Supporting Inclusive Education

Supporting Inclusive Education offers practical guidance to teachers working with pupils who have a wide variety of learning styles. The book is based on a real-life, inner-city school which the author uses as a framework to show teachers how they can practically support their pupils in the classroom.

It includes chapters on:

- different teaching and learning styles
- the effective use of learning support assistants
- responding to challenging behaviour
- how to research inclusive education

This book will be essential reading for any teacher committed to the principles of inclusive education.

Jenny Corbett is a Reader in Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. She also sits on the editorial board of the International Journal of Inclusive Education.
This topical new series addresses key issues that are causing concern in schools. Each book is based around a case study school which is used to illustrate and contextualise best practice whilst showing the real implications of current research on the everyday classroom.

The books provide an innovative and accessible approach to dealing with the inclusive classroom and are written by leading names in their respective fields. They will be essential reading for teachers, heads of department, headteachers and policy-makers determined to address the key concerns in education today.

**Supporting Inclusive Education**  
*Jenny Corbett*

**Educating Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**  
*John Thacker, Dave Strudwick and Elly Babbedge*

**Bullying**  
*Sonia Sharp, Tiny Arora and David Thompson*

**Enhancing PSHE**  
*Sally Inman, Martin Buck and Miles Tandy*

**Underachievement in Schools**  
*Anne West*
Supporting Inclusive Education

A connective pedagogy

Jenny Corbett
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Acknowledgements

Inclusive education is not a ‘quick-fix’. It comes about after years of thorough, consistent commitment to shared ideals and through the hard work of skilled teachers who are open to improving their practices. This book is dedicated to those teachers and school staff whose work over a number of years helped to create the inclusive community which is to be found at Harbinger Primary School, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Helen, whose leadership over several years helped to forge that ethos, says that:

Crucial to developing inclusive policies and practices is creating a staff team interested in learning and finding solutions rather than focusing on problems. They need to be superb teachers who believe they have a role in educating the whole child. My first challenge as a headteacher was to draw together enough talented individuals to help build an inclusive staff team and then to ensure we could share a common vision without stifling diversity.

This book is about that ‘inclusive staff team’ and the way in which they are able to cope with many challenges through a cooperative approach.

It is dedicated to the staff and pupils of the school, without whose kind support and open attitude I could not have written the book. I hope it does them justice.
School staff face many challenges today. Recently they have had to respond to a plethora of curriculum and assessment reforms, Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, Government-led moves toward performance indicators, regular OFSTED inspections, and a general push toward accountability and raising achievement levels of pupils. But there are other, possibly more enduring, concerns that also affect the day-to-day functioning of schools.

I get insight into these concerns in the course of one of my professional responsibilities—supervising teachers who are undertaking research for dissertations, as part of MA level courses. When choosing a topic I encourage them to reflect on their own professional concerns and ways in which they can shed light on them. The range of topics are rich and varied and in recent years have included underachievement of particular groups in school, student motivation and attitudes, bullying, effective approaches to inclusion in classrooms, and pupils’ emotional and social difficulties. Some issues are made particularly pressing because of recent events in their own or neighbouring schools, and are high on agendas of current educational and political discussion, as well as at staff meetings.

However, too often the information teachers and others need on these topics is not available in a form that they find helpful or accessible. Sometimes the topic is addressed in a way that is too academic and removed from the practical concerns of everyday school life. But there is a converse problem that seems to have become more obvious recently—a tendency to oversimplify and trivialise what is likely to be a complex issue, and offer packaged solutions instead of a full analysis.

This book series—School Concerns—has been set up to bridge the gap between these two types of approach. It was designed to address contemporary issues, usually related to behaviour in schools, that are
cause for concern. The aim of each book in the Series is to summarise and evaluate relevant research evidence and theory, and to seek to provide insights, conclusions and suggestions of value to readers, and to relate research findings and theory to classroom concerns. The Series is designed to be helpful but to avoid a ‘cookbook’ approach, to do justice to the complexity of a topic while avoiding dense argument and jargon. This is a difficult balance to achieve, but each author has been chosen because it was felt that not only were they leading authorities on particular topics, but they would also be able to make the topics accessible to a wide audience.

The publishers were keen to start the Series because, as far as they knew, there has not been an attempt to cover these kinds of issues in a unified and accessible fashion. The Series covers both primary and secondary sectors.

Each author has been asked to think carefully about the potential readers of the book. We have asked each author to include, as an integral part of their book, a case study of a class or school and to use this to illustrate and exemplify key ideas and conclusions. The books should be of interest to all in schools, to tutors and students on Initial Teacher Training and Professional Development Courses, as well as to researchers and lecturers, LEA and Government staff. The books will also be of interest to a wider and more general audience, for example parents. Some issues are of obvious international interest and authors have been encouraged, where appropriate, to draw out conclusions of relevance overseas.

This is a timely and exciting Series, and I expect the books to provide a significant contribution to educational debate.

**Introduction to this book**

This is an inspirational book. There has been much interest in the separate areas of inclusive education and pedagogy. Debate in both areas has not always been at a level that relates to everyday classroom concerns, or in terms that teachers can find meaningful and helpful. Moreover, as Jenny Corbett argues, there has been an overly-negative view of inclusive education. Importantly, she shows that diversity, differentiation and inclusion are not just the concern of special needs educators, but key issues for **ALL** educators. This book offers a broad interpretation of inclusive education, relevant to helping children with emotional and learning difficulties but also to mainstream education more generally. It does this by showing the intimate connections between
inclusive education and pedagogy, and through the notion of a ‘connective pedagogy’.

A key feature of this book is the place given to the practitioners’ voices. Through a case study of one school in Tower Hamlets, London, which has developed an inclusive pedagogy, the book offers insights into differentiation in practice and effective support for learners. The book shifts the focus from the macro-level of political and theoretical notions of inclusivity, to the micro-level of classroom interaction. It is through the author’s sensitivity to the concerns of the teachers and children, and her obvious appreciation of the work going on in the school, that the issues of inclusion and pedagogy are brought to life.

This is an optimistic and challenging book made all the more powerful because it recognises the complexities and difficulties inherent in everyday classroom concerns. It has been my experience that some excellent books in the Special Needs field can be unnecessarily marginalized, because they are not seen to have a general application. I am confident this book is an exception.

Professor Peter Blatchford
Institute of Education, University of London
Author’s preface: The time has come

The education system will always have to make provision for pupils with special needs, and at considerable cost. But current arrangements are plainly inadequate, and cause large sums to be spent on measures of dubious efficacy. It would benefit all children, with and without special needs, if this money were put to better use. This will require a rethink not only of the way in which special needs are assessed and addressed, but of the whole system by which schools are funded. Schools must be rewarded for success in teaching basic skills, as well as assisted when pupils falter, if the educational needs of every child are ever to be met.

(‘Like Topsy’, Leader, The Times, Monday 26 June 2000:19)

The way in which special educational needs (SEN) is addressed has become a public concern. This is far removed from the early 1970s when the special needs area of education was a marginal and medical issue, of minimal interest to educators, let alone to the general public.

Rather than feeling dismayed that there is concern over inefficiency and ill-judged expenditure, we special educators should feel relief that, at last, SEN is being included in debates about general educational developments. The time has come for an examination of what seems to work effectively in teaching and learning for the most vulnerable groups of learners. It is also time for schools to demonstrate effective support to bring learning rewards to all their students, whatever their individual needs.

This fits with a much broader definition of ‘special need’ than that often presented in the past. It is not just about disability. Inclusion means responding to individual needs, with the term ‘special’ becoming redundant. If schools respond to individual needs, this includes a wide range from specific disabilities and learning difficulties to gender and
ethnicity issues, sexuality, poverty and abuse. Many children come to school with problems. A recognition of this and a sensitivity to it is part of inclusive education. A responsive school climate, which views problems as challenges and not obstacles, is a key factor. The focus is on institutional systems, attitudes, flexibility and responsiveness rather than on the ‘special needs’ child. In order to provide such a highly developed level of inclusiveness, schools have to be willing to work consistently on improving and adapting their pedagogy. It has to be a pedagogy which relates to individual needs, institutional resources and to community values: a connective pedagogy.

We have shifted from a sentimental approach to disability to one which concerns entitlement. Schools that work effectively with pupils whose individual needs are significant, tend also to work effectively with a wide range of learners. This produces an efficient learning environment for all. That is why the time has come for a focus on pedagogy and on how the school community can be a supportive environment for all. It is a key concern for all schools that seek to be responsive to learning needs.
Chapter 1

Introduction

This book is one of a series on ‘School Concerns’, which explores issues of general relevance to education. I welcome its place in such a series as it clearly locates the topic of inclusive education in the mainstream rather than on the margins. Where there has often been criticism of the benefits of inclusion, it has related to a crude physical placement in mainstream from the special sector or as a result of initial assessment, without the means for appropriate learning and teaching to take place and without consideration for adequate resourcing to support staff and learners. There has been an inference in the past that inclusion meant bringing those outside (the ‘special’) into the privilege of mainstream without acknowledging that many mainstream learners can feel excluded by a restricted curriculum, inflexible pedagogy and hierarchical ethos.

We now know that an inclusive school community is one which values all its learners and that ‘special needs’ is not narrowly concerned with those who are in special schooling but is a broad and flexible term. A general concern for all schools now is to ensure that the teaching approaches they adopt are appropriate for the diverse range of learners whose individual and collective needs they serve. It is a real sign of an increased responsiveness to differences that this book is part of a broad ‘School Concerns’ series and not part of ‘Special Needs in the Ordinary School’.

The sub-title for this book and my initial interest in the topic developed from my collaboration with Brahm Norwich on a chapter about pedagogy and learners with special educational needs (Corbett and Norwich 1999). In this, one of the ideas we explored was that which we termed a ‘connective pedagogy’. We saw this as a teaching approach in two stages: the first recognizes and relates to individual learning styles; the second links those individuals into the curriculum, specific
tasks and group activities. It was ‘connective’ in being central to meaningful learning. In that instance, we could do no more than just explore the concept. However, it gave me an impetus to examine the topic in more detail and to explore the wider implications of a connective pedagogy beyond this simple two-stage model.

Inclusive education is a much debated issue at every level, in party politics, LEA policy-making and school staff development. In the early twenty-first century, inclusive education theorists have moved distinctly on from a preoccupation with mere physical location in a school or college and a campaigning for civil rights issues. Physical access and disability rights will continue to be ongoing struggles and theoretical concerns but the overriding practical priority in schools is that of coping with difficult behaviour and with learning difficulties. Addressing these issues requires a close analysis of pedagogy. That is why this particular topic seems to me to be a crucial and practical issue to confront. How are teachers coping in schools where they are working hard to be inclusive? What support structures are needed and how do staff learn what works most effectively?

This seems to me to be an apt topic for a series which considers school concerns. In a climate in which local education authorities (LEAs) are developing their ‘Inclusive Education Action Plans’ and appointing their inclusion officers, schools are guided to view this area as an integral aspect of their overall quality assurance. It is an aspect of their provision which will now be subject to inspection for its efficiency and consistency. It is not about special needs alone. It is much more to do with creating and sustaining systems and structures which develop and support flexible and adaptable approaches to learning.

In order to conduct this research, I arranged to visit a primary school on the Isle of Dogs in Tower Hamlets, which is one of the poorest boroughs in London and in England. This school was not selected because it provided an example of social deprivation nor because it was a multi-cultural community but because it was known to me, through discussion with teachers, as an exceptionally inclusive school according to the criteria I have set out in the Preface.

Harbinger School has been working at being inclusive for more than ten years, long before the term became popular and there was a government initiative to become more inclusive. It is a school with a stable staff of teachers and support assistants who are committed to the school and its inclusive ethos. The senior management of the school have consistently strengthened inclusive value systems which are now
embedded in the school culture. This school is proudly and publicly inclusive. It is an element of the school’s composition which is positioned at the central core of the school’s structure, rather than placed as an awkward ‘add-on’.

