

REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMISSION		
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) Overview and Scrutiny Board 20 March 2006 (as amended)	Classification Public	Enclosures Appendix 1 SEN Review Proposal and Terms of Reference Appendix 2 SEN Contributors and Schools Visited Appendix 3 SEN Statistics
	Ward(s) affected All	

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Important as it is to see that gifted and talented pupils perform to the best of their ability, their success cannot be the only test of a civilised education system. The way a society meets the needs of people whose disabilities present them with the greatest obstacles to their fulfilling their potential can be regarded as one of the key tests of its claim to be civilised.
- 1.2 Every child is unique, so the trend towards recognising this by giving every child a personal learning plan (PLP) is to be warmly welcomed and encouraged. It will ensure that all early years setting and schools address the particular needs and difficulties, and where appropriate the disabilities, of every pupil. It will also provide a context in which the bright line between pupils with and without special educational needs (SENs), and between the different categories of SEN, will fade somewhat.
- 1.3 The education of children who have SENs has been transformed during the last forty years, but it is not clear that a consensus has been established about how their special needs should be identified, analysed, funded and delivered. This report deals with these and related matters in the Hackney context and makes recommendations to the Learning Trust and the other public bodies.



Cllr Geoff Taylor

Chair of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Commission

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This inquiry was prompted by a number of considerations, including:
- 2.1.1 Members' casework frequently raised issues regarding the provision of services for children with Special Educational Needs (SENs).
 - 2.1.2 In reviewing the Learning Trust Annual Plan 2002 / 2003 and the Annual Plan 2003 / 2004, the Commission recognised that the educational attainment of children with special education needs to be looked at in more detail with a view to raising attainment through curriculum access.
 - 2.1.3 Government initiatives have emphasised the need for education authorities and schools to be more aware of their responsibilities to cater for children with SEN.
 - 2.1.4 The commission was also anxious to ensure that the particular needs of children with SEN are not overlooked in the local implementation of Building Schools for the Future and other programmes.
- 2.2 The concerns raised by the Chairman of the 1978 Warnock Committee about the way its proposals for SEN provision have worked out in practice acted as an additional spur to the enquiry.
- 2.3 The Code of Practice for Special Education Needs defines three levels of provision; School Action, School Action Plus and a formal Statement of Special Educational Need. Some SENs are addressed in mainstream Schools, and some in Special Schools. As well as this state provision some children with SENs attend independent schools.
- 2.4 The statistics in Appendix 3 were supplied by the Learning Trust. Some headline figures derived from the statistics include the following:
- 2.4.1 About a quarter of Hackney's school children have been assessed as having special education needs, compared with less than a fifth for London as a whole.
 - 2.4.2 Of those, 70% are on School Action, 17% on School Action Plus and the remaining 13% have Statements.
 - 2.4.3 Broadly speaking about the same proportion of all Hackney school children are on School Action Plus and Statements as in London as a whole; it is at School Action that the Hackney percentage, at about 17%, is significantly higher than the London overall figure at 11%.
 - 2.4.4 Over the last few years the percentage of children in Hackney schools with statements has fallen slightly to 2.0%, while the figure for London as a whole has seen a slight rise to 2.2%.

- 2.4.5 Getting on for 10% of Hackney children with a statement of special educational need attend independent schools; this is double the percentage for England as a whole. This high percentage is largely attributable to the percentage of Hackney children who attend Orthodox Jewish independent schools.
- 2.4.6 About the same percentage of Hackney statemented children go to special units in mainstream schools and special schools as in the rest of the country. The high percentage in independent schools is mostly balanced by a lower percentage in mainstream schools than in England as a whole.

