



PRESS RELEASE 9.3.2005

## 2020 Campaign

# INCLUSION IS WORKING!

The Labour Party should be proud of the policies of moving towards inclusive education which they have supported over their last two terms of office.

Some of the most progressive, forward looking, innovative, and humane work is being done in mainstream schools all over the UK where teachers have risen to the challenge of building more inclusive learning communities. Children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are having their lives turned round by careful planning, peer support, mentors, and by being taught emotional intelligence and life-skills in school. Disabled young people are being given opportunities to make friends, to develop social and academic skills, and to make a difference to the world, in ways which are unprecedented. Young disabled adults are consequently living lives which were thought impossible only a generation ago.<sup>1</sup> Inclusive schools benefit all their pupils and there has been no drop in 'standards' – in fact the opposite can be seen to be true as value-added measures are published.<sup>2</sup>

The problem is that this change is not being required of the schools or the LEAs which are reluctant to examine their values, their policies and their practices towards children they have been conditioned to think of as belonging 'somewhere else'. A child in Brighton is 24 times more likely to be segregated than a child in Newham.

Parents and children who are unfortunate enough to encounter these negative attitudes, facing hostility and neglect in mainstream schools, will of course fight for their individual child to have a 'refuge' from this. They will argue for different places where there is a welcome and more easily available specialist resources. **But these families are victims of half-hearted integration, not inclusion.**

The mistake that is constantly being made is thinking that the problem lies within the child, because their 'Special Needs' are so challenging to mainstream schools, whereas the problem lies within the systems which fail to demand that such children are treated with respect, dignity and skill, as equals, within their ordinary communities. This is the nature of an oppression. It brings the argument into the human rights arena.

Segregated education does not work in the long term for either those who are segregated, or those who are left behind. Segregation into groupings based on perceived differences, whether they be disability, race or religion only ever leads to entrenched prejudices on all sides, and further segregation in adult life. You only have to look at the divided communities of Northern Ireland, or the separate lives of disabled adults in residential homes, sheltered workshops, and day centres to see that separate schooling does nothing to bring about social inclusion in later life.

---

<sup>1</sup> See 'Where Are They Now', published by the Alliance for Inclusive Education

<sup>2</sup> See Ofsted reports October 2004-February 2005

The 2020 Campaign is led by adults who were excluded from mainstream schools when we were children. Our experience has shown us that the 'special School System' conditioned us to have low expectations of ourselves, to be passive, to accept a lower status, to be 'strangers in our own lands'.

Statistics show that children from special schools do less well in exams, have higher rates of unemployment and are often more socially isolated as they grow older than their peers in the mainstream. Many parents realise only when it is too late that their adult sons and daughters have been led down a dead-end road.

Michael Howard's call to stop the closure of Special Schools is a red herring designed only to play to populist myths. Special schools have closed under both Tory and Labour Governments. Many were residential schools which were replaced by local day provision, and others were closed because they became half empty and non-viable. The schools have been amalgamated and renamed, but the number of actual places in segregated schools is almost the same now as in 1981 when the idea of integration was first put forward. Indeed the Labour Party is building new ones at £19million pounds a throw despite much protest from the disabled people's movement.

The rising number of children with Special Educational Needs in mainstream schools is due to the changing nature of educational provision, especially since the Education Act of 1996. This put such pressure on young people to perform in standardised ways leading to an exploding rate of exclusion and Statements of SEN. Without the counter balancing inclusion movement, mainstream schools would have become even more harsh and elitist. Many teachers and educationalist know this and are fully behind a planned phasing out of segregated education. Even one of the largest providers of independent special schools, SCOPE, a charity for people with Cerebral Palsy, have announced their intention to relocate all their pupils into supported mainstream placements over the coming few years.

The 2020 campaign is asking for an end-date -- fifteen years from now - of all segregated nurseries, schools and colleges. There is much good practice in pioneering mainstream schools which needs spreading and developing, and it would all be so much easier if we did not have to continually fight this appalling mixture of ignorance and arrogance from people who have never listened to the people who have had to live our whole lives recovering from our broken childhoods.

For more information or speakers contact:

Micheline Mason	0208 682 2736 (H), 0207 735 5277 (W)
Richard Rieser	0207 359 2855
Michelle Daley	0207 359 2855
Simone Aspis	0208 459 5717
Tara Flood	0207 385 1124 (H) 0207 834 0477 (w)
Haq Ismail	07932 607 485 (Mobile)
Mark Vaughan	0117 344 4007

The 2020 Campaign, c/o The Alliance for Inclusive Education, Unit 2, 70 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL

[Info@allfie.org.uk](mailto:Info@allfie.org.uk) [www.allfie.org.uk](http://www.allfie.org.uk)

2020 membership includes

The British Council of Disabled People, People First, The Alliance for Inclusive Education, Disability Equality in Education, Parents for Inclusion, The Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education, National Centre for Independent Living, Essex Coalition of Disabled People, Disability Awareness in Action