The scale of this research is deliberately modest in scope. I wanted to undertake a research project which would mirror those which my students are doing. They are doing either initial teacher training, post-graduate or in-service courses to develop their own learning and professional awareness. Many of them are teachers or learning support assistants who often do research in their own or in neighbouring schools and colleges, in which they observe practice, interview colleagues and participants and place their experiences in a wider national context. These are small-scale research projects, designed to increase awareness and understanding. I see them as learning experiences which enrich the researcher, rather than as fact-finding surveys which may influence policy. My research is of a similar nature. It is a single case study, not necessarily intended to be generalizable or to have wider application although I feel there are lessons to be drawn from it. It is a means whereby I wanted to learn how teachers and support staff make their connections meaningful so that inclusion is about genuine participation.

It is important to have a sense of audience when writing a book and, whilst I hope the contents will be of interest to academics and LEA personnel, I am writing the book mainly for teacher-researchers. With this in mind, I shall present my findings at a practical level but I also discuss methodology and the way in which a connective pedagogy might develop. The broad issues of pedagogy (or teaching and learning interactions and strategies) and inclusive education (or the recognition of diverse learners in schools and colleges) are of concern to all educators. It is important not to see inclusion as the concern of special educators but of concern to all those involved in the school or college setting. While the earlier ‘integration’ focus tended to be on physical access and specialist resources, inclusive education implies a shared responsibility and a joint concern. I want the research to include the sharing of practice and the extension of theoretical debates. To help this process, I am bringing in sample situations and extracts from field notes throughout the presentation of findings. In each chapter, this will be followed by a series of issues for debate. I want the text to be as unambiguous as possible so I try to avoid the use of jargon.

The purpose of my research is two-fold. First, I wanted to study an example of good practice. I entered the research with the expectation that this was an effectively inclusive school. This is clearly the bias I
bring to the project. My focus is on collecting evidence to support this hypothesis that Harbinger School is a positive example of an inclusive school. When embarking on the research, my hopes were that I would find ample evidence to support this. The fact that I did so may say as much about the bias I brought to the project as it does about the school itself.

The second purpose of this research is personal. I was becoming dispirited with the degree of negativity expressed towards inclusive education. This came from various sources, including teaching unions, academics, parents and the general public. There was a recurrent mantra of ‘Yes, but it is not practical’, ‘Yes, but teachers are too busy’, ‘Yes, but it brings schools down in the league tables…’, ‘Yes, but…’, ‘Yes, but…’. There is also a prevalent feeling that schools are having inclusion thrust upon them in the drive to reduce exclusions. I wanted to look at a positive and successful school which valued its inclusive approach. I also wanted to see why staff had stayed there for many years, what made them so committed and how they found strategies which helped them cope.

Another key aspect of this research is its emphasis on including children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties, as well as those with physical and sensory disabilities. At one level, Harbinger School is not ideally inclusive as it is housed in an old multistorey, Victorian building which does not provide good access for people in wheelchairs. This has meant that the school might not be selected as a good inclusive school where the criterion for selection is predominantly that of physical access. However, within these limitations, the school is remarkably inclusive. It has children in its community who have Down’s syndrome, William’s syndrome and spina bifida. It has a child who is blind and several children on the autistic continuum. The school does not like to turn children away and has opened its doors to several children who have already gained reputations for their disruptive behaviour in former schools. Harbinger has been remarkably successful in not only containing these children but also in nurturing them towards the secondary transfer stage.

The fact that issues of physical access are not central to the analysis has the advantage that it highlights the broadest possible interpretation of inclusive education. This school celebrates difference in relation to ethnicity, with Muslim, Hindu, Chinese and Jewish festivities valued alongside Christian, and with the inclusion of many aspects of the cultural richness of the school community within its curriculum content. It is sensitive to gender issues, with girls playing football at specific
times without the boys and with space given to girls in class debates where some boys might dominate. It is not narrowly stereotyped though, recognizing that some boys are withdrawn and some girls are assertive.

There is a pronounced emphasis on treating others with consideration, which is very noticeable in the school. The way teachers communicate with children shows respect for them and gives them dignity. There is a consistent modelling of how people should behave towards one another in a considerate and careful way. This fosters a culture which is not excluding of any individual because of their perceived ‘difference’.

I hope this book will be of interest to mainstream teachers in primary and secondary schools. The teachers whose strategies are being examined are not trained specialist teachers by and large, although there is a SENCO (special needs co-ordinator) and additional special support teachers who visit different classrooms. Most of them are mainstream teachers who are receptive to learning and committed to the needs of the children. They are working at the Literacy Hour and the Numeracy Hour, adapting their teaching approaches to respond to individual differences. They are often critical of their own pedagogy and are open to improvement, even when they are very experienced teachers.

For me, this is a critical element of the study. If a connective pedagogy can help children with emotional, behavioural and/or learning difficulties participate more fully in most school activities, it is a pedagogy which can be usefully shared and learned by other practitioners. Coping effectively in mainstream schools with these particular learners has
become one of the huge stumbling blocks of inclusive education. This is another reason why I was so eager to do this research, as I feel it seems so right for where we are now. Since the early 1980s in the UK there has been a steady development of the integration of children with physical and sensory disabilities from special to mainstream schools. For many lay observers of the educational context, the image of children in wheelchairs coming from the special school sector into the mainstream is what they imagine ‘integration’ to be. Academic theorists and disability activists are strongly advocating that inclusive education is something distinctly different from integration. The issues raised in this case study focus upon that clear distinction.

The following questions were explored with staff at the school:

- What does ‘differentiation’ mean in practice?
- How can classroom management support inclusive practices in relation to learners with challenging behaviour?
- What is the most effective use of additional support?
- Are there any specialist practices which can be usefully adopted?
- What practices do you find most successful and which would you recommend to other teachers?

As part of my exploration of ‘differentiation’, I shall introduce a model of ‘stages of differentiation’ (Figure 5, Chapter 5), which explores the sequential development towards a highly responsive and flexible form of differentiation. This is a clumsy term and may be superseded in time by a focus on adopting varied teaching styles to accommodate differences in individual ways of learning. The Stages of Differentiation model came from my observations of the way teachers and support staff worked in this school, drawing upon their extensive experience, skill and willingness to keep learning.

It is my aim in this book to make the findings of the case study as accessible as possible and to encourage teacher-researchers to use them as a platform from which to develop their own work. Although it is a small-scale project, there is much detail of pedagogy to be shared in the findings. It has been a most positive and exhilarating experience to learn how this school operates. I want to celebrate its rich diversity and the genuine pleasure which staff experience in meeting the challenges of their day-to-day work. Their enthusiasm and commitment is infectious and was an inspiration to me. I had been expecting to find concrete examples of practices which staff found useful. What I had not expected to find was to be able to begin an exploration of the conceptual dimensions
of what constitutes a connective pedagogy. I also learned that this has profound implications for finding a suitable methodology with which to evaluate effective inclusion. What was a most enjoyable and valuable research project proved to be an unexpectedly rich source of theoretical stimulus. This book is a celebration as well as an evaluation. It shows just how important teachers are in ensuring that a quality learning experience is provided for all, including those who are difficult to teach.

I always say to the students I teach: ‘What did you learn about the subject you studied? What did you learn about the methods you used?’ The latter question is often as important as the former. In this instance, I learned many positive lessons about inclusive practice. I learned how difficult it is to achieve. It is very, very challenging. The commitment has to be to meet this challenge and to respond positively to it. Teachers also need to feel supported through what is a long process. The quality of this support was one of the main elements of my findings.

I also learned about the methodology of researching inclusive education. This has led me to ask if it requires a new research paradigm. I found myself having to look differently. Essentially it is not asking psychological or sociological questions but philosophical ones such as ‘What are these values?’, ‘Whose needs take priority?’ and ‘Why are differences to be celebrated?’. Doing inclusive research requires an inclusive mind-set. It is completely different from integration, both conceptually and practically. It is only possible to analyse the quality of inclusive practices if this is done with an inclusive conceptual lens. This is a paradigm shift which many theorists are currently exploring. To my surprise in what I thought would be a practical case study, this theoretical challenge to research methodology became one of the integral components of the book.

To research inclusive education, it is necessary to put ‘the student experience’ at the centre of the research framework. It is important to reflect on the following questions:

- What is the learner getting from this experience?
- Is it as meaningful and supportive to their development as it could be?
- Where can the systems and pedagogy become more inclusive?

There is much reference now, among Disability Studies theorists, to an emancipatory paradigm, which is a research approach designed to empower and support disabled people rather than to treat them as mere research subjects. If we accept that inclusion is a philosophical
concept which requires an examination of ethics, equity and justice, this can be supported by an emancipatory approach which has empathy at its core. This empathy extends beyond a narrow ‘disability’ focus.

In this book, I want to develop this notion in relation to empathy. In order to do this, it is not sufficient to ask ‘How does it feel to be you?’ just in relation to the learners concerned. Inclusive education is a two-way process. The teacher’s feelings and experience are as significant as the learner’s. I said that one of my motives for writing this book was an impatience with the negativity often expressed towards inclusive education.

Another motive for writing it is to counteract the negativity towards teachers. When teachers express reluctance to take difficult children into their classrooms, there is often criticism from academics and politicians. Following the theme of empathy I would ask them, ‘How would you cope?’ I suspect many of them would run a mile rather than face the challenge.

In undertaking the case study, I observed teachers who amazed me with their range of skills and strategies. Their imagination and ingenuity was often remarkably inventive. At the same time, there was a calm consistency which again amazed me. It is this balance of flexibility and control which seems to hold the key to effective pedagogy for inclusion.

**Summary of main points**

- Inclusive education is a general school concern relating to quality and responsiveness.
- This case study offers an example of an effectively inclusive school.
- The focus is on teaching approaches, support systems and whole-school policy.
- It explores issues relevant to all teachers, not just those with responsibility for special needs.
- The skills and flexibility required of teachers and support staff needs to be recognized and valued.

**Issues for debate**

Multi-cultural schools, in socially deprived areas, find it easier to adopt an inclusive education model because of their heterogeneity.
For many schools, ‘inclusion’ still means taking on a few disabled pupils and supporting those with a diagnosis of dyslexia.

The term ‘inclusive education’ has become a distraction from more important issues such as quality and achievement.
Chapter 2

Inclusive education

Introduction

The term ‘inclusive education’ has become so used and abused that it has little meaning. Its application to everything from school effectiveness to civil rights to political manifestos renders it vacuous and susceptible to those critiques which accuse it of masking inadequacies. For the cynics, inclusive education means abandoning labelling and special resourcing for individual needs in order to cut costs in the name of equality. They ask the ‘quality assurance’ questions of: What does it offer to enhance learning? How do you measure its quality? Which strategies are selected as of proven value? Addressing these types of questions is the current responsibility of any school which purports to be inclusive.

The focus of this particular project will determine the scope of the literature review. It begins with a selection of current definitions of inclusive education, which are directly related to the way it is defined in the introduction in Chapter 1. There is then a distinction made between inclusive education and inclusive schooling, drawing on recent debates on the meaning of ‘education’. The focus will move on to measuring quality, as this is a current preoccupation in mainstream education and needs to be applied to inclusive education if it is to be fully included.

Examples of good practice from research will be developed further in Chapter 9, which situates the case study directly in the context of OFSTED (Office of Standards in Education) inspection, national priorities and global trends. The central part of the literature review concentrates on pedagogy as this is a key element in the case study analysis. The chapter concludes with the introduction of the theoretical model, which is to inform the methodological approach described in Chapter 3.
This model is a conceptual framework with which to view inclusive education, devised from insights gained in doing the project.

**Definitions and difference**

In the Introduction (Chapter 1), I gave two definitions of ‘inclusion’. First, it is not just about disability but concerns a school culture which welcomes and celebrates differences and recognizes individual needs. Second, it has to be something more than a ‘dump and hope’ model if it is to be successful.

These two definitions reflect the theoretical and practical sides of inclusive education, providing a balanced perspective.

**Celebrating differences**

Supporting my first definition is this introductory explanation from the ‘index for inclusion’ (Booth *et al.*, *Index for inclusion: Developing learning and participation in schools* 2000):

‘Inclusion’ or ‘inclusive education’ is not another name for ‘special needs education’...Within the ‘index’, the concept ‘special educational needs’ is replaced by the term ‘barriers to learning and participation’. Consequently, inclusion is seen to involve the identification and minimizing of barriers to learning and participation and the maximizing of resources to support learning and participation, (p.13)

This involves the school culture, policy and practices. The ‘index for inclusion’ is a framework of guidance which schools use to evaluate their level of responsiveness to inclusive education. It has developed through consultation and pilot studies in many schools through the UK. One of the pilot LEAs is Tower Hamlets, where Harbinger School is located.

