

## WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) INCLUSION POLICY

### 1. AIM

- 1.1 West Berkshire Council aims to raise standards of attainment for all children with special educational needs within the context of an increasingly inclusive education system.

### 2. CONTEXT

- 2.1 This policy has been developed within the framework of the following national legislation and guidance:-

1996	Education Act
2001	SEN Code of Practice
2001	SEN & Disability Act
1995	Disability Discrimination Act
2001	"Inclusive Schooling", DfES
2001	"Accessible Schools, DfES
2003	Report of the Special Schools Working Group
2004	DfES SEN Strategy
2004	The Children's Bill
2004	"Every Child Matters : The Next Steps".

- 2.2 This policy has been developed within the context of the following local policies, strategies and plans:-

#### **West Berkshire Corporate Plan**

The Strategic Priorities within West Berkshire's Corporate Plan include:-

- "Tackling all forms of social exclusion across the District"
- "Maintaining high standards of educational achievement across all our schools".

#### **The Children & Young People's Directorate Service Plan**

The Children & Young People's Service Plan has as one of its key outcomes,

- "West Berkshire children grow up healthy, safe, achieving, employable and able to make a positive contribution as citizens; within this, the priority focus being those children most at risk of negative outcomes".

#### **The Education Development Plan**

All 7 priorities within the Education Development Plan (2002-2007) have a SEN strand.

#### **The Early Years Development & Childcare Plan**

The Early Years Development & Childcare Plan includes strategies for improving the quality of SEN provision in early years settings and increasing access to childcare places for children with SEN.

## Accessibility Strategy

The LEA's Strategy for improving access to the curriculum, to information and to the environment for pupils with disabilities is contained in the Accessibility Strategy 2003-2006.

### 3. DEFINITION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

3.1 For the purpose of this policy, special educational needs are as defined in the 1996 Education Act:

*A child has special educational needs if he has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for him*

*A child has a learning difficulty if:*

- a. he has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of his age,*
- b. he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of his age in schools within the area of the local education authority, or*
- c. he is under the age of five and is, or would be if special educational provision were not made for him, likely to fall within paragraph (a) or (b) when of or over that age.*

### 4. PRINCIPLES

The Council's Special Educational Needs (SEN) Inclusion Policy and SEN Development Plan are informed by the following principles:

- children and young people with special educational needs are entitled to:
  - prompt identification of their needs
  - early intervention
  - high quality support

within the context, in the great majority of cases, of a mainstream school environment

- children and young people with special educational needs should have access to the same opportunities as their peers, including a broad and balanced curriculum, and full access to the life of the school, including out of school activities
- pupils with special educational needs will achieve more if we have high expectations for them. They must be given the opportunity to achieve and reach their potential
- parents of children with special educational needs have a unique contribution to make to their child's education. They are entitled to be fully involved, listened to and respected. They are entitled to good quality information, support and independent advice.
- Adults working with children who have special educational needs must establish the child's views and wishes and involve the child where appropriate in decisions which are taken.
- Children with special educational needs will have different needs during the course of their education. They should have access to a flexible continuum of provision which can respond to their particular needs at different times.

- In the small minority of cases where it is not possible to meet a child's needs in their local mainstream school, provision for should be as local to the child's home as possible.
- Children with special educational needs depend on good quality support from committed and skilled staff in schools. Good practice in SEN thrives when teachers and support staff are valued and supported and their professional development is given priority.
- Outcomes for children with special educational needs will be improved when statutory and voluntary agencies work together in a coordinated and integrated way.

## **5. CHILDREN WITH SEN BUT WITHOUT STATEMENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED**

5.1 The majority of children with special educational needs should have their needs met within their local schools at the School Action or School Action Plus of the Code of Practice, without the need for a statutory assessment. We expect our schools to:

- value and respect diversity and ensure that their cultures, policies and practices promote inclusion
- respond to individual needs at all levels through appropriate differentiation of the curriculum
- follow the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs
- work with parents of children with special needs as equal partners in their child's education
- have a published SEN policy which is regularly reviewed
- make effective use of delegated resources to support children with special educational needs.
- be accountable for the use of resources delegated for children with special educational needs
- have an Access Plan, as required by the SEN & Disability Act.

5.2 We will support our schools in removing barriers to learning through:

- Training & Development
- Information & Guidance
- Dissemination of good practice
- Access to specialist advice and support
- Improvement to school environments
- Review of funding mechanisms to ensure appropriate targeting.

## **6. STATUTORY ASSESSMENT**

6.1 We will continue to move towards a position whereby only children with the most complex and long term needs will require a statutory assessment, as the provision required for the majority of children with SEN will be routinely available without recourse to the statutory assessment process.

6.2 Decisions to carry out statutory assessments will be made in accordance with clear and objective criteria. The responsible LEA officer will be advised by a Special Educational Needs Panel which will include Headteacher representation. The Panel will always make clear the reasons for its decisions to schools, parents and other interested parties.

6.3 We will complete all assessments under the 1996 Education Act within the statutory deadline of 18 weeks.

## **7. PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN WITH STATEMENTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

7.1 In accordance with the statutory framework for inclusion, children with statements of special educational needs will be educated in mainstream schools unless this would be incompatible with:

- (a) the wishes of the child's parents
- (b) the provision of efficient education of other children.