3. METHOD

- 3.1 The commission appointed a sub-committee of members to lead the enquiry, namely: Cllr Geoff Taylor, Cllr Muttalip Unluer, Cllr Chris Kennedy, Cllr Harvey Odze and Mr Andrew Bridgwater (co-optee). This group visited several schools and other institutions in the Borough to see for themselves how SEN provision is being delivered. They also arranged for people with first-hand knowledge of SEN provision in Hackney to appear before the whole Commission. The details of visits and witnesses are given in Appendix 2. The Commission also received written submissions which are appended to the minutes of its meetings.
- 3.2 The Commission is grateful to all who contributed in any way to its work and hopes that contributors and others will feel that its recommendations will assist in giving support to children with special educational needs and their parents and carers.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The commission recommends that:
- 4.1.1 The Learning Trust in partnership with the City and Hackney Teaching Primary Care Health Trust (CHTPCT) seeks ways of identifying SENs amongst *all* pre-school children, not only those attending nursery or Sure Start provision or under the care of health services or the London Borough of Hackney Children and Family Services.
- 4.1.2 The CHTPCT, the Learning Trust and LBH Children and Families work together to alert parents and carers to the early signs of SENs and the benefits that can result from early identification and action.
- 4.1.3 The Learning Trust work with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the CHTPCT on a programme to raise understanding of SEN issues among hard-to-reach communities, for example the Muslim community.

- 4.1.4 The Learning Trust give further guidance to schools about the need for the timely consideration of SENs whenever behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESDs) are identified.
- 4.1.5 The Learning Trust investigate how best it can persuade parents and carers that the use of statements is not necessarily the best way to meet SEN, and that delegated funding can meet special needs more effectively.
- 4.1.6 The Learning Trust demonstrate to parents and carers how schools are being held to account in the management of delegated funding to provide for children with SENs.
- 4.1.7 With a view to increasing confidence between parents/carers and schools, the Learning Trust encourage the greater use of alternatives to statementing as a way of identifying a child's special educational needs, especially School Action Plus and Personal Learning Plans (PLPs).
- 4.1.8 Schools fully document any special educational needs when a child leaves a primary school to ease the fears of some parents and carers that, without a statement, the needs of their child will not be properly met at secondary school level.
- 4.1.9 The Learning Trust ensure that more guidance and support is available to mainstream schools when they need to help parents and carers to understand why their child might benefit from attending a special school.
- 4.1.10 The Hackney BSF team clearly incorporate provision for children with SENs into their programme, not only through special school provision but also by designing-in such facilities as hearing loops in some mainstream schools.
- 4.1.11 The Learning Trust convene a cross-agency conference on how better support can be given to schools in their work with children with SENs, especially those who are vulnerable in other ways.
- 4.1.12 The leaders of the Orthodox Jewish community give particular attention to ensuring that the special educational needs of all children, in particular boys, are more fully addressed.
- 4.1.13 The independent schools run by the Orthodox Jewish, Muslim and other communities in Hackney develop and maintain a dialogue with the Learning Trust about provision that is currently available to support the needs of those of their children with SENs, such as SENCO training and funding for statemented children.
- 4.1.14 The Learning Trust, in deciding on special school placements for an individual child with SENs, take account of the extent to which each

child's ability to benefit educationally from the proposed provision is dependent on how familiar to the child is the cultural and social setting it provides.

- 4.1.15 The Mayor of Hackney approach the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, if possible with the support of Hackney's MPs, to seek a national review of Government funding of SEN provision in independent schools with a view to obtaining funding for the SENs of all children on the SEN Code of Practice.
- 4.1.16 The Mayor of Hackney approach the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, if possible with the support of Hackney's MPs, to amend the Education Bill currently before Parliament so that special schools in the independent sector can obtain Voluntary Aided status, and, if successful, the Learning Trust support Side by Side to apply to become a VA maintained school.
- 4.1.17 Side by Side and the Learning Trust give consideration to giving the Side by Side nursery provision the status and funding of a Children's Centre.
- 4.1.18 The independent schools ensure that the Learning Trust is aware of all children with SENs who live and go to independent schools in Hackney so that it can provide accurate information about what SEN support it is able to provide.
- 4.1.19 The Learning Trust obtain and review Ofsted reports on independent schools in the Borough so that it is aware of how adequately SENs are being addressed by them.
- 4.1.20 The leaders of the Orthodox Jewish community initiate a three-way dialogue with the Learning Trust and the London Borough of Haringey about SEN provision in independent schools in Hackney that take children from Haringey.
- 4.1.21 The developing Hackney youth service give particular attention to the specialised needs of children with SENs.
- 4.1.22 The Council and the Learning Trust make available to the Huddleston Centre reliable medium-term funding and other support.
- 4.1.23 The Learning Trust, TPCT, schools and other appropriate agencies acquaint themselves with such organisations as 'Sibs' and make information about them available to parents and carers.
- 4.1.24 The Learning Trust co-operate with other agencies to determine whether the perceived problem of lack of post-16 education and support for young people with SENs is one of supply of such provision or access to it, or merely the result of lack of information.