Although my case study was not undertaken in conjunction with the ‘index for inclusion’ research project, it can contribute an additional dimension to it. In Chapter 9 (Conclusion), I will examine ways in which I feel that Harbinger fulfils the criteria set out in this first definition, by addressing barriers to learning and participation. I think inclusion is an active and not a passive process. As Roger Slee and I suggested:
Inclusive education is an unabashed announcement, a public and political declaration and celebration of difference...It requires continual proactive responsiveness to foster an inclusive educational culture. (Corbett and Slee 2000:134)

This level of proactive responsiveness is typically found in multi-cultural urban schools where confronting cultural and linguistic barriers to learning is a daily challenge. It is no surprise that the case study school and other similar schools are particularly inclusive in ideology. They have to be so if they are to meet individual needs.

I think it is helpful to see inclusive education as being about recognizing the complex relationship between sub-cultures and the dominant culture (Corbett 1999). If we look at sub-cultures instead of special needs, we are more honestly recognizing barriers to learning. The prevalent emphasis, in much of the early and current literature, on the physical barriers of access to mainstream schools for children with physical disabilities tends to obscure this cultural aspect of inclusion. The largest group with statements of special educational needs (SEN) and on the Code of Practice are children with learning difficulties and behavioural difficulties. In relation to both these categories, the cultural barriers are often significant. There are sub-cultures relating to class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, which struggle within the dominant culture. Where a school community is sensitive to its sub-cultures and gives them value and respect, it is an inclusive community.

Inclusive education is about the quality of mainstream education and is not about special education per se. As Ballard (Inclusive Education: International Voices on Disability and justice 1999) says:

What we refer to as inclusion is, and should be, derived from mainstream approaches to instruction and school organization, creating an alternative to special education knowledge and practices. (p.1)

He goes on to reflect that this ‘alternative’ may be seen as a ‘merger of special and regular education’ and could be problematic as this may maintain a medical model of education. I recognize his caution and agree that replicating child-deficit models of practice in mainstream would be a retrograde step. However, my observations from the case study research have led me to appreciate the value of some aspects of pedagogy derived from the special education sector. There are certain specific ways of responding to barriers to learning which can be very
helpful. I would include a recognition of the need to keep an open mind on learning from what is best in special education practice as part of my definition of quality inclusive education. This has to be balanced in relation to the quality of mainstream education generally and the real problems faced in schools which are not operating as effectively as they might.

**Not a ‘dump and hope’ model**

To address the practicalities, I shall turn to two of the major professional and practitioner SEN journals in the UK, *Support for Learning* and the *British Journal of Special Education*. These tend to express views from the grassroots and experiences of class teachers as well as educational researchers. In an editorial, Charles Gains (1999) asks:

> Can we reasonably expect all staff to be equally sensitive, aware and committed to the needs of pupils with special needs?…When a local authority, perhaps under pressure from a variety of sources, simply treks a child around a number of schools in the vain hope that somewhere someone might produce the magic answer, we should certainly be wary. To offer, as might be the case in disruptive pupils, minimal ‘counselling’ on an *ad hoc* basis goes nowhere near the continuous support these children need, some would argue, as much as their physically disabled counterparts. Teachers will try their best, as they have always done, with such pupils, but they will claim, quite rightly, that there are other pupils who equally need their attention. (p.98)

He goes on to suggest that it would be unwise to reject the expertise in special schools for an ‘ill-thought-through ideology’. I concur completely with his focus on the practicalities. Inclusive education has to be workable and to give good value in terms of a quality learning experience for all. Otherwise, it is potentially destructive. In the case study, I hope to illustrate how schools which are successfully inclusive learn how to work through their problems and challenges and to make full use of many kinds of pedagogy, which includes that derived from the special education sector.

I shall make extensive reference here to Klaus Wedell’s (2000) comments on putting inclusion into practice, which is a summary of issues arising from the SENCO Forum. I see him as a central figure in this debate because he has been so influential on the development of SEN legislation
and provision in the UK over many years. He is also someone who combines expertise with a very practical approach. The SENCO Forum is an e-mail network of teachers across the UK, who are all working to support inclusive education in mainstream. In reflecting on their experiences, Wedell provides a perfect defence against the ‘dump and hope’ model of inclusive education. He raises several key issues relating to how we define inclusion in practice, something significantly different from inclusion as an ideology. One key issue is that of teacher attitudes, the demands to increase their teaching repertoire and their feelings of inadequacy when they are unable to do so. There is a recognition that improving their responses to individual needs benefits most pupils. Another key issue raised is that of funding and the importance of delegated funding earmarked for pupils with SEN being used appropriately to meet individual needs and not being used for wider purposes. He raises the key issue of how a school’s commitment to inclusive education could damage its position in the league tables. He reflects:

Some participants in schools with a high proportion of pupils with special needs found that they were attracting even more, leading to the lowering of their position in the local league tables. (p.100)

In relation to OFSTED inspection and quality assurance, he says that:

One participant reported how their primary school had a policy of focusing its resources particularly on the early years of schooling, and that this had significantly increased the subsequent achievement level of its pupils. It was felt that there should be an appropriate recognition of schools which made a commitment to effective inclusion, and it would be helpful if some were accorded ‘beacon’ status in order that their successful practice could be widely promoted. (p.100)

This emphasis on inclusion in practice is a most valuable starting point for defining quality inclusive education. It has to involve strategic planning to resource staff development and focused funding and it has to be given appropriate status to avoid the current unequal balance between schools which are committed to inclusion and others which protect their league table results. The way in which positive attitudes are supported and funding is used to provide appropriate resourcing is a central feature of the case study school.
Inclusive education, not just Inclusive schooling

Setting a mainstream context

I make no apology for extending the debate on inclusive education into a reflection on what constitutes education and what constitutes ‘relevant’ research. Inclusive education is a political issue. It is about values and beliefs. It is also a key component of government planning. It is important not to divorce discussions on inclusive education from debates on education in general. It also seems to me to be important to locate research on inclusive education in the context of educational research generally. This integral approach is inclusive of itself. Education is a far broader concept than schooling, incorporating adult learning and addressing issues of social exclusion. It is a key objective on the political agenda of the UK Labour government. There is a growing discomfort among teaching professionals about the unmet needs of a substantial proportion of pupils within the current norm-referenced curriculum framework found in state schooling.
Educational researchers have had an uneasy time with government critics and OFSTED inspectors, some of whom have dismissed research as being useless to schools. It is a crude example of the gap between theory and practice. The special issue of the *British Educational Research Journal* (September 2000) asks, ‘Is New Labour Delivering the Goods?’ The editors recognize that there is a government concern for social exclusion and for the high rate of teenage pregnancies in the UK. There are initiatives to address social exclusion, specifically ‘Education Action Zones’ and ‘Excellence in Cities’. The editorial introduces a reflective analysis on critiques of educational research which ‘seem to need education as a political scapegoat for various perceived economic and moral declines, and therefore for its legitimate description to be in safe populist hands’ (Hustler, Stronach and West, 2000:438).

Each editor makes individual contributions to this debate, and Stronach, in particular offers a distinction between political perspectives on the role of education and the tasks of educational researchers. He is critical of the contradictory nature of policy, the concentration on performativity and the anti-intellectualism which threatens integrity. He makes an interesting distinction in saying that education, as opposed to schooling or training, is more complex an issue and so:

Research-based knowledge will always be situated, temporary and provisional. And it will need far more to address the specific than the universal—education as a guerrilla engagement, not a global war.

(Hustler, Stronach and West 2000:439)

I like this analogy and find it helpful in the context of the case study example which is the focus of this book. Looking closely at what seems good practice in inclusive education, both in policy and pedagogy requires a guerrilla engagement with the specific. It is something quite different from a global measure of performability, comparing very different cultural contexts both inside the UK and beyond.

Educational researchers have a responsibility to capture the ‘situated, temporary and provisional’ and to illustrate what is truly ‘educational’ in its broadest, most life-enhancing sense. In another context, Stronach (2000) was asked to be an expert witness at the Summerhill Tribunal, in which a progressive independent school was defending its methods against the attacks of OFSTED inspectors and a norm-referenced framework. Stronach prepared a statement in which he reflected that:
Essentially, the OFSTED model sees childhood education as a preparation for life, work and citizenship which involves accumulating the knowledge and skills that enable an effective adulthood. Such knowledge and skills offer a freedom after knowledge.

Summerhill sees childhood as an expression of life, work and citizenship wherein the necessary values, dispositions and actions are internalized through their exercise in the lives of the Summerhill ‘community’.

...In general the OFSTED goals are centred on subject attainment, normatively assessed and outcome-oriented, whereas Summerhill emphasizes an education of the emotions as well as the intellect, stressing the process of learning and living rather than the outcomes.’ (p.14)

I find this distinction helpful in addressing education as opposed to schooling as it would be hard to find any other school in the UK which is as distinctly non-conforming to prototype as Summerhill. The case study school, despite being in the public, state sector, has certain features which make it comparable to a school like Summerhill. Harbinger School is not afraid to teach emotional intelligence through its expression of how a healthy community lives collaboratively and cooperatively. It is this emphasis on ‘an education of the emotions as well as the intellect’ which helps to make it such a successfully inclusive school.

Meaningful education is about learning which is relevant and which offers a connective pedagogy, in that it is understood, valued and seen as useful. Recent newspaper articles have compared the breadth of secondary school choices in Holland and in parts of the UK (Davies 2000a). The vocational courses, which were a feature of former technical schools in the UK, have been reconstituted as new courses in engineering, electronics, catering, construction, printing and industrial model making. These courses have proved very popular with less academic pupils in Holland and have been adopted by some schools in the London Borough of Barking. They provide meaningful learning for some students who might otherwise leave school with no qualifications. In his article in The Guardian, Nick Davies, a journalist who was exploring education as a political agenda, offers a valuable outsider-perspective from someone not in schooling nor in academia. These ‘common-sense’ questions tend to focus on the ‘student experience’ at the heart of learning and are centrally about effective inclusive education. He is able to ask outsider-questions like, ‘Why push a child through at a level they can’t understand?’ He says:
There is the classic example of children who arrive in secondary school without being able to read and who simply cannot do the work. Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Austria, Greece and Belgium all encourage varying degrees of grade-repetition. Why not Britain? (p.6)

He goes on to ask why we stick to rigid assessment procedures:

A criteria-based exam sets a minimum standard and allows every child to pass; some of them can score distinctions. Why do we cling to the norm-based version? (p.7)

Such is the pressure to push children through the norm-based assessments that teachers have been found to be cheating, in doing the work for pupils and giving them the questions to prepare for exams (Davies 2000b). This ceases to be about education but about ‘performability’, a term which is now embedded in the UK New Labour government ‘third way’ policies. A deep understanding of inclusive education has to involve an awareness of these general issues. An inclusive school is one which recognizes differences and responds to them, in a way which seeks success in achievement rather than performability. There is a clear distinction. A focus on performability can result in the bottom 40 percent being disregarded as non-achievers. The high rise in school exclusions and truancy has been equated with this prevailing attitude in secondary schools.

James Tooley (2000) has become a controversial figure among educational researchers, with his provocative challenges to their efficiency and relevance. He distinguishes between education and schooling, with education following two conceptions which are:

1 Education as an instrumental good—for a) the promotion of certain goods in society or (b) as a preparation for adult life.
2 Education as intrinsically worthwhile. (p.27)

He has courted controversy specifically for his allegiance to the private sector in which he perceives a ‘combination of cost-effectiveness and the possibility of investment which can lead to higher status for all’ (p.200). He cites education companies in South Africa and other countries which buy up recruitment agencies in order to help their students get employment. Although he acknowledges that state schools forge links with employers to some extent, he feels it is not
Inclusive education and special schooling

As well as looking at issues of inclusion in the mainstream state sector, it is important to assess the impact of inclusive education on special schooling in the UK and beyond. In New Zealand, a new policy, Special Education 2000, has just been introduced with the aim of achieving over the next decade ‘a world-class education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all students’ (MOE 1996:5). The policy addresses a number of weaknesses: resource allocations based on historical accident rather than individual need; lack of coordination and sharing of provision between education sectors; too much funding for administration and assessment; an over-centralized special education provision out of step with broader educational reforms. Mitchell (1999) summarizes this as the special education sector ‘representing unfinished business’ (p.200).

