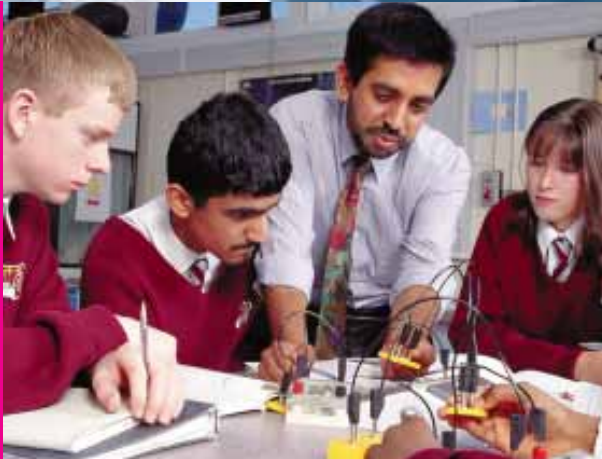




# *Excellence for all* **children**

*Meeting Special Educational Needs*





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*Meeting Special Educational Needs*

Presented to Parliament by  
the Secretary of State for Education and Employment  
by Command of Her Majesty

October 1997



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#### Abbreviations

Please note that all statistics quoted for January 1997 are provisional figures derived from the Schools' Census (Form 7).

# Foreword

*by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, the Rt Hon David Blunkett MP*

There is nothing more important to the Government than raising the standards children achieve in our schools. The White Paper ***Excellence in schools*** committed us to exacting targets, and proposed a challenging programme to achieve them.

Our vision is of excellence for all. This inclusive vision encompasses children with special educational needs (SEN). Schools currently identify 18% of children as having special educational needs of differing kinds. Almost 3% have individual statements showing the additional special educational provision they require. This Green Paper asks some questions about these figures. What is not in question is the case for setting our sights high for all these children.

Good provision for SEN does not mean a sympathetic acceptance of low achievement. It means a tough-minded determination to show that children with SEN are capable of excellence. Where schools respond in this way, teachers sharpen their ability to set high standards for *all* pupils.

The great majority of children with SEN will, as adults, contribute economically; all will contribute as members of society. Schools have to prepare all children for these roles. That is a strong reason for educating children with SEN, as far as possible, with their peers. Where all children are included as equal partners in the school community, the benefits are felt by all. That is why we are committed to comprehensive and enforceable civil rights for disabled people. Our aspirations as a nation must be for all our people.

Our approach to improving the achievement of children with special educational needs has six themes:





- our high expectations for all children include high expectations for children with SEN. All our programmes for raising standards will reflect this, starting from pre-school provision, building on the information provided by the new arrangements for baseline assessment when children start in primary school, and leading to improved ways of tackling problems with early literacy and numeracy;
- while recognising the paramount importance of meeting the needs of individual children, and the necessity of specialist provision for some, we shall promote the inclusion of children with SEN within mainstream schooling wherever possible. We shall remove barriers which get in the way of meeting the needs of all children and redefine the role of special schools to develop a network of specialist support. We attach high priority to the development of new regional arrangements for improving the effectiveness of SEN provision;
- we want all parents of children with SEN to get effective support from the full range of local services and voluntary agencies, to have a real say in decisions about their child's education, and to be empowered to contribute themselves to their child's development. Some parents need to be helped to gain access to these opportunities;
- we want good value for money from the one-seventh of their budget – £2.5 billion – which local education authorities (LEAs) currently spend on special educational needs. This is not about cost-cutting. It is about ensuring that this provision leads to achievement at school, and success in adult life. We want to look at ways of shifting resources from expensive remediation to cost-effective prevention and early intervention; to shift the emphasis from procedures to practical support; and to see whether changes should be made to any aspects of statements of SEN;
- we shall boost opportunities for staff development in SEN, and see that good practice is widely disseminated, so that the principles of this Green Paper can be put into practice;

- we know that positive approaches to special needs make a difference. We shall work in co-operation with all who share our objective of high standards for children with SEN; and we shall expect provision locally to be based on a partnership of all those with a contribution to make.

This Green Paper is the first step in a fundamental reappraisal of the way we meet special educational needs. It explains our approach. It challenges some widespread assumptions. Above all, it seeks the views of all those with an interest in special educational needs on how to make a reality of our vision. The Paper includes examples to show what is currently being achieved. These are not intended as benchmarks of best practice but to demonstrate good practice on which we can build.

We have set up a National Advisory Group on SEN, chaired by the Minister responsible for SEN, Estelle Morris MP. This Group, whose membership is listed in Appendix 1, has been influential in the preparation of this Green Paper. It will work closely with our Standards Task Force. Members of the Group will play an important part in the arrangements for consultation on the Green Paper.

This consultation process will include conferences, meetings and discussions throughout the country. Many organisations have already announced their intention to contribute actively to this debate. I hope that there will be much local discussion. A copy of the Green Paper is being sent to all headteachers, chairs of governing bodies, SEN co-ordinators and LEAs. A summary leaflet will also be made available.