- 4.2 The commission would be grateful if the various agencies named in these recommendations, and particularly the Learning Trust as the lead agency in this field, would indicate which of the recommendations they feel able to accept and when they plan to implement them, and their reasons for rejecting any recommendations.
- 4.3 It would further be grateful if the Learning Trust could present a brief report to the commission in February 2007 outlining progress made with the accepted recommendations.

5. COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

- 5.1 There are no legal or propriety issues that require comment.

6. COMMENTS OF THE FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

- 6.1 There are potential financial implications arising from the recommendations but these need to be determined based on a review of existing capacity and an analysis of the financial impact on implementing. The Learning Trust will carry out the review and consider in the context of the 2006/7 budget.
- 6.2. The BSF Team have set aside capital and resource for facilities in mainstream schools and we will work closely with relevant stakeholders in designing specifications that meet the needs of children with SEN.
- 6.3 Opportunities for funding and grant funding for the Huddleston Centre will be explored by the Learning Trust.

7. FINDINGS

- 7.1 Investigation by the Commission has highlighted several issues that are categorised below as key areas of interest and concern.
- 7.2 Identification
- 7.3 Nothing can be done to address a child's SENs until the fact that the child has SENs has been identified; moreover, the sooner those needs are addressed, the better. This means that great importance has to be attached to the early identification of SENs. The commission heard about much that is already being done to facilitate early identification, notably through SureStart programmes as well as through careful monitoring of pupils' progress in school.

- 7.4 The commission heard that there were a number of barriers to early identification in some cases, including:
- 7.4.1 The lack of systematic contact by health and education agencies with some children in the years before they start school.
 - 7.4.2 A lack of understanding among some parents as to what they might look out for in order to spot early signs of their child's having SENs, and what measures can be taken to help with them before starting primary school.
 - 7.4.3 The resistance and/or reluctance of some parents/carers not only in hard to reach and minority communities to recognising their children's SENs which could include mental health problems.
 - 7.4.4 The lack of knowledge of what support is available to parents and carers of children with SENs.
 - 7.4.5 The reluctance of schools to make provision for SENs when a pupil is nearing the end of compulsory schooling.
- 7.5 The commission therefore recommends that:
- 7.5.1 The Learning Trust in partnership with the City and Hackney Teaching Primary Care Health Trust (CHTPCT) seeks ways of identifying SENs amongst *all* pre-school children, not only those attending nursery or Sure Start provision or under the care of health services or the London Borough of Hackney Children and Family Services.
 - 7.5.2 The CHTPCT and the Learning Trust work together to alert parents and carers to the early signs of SENs and the benefits that can result from early identification and action.
 - 7.5.3 The Learning Trust work with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the CHTPCT on a programme to raise understanding of SEN issues among hard-to-reach communities, for example the Muslim community.
- 7.6 The commission was told of dissatisfaction with the treatment of young people who show behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESDs) at school. It was told that BESDs were too often dealt with by excluding the student from school before the possibility that a SEN underlay the BESDs had been explored. The commission sympathised with schools' needs to protect their other pupils from the results of one pupil's BESDs, and recognised that there was a grey area here, but recommends that the Learning Trust give further guidance and support to schools about the need to consider SENs whenever BESDs are identified.

