Including children means more than just being ..... SMART

In this article, written for Special Children, I will look at some of the ideas presented in a book about how to include children with dyslexia in mainstream schools. (McKeown, S. and Squires, G. (In Press) Supporting Children with Dyslexia Birmingham: Questions Publishing Ltd) Many of the issues are also relevant to other children with different special educational needs.

Ideas in education are constantly changing, and some say that if you wait long enough the old ideas will come back round again. There was a time, before the 1993 Education Act and subsequent Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs (SEN), when children who were a little bit slower at acquiring some skills were simply supported by their class teacher or subject teacher. The introduction of the Code of Practice gradually led to an expectation that all children who were not 'average' would somehow need and receive additional support. Those at the extreme end of the spectrum for any aspect of learning would be 'Statemented'.

A number of problems exist with this expectation, (which I have exaggerated to make the point):
· It is extremely costly - removing money from schools to be kept in LEA budgets so that it can be given back to schools to meet the needs of a few identified children
· It is bureaucratic - with the 'additional funding' that statementing provides taking a long time to reach the school and provide support for the targeted child
· In some schools, the responsibility for the child's learning difficulties are gradually passed along a chain of people. The class teacher passes the child on to the SENCo, the SENCo passes the child on to an advisory teacher, the advisory teacher passes the child on to the educational psychologist and finally the EP passes the child on to a teaching assistant via the statementing process.

There is an emphasis on remediation - somehow doing some extra teaching will make the child become like all of the other children in the class. They start 'below average' in some identified area and after a short period of additional teaching they will become 'average'.
· When a child fails to make average progress in a mainstream school, the school considers that they cannot meet the child's needs and some other more specialist provision is required. The Audit Commission has recently pointed out the wastefulness of this process and called for the system to be reviewed (Audit Commission, 2002).

The alternative strategy is to provide support sooner and most people in education have heard of the concept of early intervention. Many believe that this means getting money to the child so that additional adult support can be provided. However, a better interpretation would be that the sooner someone notices that child's difficulties and helps or supports the child the better the educational outcome will be. Effectively, early intervention starts with the class teacher, noticing and responding to the child. And here we are, full circle - the class teacher or subject teacher is responsible for teaching the child and not simply delivering a curriculum.

In this article, I will consider what we mean by adequate process; re-affirm good practice when considering IEPs; and I will offer a way of going beyond IEPs to improve classroom support for a whole range of children. This second aim is the purpose of the series of books entitled Supporting Children with ...
The implications of 'adequate progress'

Some of the philosophy of the old Code of Practice is still evident in the new Code of Practice, but there is a change. The focus is on inclusion. All children are not expected to learn at the same rate, nor are slower learners expected to catch up. There is a suggestion that children will make progress in a way that is adequate for them. The emphasis is on success and not on proving that the child is a failure. The term adequate progress is used and defined in a variety of ways (CoP p 68). Each definition has its own implications and these are explored below.

The first definition used seems familiar and has a 'common sense' interpretation about it.

- The pupil 'closes the gap' between their level of attainment and that of their peers. This is a more traditional view and consistent with the idea of catching up or becoming more average rather than remaining below average. However, if we are to have a more inclusive education then we need to acknowledge that not all children can be average. Some children will not 'catch up' no matter what we do. They will always learn at a slower rate, even if taught individually and with the best teachers. The Code of Practice recognises this and offers further definitions.

The following examples show the difficulty of using the definitions meaning fully:

- The attainment gap does not get any wider. This is a difficult definition to interpret. In the simple example of using reading ages to measure childrens' ability we are faced with the difficulty that a reading age is usually defined as the level that 50% of children achieve on a test at any given age. This means that 50% do not achieve that level and there will be a spread of abilities. As children get older the spread will become wider. This means that a child making normal progress and being classed as an average reader will find that the gap between their age and the reading age expected for children of their chronological age on a particular test will get wider. This leads to other questions about this definition:
  - Does this mean that a first centile child remains at the first centile and does not drop to 0.5 centile?
  - Does it mean that the child who is two years behind does not become three years behind?
  - Progress remains 'similar to that of peers starting from the same attainment baseline, but less than the majority of peers'. This definition effectively deals with the difficulties presented by the last definition. But it raises new questions. In the example of a poor reader our first question is, "How much progress should a similar child make in reading?" This depends on the test and on the aspect of reading being considered. Table 1 shows the amount of progress 7 year old children of different abilities should make, when measured on the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA-II, Form 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading skill</th>
<th>2 centile child</th>
<th>4 centile child</th>
<th>16 centile child</th>
<th>50 centile child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Not measurable</td>
<td>Not measurable</td>
<td>9 months progress</td>
<td>12 months progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Not measurable</td>
<td>Not measurable</td>
<td>7 months progress</td>
<td>12 months progress</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Progress for children of different ability over 12 months

What this table shows is that for a child who is low average, their progress will be less than one month for each month of teaching. The gap between them and the 50th centile child increases at a rate of 5 months per year for accuracy. For children at the bottom end of the spectrum, progress ceases to be measurable using a standardised test.
This difficulty of measuring adequate progress on standardised tests is recognised in part with the following definition:

- 'Matches or betters' previous progress. At the extreme end of the ability spectrum this could mean that the child learned two words last year and has mastered three this year.

Finally, the definition that tries to place teaching as a property of the child's learning in the given educational setting states:

- Ensures access to the full curriculum. The level of the curriculum is not specified and this means that access is determined by how well the teacher can teach and how well the curriculum is broken down. How much differentiation is needed? When does differentiation become modification?

The defining of adequate progress sets the inclusive context. Teachers are being presented with the task of including pupils as fully as possible within the curriculum. In order to be said that teaching has taken place, there must be evidence of learning. In order to demonstrate learning we need to take into account that:

- All children are different and learn at different rates
- There will always be fast learners and slow learners
- Increasingly, the spectrum of children with difficulties in different areas will become more diverse as there is a move towards more inclusive learning.
- When we think about a child's progress we need to consider this and compare the child to similar children rather than 'average' children.
- When a child cannot learn as quickly as the majority of peers then the teacher can increase remedial teaching; consider how to support children accessing the curriculum in their class at the planning stage of lesson preparation; or, do both of these.
Being SMART about IEPs

Most schools have developed their own format for setting out Individual Education Plans, or they make use of a standard format produce by their LEA. The model in the Code of Practice remains one of using the IEP to guide remedial teaching. An example format is shown on the next page and was devised for Supporting Children with Dyslexia.

The IEP is a working document; when planned well it should inform the additional teaching that is being done with the child and it should provide the basis for future review of that teaching. Poor educational practice in the use of IEPs often includes the setting of many targets to try to cover all areas of identified need. This is impractical - how can a busy teacher work on 20 targets for one child, particularly when there may be more than one child with an IEP? Secondly, targets are sometimes woolly and are couched in terms that are unrealistic e.g. 'the pupil's reading age will increase by 6 months in the next 4 weeks'. Thirdly, sometimes targets on the IEP reflect teaching targets for the curriculum being presented to the class. This is not necessary - IEPs should only include targets that are different and additional to what is being taught in class (including normal classroom differentiation).

Good practice requires some prioritisation; choices have to be made about the areas for which additional teaching will be provided. Other areas of difficulty will continue to need to be supported in class. The IEP is usually devised for a short period of time and has 3 or 4 short-term targets that are,

- Specific,
- Measurable,
- Attainable,
- Relevant and
- Time limited

Ideally, the IEP should be set up with parents involved as equal partners. The pupil should also be able to give their views and have these included in the planning.

The strategies should involve highly structured programmes that are carried out frequently. They should have an emphasis on success, work to develop mastery learning, and include some element of interleaved learning. Interleaved learning allows some previously learned material to be included when learning new material and has two advantages:

- Increases the child's confidence because the material is familiar and they can succeed more easily
- Refreshes learning after a period when the skill or material has not been practised. This deals with the problem of children appearing to forget a skill that they had previously mastered. Relearning is usually quicker than the original learning, and this suggests that something of the original memory may remain.