This critique of services is redolent of the British context, in which special education is increasingly being amalgamated with overall educational planning within a new rhetoric of ‘inclusive education
for all’. The notion of ‘unfinished business’ is apt, for the process of changing education systems so fundamentally within an existing and outmoded framework is fraught with frustration.

It is useful for those in the UK to look outside for examples of good practice and to be open to learning from other cultures. In relation to the vexed issue of school exclusions, for example, Parsons (1999) illustrates the anomaly that England and Wales are different from Scotland and Northern Ireland and from France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and Denmark in their response to children with behaviour difficulties. In these countries, the rights of children to continue full-time education are enshrined in the law.

This anomaly of attitude applies to our near neighbours. In Northern Ireland, for example, exclusion figures are one-tenth those in England. We need to ask, ‘Why can they include those we exclude? What is it about their attitude to exclusion which influences policy?’ Our neighbours in other countries may well have strategies and resources which we could share. Inclusive education, in its fullest sense, is an approach which is inclusive of ideas and pedagogies drawn from many diverse sources. It is an educational approach which is open to learning.

I believe that the mainstream sector can also learn some useful strategies from the special education sector. In saying this, I recognize that there will be many who will disagree with me. Doing this research project has shown me that one of the very reasons why Harbinger School is so successfully inclusive is its capacity to draw pedagogies from a diverse range of sources, including the special education sector. It seems to do this unconsciously, guided by an impetus to connect the child into meaningful learning. As I go on to suggest in the next chapter, the flexible and innovative nature of inclusive education means that it exists beyond boundaries.

This includes the pedagogic boundaries of mainstream and special teaching approaches. It does not create clear-cut divisions between any sector which can obstruct the fluidity of an open approach to learning. Primary practices can influence secondary and post-compulsory practices can influence other sectors. If we consider ‘learning styles’, rather than ‘mainstream/special sectors’ or sequential stages of schooling and post-compulsory education and training, then an open approach to learning makes good sense. Bovair (2000) rightly says, of the prevalent negativity towards the special education sector amongst inclusion purists:
Portraying educators in special education as oppressors is no way to take people with you. (p.23)

He advocates a way forward in which the skills of special educators are adopted and used to positive effect in mainstream. This includes the use of small group teaching and some individual support. As I found at Harbinger, this also includes applying some specific approaches (e.g. those which are sequentially structured to support children with autism or Asperger’s syndrome), which can usefully be adapted to be of benefit to all learners.

**Measuring quality**

If inclusive education is to gain validity as an indicator of good quality learning, ways need to be found which can measure its success.

This is now becoming an element of school inspection. OFSTED are now going to inspect educational inclusion in schools, under the following criteria: pupils’ experience of schooling, which includes their opportunity to learn effectively, to have access to all aspects of the curriculum and to feel happy in school; the extent to which schools address barriers to learning, in recognizing differences, reducing disadvantage and discrimination and promoting positive behaviour management; promoting inclusive values, in the curriculum, resources and communications, in the way staff talk to one another and to pupils and in consistency of staff behaviour.

There are clear parallels here between the assessment structure within the ‘index for inclusion’ (Booth et al. 2000) and the case study I have described and what is to become part of the national inspection process. There are now some LEAs in the UK which have been operating an inclusive education policy for long enough to be able to demonstrate their success. As Graham Lane, chair of the Local Government Association Education Committee and chair of Newham Education Committee, said when interviewed, successful inclusion is also about raising standards. He reflected:

We’ve noticed that children in special schools have few end qualifications. This year we have a young man, now at college, a Down’s syndrome child, who managed to get six GCSEs including three at grade C.

(Interviewed by Griffiths 1999:20)
This example of individual achievement is illustrative of the possibilities inherent in an inclusive mind-set which treats all learners as unique and not just the sum of their label. In recent research on the theories of inclusive education (Clough and Corbett 2000), Peter Mittler reflected on his many years of working with young people who have Down’s syndrome and gave a similar example of a student achieving GCSE results beyond what might have been expected. He suggested that the biggest barrier to successful inclusive education is in the low expectations which had often been placed on young people with labels of special educational needs.

A common concern among mainstream teachers is that the training to cope successfully with diverse learners is woefully inadequate. Laurie Quinn, the UK Labour Party contact to NASEN (National Association for Special Educational Needs), says:

> The Government will strengthen the role of special schools, while encouraging an exchange with mainstream schools in an effort to develop pupils’ potential while breaking down barriers.  

(Quinn 2000:53)

This sounds positive but also very much like ‘politician-speak’, all promises and little substance. Clearly, if this sharing of skills is to be effective, it needs to be developed strategically at LEA level.

Recent research into the role of LEAs in developing inclusive policies and practices (Ainscow et al. 1999) found the following: that inclusion sometimes meant just placement without adequate provision; that the role of special schools can be positive only if there was support for professional development on both sides. In relation to the crucial issue of funding, they concluded from the data that:

> To be effective, an LEA’s inclusive education policy has to be underpinned by a funding strategy that has been designed specifically to support that policy. Ideally, there should be wide support for, and ownership of, the policy, and hence an understanding of why and how the funding arrangements are so constructed.  

(Ainscow et al. 1999:137).

This level of transparency and accountability has become a hallmark of how Quality Assurance is measured and it seems appropriate that inclusive education should be set against the same criteria as all other aspects of education quality.
In the ‘index for inclusion’ (Booth et al. 2000) these quality measures are referred to as indicators in the following dimensions: creating inclusive cultures, which build a community and establish inclusive values; producing inclusive policies, which develop a school for all and organize support for diversity; evolving inclusive practices, which orchestrate learning and mobilize resources. Through the process of addressing each of these dimensions in meticulous detail, individual school communities can take power themselves in creating the type of inclusive education which is effective in their context and for their particular learners. This level of involvement and ownership seems to me to be an important stage on from that more oblique commitment which has often characterized government legislation.

Recent research has involved trying to understand exactly what constitutes effective inclusion. Harrop (2000) suggests it needs to involve the whole curriculum package and that extra-curricula subjects are just as important:

There is widespread acceptance, for example, that some schools, or parents, may choose to provide music tuition, dancing lessons, karate classes, as extra-curricular or after school clubs which complement the core curriculum offered to schools. Why not offer special therapy, signing classes, thinking skills or writers’ workshops, using a wider range of available experts, not just for children who have experienced failure or have been slower to develop these skills, but so that a wider audience of children and adults could access these facilities?

(Harrop, 2000:12)

This is the step to move on from inclusion into the status quo to inclusion into a school culture which recognizes and values differences.

As Sebba and Sachdev (1997) say, ‘implementation can only be judged truly at the classroom level’ (p.36). This is particularly well-illustrated in the case study of Cleeves Primary School in Newham, which was researched and collated by Alderson (1999). There are clearly some comparisons to be made between the case study I have undertaken at Harbinger Primary School in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the case study of Cleeves School. Both are in neighbouring London boroughs, which are multi-cultural and have high levels of social and economic deprivation. The research emphasis is, however, slightly different.

My case study of Harbinger is particularly focused on issues of
classroom management, pedagogy and responding to individual needs. The aims of the study on Cleeves School are not to focus on detailed teaching techniques but to describe how the school responds to challenges and to show how it operates as an effective model of inclusive education. I particularly like these words of the headteacher, Brigid, who says:

Inclusion has to happen in everything we say and do. It can’t just be added on, and that is why it shouldn’t be called integration. Inclusion is more powerful, because it means you take the needs of all children, particularly those who are most vulnerable, that might be because of their gender or their circumstances or their learning needs, or whatever, and you say ‘How does the institution enable that child to come to school and be happy and feel, “Oh, it’s great, I’ll have some good fun at school today and I’m going to learn at the same time with my friends”?’

(in Alderton 1999:44)

The focus is on valuing individuals and fostering a happy school culture where learning is a positive experience. In my case study analysis, I shall illustrate how Harbinger School is able to successfully achieve this approach and the benefits it yields for teaching and learning.

A pedagogy for inclusion

Before examining a pedagogy which supports inclusive education, it is useful to establish whether there is such a thing as a pedagogy for special needs. In their recent research, Lewis and Norwich (2000) asked if distinct kinds of teaching were needed for children with learning difficulties.

They built their analysis from Norwich’s (1996) conceptual framework of ‘commonality-differentiation’ of pedagogy which distinguished between the following: pedagogic needs common to all learners; pedagogic needs specific, or distinct, to groups of learners; pedagogic needs unique to individual learners. They established the features of effective pedagogy in general as being about clarity, continuity, opportunities for application and feedback. In examining pedagogic needs specific to certain groups of learners, they found research which suggested that the developmental differences in children with Down’s syndrome indicated the need for different teaching strategies which are error-free, focused, visually explicit and using varied approaches to avoid boredom—all features which can have
wider value for other learners. In relation to pedagogies unique to
individual learners, this applied particularly to children with profound
and multiple disabilities, with autism and very specific awareness
difficulties, for whom some specialist programmes may have value.
They concluded that what works with most pupils would also work
with all pupils. They reflect that there is a combination of pedagogic
responses which have value: those which recognize individual needs,
termed ‘unique differences’; those which offer more intensive and
explicit teaching for pupils with different patterns and degrees of
learning difficulties. They say that:

If research is to inform future developments in the teaching of
pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, then it has to consider
issues of how to expand conventional mainstream classroom
teaching routines to enable more adaptations for a greater variation
in pupils. (p.63)

I welcome their request for such research and hope that this case
study of a connective pedagogy makes some contribution to this
development.

In Chapter 5, I present a conceptual framework (Figure 1) of
‘differentiation’ which proposes that there are three stages: the traditional
form of adapted pedagogy for ‘unique differences’; stage 2, a pedagogy
of ‘inclusive learning’ which values variation in learning styles; and
stage 3, a wider pedagogy for supporting achievement at many different
levels beyond the merely academic, in which respect for differences is
overtly expressed.

I very much support O’Brien’s (2000) notion of ‘inclusive learning’
which demonstrates to individuals that they can learn and supports
them in understanding how they learn. He takes this level of inclusion
beyond the surface experience to a deep sense of self-expression, in
saying that:

Inclusive learning is grounded in who you are as a person, your
sense of worth and the contribution that you can make to the
community now and in the future. It is also grounded in how you
learn. (p.5)

This implies ‘education’ rather than mere ‘schooling’, as a lifelong
process of personal growth and community values. It also presents a
considerable challenge to teachers who need to extend and constantly
renew their pedagogic repertoire in order to adjust to varied learning styles. Whilst O’Brien recognizes the importance of understanding the four cognitive stages of learning (accretion, restructuring and tuning in, automization and de-automization) he also values affective factors, which he terms ‘beyond cognition’. These relate to self-esteem, external influences and the school culture. His focus on inclusive learning is highly relevant in the current context, in which the success of inclusive education is measured against levels of achievement. It is also topical in addressing ‘emotional intelligence’ which is now recognized as a key component of a well-balanced, grounded individual who is able to make the transition to a social inclusion in society.

There is ample evidence now accumulating, from both university academics and from teacher-researchers, which illustrates the significance of effective teaching approaches in inclusive learning of real quality. It is just as important, I feel, to listen to the views and experiences of classroom teachers as to university research findings. Teacher-researchers can tell us what works. They assess individual progress. Their observations are based on day-to-day interactions. Their emphasis has to be on the pragmatic rather than the ideological and, as such, provides powerful evidence of practice. As Ainscow (2000) reflects:

My experience over the years leads me to believe that in most schools the expertise needed to teach all pupils effectively is usually available amongst the teaching staff. (p.77)

He makes some very practical suggestions, based on his research in the London Borough of Lewisham ‘Improving Schools’ project: that the use of questions as a teaching technique is valuable and stimulating; that support includes whole-class work, some over-learning for individuals or small groups; that the development of practices which support inclusive education need systematic analysis. His reflections that a commitment to collaborative problem-solving is the most important contribution to the development of more inclusive practices in schools is illustrated in my case study school, Harbinger, in which problem-solving is a central feature.