7.7 Statementing

- 7.8 A major issue considered by the commission was the use of Statements of Special Educational Need. This is the third and highest stage of the three in the Code of Practice; the others are School Action and School Action Plus. All are intended to identify precisely what must be done to address a child's SENs. Statementing was introduced as a result of the Warnock report and creates an enforceable entitlement to funding for the child's SEN provision. It has also been used by parents and carers in obtaining for their child a place at a secondary school of their choice.
- 7.9 The commission was told that the Learning Trust regards the statementing process as cumbersome, long-winded, inflexible and in many cases unnecessary. In common with others – including Baroness Warnock – it was seeking to discourage the use of the process except where distinct benefits could be obtained for the child by its use. The same resources would be provided, but this would be through the schools' delegated budgets.
- 7.10 The commission heard that some parents and carers were perhaps inevitably suspicious that this approach was intended to either save money or allow it to be diverted from providing for children who needed expensive special provision into the general school pot.
- 7.11 The commission felt that the Learning Trust made out a credible case for wanting to focus the use of statementing on the cases where it could make a significant improvement for the child. It heard evidence from a deputy head in a secondary school with 36% of its pupils on the SEN register that statements made no difference to the level of support offered at the school level and served no real purpose. This evidence was supported by a primary school head teacher with 40% of her pupils on the SEN register. The commission was told that mainstream SEN funding and Action Plus was less resource intensive than the use of a statement and made no difference to how SEN needs were met. The Learning Trust advised the Commission that the tracking mechanisms for SEN included School Annual Reviews, financial monitoring of SEN provision and school advisor visits.
- 7.12 However, it was clear that much work needed to be done to satisfy parents and carers that children who might have been statemented in the past would not be short-changed by the new system. In particular, they needed to be convinced that adequate resources were being devoted to supporting children with serious SENs.
- 7.13 The commission was impressed with the personal learning plans in use at some schools, such as Hackney Free and Parochial, and felt that a more general use of such plans would help reassure parents and carers that the needs of children with SENs were being properly monitored and provided for.

7.14 The commission therefore recommends that:

7.14.1 The Learning Trust give further guidance to schools about the need for the timely consideration of SENs whenever behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESDs) are identified.

7.14.2 The Learning Trust investigate how best it can persuade parents and carers that the use of statements is not necessarily the best way to meet SEN, and that mainstream funding can meet special needs more effectively;

7.14.3 The Learning Trust demonstrate to parents and carers how schools are being held to account in the management of delegated funding to provide for children with SENs.

7.14.4 With a view to increasing confidence between parents/carers and schools, the Learning Trust encourage the greater use of alternatives to statementing as a way of identifying a child's special educational needs, especially School Action Plus and Personal Learning Plans (PLPs).

7.15 Secondary Transfer

7.16 The Commission was told that parents and carers valued the power statementing gave them to control which secondary school their child went to at secondary transfer. However it also heard from the Learning Trust that statements were never intended to be used in this way.

7.17 Parental insights into a child's needs may be a valuable element in deciding which secondary school is best for a child, but the commission felt that the view of educationalists also needed to be given full weight, especially when secondary schools increasingly specialise. The commission heard that it was very rare for agreement not to be reached between the primary school and the parents/carers as to which secondary school could best provide for a child's SENs. The commission was pleased to hear that the Learning Trust had introduced a Secondary Transfer Panel where the Learning Trust together with representatives of all secondary schools determine secondary school transfers.

7.18 Again, the commission felt that some confidence building was needed here, and accordingly recommends that special educational needs be properly documented when a child leaves a primary school to ease fears among some parents and carers that without a statement the needs of their child will not be properly met at secondary school level.

7.19 The commission was told that in some cases, while the size, nature and routine of primary schools made it possible for them to be well adapted to supporting children with SENs, secondary schools were very different. Additionally, children at secondary schools were at a significantly different developmental stage. Consequently, the commission was told, it was

necessary at secondary transfer to give consideration to the possibility of a pupil with SENs at a mainstream primary school transferring to a special secondary school.

7.20 The commission therefore recommends that:

7.20.1 Schools fully document any special educational needs when a child leaves a primary school to ease the fears of some parents and carers that, without a statement, the needs of their child will not be properly met at secondary school level.

