand outside inclusion, as is sometimes implied; they are part of it.
The concept of inclusion, then, has moved on from being about all pupils being included in mainstream schools to the much more productive idea of all schools working together as part of inclusive education service. Nor is it only schools that are part of inclusion. Advisory and support services too have a significant role to play in supporting pupils with special educational needs, wherever they are being educated.

The lengthy debate around the meaning of inclusion has hindered the development of a coherent education service, within which there is agreement about how to meet the whole range of needs, from the vast majority of pupils who require varying levels of support in mainstream schools, right through to those whose needs are so severe that a 52-week placement may be considered. Instead, local authorities and individual schools have been inclined to devise their own ways forward, outside any national framework.

Examples from across the range of provision are given in the following chapters. The case studies have been chosen to illustrate some of the many ways in which schools, both mainstream and special, as well as advisory and support services, are moving forward in new ways to embrace the concept of working together to meet the needs of all pupils. A range of innovative practices are emerging, that illustrate some of the many and varied ways, that pupils with special educational needs are being included in a very real sense. An added impetus to this work has been the unfolding of the Every Child Matters agenda, with its emphasis on placing children and their individual needs at the heart of what schools do, rather than thinking in terms of what is most convenient for the institution.

Terminology and SEN

The term ‘special educational needs’ was used by the committee set up in the 1970s, under the chairmanship of Mary Warnock, to look at the education of ‘handicapped children and young people.’ The term was used widely on its own until the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act of 2001 brought the two terms ‘SEN’ and ‘Disability’ together. Although the expressions are not synonymous, there is considerable overlap between them. The Disability Rights Commission’s Code of Practice for Schools (2002) explains that:

Pupils may have either a disability or special educational needs or both. The SEN framework is designed to make the provision to meet special educational needs. The disability discrimination duties, as they relate to schools, are designed to prevent discrimination against disabled children in their access to education. (Paragraph 4.10)

Further shifts in terminology can be detected through recent reports from Ofsted:

- Special educational needs in the mainstream (2003)
- Special educational needs and disability: towards inclusive schools (2004)
- Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught? Provision and outcomes in different settings for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (2006)
In the last of these three reports, the term ‘SEN’ or ‘SEN and Disability’ is replaced with ‘Learning Difficulties and Disabilities’ (LDD). The explanation for this is given in the report itself:

The term LDD is used to cross the professional boundaries between education, health and social services and to incorporate a common language for 0–19 year olds. In the context of this report, it replaces the term special educational needs. (Page 21)

Ofsted has a valid point. With the roll out of Every Child Matters, a common language across services, particularly education, health and social care, is much needed. The difficulty is that the term ‘SEN and Disability’ is enshrined in law and the DfES will continue to use it. For the sake of simplicity, ‘SEN’ will be used throughout this book.

Questions for reflection

■ What is your own view of inclusion?
■ Do you think it is time to replace the word ‘inclusion’ in the context of special educational needs?
■ Does the term ‘SEN’ itself need replacing, and if so, have you any suggestions as to what should be put in its place?

The background to the inclusion and Every Child Matters agendas

In schools, there is often a feeling of a lack of cohesion between government policies and a sense of despair when some of them seem contradictory. For instance, the need to raise standards for all can be accepted as a general principle, but the way to set about achieving this has caused much anxiety, not least for those concerned with the progress of pupils with SEN. Personalising the curriculum and focusing on the needs of every individual, sits uncomfortably with the notion that all pupils of the same age should be tested on the same day. Performance tables may have been renamed ‘Achievements and Attainments Tables,’ but they still measure the attainments of some, rather than recognising the achievements of all pupils, whatever the level they have reached.

However, two agendas that do sit comfortably together are those of inclusion and Every Child Matters (ECM). To understand how the present position has been reached, both in terms of the debate about inclusion and the emergence of ECM, it is worth remembering some of the more recent landmarks that have led to the current situation, from the time of the 1970 Education Act.
Every Child Included

Education Act enshrines in law the statementing procedures to protect those with the greatest level of need within the SEN continuum.

1970
Education Act. All children brought within the education service, including those with an intelligence quotient (or IQ) deemed to be below 50, rather than being the responsibility of the health service.

1978
Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (often referred to as the Warnock Report). Chaired by Mary Warnock, it introduces the term ‘Special Educational Needs’ to encompass a further 18 per cent of the school population in addition to the 2 per cent catered for in special schools.

1981

1994
Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (revised) reduces the 5 stages of the original code in order to cut back on bureaucracy.

2001

2003

2004

2005

2006

Every Child Matters (ECM) published as a result of Lord Laming’s Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié.

The Report of the Special Schools Working Group begins the shift back to recognising a continuing role for special schools, after the denigration of special schools in the 1980s and 1990s.

