

SEN ACTION PROGRAMME

CONSULTATION

*(Initial response from
Centre For Studies on Inclusive Education, CSIE.)*

Section 1 - Overall programme

The main aims of the programme are to:

- **set out clearly the Government's objectives and priorities for future action in the short and longer-term**
- **embed SEN in mainstream policy and practice**
- **improve outcomes for children and young people**

Will the work proposed under the six broad areas of the action programme and the two cross-cutting themes contribute to achieving those aims?

We welcome the Government's decision to revise the SEN Action Programme but have a number of doubts about the aims as currently expressed. We feel this is an unprecedented opportunity for Government to fulfill its responsibilities to make sure the rights of all children and young people to properly supported inclusive, mainstream education are upheld and put into practice.

For this reason we feel the aims of a revised action programme should be clearly stated as phasing out segregated educational settings and developing a restructured, inclusive mainstream system capable of providing appropriate support for all pupils in their local areas.

Because of the Government's continued support for a special school system alongside ordinary, mainstream schools, the current proposals for a revised action programme do not wholeheartedly embrace the rights of all children and

young people to properly supported inclusive education as we would wish them to do.

What are the top three priorities you would like the Action Programme to address?

- 1) *Building the capacity of ordinary, mainstream schools and local education authorities to provide support for the full diversity of children and young people in their local areas.*
- 2) *Phasing out and planning the closure of separate, special schools and transferring resources, expertise, staff and pupils to an appropriately supported and diverse mainstream.*
- 3) *Paving the way for legislative changes to end segregation in education and make inclusion a matter of routine entitlement guaranteed by law for all students in their local mainstream schools.*

Such legislation would involve:

- *removing LEA powers to run separate, special schools*
- *removing the remaining constraints on access to the mainstream*
- *making provision of necessary support for learning a legal entitlement for all students in local mainstream schools*
- *reducing reliance on current assessment and statementing procedures, which are based on an outdated view of disability as individual 'defect' and which hinder inclusion, as a main means of obtaining necessary support.*

In our view an action programme to build schools' capacity to support the full diversity of learners in their local areas and phase out segregated settings is more appropriately described as a National Inclusion Action Programme, not an SEN Action Programme.

What are the three main barriers to progress in those areas at present?

- 1) *Continuing philosophical, financial and legislative support for segregated schooling.*
- 2) *Lack of a national programme and timetable to build the capacity of mainstream schools to support the full diversity of learners in their local areas and the transfer of necessary resources including appropriate specialist support services from segregated settings.*
- 3) *Failure to recognize the rights of all children and young people to fully supported, inclusive mainstream education and the responsibilities of Government to provide it as set out in international human rights agreements and standards.*

Section 2 – Individual areas

Under this section we have outlined the main areas of work which we feel should be tackled by the Government in operating a National Inclusion Action Programme with aims as proposed in our response to Section 1. These main areas of work would be:

Experienced Leadership for Inclusion

Urgently recruit and set up a high-level team including representatives from schools and LEAs who have experience of making inclusion work and of disabled people, parents, and pupils with similar experience. This team to be headed by an experienced educationalist with a proven track-record in inclusion and to be given necessary resources and support to begin work immediately in a full-time capacity to design, instigate, oversee and monitor progress of a timetabled National Inclusion Action Programme.

Training of the School Work Force to Support Inclusion

Improve ways of exchanging best practice in teaching and learning for diversity and organizing appropriate training programmes to give all staff the skills and confidence to support all learners.

Transferring Resources from Segregated Settings to Support Inclusion

Set targets for the phased closure of separate special schools and ensure that all appropriate specialist provision and resources are retained and transferred to mainstream.

Monitoring and Reviewing Funding Mechanisms to Support Inclusion

Make sure schools have the funding required to ensure every child has necessary support to participate fully to the best of their abilities in the life and learning of their local school and community.

Monitoring and Reviewing Assessment
of Teaching and Learning to support inclusion

Make sure assessments used in schools enable all learners to demonstrate their abilities and achievements and assist teachers in developing participation and learning for every student to the maximum extent.

Human Rights for Inclusion

Plan and implement a programme for schools to educate pupils, staff, and parents on disability equality and human rights in education, concentrating especially on rights of children and young people to fully supported, inclusive mainstream education as set out in international human rights agreements and standards.