7.21 Special Schools

7.22 The commission was unable to involve itself in the national debate about the general desirability of sending children with SENs to mainstream schools rather than special schools. It felt that a mainstream school should be used unless the necessary support could not be given there, in which case a special school should be used; it also felt that in cases where the decision was marginal care needed to be given to the particular needs of the child and concerns of the parents and carers, and to the consideration of the mainstream school that was best able to cater for their needs. It followed that the commission felt that mainstream schools needed to make provision for children with SENs and that places in special schools should remain available for those who needed them. But the commission also recognised that this was merely to restate current good practice and the situation in Hackney, some of whose provision it recognised as exemplary.

7.23 The commission heard of cases where parents or carers had successfully pressed to send a child with BESDs as well as SENs to a mainstream school against professional advice. This has sometimes had the unfortunate effect of resulting in the exclusion from the mainstream school of a child whose difficulties could have been handled by a special school. When the mainstream school begins to suspect that such a placement is not sustainable because of its effects on other pupils or because of the risk of exclusion, it needs to put considerable effort into gaining the parents' or carers' understanding of the position in order to secure their agreement to a move to a special school. The commission understood that the law required that the child's best interests be paramount in such cases, and wished the educational professionals well in their attempts to persuade reluctant parents and carers that their advice was sound. The commission felt that it would be helpful if more guidance and support in handling these situations could be available to mainstream schools.

7.24 The commission therefore recommends that:

7.24.1 The Learning Trust ensure that more guidance and support is available to mainstream schools when they need to help parents and carers to understand why their child might benefit from attending a special school.

7.25 Partnership Working

7.26 Children with SENs are often among the most obvious beneficiaries when the various agencies work smoothly together; by the same token, they are among the first to suffer when they don't. The commission was told of some schools' concern that they had not been receiving adequate assistance from social services, the school nursing service and the health service. It was encouraged to hear of good co-operation between schools and the police and the youth offending team, and of the success of the recently integrated speech and language therapy service. It noted with satisfaction planned improvements to the nursing service and CAMHS, including the establishment of a Schools Mental Health Service.

7.27 The commission shares the general hope that with the implementation of the Children's Services agenda and the imaginative implementation of Building Schools for the Future (BSF), partnership working will become the norm. These developments should make it easier to address children's special needs through providing direct access to the relevant professionals on site rather than schools having to refer pupils externally. A major benefit is to be hoped for from the facilitation of joint working where a child not only has SENs but is also on the child protection register or being looked after by the local authority. Joint working will also be helpful in relation to children from hard-to-reach communities and would also assist schools in identifying children's special needs at an early stage.

7.28 The commission therefore recommends that:

7.28.1 The Hackney BSF team clearly incorporate provision for children with SENs into their programme, not only through special school provision but also by designing-in such facilities as hearing loops in some mainstream schools.

7.28.2 The Learning Trust convene a cross-agency conference on how better support can be given to schools in their work with children with SENs, especially those who are vulnerable in other ways.

7.29 Independent Schools

7.30 Most children from Orthodox Jewish families in Hackney go to independent schools run by their own cultural communities, as do some children from Muslim families. The Commission heard of resentment that provision for children with SENs in these schools was not being fully funded out of public funds. The Commission feared that this might mean that the SENs of children in these independent schools were not being adequately provided for and that this could be against equal opportunities policy; it appeared that Every Child did not Matter equally.