Special Educational Needs: A New Look is published by Mary Warnock, who is concerned that, in the name of inclusion, too many pupils with SEN are being placed in mainstream schools.

i) Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (revised) reduces the 5 stages of the original code in order to cut back on bureaucracy.

ii) Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) strengthens the rights of parents to have a place in mainstream schools for their children. The Act places new duties on schools not to discriminate against pupils with disabilities and to make reasonable adjustments in order to include them.

NB: The SENDA, the SEN Regulations and the Code of Practice (revised) are sometimes referred to as the ‘SEN Framework.’

i) The Children Act is passed and becomes the legislative framework for ECM.


iii) Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Schools is issued as a suite of documents specific to the role of schools, social care, the Criminal Justice System and health services.

iv) The government’s SEN strategy, Removing Barriers to Achievement is published and incorporates some of the findings of The Report of the Special Schools Working Group.

The Children Act

The Report of the Special Schools Working Group

Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (first version) is published to address the needs of all the 20 per cent and not just the 2 per cent with a statement. A 5-stage approach to addressing those needs is advocated.

The Children Act

Conservative Party’s Commission on Special Needs is launched under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Balchin.

House of Commons Education and Skills Committee’s Report on Special Educational Needs is published in 3 volumes, July 2006.

Conservative Party’s Commission on Special Needs

Making ‘inclusion’ include all provision

In tracking the evolution of the meaning of inclusion, it is worth remembering how there was a shift from the use of the term ‘integration’ in the 1980s, to using the term ‘inclusion’ in the 1990s.

Integration and inclusion

Integration was about integrating individuals into mainstream schools, with the onus being partly on the pupil with SEN to adapt to a mainstream environment.

Inclusion was used to signal a change as to how schools themselves could adapt to meet the needs of all the pupils who come to them.

The 1990s was a time when there was increasing awareness of the need to provide lifts and ramps to help wheelchair users and others with mobility problems to access buildings, and this included schools. Those with sensory impairments, the deaf and the sight impaired, benefited from technological advances that made it possible for some to access a mainstream curriculum for the first time. But a very sensible and realistic move to include more pupils in mainstream schools became for some enthusiasts of mainstream provision, proof that all could be included in mainstream education. This position overlooks the very real differences between those who need physical or technological adaptations to access the curriculum, and those with other kinds of needs, such as cognitive impairment, where no such adaptations are available.

Warnock, in her introduction to Farrell’s book, *Celebrating the Special Schools* says:

“*What has been wrong with the policy of inclusion has been the idea that if some children with special needs can flourish in the mainstream they all can.*” (Farrell, 2006: v)

Although the new century has seen the growth of a common understanding about the need to maintain a range of provision, there is still a minority who would argue that, where inclusion appears not to be working, the fault lies entirely with schools who have failed to adapt sufficiently to meet all needs. In fact, most mainstream schools have worked extremely hard to include a wider range of pupils and have done so with a considerable degree of success. However, seeing it just in terms of what schools are achieving is only looking at one side of the issue. For it is not just a matter of how far schools have been successful in welcoming pupils with more complex needs, but whether the pupils themselves are comfortable in a mainstream environment. The idea that the greater the child’s difficulties, the more it may be necessary to adapt the environment to suit their needs, is one that will be explored throughout this book.

A further aspect of the inclusion debate has been raised by those who have treated inclusion in mainstream schools as a human rights issue. This goes further than saying that there should be a right to choose a mainstream education. Instead, it puts forward the view that all schools must be prepared to accept all children and, as special schools stand in the way of this happening, special schools should close. As well as assuming that all pupils could have their
needs addressed in a mainstream environment, including specialist teaching and equipment, and the therapies and medical support some of them depend upon, this viewpoint deprives parents of choice. It used to be the case that parents of children with SEN, had to fight for a mainstream place. Today, the situation has changed and parents are just as likely to be fighting for a place for their child in specialist provision. As Warnock says about inclusion in her latest publication, *Special Educational needs: A New Look*:

> let it be redefined so that it allows children to pursue the common goals of education in the environment within which they can best be taught and learn. (Warnock, 2005: 54)

If this is a matter of human rights, then surely it should be about the right of every child to receive an education appropriate to his or her needs.

In its SEN Strategy, *Removing Barriers to Achievement*, published in February 2004, the government tried to move the debate on by clarifying that inclusion does not mean including all pupils in mainstream schools, but including all schools, and, indeed, all types of specialist provision, within an inclusive education service. Although this was clearly spelt out in the document, it did not receive enough publicity to make it generally recognised or accepted as the way forward. Farrell suggests overcoming the problem of different interpretations by using a new expression:

> An alternative to inclusion, ‘optimal education,’ involves mainstream and special schools working together in a joint enterprise of optimising the attainment, achievement, progress and personal development of pupils with SEN. (Farrell, 2006: 23)

He goes on to suggest that a key difference between inclusion and optimal education would be that there would be no presumption that special schools are revolving doors . . . for pupils with SEN whose real place is in the classroom (Farrell, 2006: 24).