How the teaching is to be resourced is an important issue. There are several questions to be answered:

- **What** is to be used? What materials or learning packages are needed?
- **Who** is going to carry out the intervention?
- **When** is the remedial work going to be done?
- **How** long is going to be spent during each session on this strategy?
- **How** often is the strategy going to be used?

Monitoring of learning is important. It allows us to know whether the strategy chosen is effective or not. It also provides useful information about when a target has been reached and it is time to move on. The monitoring does not need to be carried out every time learning takes place but it should be built into the programme at regular intervals. Good monitoring allows the rate of progress to be gauged and this can help future planning.

Exit criteria simply state the level to which the skill has to be mastered before the target is considered to have been met. This means that either a new target can be set or the time for remedial teaching can be divided amongst the remaining targets to provide a more focussed intervention.
Including children means more than just being

......SMART
# Individual Education Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil Name</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
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**Concern that has been prioritised**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Monitoring arrangements</th>
<th>Exit Criteria</th>
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Beyond the IEP

The second aspect of supporting children requires teachers to plan to go beyond the IEP. The three main features to include are:
- opportunities for generalisation from remedial teaching to classroom work
- classroom support strategies to be used
- improved communication between all who are supporting the child

The main difficulty is that the support strategies need to be communicated in an efficient way to all those people who will teach the child. In a secondary school, this may be 12 or 15 different teachers. Arrangements also need to be in place for days when the usual teacher is absent or out on a training course.

Generalisation is helped with good liaison between the teacher and adults working with the child on remedial programmes (either on a withdrawal basis, small group basis, or in teaching specific strategies by working alongside the child in the classroom).

The support strategies used in class can be drawn from the examples given in books such as those in the Supporting Children series. They could also include a listing of useful aids, software and classroom support packages. Strategies that the teacher, parent or child find useful can be included.

The next page gives a possible format for sharing this information, which could also act as an aide memoir for planning lessons. Most importantly it is a working document to support the child in the classroom and as such should be referred to by the teacher during every lesson.

The classroom support plan will probably be longer term than the IEP. However, like the IEP, it will need to be reviewed. Some strategies selected for the pupil may turn out to be ineffective; others may become redundant as the child makes progress.

As with the IEP, this sheet should only list those strategies that are not in common use in the classroom. As teachers become more familiar with the strategies that can be used to support dyslexic children in their classroom, the number of strategies needing to be recorded will reduce.

It is my view that the classroom support plan can be a useful tool that will enable teachers to take on the day-to-day responsibility for children in their care. In doing so, they will utilise support strategies which will increase the child’s ability to access the curriculum and to record ideas. This will have benefits for the individual child with greater generalisation of skills learnt during IEP targeted remedial work, to work done in the classroom. It will also benefit the rest of the class as the teacher using a wider range of strategies in a structured way and thus enables all children to work more effectively and with greater independence. The classroom support plan can therefore help with teacher skill development and lead to whole school improvement, producing raised standards for all pupils.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities for Generalisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Useful information that the class teacher or subject teacher can collect to support specialist teaching</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Technological aids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom strategies</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Using the IEP and Classroom Support Plan together

The following example is taken from Supporting Children with Dyslexia and it shows how the IEP and Classroom Support Plan might be used together.

A number of possibilities exist for choosing targets for Harry:

- He could be taught to improve discrimination between similar looking letters when reading
- He could be taught to improve discrimination between similar looking letters when writing
- Specific words could be taught to improve reading and spelling (e.g. bus, home)
- He could start to work on the 'magic e rule'
- He could be taught rules to help with all long vowel sounds
- More general orthographic rules could be taught
- He could be taught proof reading skills involving looking up words in a personal dictionary or word list
- etc …

These would be discussed between his teacher and parents at a planning meeting and a choice made. Once targets have been selected, materials are considered and strategies to use chosen. Monitoring is considered and exit criteria chosen. The work of teaching Harry is then divided up.