- 7.31 It is worth saying at the outset that the Commission recognised that when families choose to send their children to independent schools they must ordinarily accept the cost of that alternative educational provision. However, they felt that SENs were Special (i.e. *not* ordinary) as well as Educational, and that in principle therefore the cost of providing for them should be supported out of public funds. They recognised that this would have significant financial implications. It nevertheless hoped that this would not result in its recommendations being dismissed out of hand. It felt that making proper provision for the SENs of children in the Borough's independent schools should be seen as an important application of the principle that Every Child Matters.
- 7.32 The Commission heard that the rapidly growing Orthodox Jewish community runs about 30 schools catering for over 6000 children, including some who live in the London Borough of Haringey. Only two of these schools are currently Voluntary Aided. The education of girls and boys in these schools is not only strictly separate but different, with the older boys following a curriculum that focuses more heavily on Hebrew and Jewish studies. Only around 1% of these children have statements of SEN, which is about half of what would be expected. The schools struggle to make SEN provision available, especially to children who in maintained schools would be on School Action and School Action Plus. There appeared to be less provision for the SENs of boys than of girls, partly because male teachers were being paid more than female teachers, partly because there were fewer specialist male teachers than female.
- 7.33 The Learning Trust told the Commission that it does all it lawfully can to support Orthodox Jewish independent schools, short of putting money directly into their budgets, which is not allowed by the DfES. For example, the Trust is also working with BINOJ to train SENs co-ordinators (SENCOs) in Orthodox Jewish independent schools. In addition the Trust provides a translations and advocacy and parent volunteering service for all schools, without charge. Information mail outs and *SEN news* are also sent to all schools and voluntary organisations without charge. The Trust also provides a Parent Partnership and Drop In, both of which support and train parents and carers of Hackney children who attend any school, again without charge. Orthodox Jewish institutions that make use of this support told the Commission that they value it greatly.
- 7.34 Most significantly, the Learning Trust told the Commission that it pays all the costs for children who are statemented and sent to independent specialist SEN schools where that is agreed by the Trust to be the most appropriate educational provision for the child. It was put to the Commission that children with SENs make the most of their abilities when they are in settings that are culturally and socially familiar to them. The Commission sympathised with this view, and was advised that to send an Orthodox Jewish child with SENs to a school not run as an Orthodox Jewish institution would not so much offend the child's parents' cultural preferences and religious obligations as damage the child's educational development.

- 7.35 The Commission was told that if parents wished to send a statemented child to an independent school but the Learning Trust believed that it was able to meet that child's educational need in a maintained school, the Trust will pay only for the statemented part of the provision in the independent setting. Less severe SENs that warranted School Action or School Action Plus would not be funded by the Learning Trust. The Commission felt that the growing tendency to make greater use of School Action Plus where statementing could be avoided, about which it had been told and of which it broadly approved, could in this case increase injustice. It felt that public funds should cover the cost of *all* SEN provision even when the child had been placed by the parents in an independent school that the Trust did not regard as the most appropriate provision when judged from a narrowly educational point-of-view.
- 7.36 The Orthodox Jewish community provides nursery and primary SEN education at Side by Side. This is a well-regarded institution and the Commission believed that a powerful case could be made for it to be more closely integrated into the state sector, partly as a (VA) primary special school, partly as a Children's Centre for nursery-age children with SENs; such integration would enable them to expand to meet currently unmet needs. It was told however that the law as it stood did not provide for special schools to become VA. It did not understand what rationale this apparent anomaly might have and hoped that it could be corrected. The Commission also noted that many of the issues of funding for SEN provision could be dealt with if more independent Orthodox Jewish schools felt able to join those that had already become Voluntary Aided.
- 7.37 The Commission recognised that some of the changes it wanted to see in the application of public funds to providing for all SENs were likely to require a change in DfES regulations or even in the law. It was mindful that an Education Bill was currently before Parliament if primary legislation were needed.
- 7.38 The Commission heard that the Muslim independent schools had concerns similar to those of the Orthodox Jewish schools. The Commission was told by a representative of a Muslim school that there were statemented children in his school of whom the Learning Trust was unaware. The Trust expressed its willingness to make similar support available to these schools, and the Commission was pleased that the meeting of Learning Trust and Muslim school representatives at its evidence gathering session had opened up channels of communication that it hoped would benefit children with SENs in those schools.
- 7.39 The Commission was aware that the Orthodox Jewish and Muslim independent schools educated over 20% of Hackney's children. It felt that it would be helpful if the Trust, in conjunction with the independent schools, collected data about these children and if it would routinely review the SEN sections of Ofsted reports about independent schools.