7.2 If concerns exist that placement of a statemented pupil in a mainstream school would be incompatible with the efficient education of other children, the LEA will seek to take "reasonable steps", working closely with the school, to prevent the incompatibility.

7.3 We believe that with the right training, strategies & support, the vast majority of children with special educational needs can be successfully included in mainstream education. Cases where "reasonable steps" cannot be taken to allow inclusion of a child in a mainstream school, where this is the parents' preference, should be in a very small minority.

## **8. THE ROLE OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

8.1 We value the considerable expertise and good practice which exists within our special schools. We will protect and promote this. We will work with our special schools to develop them as centres of advice and expertise, and as such, as an integral part of an inclusive education system.

8.2 Our special schools will be outward looking centres of excellence working with their mainstream partners and other special schools to support the development of inclusion. Special school consultancy services will enable children with significant special educational needs to remain included in mainstream schools, through provision of advice and guidance to mainstream staff in respect of individual pupils.

8.3 Special schools will act as a resource to develop the skills of staff in mainstream schools through

- provision of training
- team teaching
- joint development of teaching resources
- opportunities for visits and observation
- opportunities for short and longer term staff exchanges and secondments.

8.4 Special schools in West Berkshire will continue to meet the needs of pupils with the most complex special educational needs. Wherever possible, children on the roll of special schools will be given opportunities for some inclusion in a mainstream school. More use will also be made of short term and dual roll placements.

8.5 In order to promote joint working between the special and mainstream sector, and in order to create more inclusive provision for children with the most severe learning difficulties, West Berkshire special schools will be colocated with mainstream schools over the period of the current SEN Development Plan. This means that the special schools will continue to exist as separate schools, with their own Headteacher, Governing Body and separate budget, and with staff continuing to be employed by the special school, but that they will be physically located with mainstream schools. Facilities and resources will be provided on the mainstream school site to allow children continued access to any specialist provision they require, including access to medical and therapy support. Opportunities will exist for the most vulnerable children to be taught separately for all or most of their time, where this is appropriate. Inclusion within the mainstream will be promoted, subject to agreement by the mainstream school and the efficient education of all children.

8.6 Special schools will be developed in line with the extended schools model, promoting links with SEN support services, Health services, Social Services and the voluntary sector, so that parents can access a range of services in one place.

## **9. PLACEMENTS OTHER THAN IN LOCAL MAINSTREAM OR LOCAL SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

9.1 We believe that children should have the opportunity to access local provision to meet their special educational needs wherever possible. Children benefit from remaining within their communities, with the support of their families and their peers. We will therefore continue to develop our local continuum of provision to meet as wide a range of needs as possible. This will include maintenance and further development of “resourced” mainstream schools which can cater for children with particular types of SEN whose needs may not be capable of being met (at least on a temporary basis) in their local mainstream school. It will also include enhancement of our local special schools to ensure that additional needs associated with learning difficulties, such as sensory impairment, physical disability and autistic spectrum disorder, are well catered for.

Where local provision would not be viable, we will work with neighbouring Authorities to develop regional provision.

9.2 In a very small number of cases, however, children may have such complex or unusual needs that they will require a specialist placement which may be some distance away. In these circumstances, the need to access suitable provision overrides the desirability of local provision.

9.3 Where a child’s needs cannot be met within any school maintained by West Berkshire Council or by a neighbouring Local Education Authority, we will seek in the first instance to make a day placement at an independent or non-maintained special school which is within a reasonable travelling distance of the family’s home. Where a suitable school does not exist within a reasonable travelling distance, we may make a weekly or termly residential placement. Depending on circumstances, this may be in conjunction with Social Services and/or the Primary Health Care Trust.

9.4 We will keep our provision for children with special educational needs under regular review.

## **10. PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS**

10.1 We believe that children with special needs are more likely to thrive and to achieve when their parents or carers are treated as equal and active partners. Distrust between parents and professionals can impact negatively on children’s well being and progress. We will strive to work in genuine partnership with parents through provision of:

- adequate and timely information in an accessible form
- maintenance of a constructive dialogue with parents about their children’s needs
- access to independent support for all parents who wish it through the Parent Partnership Scheme
- training for LEA and school staff on conciliation skills and dissemination of good practice in working with parents

10.2 We aim to reach agreement with parents about their children’s needs and provision wherever possible through discussion, negotiation and mediation where necessary. We will strive to resolve conflict wherever possible.

10.3 We will aim to establish and take into account the views and wishes of children with special educational needs.

## **11. MULTI AGENCY WORKING**

11.1 We will strive to work in partnership with all agencies and bodies who may have an involvement or interest in provision for individual children and/or strategic planning of local services for children with special educational needs, including Social Services, Health and the voluntary and independent sector.

## **12. QUALITY**

- 12.1 We believe that the Local Education Authority has an important role to play in monitoring the quality and effectiveness of provision for children with special educational needs at all levels. We will monitor the quality of special needs provision in schools and the effective use of resources delegated for children with special educational needs. We will assist schools who require support in making effective provision for children with special educational needs.
- 12.2 We will seek customers' views of our services for children with SEN and will strive to respond to customer opinion in our service development.
- 12.3 We will monitor our effectiveness as a provider of services for children with special educational needs through measures such as bench marking with other local education authorities.
- 12.4 We aim for continuous improvement of our services for children with special educational needs through an ongoing process of monitoring and evaluation.

## **13. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

- 13.1 This Policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an annual basis.