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## **Response to the Mayor's Draft Children and Young People's Strategy from the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education**

### **Developing Inclusion Means Ending Segregation**

CSIE supports the initiative by the Mayor of London to develop a children and young people's strategy for the capital.

As an educational charity supporting inclusion and challenging segregation, the Centre particularly welcomes promotion of inclusion and equality amongst London's children and young people as a key goal of the draft strategy. The pledge to tackle educational inequalities and disadvantage is also welcome.

We share the view that homeless young people, children of travellers and gypsies, young refugees and asylum seekers, young carers and mothers, young people in custody, disabled children, and lesbian and gay young people all experience difficulties accessing education.

However, the Centre is concerned about a major gap in the areas of concern covered by the proposals. Although the draft strategy focuses on promoting inclusion for children and young people, there is no reference to the equally pressing need to challenge segregation.

A main lesson from CSIE's research and experience over 21 years is that one of the biggest barriers to developing inclusion in mainstream schools is the continued existence of segregated special schools. We have come to understand that developing inclusion means ending segregation at the same time as re-structuring mainstream schools. Segregated schooling undermines efforts to develop inclusion by draining resources and is itself damaging and discriminatory, as we outline later in this paper. We sincerely hope that the Mayor will take this into account and strengthen the draft strategy accordingly.

London has some of the highest segregating education authorities in the country (Lambeth and Lewisham) as well as the least segregated authority (Newham). We feel it would be an important role for the Mayor to highlight and promote, as a children's rights issue, the need to end segregated schooling in the capital and to develop appropriate support for all pupils in the mainstream. The statistics showing variations in placements in separate special schools in London are contained in 'LEA inclusion trends in England 1997–2001' by Brahm Norwich.

## **Convention on the Rights of The Child**

CSIE recommends a properly planned and phased programme for the closure of separate special schools and retention and transfer of all appropriate specialist resources to help develop the capacity of mainstream schools to provide appropriate support for all children in their local areas. A timetable should be agreed and targets set for closing separate special schools and developing and restructuring mainstream schools. CSIE believe that 10 years is an achievable target.

We believe the Centre's position is in line with the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which the draft strategy also takes as its principled starting point for achieving children's rights. In our view segregated schooling violates children's rights to inclusive education and beaches all four principles underpinning the Convention. It is our view that segregated schooling is institutional discrimination. Sharon Rustemier has documented these violations in detail in a report for CSIE 'Social and Educational Justice – the Human Rights Framework for Inclusion'.

## **Damage of Segregation**

In addition, research evidence continues to grow regarding the damage of segregated schooling including studies from academics and reports from disabled people and pupils who have been hurt by the system. This personal damage includes devaluation and undermining of status and self-esteem as well as impoverished social and academic experiences and outcomes.

There is also accumulating research evidence of the way the existence of separate, special schools perpetuates discrimination and prejudice against disabled people - the very problems which many disabled people say create the greatest barriers to their full participation in adult life.

Young people themselves have consistently spoken out against segregation and of their wish to learn together. CSIE's 2002 Inclusion Week Magazine contains an article and quotations highlighting their views (see <http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/inclusionweek/articles/together.htm>).

## **Government Considering Future of Special Schools**

As suggested earlier, there is an important role for the Mayor of London regarding supporting educational inclusion and challenging segregation in a city which has examples of best practice in inclusion as well as the worst examples of discrimination and segregation.

This task of championing an end to segregation has become all the more urgent as proposals are currently being considered by the Government to give a permanent and enduring role to segregated schooling.

Disabled people and pupils have opposed the move, recommended by a Working Group on the Future of Special Schools set up by the DfES, although they have found it hard to make their voices heard. Earlier this month because of the lack of consultation with disabled people's organisations, the Alliance for Inclusive Education called together disabled people who see themselves as special schools survivors and invited DfES officials to hear their concerns.

It would be extremely timely and would further democracy, as well as children's human rights, if the Mayor of London supported moves towards greater inclusion in education and the phased closure of all segregated education.

**CSIE, July 2003**