Farrell’s idea of replacing ‘inclusion’ or ‘an inclusive education service’ with ‘optimal education,’ would be one way forward. As he says himself, the ideas behind them are very similar. Both see a joined-up service, with mainstream and special schools working closely together to support pupils with SEN. The difference would be that Farrell sees ‘optimal education’ as meaning some children might be placed in specialist provision for most, if not all of their school career, whereas the ‘revolving door’ idea implies that pupils would be more likely to spend only some of their time in special education. Recently, the government itself has come up with a new expression. In its evidence to the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, as part of the Inquiry into Special Educational Needs, (Autumn 2005–Spring 2006), the DfES clarified that the current view of government was to use the term a ‘flexible continuum of provision’, as an alternative to ‘an inclusive education service’. It may be seen as an advantage in terms of getting away from arguments about inclusion and its meaning, that both ‘optimal education’ and ‘a flexible continuum of provision’ manage to avoid the word *inclusion* altogether. But whatever term is used, the idea is still the same, of seeing all schools as part of the same system, taking shared responsibility for meeting needs between them. This is a considerable advance on talking about special schools as ‘segregated provision’, and seeing mainstream and special schools as belonging to two discrete sectors. Both have so much to offer each other, and in encouraging
local authorities to maintain a flexible continuum of provision, it should be easier for pupils – and staff – to move in and out of different settings. Pupils’ needs are not static: they change over time, and a more flexible service should be able to respond by putting in place greater opportunities for children and young people to have different types of placements as their needs alter, including, short-term, part-time and dual-role placements.

### Three types of placement

**Short-term provision**

Pupils may benefit from being in a more specialist setting for a short period of time and then be ready to return to mainstream classes after a period of intensive help. At present, the statementing process makes it harder to put this fully in place.

**Part-time placements**

Some pupils have sessions when they go to a different school. Children may be in special schools part-time, when they are undergoing assessment, using it as a step towards reintegration, or to give pupils who are likely to stay in special schools, some experience of a wider peer group. Likewise, pupils in mainstream schools may have some sessions in a special school.

**Dual placements**

These can also work both ways. Pupils may have dual registration, dividing their time between two settings, for instance, taking part in lessons at a mainstream school, while continuing to be on the roll of a special school, or vice versa. Over time, pupils are likely to reach a stage where it is clear which environment will suit them best.

Putting in place more flexible arrangements for meeting pupils’ needs, ties in very neatly with the government’s Every Child Matters agenda, which places children and families at the centre and builds round them the services they need.

### Making every child matter

The Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, and The Children Act 2004 that enshrined it in law, looks at how to meet the needs of children and families in a more holistic way. This involves the main services used by families – education, health and social care, in particular – working much more closely together and being more readily accessible. To help bring this about, the former Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are disappearing and becoming part of Children’s Services, with a Director of Children’s Services, rather than a Director of Education.
The Children Act

Under the Act, Local Authorities are required to:

■ Appoint a Director of Children’s Services
■ Appoint a Lead Member for Children’s Services
■ Promote the educational achievement of children in care

By 2008, they must establish children’s trusts to deliver frontline services, working with local partners from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors in offering support to children and families.

At school level as well, there is an expectation of more joined-up working. Children’s centres are at the forefront of this new approach for pre-school children and some are being based with primary schools. All schools are expected to contribute to the Extended Schools programme, offering childcare, as well as a range of activities between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. to children, their families and the local community. In other words, schools are taking on a role that sees them being at the centre of their communities, rather than being there solely for the benefit of their own pupils.

Children’s Centres and Extended Schools

Children’s Centres

■ Early years provision for 0–5 year olds, with a qualified teacher in charge
■ Support for parents
■ Access to health and social care
■ Referral pathways to other specialist services

Extended Schools

■ All schools to be involved by 2010, working collaboratively to provide services between them
■ All primary-aged pupils able to access childcare all year from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
■ All secondary schools open all year round from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
■ Varied menu of activities, such as study support, homework clubs, breakfast clubs, catch-up classes, opportunities for the gifted and talented, dance, drama, music, sport and ICT
As Extended Provision becomes the norm, ways will need to be found of ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are not excluded from the opportunities offered to their peers. Transport and additional staffing will need to be considered. For children attending special schools, there will be the question of whether they access after-school clubs in or near their school, or in their home locality, which may be some distance away.