In her research on effective inclusion in a mainstream primary school, teacher-researcher, Broderick (2000) says:

The staff communicate exceptionally well and are willing to follow advice, working flexibly to meet the demands of all the children in the class. (p.8)
'Communication', 'openness', 'flexibility': three key features which support inclusive learning. This flexibility can include the use of many different approaches. Odogwu (2000), another teacher-researcher, suggest from her experience that grouping in ability groups for maths and languages is appropriate whilst other subjects may be better in mixed ability groups. LSAs can be used to support a statemented child within a group, where others can benefit also from the extra help, and may also withdraw a child for individual work on literacy or numeracy. She refers to a school’s commitment to the ‘infinite potential of each student’ (p.64), reflected in the provision of many different pedagogic possibilities. This commitment extends to adapting specialist techniques in mainstream, if they are seen as having value for individual learners.

Another teacher-researcher, McBay (2000), for example, in her case study of an inclusive primary school, reflects on how special approaches have their place. Her school uses very structured systems, for example, the children always had the same placing in lining up or when sitting on the carpet. She says that:

> Teachers felt that this gave the children ‘a security of knowing where they should be’ and it allowed teachers to place certain children away from other children or match children based on personality. (p.8)

In McBay’s mainstream school, which is very successful with children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), there are structures in place which are familiar aspects of special school practice relating to behaviour modification and systems to reward positive progress. She says:

> They also have white-boards with a good side and a consequences side on which children would write their names and watch as their name moved from ‘miss playtime’ to the ‘well done’ or ‘good listener’ side. Teachers also have class target boards. The class had a target to work towards each term; when a child achieved their target, they could write their name underneath it. Individual behaviour targets from children’s IEPs were put on a sticker record sheet that attached to a child’s desk. This gave easy access for both teacher and child to record progress with the target. (p.8)

Circle time is used at her school to discuss problems and work together for solutions. Support staff are used very effectively for many purposes,
including monitoring children who arrive late at school, as this was a big problem at one stage. McBay reflects that:

During a literacy lesson, I observed a support assistant supporting a child who was finding it very difficult to listen. The ISA helped by sitting on the carpet with the child, demonstrating how to sit and by offering quiet words of encouragement and praise. (p.9)

The ‘inclusive learning’ practices are to mix whole-class teaching with reinforcing learning in small groups and in one-to-one support. There are very structured lessons with clear aims and objectives. The teachers see it as important to use different teaching styles and a variety of recording methods. McBay noticed:

Throughout my observations, teachers were constantly praising children and encouraging those experiencing difficulties, showing the pastoral role of the teacher is very important for these children. (p.10)

This is an illustration of how the degree of pastoral support in mainstream, sought by Gains (2000) and the flexibility and problem-solving approaches recommended by Richards (1999) can make some mainstream schools inclusive environments for children with EBD.
Attitudes of teachers at this school are supportive of this level of inclusivity. McBay records that they are fair and understanding. They listen, show compassion, recognize individual differences, seek professional help when necessary. They have a positive approach to inclusive learning, not holding grudges when children’s behaviour is destructive because they understand the difficulties they can be experiencing. This addresses Wedell’s (2000) concern about teachers’ capacity to cope. McBay says that the teachers at her school acknowledge that it is a challenging and difficult school. They are sensitive to individual needs and open to outside help. They try to think positive, not demonizing the child but confronting the behaviour.

I have focused so extensively on this particular example of a teacher-researcher study as it bears many parallels with my own case study school. Both are inner-London, multi-cultural primary schools which include a high proportion of children with SEN, especially with EBD. Both schools have developed highly skilled teaching teams, whose pedagogic repertoire extends to strategies more commonly found in the special school sector. The strengths of the school McBay describes are illustrated in the successful maintenance of an inclusive learning environment which caters for diverse needs. The dangers, however, are that so high a proportion of the school population are requiring special attention that this can distort the nature of such mainstream provision to make it quasi-special. Being too good at inclusive teaching has its penalties in, for example, other schools feeling they do not have to bother.

**Looking through an inclusive lens**

If we take the term ‘inclusion’ away from its association with education and see it as a structural and ideological approach to public sector services, the key components to be evaluated can be viewed more clearly. At a structural level, it is about strategic planning and coherent service delivery. This is an intensely practical process, which should be transparent in its application. At an ideological level, it is about shared values and agreed aims which require sustaining through common, community commitments. It is often the case that these practical and political elements are kept separate in debates on inclusion.

The inference from this is that the impracticalities of the ideologies render them void. For those who espouse a purist stance, resistance on practical grounds is a sign of unwillingness to change. This typical deadlock is hampering the progress of an inclusive education which is considered valid, appropriate and nothing out of the ordinary.
In their research on education professionals’ views on inclusive education, Croll and Moses (2000) found that there were many tensions and contradictions among the range of views expressed. Despite commitments to the ideology of inclusion, some of the headteachers, education officers and educational psychologists interviewed felt that there were certain children whose behaviour was so extreme that they had to be excluded in segregated provision on practical grounds.

Croll and Moses felt that they were not expressing muddled thinking or being deliberately perverse but were reflecting the limits of Utopian thinking in relation to inclusion. This they describe as:

Idealistic, in that it represents what many people desire but regard as a far distant aspiration, and, at the same time, it also corresponds to observable trends as the overall proportion of pupils in segregated provision declines, even if slowly and unevenly. (p.9)

This research is valuable as an indicator of professional attitudes. The kind of mainstream school described by McBay is still relatively rare and more often found in inner-city contexts where diversity is a given. For many mainstream schools, including children with challenging behaviours is an ‘inclusion too far’. This is the stage we are at. Some schools are highly inclusive. Some are low-inclusion zones. Only an imposed structural change can alter this uneven balance.

Pedagogy is a central aspect of effective inclusion. If children are bored at school and experience repeated failure, they are more likely to challenge the system. Skidmore (1999) shows in his research that, within the restrictions of the Literacy Hour, teachers can either open up a fruitful and meaningful dialogue or adopt a pedagogy which excludes in its closure. He reflects that:

At certain pivotal moments during teacher-student dialogues, the lead offered by the teacher can have real and educational significant consequences for the course of the subsequent talk: it may tend to retrace the familiar attitudes of authoritative, teacher-controlled discourse; or it may invite students to engage in the riskier, more taxing, but more fulfilling enterprise of formulating and being answerable for their own thinking. (p.16)

Schools like the one McBay describes, and my case study school, are illustrations of this approach, working creatively within existing structures to make them as inclusive as possible.
In her teacher-researcher study, Armitage (2000) uses the ‘thinking-skill’ programme, COGNET, to demonstrate the value for learners of understanding how they learn and how they can improve the quality of that learning process. This programme has been adopted by her London borough as a valuable resource to support inclusive learning. Armitage shows how groups of learners with very different educational needs develop into an effective learning team through the use of COGNET. She illustrates this sharing of the learning experience:

The students began to take responsibility for each other’s learning, for example, during lesson 10, AG took the initiative to read a worksheet, as he is a competent reader. AM pulled the sheet away and began to struggle to read out loud. AG was about to retrieve the paper, but then recognized the effort AM was making and that this was an important contribution for AM. AG sat quietly waiting for AM to finish. He did not interrupt or try to correct misread words as had happened in earlier sessions. (p.60)

She notes that all the students developed a respect for each other as learners. This recognition of ‘thinking skills’ as a pedagogy which can support inclusive learning reflects an openness which I find very refreshing. If we are to look through an inclusive lens, this requires three visual filters: seeing the strategic planning and its practical implications; being able to see outside the school into the community and its values, as well as inside the self to reflect on how our own emotional needs influence us as teachers and learners; opening up to see beyond boundaries to draw from other ways of understanding and being, so that inclusive learning is enriched.

If we acknowledge that inclusive education is not integration as defined by the 1978 Warnock Committee, then we can be really open to its rich potential. Inclusive learning, if applied at a consistent level, has the capacity to make the teaching and learning experience more meaningful for all its participants, teachers and learners.

**Summary of main points**

- ‘Inclusive education’ is different from ‘integration’ and is not just about ‘special educational needs’.
- ‘Inclusive education’ is about good quality education generally
and about developing practices which are responsive to different learning styles.
• There are aspects of specialist strategies which can be usefully adapted to support successful inclusion.
• An inclusive school is one which is inclusive in every aspect of its ethos and this is reflected in the way staff treat the children and each other.

**Issues for debate**

A balance of pragmatism and ideology is the cornerstone of inclusive education.

Effective inclusive education is of value for all learners as it is about good quality teaching.

Pedagogy is at the heart of successful inclusive education and it is also the greatest challenge to teachers as it requires a high level of responsiveness and a capacity to keep open to learning new skills.

The way in which we conceptualize inclusive education influences what we select as significant.
Chapter 3

Researching inclusive education

Introduction

The way in which ‘inclusive education’, or in its earlier incarnation ‘integration’, has been researched over the last 30 years is an indicator of the political nature of research in any area in which ethical issues are paramount. The shift of emphasis has been sequential albeit often complementary: from psychological and medical child-deficit models of integrating individual children; to a sociological critique of labelling and segregation; to inclusion being an integral element of school effectiveness; to a social model of disability, placing the onus on institutions to remove barriers which limit participation.

Those researchers working within the various paradigms have also grown conceptually and changed their views and perceptions as their research has given them deeper insight into the issues (Clough and Corbett 2000). Inclusive education is an evolving and ‘alive’ area influenced by prevailing educational trends, such as initiatives to reduce exclusions, and by the impact of external assessment measures and competition between schools.

There is a current unease with the expansion in numbers of children being assessed as having special educational needs. As John Marks, director of the Educational Research Trust, is quoted as saying in a report published by the Centre for Policy Studies, a right-wing think-tank:

Are there really twice as many children who need special help at school as there were a few years ago?...It is professional negligence of the most culpable kind to provide substantial resources with no sense of whether they are being used effectively. Existing policies on special educational needs must therefore
be scrutinized—in the interests of all those pupils who have been failed by ‘the system’.

(O’Leary 2000:6)

Such a critique is valuable as a platform from which to evaluate where we are on these issues. In going on to suggest that increased segregation could be a way forward, Marks makes no concessions to political correctness and shows no particular empathy towards children whose individual needs require additional resourcing. As special educators, with an inherent commitment to individual rights and needs, we have to listen to such ‘devil’s advocates’.

In confronting their prejudices, we can clarify and sharpen our arguments.

In this chapter, I am going to ask:

• What do we look for when researching inclusive education?
• Where do we find it?
• How do we evaluate what we see?

Through this process, I hope to develop a conceptual framework through which to research inclusive education.

**What do we look for?**

We look for signs of strategic planning in which resourcing, staffing and training are considered as part of long-term on-going needs. Inclusive education has to be a visibly integral element of overall quality assurance. It needs to be embedded in strategic planning. An example in the case study is that supporting inclusive education is budgeted for as a high priority issue for the school. This has led to a high level of resourcing, both in terms of LSA support and in the use of specialist teachers. There is an inclusion team of five staff, rather than the SENCO alone, and one of these is a counsellor who supports children and staff. The strategic planning acknowledges that inclusion is very challenging and difficult. The head ensures that staff feel supported. With this support being resourced strategically, there is the possibility of long-term planning and vision for future development.

In order to research inclusive education, it is important to connect three interrelated stages: the community, the institution and the ‘self’. This distinguishes researching inclusion from researching integration. It has been common practice for research on integration to focus
upon the school or college and its policy, practice, curriculum and pedagogy. Integration is concerned with adapting to what exists within that status quo of the institutional framework. It does not often extend into the community, nor does it always require an examination of staff attitudes and behaviour. Inclusion, being a more multi-dimensional and challenging process, explores the layered relationship between the institution, its outer context and the inner context of the human interactions and dynamics. This is a ‘connective’ process. It is a concept which recognizes the ways in which our experiences are not separate but are connected.

Thus, an inclusive school looks to the needs of its community and works to foster a healthy climate in which individual differences and collective values are taken seriously. In Chapter 1, the idea of a connective pedagogy was introduced, linked directly to the notion of effective learning. First, it is about connecting in to the individual’s learning style and recognizing how they learn most effectively. Second, it is about linking them into the curriculum and learning tasks in such a way that they can gain maximum benefit. This research project has taught me that a connective pedagogy is more than just this two-stage process. In interviewing teachers and learning support assistants and observing their practice, I have realized that they link both into community values and into their own internal value systems and emotional baggage. Inclusion is not confined to the boundaries of place and time. It is beyond boundaries and can only be appropriately assessed within that understanding.