The difficulties that Harry has in recording his ideas independently in class work writing is recognised and his teacher considers ways that might support him in class. The combined plan is shown on the next two pages.

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Harry is an eight year old. His teacher thinks that he is 'quite bright' and cites him being able to answer questions in class discussions and having a good memory for facts. He can easily alliterate and rhyme and seems to have a good phonological awareness - so long as no print is involved. In his reading, he often confuses similar looking letters. A piece of recent writing gives an idea of his spelling - “i ga naw on a dus’ [I go home on a bus]. At first these spellings appear bizarre. However, a closer look shows that he:

- Confuses similar looking letters by orientation (b/d, h/n, w/m)
- Confuses similar shaped letters (a/o)
- Has not learnt the orthographic rule for adding e to make a long vowel sound (magic e rule)

Harry does not have a Statement and is currently supported at School Action Plus. His parents are very supportive, but busy and can only afford a few minutes each day to work with him. His mum is quite anxious that Harry plays her up when she tries to work with him on reading and spelling.
## Individual Education Plan

**Pupil Name** Harry  
**Start Date** 1 Sep 02  
**End Date** 18 Oct 02

### Concern that has been prioritised

*Harry confuses similar looking letters when reading and spelling*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Monitoring arrangements</th>
<th>Exit Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be able to discriminate between b/d when writing</td>
<td>Spelling lists of phonically regular words containing b/d</td>
<td>Daily practice of 10 words chosen from list for quick spelling test with parents at home (M,T,W), adult helper during registration (Th,F)</td>
<td>Score from Friday spelling tests</td>
<td>10 out of 10 on two successive weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be able to discriminate between b/d/p/q and between h/n when reading</td>
<td>Precision teaching charts with randomly presented target letters.</td>
<td>Charts produced on computer and printed on sheets for daily use by teaching assistant after break each afternoon. Stop watch for timing one minute for fluency training.</td>
<td>Weekly probe sheets to measure number of letters correctly identified in one minute</td>
<td>30 letters identified correctly in one minute on two successive probe sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successfully identify b/d in class reading book</td>
<td>Peer tutoring with instruction to look for b and d</td>
<td>More competent peer trained to engage in peer tutoring and instructed in searching for b and d. Daily before lunch.</td>
<td>Weekly check by teaching assistant and recorded to show percentage of letters identified correctly</td>
<td>85% accuracy in spotting b/d correctly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Classroom Support Plan

| Opportunities for Generalisation                                                                 | Looking for b/d during literacy hour whole class reading, group reading and supported individual reading.  
|                                                                                                  | Targeted marking of writing to highlight b/d errors  
|                                                                                                  | Teacher modelling choosing b/d in whole class teaching and teaching mnemonic using hands to make letters |
| Useful information that the class teacher or subject teacher can collect to support specialist teaching | Evidence from targeted marking to inform choice of b/d words for practice spellings at home |
| Technological aids                                                                              | b/d visual mnemonic cue cards Sellotaped to corner of desk |
|                                                                                                  | Electronic Spellchecker to allow Harry to check some words for himself |
|                                                                                                  | Tape recorder so that the teacher can record reading to support Harry during class work |
|                                                                                                  | Tape recorder so that Harry can record some of his answers and ideas rather than writing them down |
| Classroom strategies                                                                            | Sat near front so that teacher can easily provide support during reading or writing. Provide support ‘in passing’. |
|                                                                                                  | Sat next to more competent peer (John) to support class reading and following worksheet instructions |
|                                                                                                  | Being allowed to stick worksheets into book and writing short answers to questions directly onto sheet |
|                                                                                                  | Cloze procedure for some writing. |
|                                                                                                  | Introducing Harry to the idea of the ‘magic line’ to encourage independent writing. |
|                                                                                                  | Personalised word list to copy words from during independent writing. |
|                                                                                                  | Key words put on board during class discussion about writing. |
|                                                                                                  | Key words for different curriculum areas displayed on walls, along with routine words such as days of the week |