Early in 1998, the National Advisory Group on SEN will consider the results of this consultation, and will advise the Government on a programme to drive forward improvements. After that, if there is a need to change the law, we will seek an early opportunity to do so. While there is much scope for more effective targeting of expenditure within the large SEN budget, we know that there will be transitional costs in implementing our programme. The pace of change will be linked to the availability of resources. Action will be carefully phased, bearing in mind everything that is being asked of schools and LEAs. Our objective is a programme for this Parliament and beyond, sustaining high quality provision for children with special educational needs well into the twenty first century.



**David Blunkett**

## **A programme for early action...**

**The following section summarises what we aim to achieve for SEN provision over the lifetime of this Parliament. Much of that programme will depend on the responses to this Green Paper. But we want to make urgent progress in key areas, to help prepare for action in all parts of the country and in all schools over the next few years. We are therefore announcing a series of co-ordinated projects to kick start the process. By early next year, each of the actions described below will be under way.**

- We shall be working with a group of LEAs and schools with relevant experience, to establish the necessary conditions for promoting inclusion much more widely.
- We shall be working with schools in a small number of LEAs, to find ways in which staff in special and mainstream schools can most effectively support each other.
- We shall be funding research to assess the relative costs, benefits and practical implications of educating children in mainstream and special schools.
- We shall announce a significant expansion in the Schools Access Initiative, to help mainstream schools become more accessible to children with disabilities.
- We shall be supporting projects in two regional Government Offices, to prepare for the introduction of regional planning arrangements for SEN.
- We shall be working with a group of LEAs, schools and voluntary bodies representing parents, to promote effective arrangements for parent partnership.
- We shall be supporting a project to help special schools develop procedures for target setting.
- The DfEE, with the support of OFSTED, will run a programme of practical workshops to help special schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties improve the achievement of their pupils.
- All Government policies for schools will include an explicit assessment of the implications for children with special educational needs.



## By 2002...

**At the end of each chapter is a summary of what we aim to achieve for children with special educational needs over the lifetime of this Parliament. All the summaries are brought together here.**

### By 2002...

# 1

- The policies set out in *Excellence in schools* for raising standards, particularly in the early years, will be beginning to reduce the number of children who need long-term special educational provision.
- There will be stronger and more consistent arrangements in place across the country for the early identification of SEN.
- Schools and parents will have higher expectations of the standards children with SEN can attain.
- Target setting, in both mainstream and special schools, will take explicit account of the scope for improving the achievements of children with special educational needs.
- New Entry Level awards will be available for pupils for whom GNVQs or GCSEs at 16 are not appropriate.
- There will be more effective and widespread use of Information and Communications Technology to support the education of children with SEN, in both mainstream and special schools.

### By 2002...

# 2

- All parents whose children are being assessed for a statement of SEN will be offered the support of an independent “Named Person”.
- Parent partnership schemes will be in place in every LEA in England, and will play an important part in supporting parents of children with SEN.
- Improved arrangements for encouraging dialogue between parents, schools and LEAs should be reflected in a reduction in the number of appeals to the SEN Tribunal.

### By 2002...

# 3

- A revised version of the SEN Code of Practice will be in place, preserving the principles and safeguards of the present Code, while simplifying procedures and keeping paperwork to a minimum.

- There will be renewed emphasis on provision under the school-based stages of the Code of Practice, with support from LEAs and greater assurance for parents of effective intervention, particularly at stage 3.
- The result of these improvements will be that the proportion of children who need a statement will be moving towards 2%.
- The great majority of SEN assessments will be completed within the statutory timetable.

#### By 2002...

# 4

- A growing number of mainstream schools will be willing and able to accept children with a range of special educational needs: as a consequence, an increasing proportion of those children with statements of SEN who would currently be placed in special schools will be educated in mainstream schools.
- National and local programmes will be in place to support increased inclusion.
- Special and mainstream schools will be working together alongside and in support of one another.

#### By 2002...

# 5

- Regional planning machinery for SEN will be in place across England, helping to co-ordinate provision for low-incidence disabilities, specialist teacher training and other aspects of SEN.
- There will be clear guidance to support the effective development of special schools in the context of a policy of increased inclusion.
- New arrangements will be in place to safeguard the interests of children with special educational needs who are placed in independent schools.

#### By 2002...

# 6

- There will be a clear structure for teachers' professional development in SEN, from a strengthened attention to SEN issues in initial training through to improved training for headteachers, SEN co-ordinators and other SEN specialists.
- There will be a national framework for training learning support assistants.

- There will be national guidance on training governors to carry out their responsibilities for pupils with SEN.
- There will be national agreement on ways of reducing the time spent by educational psychologists on statutory assessments and maximising their contribution in the classroom, and the training necessary for their developing role.

**By 2002...**

**7**

- There will be new arrangements for disseminating up-to-date information about good practice in SEN provision.
- There will be improved co-operation and co-ordination between local education authorities, social services departments and health authorities, with the focus on meeting children's special needs more effectively.
- Speech and language therapy will be provided more effectively for children who need it.
- The Department will be collecting information about the experiences, once they have left school, of young people with SEN, to help schools and colleges prepare young people for adult life more effectively.

**By 2002...**

**8**

- A national programme will be in place to help primary schools tackle emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) at a very early stage.
- There will be enhanced opportunities for all staff to improve their skills in teaching children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- There will be a national programme to offer support to EBD special schools experiencing problems.
- There will be expanded support for schemes designed to renew the motivation of young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties at Key Stage 4.