Of course, it is vital to evaluate institutional practices, the routines and rituals of classroom patterns and the cultures within schools and colleges. However, what is happening within the institution is only part of a wider picture. It is the sensitivity to community values and to self-assessment which can determine the actual quality of inclusion. Two examples from my data analysis (one looking outside, one looking inside) illustrate this extension beyond institutional boundaries.

The home-school link teacher, from the school’s early years unit, goes into the home of one of the Bangladeshi mothers to take the toy and book library into the domestic setting, as the school-based service was only being attended by white parents. Bangladeshi mothers seemed shy to participate in a school-based pre-school facility and they like to entertain at home. Instead of being only school-based, the facility went to them. This has proved to be very successful and many other Bangladeshi mothers join in this community link, with the teacher as their guest rather than their leader. Bengali mothers and babies from
three local estates come to have tea and samosas. It brings school to them on their terms. This initiative has demonstrated a responsiveness and respect for community values and customs, even before the children start formal schooling. It is about general good practice in home-school liaison. As the research findings will illustrate, effective inclusive education is about effective teaching and learning and whole-school policies. There is little that is essentially ‘special’ about good practice in inclusive education. Perhaps this truism, much debated in current research literature, needs constant repetition. The key features which mark out an effectively inclusive school are also those which may be seen as facets of any good quality provision. The main defining characteristic which sets apart the consciously inclusive school is the central emphasis on inclusive values as an integral part of the ethos.

Another example, which illustrates awareness of ‘self, is that of a teacher who says that she often comes home from school and could ‘shake herself for having told one particular boy off too many times that day. She recognizes that, ‘I know he has low self-esteem anyway, and that will not have helped him.’ She consciously decides to restrict the times she draws attention to his negative behaviour and to increase the praise she offers for anything positive. This teacher’s behaviour shows an awareness of ‘self and a humility in the commitment to supporting effective inclusion. It also shows an understanding of behavioural psychology. The school is very sensitive to positive reinforcement of desired behaviours and teachers are fully aware of the impact of behavioural psychology.

Where do we find it?

The awareness of ‘education’ being something beyond schooling is a key aspect of inclusion. It is understandable that all learners of any age are educating themselves for life, not just through a prescribed curriculum taught in an institutional context. Adult education has often led the way in being inclusive as a creative and fun activity, unhampered by competitive assessment procedures. ‘Education’ means responding to the curiosity and interest of the learner, letting them take the initiative. Can this still happen in schools when there are so many externally proscribed assessments? In the case study school, I see ‘education’ (not just schooling) as occurring in the informal aspects and social areas of the curriculum: the assemblies, celebrations, outings, visitors. It is also about seeing beyond the boundaries of formal schooling in the state sector: making education distinctive and meaningful. This
inclusive school has elements of a non-state school about it. It feels independent in spirit, in that it is confident, positive, open, proud. It has its own style.

Teaching is not just about talking and demonstrating. It is also about listening. Inclusive education requires careful listening. If children are really treated with respect, as equal citizens, they need to be listened to and their views given status. This empathetic listening is a central feature of the case study school. The children are not shouted at or ridiculed. There is an atmosphere of calm control and consistency in behaviour from staff. The consistency both maintains a secure community and values the children’s perspectives. Children call staff by their first names but, far from being insolent as a result, this seems to lead to warm and respectful treatment on both sides.

**How do we evaluate what we see?**

I want to address the final research question, ‘How do we evaluate what we see?’ by introducing the concept of viewing through an inclusive lens. If the premise on which definitions of inclusion are predicated distinguishes it as something altogether different from integration, then it requires an altogether distinctive way of evaluating when it is happening and how quality inclusion is perceived.

Drawing from the research findings, I see the inclusive lens as having three inter-related apertures: strategic planning; looking outside in and inside out; moving beyond boundaries. All three shed light. If we are to move on from what one of the teachers said was the ‘dump and hope’ stage of inclusion then we need structural cohesion. Institutions have to fully include planning for supporting learners who require additional resources in their long-term strategic planning and not as an addon. This sheds light because the means to realize an inclusive vision are structurally created. By looking outside in and inside out, inter-connectiong aspects of experience are related. It is integral to effective inclusion that a school is responsive to community needs.

It also has to recognize how those who teach and support individual needs react to their own emotional responses and assumptions.

To return to Marks’ critique: the old model of labelling more and more as ‘special needs’ is ineffective and unproductive. Marks asked how we measure the quality, efficacy and outcomes of special provision in mainstream.

This can be done by evaluating progression in relation to initial assessment of need through visible accountability in the form of structural
and strategic planning; by engaging in problem-solving in a responsiveness which looks at priorities and addresses them; by sustaining a holistic flexibility in an open approach which focuses upon education within many contexts rather than mere schooling. An inclusive provision is a self-critical one, always seeking to develop and improve, fluid and receptive to new ways of adapting pedagogy and curriculum content. One way of doing this is to value lessons from different sectors, seeing that learning can take place in unexpected places. The researcher of inclusive education has to learn how to capture what is inevitably elusive and complex.

**Summary of main points**

- Inclusive education requires a distinctive way of viewing what is happening, which is informed by inclusive values.
- It needs to evaluate strategic planning to avoid being merely reactive in its practices.
- It looks beyond the boundaries of the institution of the school to the needs of the local community and to the level of responsiveness of teachers and support staff.

**Issues for debate**

Evaluating the effectiveness of inclusive education requires finding evidence of the use of imagination and empathy in order to address community and individual needs.

Researching inclusion involves a focus on educational values rather than a narrow emphasis on schooling and it needs to be receptive to the diverse places in which learning happens.

An empowering approach to researching inclusive education is one which supports the voices of those whose experiences of inclusion are being shared by ensuring that their dignity is a central concern and their identities are treated with respect.
Chapter 4

The case study: First impressions

Introduction

In Chapter 3, I suggested we needed to look beyond boundaries in order to evaluate inclusive education. An illustration of what I mean by boundaries is seen in the way integration was interpreted in the 1970s and 1980s. The model of integration represented in the Warnock Report (DFE 1978) presented three sequential stages: locational (sharing a base); social (mixing for recreation); functional (full curricular inclusion). This is locating integration within an institutional boundary in which those who are integrated are at different stages towards a ‘full’ integration which is ‘functional’. This ‘functional integration’ is about being able to function within the status quo. There is no inference that the school has to adapt its curriculum or pedagogy in order to be responsive to individual differences.

In a critical analysis of inclusive education, I have suggested we now require to present three distinctly different sequential stages: surface (policy/effective schools); structural (curriculum); deep (culture). My rationale for this change of emphasis is set in relation to what has come before:

My observations on examining the process of integration over the last fifteen years are that it contains elements of the following features: the individuals being integrated are expected to have reserves of courage and tenacity beyond what could usually be considered reasonable to expect; most educational institutions create their own cultural norms which define who is achieving and who is failing. Given this reflection on the progress of integrationist practices, it seems to me that it is the culture of inclusivity which has to be addressed, rather than policy and curricular developments alone. This culture forms the deep, third level of inclusivity… It is within
this level that children feel either included or excluded, whatever the policy or structural processes of inclusivity may offer them. Part of the deep culture in mainstream and in special schools is the intangible process whereby children are taught to see themselves as either valued or devalued group members.

(Corbett 1999:129)

This school culture can be felt in the general atmosphere of the building, in the way people speak to each other, what is visible and valued, where images and artefacts are placed and in how the school projects its ‘self’.

My earlier analysis can be seen as my own conceptual growth towards a deeper understanding of what a connective pedagogy might entail. I had become disenchanted by a form of integration which placed the onus on vulnerable individuals to ‘fit in’ to an institutional conformity which may effectively marginalize their values, needs and identities. Whilst this might be said to reflect the dominant social structures beyond school and thus, many will argue, is a realistic model, it is not an inclusive one. In undertaking this particular project, I am deliberately selecting a school which may be seen as an unrealistic model in that it projects and celebrates inclusive values rather than those of the dominant social structures beyond its perimeters.

In order to introduce the case study, I am sharing my field diary of the preliminary visit to the school. If I was adopting a psychological model, I might focus upon the children with Down’s syndrome, the blind child, the children diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and describe how they are being treated in relation to their specific needs. This will form part of the central case study but it is not part of this introduction. I might also have taken a sociological perspective, as this is a school surrounded by housing estates from which it draws a population with many socio-economic needs. It is also a multi-cultural school, with a high proportion of children from Bangladesh. It might well have been assumed that ethnicity and poverty would become major areas to explore in relation to the case study. Again, these will be developed within the case study but they do not form part of the introduction in any specific way although they are all part of the rich fabric.

As I have indicated in the links with my earlier analysis, I view the ‘deep culture’ of a school as a key feature of an inclusive school community, so the main question which this chapter addresses is: What does the culture of this school feel like? On my initial visit, I
The case study: First impressions

It was taped by me on first encounter. What it does provide is a taste of what the deep culture, the hidden curriculum of rituals and routines which make up any institution, felt like to me on first encounter. In addition to my field notes, I will introduce my key informant in the case study who was also the gatekeeper to the project. In any ethnographic study, this person is of central importance. Without his cooperation and support, I might not have had the degree of access and informal liaison which helped me gather information. He defines what inclusion is and is not and sets criteria for judging what is effective in supporting inclusive education.

First impressions

Preliminary visit, Monday 29 November 1999:
Interview with the headteacher, quality assurance teacher and SENCO

My first impressions of the school were that it was a warm and very inviting environment. The entry to the school is very attractive and you feel that people of every faith and background are welcome there. The atmosphere in the school is very relaxed and calm. It is also quiet and just civilized, I suppose. You don’t hear teachers shouting at children and neither do you hear children shouting at other children. There seems to be a culture there of respect for one another. I can’t believe that it is artificial because it does just permeate the whole school in every class I was in. The children just seem to be overall happy to be at school. I’m not saying they don’t have problems. I think the school accommodates children with a wide range of needs and coming from many different environments, including some who have very real problems. But it is a school which really cares for the children and creates a very supportive and welcoming atmosphere. The headteacher told me that she felt she had a wonderful staff. She was very lucky with the staff she had.

One of the things which is remarkable is that teachers stay for many years, which is probably a sign of a school which is pleasant to work in. The headteacher seems very enthusiastic and committed to inclusive education in its very broad conception. One of the things she has done is to develop a very positive approach to the use of
learning support assistants. They are very much involved in classroom activities. They are involved in working together with teachers to deliver the curriculum. They play a very active role in the pedagogy which is something I particularly want to look at when I go into the school because I think that the way learning support assistants are deployed is one of the keys to successful or unsuccessful inclusion. The head also employs a trained counsellor who comes regularly into the school working with those children who are having difficulties.

The OFSTED inspectors who had just been in two weeks before apparently said that this seemed unusual and why wasn’t she using these posts of responsibility for curriculum areas. She said that she spreads the curriculum responsibility across all the different teachers. They each take responsibility for two different areas of the curriculum so that it is spread across the whole school. Posts of responsibility are for specialist support and for general quality assurance. This includes keeping statistical checks about the comings and goings in the community of the school and keeping track of what is happening within that community in terms of demographic developments and changes and linking it in to the community around it. That is all part of the quality assurance. That is something I’m going to find out more about. How does that relate to inclusion? From my own observations in my work context, if you are going to foster equal opportunities, which is obviously one of the issues in inclusive education, then you need to have very well-thought-out quality assurance measures by which you are going to assess how to share resources in an equitable way. It will be interesting to learn more about how the school does that.

Then I was taken around the school by two of the senior students. They were probably about ten years old. They took me all round to the different areas, including the separate, large space for very young children from three to five. I was very impressed with that because it was so obvious they were focusing on play activities rather than the much more formal reading, writing and number work which some schools are adopting for their nursery age group. This was a real nursery, I felt, with very creative and fun things going on and a really supportive atmosphere for very young children. I was very impressed going round the school at the quality of the work and what was up on the walls…and the expectations.