7.40 The Commission therefore recommends that:

- 740.1 The leaders of the Orthodox Jewish community give particular attention to ensuring that the special educational needs of all children, in particular boys, are more fully addressed.
- 740.2 The independent schools run by the Orthodox Jewish, Muslim and other communities in Hackney develop and maintain a dialogue with the Learning Trust about provision that is currently available to support the needs of those of their children with SENs, such as SENCO training and funding for statemented children.
- 740.3 The Learning Trust, in deciding on special school placements for an individual child with SENs, take account of the extent to which each child's ability to benefit educationally from the proposed provision is dependent on how familiar to the child is the cultural and social setting it provides.
- 740.4 The Mayor of Hackney approach the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, if possible with the support of Hackney's MPs, to seek a national review of Government funding of SEN provision in independent schools with a view to obtaining funding for the SENs of all children on the SEN Code of Practice.
- 740.5 The Mayor of Hackney approach the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, if possible with the support of Hackney's MPs, to amend the Education Bill currently before Parliament so that special schools in the independent sector can obtain Voluntary Aided status, and, if successful, the Learning Trust support Side by Side to apply to become a VA maintained school.
- 740.6 Side by Side and the Learning Trust give consideration to giving the Side by Side nursery provision the status and funding of a Children's Centre.
- 740.7 The independent schools ensure that the Learning Trust is aware of all children with SENs who live and go to independent schools in Hackney so that it can provide accurate information about what SEN support it is able to provide.
- 740.8 The Learning Trust obtain and review Ofsted reports on independent schools in the Borough so that it is aware of how adequately SENs are being addressed by them.
- 740.9 The leaders of the Orthodox Jewish community initiate a three-way dialogue with the Learning Trust and the London Borough of Haringey about SEN provision in independent schools in Hackney that take children from Haringey.

7.41 Social Impacts

7.42 Although it was primarily concerned with educational progress, the commission felt unable to ignore the social impact of having SENs, not least because educational progress can be adversely affected by social isolation and unhappiness.

7.43 SENs often impose obstacles to a child's access to social activities, and the commission commends voluntary efforts to overcome these, notably the Huddleston Centre in Clapton, which – despite severe funding difficulties – has given life-enhancing social support to children with SENs and their parents and carers for over twenty years. The commission felt that such efforts need and deserve the support and co-operation of the authorities.

7.44 But the commission also noted that it is not only the children with SENs who are affected by the social impact of SEN. Although their siblings often develop valuable skills and understanding, they can be negatively affected, for example by their parents' and carers' need to give attention to a child with SENs. The commission was told of an organisation called Sibs that has been set up to assist such children. It felt that information about Sibs should be made available through the Learning Trust, schools and other agencies.

7.45 The commission therefore recommends that:

7.45.1 The Developing Hackney youth service give particular attention to the specialised needs of children with SENs.

7.45.2 The Council and the Learning Trust make available to the Huddleston Centre reliable medium-term funding and other support.

7.45.3 The Learning Trust, CHTPCT, schools and other appropriate agencies acquaint themselves with such organisations as Sibs and make information about them available to parents and carers.

7.46 Post –16 Education

7.47 The commission was told of concerns that provision for the educational needs of young people with SENs after the end of compulsory education at age 16 is not adequate and that significant numbers of these young people who continue to need education do not get it. It was told of the 16-19 provision at Ickbough School and B6 as well as in the sixth forms of mainstream schools, and of support available from Connexions and the Learning and Skills Council. The commission did not investigate this issue but recommends that the Learning Trust co-operate with other agencies to determine whether the perceived problem is one of supply of provision or access to it, or merely the result of lack of information.

7.48 The commission therefore recommends that:

7.48.1 The Learning Trust co-operate with other agencies to determine whether the perceived problem of lack of post-16 education and support for young people with SENs is one of supply of such provision or access to it, or merely the result of lack of information.

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Background papers

The following documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report or were presented to the Scrutiny Commission as part of the investigation:

Description of document	Location	Date
SEN Evidence Gathering Meeting	Minutes of the CYPSC	07/09/05
SEN Evidence Gathering Meeting	Minutes of the CYPSC	25/10/05
SEN Review of Evidence Gathered	Minutes of the CYPSC	14/12/05
Supporting Siblings - Sibs	www.sibs.org.uk	