Fundamental to Every Child Matters are the five outcomes, which were decided in discussion with children and young people, who said they were the ones that mattered most to them. While the joining up of services will take longer to achieve, and have not yet impinged significantly on the work of all schools, the five outcomes are already beginning to pervade all aspects of school life.

The 5 outcomes of ECM

1. Being healthy
2. Staying safe
3. Enjoying and achieving
4. Making a positive contribution
5. Achieving economic well-being

Work in progress

While it will take time to change structures and practices, to break down the divisions between professionals and create more productive joint working processes between services, there is at least clarity about what needs to be done and how to set about creating a better future for children, young people and their families. Although considerable progress has also been made in agreeing what needs to be put in place to improve provision for pupils with SEN, there are still areas of uncertainty. As a result of its Inquiry into SEN during 2005–06, the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, while in agreement with the need for the full range of provision, itemised some of the difficulties and called upon the government to take a fresh look at SEN, in order to:

- Develop a national framework, giving minimum standards for the range of provision that should exist in every area
- Undertake a radical review of statementing (which was also called for by the Audit Commission in 2002, when they discovered that 68% of the funding available for SEN was being spent on the 3% with statements)

- Resolve the contradiction in what has been said about whether special schools are likely to 'shrink' (as suggested in the SEN Strategy), or whether the present numbers in special schools (roughly 1.4% of the school population) are to remain static (as suggested by the DfES in its evidence to the Select Committee)

- Ensure that inclusion, in the sense of including all pupils in the setting or settings that best meets their needs, is more widely understood

In its reply, the government rejected the idea that a fresh look at SEN was necessary, because it felt that sufficient progress was being made. It agreed that a national framework is desirable, but saw this coming about as a result of ECM and the implementation of the five outcomes, integrated planning and multi-agency working. Its view on statementing was that there are some improvements, with a lessening of the differences between authorities in the numbers who gain statements and a general move to get money into schools without recourse to the statementing process. The government did agree, however, that the Chief Inspector for Schools (HMCI), should carry out a review of progress in 2009/10:

_We have asked Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools to consider progress in 2009/2010. We will consider, in the light of HMCI’s advice, whether the present framework for SEN, or particular features of it, should be reviewed and what further action should be taken to achieve better outcomes for children with SEN and/or disabilities and their families. (Section 1, paragraph 17)_

Meanwhile, the Interim Recommendations of the Conservative Commission on Special Needs is fully supportive of the need to maintain a range of provision. Indeed, the suggestion is made that there might need to be more special schools. This raises an interesting point for discussion. If more pupils are being identified with conditions such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), as well as mental health problems, it could be argued that a greater range of specialist provision is needed. This need not necessarily mean more special schools, although it could include that option as part of the solution.

At the heart of this book are four chapters which give examples of the many and varied ways that a flexible range of provision is beginning to emerge. The first of these (Chapter 2) looks at developments from the perspective of mainstream schools, which is where the vast majority of pupils have always been educated. Case studies are included of schools from across the age range, from a children’s centre to an academy, and from a first school with a very high percentage of special needs, to a secondary school for girls, where numbers with SEN used to be well below average, but are now increasing substantially. The next two chapters (3 and 4) switch to the perspective of the special school, although the
mainstream element is very much present in the examples of federations, partnerships and co-located schools. Chapter 3 looks at a variety of day provision, while Chapter 4 concentrates on schools offering residential placements. To give a broader picture, case studies are included of schools in Northern Ireland and Wales. Chapter 5 turns to the development of outreach, advisory and support services, as well as pupil referral units (PRUs), all of which are available to support schools in including children and young people who have special educational needs.

It has been possible to include only a few examples of some of the innovative and exciting ways in which schools and services are exploring how best to include fully all pupils, and make the five outcomes a reality for them. It is hoped that this glimpse will be enough to bring readers in touch with some of the extraordinarily imaginative and inspiring ways that a flexible continuum of provision is being created.

As Tutt and Barhorpe state:

_Every child must matter and every child must feel equally valued. All pupils and students deserve an education tailored to their individual aptitudes and interests, but for those who have special educational needs, the personalisation of their schooling requires that much more thought and attention, so that they can maximise their potential within a flexible and inclusive education service._ (2006:12)

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**Final thoughts**

- Has your concept of inclusion changed at all since reading this chapter, and if so, in what way has it altered?
- Do you agree with the concept of a flexible continuum of provision? If not, what would you put in its place? If you do agree, list the types of provision you would include as part of the continuum.
- Do you think it is possible or useful to identify pupils who are disabled but do not have SEN, or who have SEN but are not disabled?
- Do you know of any children who you think could be described as one but not the other? What is the nature of their SEN or disability?
- What do you think are the dangers in labelling children? Could we do without labels altogether?