One of the things which impressed me was the very high academic expectation and I want again to ask the teachers about this. How does high academic expectations link with creating an inclusive school community? How can you bring the two together, because so often
the argument is that you can’t maintain high academic expectations if you have an inclusive school. I want to know from these teachers how they tackle that one because it is very evident from the quality of the work around the rooms that there is some very interesting and highly academic work taking place in those classrooms, as well as them catering for a very wide range of different learning styles. The way in which the classrooms were arranged was very much geared to small group teaching but also they were doing their Literacy Hour when I was going round. The children were sitting on the carpet and going through the books and the reading activities. So they obviously are having to accommodate all of those kinds of demands and the scholastic aptitude tests (SATs) along with taking a wide range of learners. One of the things I was told this morning was that some children with a history of disrupted schooling related to their challenging behaviour have come here and been successfully included at Harbinger through until the end of primary school stage. I want to know how they manage so effectively with children who’ve got challenging and difficult behaviours. How come their behaviour becomes more manageable in this particular school? Anyway, it was a very favourable impression on a first visit and one of the things which was very nice is the teachers are very enthusiastic about me coming in. They feel they’re going to get something valuable out of it and I feel I am as well. It’s impressive that they seem

Figure 4  Reading for pleasure, with the teacher
to be really enjoying their work. They seem to have a deep commitment to the school and to its ethos and to what it is trying to do. Also to the children, great respect for the children.
The assembly was lovely because it was about Advent and about the coming of Christmas but it was also about Ramadan. It was respecting of the multi-faiths within that school community. I thought it was beautifully done in fact. So it was respecting everybody’s different experiences. And I think it’s not easy to do that with sincerity—a real feel that everybody is equally valued. But I think that did come about. I’m going to be very interested to talk to some of the learning support staff who are very visible in the school. They’ve got a high ratio of LSAs and I want to know how they feel about inclusive education and the sort of things they find works effectively. I want to get their perspectives and opinions and learn about some of their practices.

**Moving on from the ‘dump and hope’ model**

Peter is the gatekeeper and key informant of the case study. He has been a learning support teacher working in many schools across the LEA before coming to Harbinger five years ago. He has the advantage of understanding much about the pedagogies which support children with a wide range of individual needs as well as being committed to the philosophy of inclusion. However, he has no illusions about it:

> My experience of inclusive education is that it is a lot of hot air and not a lot of substance. A lot of people use the word ‘inclusion’, often well intended, but they don’t look at the realities of what it means for anybody, whether it is the individual child they think they are including, the community of the school, the other children in the class and the amount of resources which are required for it to be effective. One of the phrases that always sticks with me about inclusion is what the University of Portsmouth said about the inclusion of children with Down’s syndrome, that they felt in the UK we are very much stuck in the ‘dump and hope’ phase.

His reflections indicate that he does not want to just show a theoretical commitment without attention to the practicalities. Peter told me that there are two building blocks to supporting effective inclusion and that, if these were maintained, progress could be made. I have
placed his words beneath the two criteria:

1. A commitment to meeting individual needs.
   ‘If you have that, then you will work through everything that comes up.’

2. A commitment to working through problems together as a community.
   ‘There are going to be times when the community is functioning less well than at other times. It is often at those times that problems around including challenging pupils will arise. You have to hang on then. You have to work through it.’

I shall use the criteria established in this key informant interview data to help me evaluate the quality of support for effective inclusive education in its day-to-day application in classroom management, effective use of support staff and flexibility in teaching approaches.

**Evaluating the deep culture**

If, as we are now led to believe, quality assurance measures are concerned with ‘the student experience’, then this has to be measured in terms of overall development and progression. It is not just academic progress which can be evaluated from base-line assessments to progressive learning outcomes.

The experience of schooling has to be assessed in all its aspects: spatially, how children feel in the playground, the dining hall, the corridors and staircases; emotionally, how staff learn to empathize with learners whose experiences are varied and complex and to help them to feel valued; as citizens, in creating a school culture which gives messages about how we treat others who are different from ourselves with respect and dignity.

The ‘deep culture’ is about ‘the student experience’. It is about actedout values, carefully considered wording of verbal inter-changes and thoughtful use of role models and images. It is about a conscious level of fostering a shared value system which may not reflect dominant social values. This kind of deep culture is political and challenging in that it holds up a way of treating other people which is not based on a competitive, hierarchical model.

**Summary of main points**

- Inclusive Education challenges rather than supports the status quo.
The ‘deep culture’ of a school is where students feel either valued or marginalized.
An inclusive school is one which consciously models the valuing of differences.

**Issues for debate**

A case study is a valuable way of examining the quality of inclusive education beyond the superficial ‘dump and hope’ level as it engages with many aspects of development which can only be observed after a period of detailed analysis and familiarity.

First impressions in ethnographic research are important, as they reveal genuine feelings in entering an unfamiliar environment and comparing it with expectations.

The ‘gatekeeper’ in case study research is a key informant and allows entry but may be said to be a map-maker, in defining the territory from the outset which is useful but potentially constraining.

Do researchers need to let go of the gatekeeper’s influence in order to map their own territory as they learn what areas of the terrain are of most significance in their perspective?
Introduction

In Chapter 1, several questions were introduced, as issues which I had explored with staff at the school. The first of these was ‘What does differentiation mean in practice?’ In this chapter I shall begin by defining what I mean by the term ‘differentiation’, for it has many interpretations which have an impact on the way it is valued. I shall then discuss how the headteacher, SENCO and a class teacher define differentiation as it relates to Harbinger School. Examples of observed practice of differentiation in the school will be evaluated in relation to these definitions and the criteria already established. One of the distinctive aspects of this analysis will be its emphasis on the subtle relationship between effective differentiation and the valuing of differences.

Defining differentiation

The traditional model

The traditional model of differentiation means the adaptation of teaching and learning materials to account for individual differences in learning style. This definition derives from the SEN psychological model of assessing individual needs. It can be narrowly focused and individualized to the exclusion of creativity and group dynamics. It has often been given a bad press in the education world as consisting largely of the often dull and inevitable worksheet. There is a delicate balance to be sought between ensuring the work is manageable and not making the tasks too boring and unchallenging. The teacher’s attitude to differentiation is the significant factor. If it is seen as a dreary chore by the teacher, it will be a dreary task for the learner.
valuing differences comes to the fore. If a teacher recognizes and respects the range of different learning styles within the class group, there is a natural receptivity to adaptations which are meaningful and place value on the learner.

Differentiation has been much debated and I do not want to go over old ground here. What I wish to do, for the purposes of illustrating how inclusive education can be supported, is to open up the concept of ‘differentiation’ through linking it with effective learning and with the valuing of differences, both cultural and specific. I shall begin by introducing my three conceptual definitions of ‘differentiation’. In effect, they represent three stages towards a wider and more imaginative application (Figure 5: Stages of differentiation). Stage 1 (the traditional model) has grown from the SEN framework; stage 2 (the inclusive learning model) links effective inclusion with effective learning; stage 3 (valuing differences) links inclusive learning into empowerment and lifelong growth. Visually, I see these stages in a form of opening out further possibilities and potential.
Differentiation and valuing differences

The Inclusive Learning model

Differentiation is a sensitive area. Although it is ostensibly about responding to individual needs, it can lead to crude labelling and segregation and no child likes to be singled out as ‘stupid’. If differentiation is to be effective, it has to occur as an evolving, responsive process of sensitive tailoring to individual differences, which avoids denigration in the nature of the tasks set. I believe that this form of differentiation is about high quality teaching skills. It is extremely difficult to achieve and that is why so many teachers find differentiation an intimidating, daunting and dreaded issue.

Like O’Brien (2000) I support schools that are ‘learning inclusive’ rather than merely ‘organizationally inclusive’. These are schools in which inclusive learning is taking place within the classrooms. This includes adapting pedagogy to suit the individual learning style e.g. using a high level of visual sequencing and an errorless starting point when teaching some children with Down’s syndrome. This is significantly more differentiated and more imaginative than the ‘worksheet’ formula.

Valuing differences

It is important not to see inclusion as distinct from education generally. The valuing of differences is a facet of certain educational values, not just of an inclusive ideology. Professor Broadfoot sets inclusive values at the very heart of the general educational agenda, for example. Broadfoot’s perceptions are presented as part of her presidential speech to the British Educational Research Association Conference of 1999. She is reflecting on her view of education as a connective pedagogy, although she does not use these terms. Her ‘connection’ is into the broad experience of learning for its own sake, rather than just performing to the test. The challenges she makes to the status quo are reflective of an inclusive ideology.

The connective pedagogy to which I refer is about all learners, not just those with labels of ‘SEN’. It is about their meaningful engagement in a learning process, which gives them the tools to become independent learners through their lifetimes. A flexible approach to pedagogy benefits more than just a narrowly defined group. However, it would be disingenuous to imply that a really responsive approach to different learning styles is easy or simple to achieve.

If ‘inclusive education’ is really inclusive it has to be a reflection of
current educational concerns and priorities, not just in special education but also in the core of mainstream issues. Inclusion is about that very core and about improving quality for all not just any one group. I find Broadfoot’s (2000) analysis particularly valuable. She critiques the prevailing emphasis on ‘performativity’. She seeks a pedagogy which develops individuality rather than conformity and which provides the basis for communication and thinking in a class or group. She values the retention of a pedagogy which empowers pupils in an individual and creative way, ‘sowing the seeds of lifelong learning through the active, personal engagement of pupils’ (p.29). This ‘engagement’ is a measure of the quality of differentiation to make the learning meaningful and alive. It is a political act of placing value on all, whatever their potential to perform within norm-referenced assessment criteria.

**Proactive systems**

Mandy, the headteacher of Harbinger, recognizes the difficulty of effective differentiation and supports her staff in this process:

> In terms of learning styles, we make sure staff have access to any training courses which might be useful, and we have specialist expertise on the staff. People are very proactive. If we need help, we ask for it.

This open approach to learning from others is fundamental to effective differentiation. One of the damaging legacies of a segregated education system is when teachers assume a level of expertise in others which negates their professional competence to cope. Asking for help and learning from others is a stage towards gaining skills and confidence.

The SENCO, Nicki, defines differentiation as ‘ensuring the children are all working on something at which they can gain success and move forward at their own level so that they can take the next step.’ She sees the terminology we use as important. The Special Needs register, for example, is called the ‘Individual Needs’ register in this school. It is about recognizing individual differences. The challenge, with thirty children in a class and the pressures of the Literacy and Numeracy strategies is to differentiate at three levels. Nicki says that they have many groupings in fact and not just at three levels. She asks, ‘How do you make sure children are still getting what they need?’

She is quite aware that the current national emphasis is on majority interests rather than minority needs. This presents a real challenge in
a school where minority needs are majority interests. She closely relates differentiation to a demonstrable valuing of differences. She expresses this in terms of teacher behaviour:

How you talk to children and respond to them is crucial; creating an ethos where they feel confident to question and challenge.

This is a reflective and sensitive process, as one of the teachers says:

Sometimes he just needs somebody to come and sit down and start him off. Once you’ve done that, he continues reading.

There is a delicacy of approach here which illustrates the skill of effective differentiation. It happens naturally without any sense of being made ‘special’. Such a response comes from experience and confidence, having learned through practice what is and is not productive.

One of the most powerful advantages which Harbinger School has is the maintenance of a stable, very experienced core staff. This is an enormous asset and something of a rarity in many London schools, where a high turnover of supply teachers or inexperienced new teachers is common. If differentiation is being attempted in a context where staff are not experienced and committed, it is unlikely to be of the quality required for best practice.
Examples of differentiation

These will be explored as they relate to stages 2 and 3, demonstrating inclusive learning and the valuing of difference through the active, personal engagement of learners. Examples are selected from the case study interview and field notes. Specific questions and issues arise in the analysis, which will be discussed as topics of concern and interest.

‘Learning Inclusive’ classrooms (stage 2)

There is a commitment to drawing from a diverse range of teaching and learning styles. As this teacher explains:

We mix different teaching styles: small group teaching; whole class teaching; strategies for different levels. For example, during mental maths in the Numeracy Hour, some of the questions would be geared at children working at the basic level and others will be geared towards children dealing with fractions. I’ll cater for it on a time element, allowing children time to work things out and not hurrying them. They’ll have more time to get the work completed where other children will have a shorter time and extension activities.

One of the greatest misnomers about what ‘inclusion’ means is that it is an assumption that there are no differences in learners: that they

Figure 7  Choices of play activities in the Early Years unit
Differentiation and valuing differences are all the same. There have been times when the inclusive education purists have denied differences in learners, in a misguided notion of equality. This sets back the acceptance of inclusive education because it is overtly apparent to skilled practitioners that their job is to recognize and adapt to differences, not to deny them.

This same teacher understands that academic skills are not the only source of learning in the school setting. A girl with Down’s syndrome, who is in her class, is learning about independence and developing social skills as well as learning to read. She says of her progress:

Josie likes to be independent. There’s the need to sustain that and to channel it so she’s working well. Occasionally, when she opts out and then sees you working with other children, she’ll opt back in. She’ll say, ‘It’s my turn now’. When I first started with her, she wouldn’t read anything back to me. She was deliberately doing it, knowing she’d get my attention and a lot of it. So I said to her, ‘I’m ever so sorry but there are lots of children in the class and I’ve got to give my attention to all of them’. I asked her to go away and work on it and come back when she was ready to share it.

The significance of social learning for a child like Josie is respected. She is able to adapt to turn-taking and sharing, with the support of her LSA, which helps her to learn how to work in a group. The expectations in this school are that all children can learn about social behaviour and respect for others. The ‘SEN’ children are not babied, as they can sometimes be. They are encouraged to become aware of their social context and the influence they have on others.

**Example 1: Meaningful maths**

(field note in the Early Years unit, February 2000)

‘Mohammed’, a 4 year old blind boy, with his LSA, is participating in the Numeracy Hour in the early years unit. The teacher is working with six children in all to do a session on ‘Recognizing Shapes’. The teacher holds up a picture which has raised, spongy shapes of squares, triangles and circles which Mohammed can feel. It is a ‘feely-shape’ large book (an inclusive resource).

The teacher guides the LSA and gets the other children to interact with Mohammed (e.g. in passing a penny to him when
they are exploring round shapes. He is being actively included. The group was helped to see the shape by the teacher drawing it on Mohammed’s hand.

He had a Bengali-speaking LSA and another LSA who was trained in Braille. It is not easy to learn Braille. He is very bright and needs to be in a mainstream setting. He is very good on the piano. The specialist peripatetic VI (visually impaired) teacher comes to work with him and his LSA for two weekly visits totalling three hours a week. He lives across the road from the school so it’s his obvious choice.

The specialist VI teacher says, ‘Staff are very supportive. They see him as their kid. The most important thing is that people are willing to make the effort. They’re open to it. Here, they think about the child within the national curriculum, Literacy or Numeracy hour. Mohammed is very involved with the Numeracy hour, not the Literacy Hour. His teacher says, ‘Good early years practice is good practice for everybody. Opportunities for child-initiated play are vital. Mohammed functions older cognitively than other 4 year olds, so he makes decisions about what he want to do, alongside directed tasks. There is a balance during the day for him to choose. His LSA knows he needs to do certain things and also lets him make decisions.’

This is an example of meaningful learning which properly includes him whilst not excluding the others. There may be other children who find the three-dimensional raised shapes helpful. There is also a celebration and valuing of all Mohammed’s abilities (in music, in verbal skill and decision-making) rather than an exclusive focus on his disability. It is an acceptance of the whole person and how they can get the most out of their inclusive learning environment. David Blunkett, a former Secretary of State for Education who is blind, was also sent across Sheffield to a residential school aged 4 years, the same age as Mohammed. It seems so sad that he was excluded from his neighbourhood school and family life when it is evidently possible to make learning in a mainstream setting a reality for a blind child. It is important to recognize that Mohammed is exceptionally bright and delightful. This is significant. He learns quickly and charms people with his open personality. Were this not the case, his successful inclusion may have been more difficult to achieve.
Example 2: Whole-class science teaching

(field notes 1 March 2000)

This is the oldest class (10–11 year olds) preparing for Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), looking at the topic of ‘insulation’. A wide range of teaching styles were used to make science meaningful at different levels:

1. Ten minute explanation with whole group, using white board; whole class on carpet; talk and visual presentation of stages.
2. Each set to draw a graph in small groups at tables (gender mix for science; balance of girls and boys on each table).
3. Each small group to do an experiment: insulating a mug.

At my table, one girl did the graph for the girl opposite her, while she watched (an Afro-Caribbean girl doing it for an Asian girl). The more able girl was guiding and leading the other girl-collaborative and supportive. After the group work, the teacher gets the groups sitting on the carpet around the white board with their sheets. They have all done graphs to show the time it took for the temperature to drop in their mugs, each with different insulating materials. They compare the use of different materials to assess the drop in temperature over the fifteen minutes of the experiment. The materials are: tin foil, cotton wool, cling-film, leather, cotton, black paper, foam sheet and the control mug with no insulation. They assess the maximum and the minimum insulators all giving feedback on ‘Which was the best, which was the worst insulator?’

There was a very good mix of learning styles. The teacher did not tell them the answer but used a series of questions to get answers from the class.
One of the main advantages of mixing teaching and learning styles is that it offers opportunities to those who learn better in specific ways e.g. visually rather than through text. Group work is also used effectively. The care taken with gender balance is significant. A deliberate mixing of girls and boys helps to maximize the different levels of interest, experience and skills. Children are being encouraged to teach and guide other children. They learn from one another as well as from the teacher. Science is a collaborative subject and, in a simple but fascinating experiment like this, collaborative learning is fostered. It is also error-free, permitting risk-taking.

These students are getting ready to leave their primary school to transfer to secondary. A healthy, risk-taking attitude to science will be advantageous to them.
Example 3: Specialist language support

(field note 31 January 2000)

A 6 year old statemented boy with speech and language difficulties has an LSA working with him this afternoon. He has his individual language lesson while the rest of the class go for PE. The teacher agrees it is not ideal. From tomorrow, the LSA will come in the morning and join in the Literacy Hour to support him in a group. He is doing language comprehension games with the LSA (‘over’, ‘on’, ‘under’) and understanding the meanings of words like ‘square’, ‘triangle’ and ‘opposite side’.

Where this boy needs lots of extra language work, he can best get this in a one-to-one programme, working through his IEP tasks with the LSA. It is hard for him to miss his PE and good that he can get this help in the Literacy Hour tomorrow (but will it be more diluted?)

Differentiation: a balance of ensuring that he gets both the required help and access to a wider curriculum (e.g. PE).

The dilemma of weighing up the value of individual support, without the distraction of others in the room and being able to take time, with the value of inclusion in a fun, shared activity. This issue of balance is significant in successful inclusion.

Example 4: Setting in maths

(field note)

The class are working in small groups, very purposefully on their maths tasks at differentiated levels. I ask the teacher, ‘Is there a rationale for the class seating arrangements? Is it for different levels?’ ‘Yes. They are in ability groups.’ The two children with emotional and behavioural difficulties in the class are in different groups. One is better at maths than the other. One of them is in the top maths group. All the class
I have placed Examples 3 and 4 together sequentially as they both reflect the stage 1 version of ‘differentiation’, the traditional form. They show how individual support on IEP tasks is valued as is setting for different ability levels in maths. One of the lessons I’ve learned from this research is that a successfully inclusive school can also absorb this traditional form of differentiated learning. If it is recognized that this is a school which caters for very different learning styles, then it has to be accepted that this requires a wide repertoire of teaching and classroom management approaches if meaningful learning is to take place.

One of the specific examples I reflected on was that of the boy with emotional and behavioural difficulties who was in the top set for maths. If he had been located in a special school, would he be likely to have access to this degree of stimulus? He spends some time in one-to-one support with other learning tasks and is kept close to the teacher in the ‘carpet time’ of the Literacy Hour, as he can be restless and distracting. His inclusion, however, gives him this opportunity to be working with a group of other high-achievers in maths. I think it is a sign of a confidently inclusive school that so many different approaches, including what purists may see as restrictive and potentially excluding pedagogies, can be healthily mixed to form a productive learning base.

Example 5: Exploring pedagogies together

(field note: 20 January 2000)

Numeracy Hour (10–11 year olds)

Mental arithmetic group work on the carpet. All the class have been given a set of number cards from one to ten, tied together with a string. They are used as a visual aid, for example, when the teacher says ‘three times twelve’, they have to select from their number cards and hold up 3 and 6 in front of them, not to
This degree of openness really impressed me. It felt as if teacher and learners were exploring together to assess the usefulness of a potential tool. The children were asked what they thought of these number cards. Some liked them as they gave visual clues. Others just found them distracting. What this experiment provided was a chance to reflect on how they learn mental maths and what is helpful in the process. It is demystifying ‘thinking’, inviting the pupils to put their perspectives forward as to what can aid thinking skills.

The quality of teaching which I observed in the school was often exceptional and was generally enthusiastic and creative. It takes a reflective and committed teacher to try out new methods and to ask the children to assess their value. It also supports inclusion as, in the process, it may be found that some children learn more quickly and effectively with this kind of visual and tangible stimulus than they do when totally reliant on abstract thought. For others, the very concrete sense of holding your own personal set of number cards on a string may offer comforting reassurance. Exploring new pedagogies together helps to find out what works for different individuals. The teacher then has the option to draw from a wide range of approaches in the Numeracy Hour.

Example 6: Individual education programme

Some children have a high ratio of individual support. One 10 year old boy who is autistic has the following support each week:

- 7.5 hours LSA support (11 AM-12.30PM daily)
- One hour specialist teacher support (3.15–3.45PM Mondays, 10.30–11AM Tuesdays)
The specialist teacher sets a programme for the week for the LSA to deliver and record for the class teacher and specialist teacher on a record keeping sheet. This boy’s targets relate to reading, word recognition, recall, sequencing, phonics, oracy, writing and number.

This pupil may well have been placed in a special school had he not been accepted at Harbinger. His needs are such that he requires high levels of adult support. Socially, he clearly gains from the environment and is not aggressive or distracting, just very withdrawn and quiet. He has built up a close rapport with his LSA who really enjoys working with him and has done so for a long time. The dilemma arises at secondary transfer and it has been decided that he will go to a special school at that stage. A question we may want to ask is: Is inclusive education at primary and not secondary level better than no inclusion at all or is it easier for the learner to have a long continuity period in special education?

Example 7: Responding to individual needs

(field note 9 February 2000)

The Literacy Hour for 7–8 year olds

The teacher reads out children’s writing on the Minotaur (from simplified stories of Greek legends). They are very dramatic. The teacher shows them to the class. She says, ‘I love the way you set them out.’ She has ‘Tommy’, who has ADHD, in the class. She makes a joke for him and the others about getting him to sit down and listen (‘I’ll glue you to the floor with Pritt-stick!’). They are looking at a very lively cartoon version of the Greek legends. They read out extracts in turn and the teacher reads parts to keep it together. Yesterday’s task was to write a letter from Theseus to his father. They are now asked to continue with a diary entry called, The day that changed my life’. The LSA then takes five children, including Tommy, out of the class. They are taken out to work as a separate group three days a week during this stage of the Literacy Hour, to get special help with phonics.
This school uses a wide range of practices with the overall commitment to meeting individual needs. If this means that some children require a different kind of help to others, they are withdrawn, either on their own or in a small group, to get the specific help they need. We may want to ask: Does successful inclusive education preclude withdrawal for special help? The whole issue of withdrawal, removing one or more pupils from a class to engage in a different learning activity, is controversial in the inclusive education debate. Some purists say, ‘On no account should pupils be withdrawn. It constitutes a form of segregation.’ Other theorists say, ‘Unless you withdraw sometimes, you are doing individual learners a disservice.’ From my research at Harbinger, I have learned how withdrawal for special support has its integral place in effective inclusive education. Were it the only form of differentiation, and whole-class teaching using limited pedagogic options was the norm, I would see it as very restricting. However, in a school like this, where many diverse teaching and learning styles are available to suit individual needs, withdrawal is just one among many alternatives. It certainly has its place as a valuable means of making learning meaningful when some children could not undertake the whole-class activity. My observations are that a confidently inclusive school can feel able to draw on many different practices. The two base-line criteria are those of: meeting individual needs; working through problems. An open approach to the value of a range of pedagogic practices is a direct result of responding to these base-line principles. There is little in the examples of practice which is not of direct relevance to general issues of school effectiveness. The teaching and learning styles are about responding to different individual needs. Where there may be a distinct additional dimension is in the embedding of effective teaching practices within a school culture which consciously supports inclusive values.

**Demonstrating a valuing of differences (stage 3)**

If a pedagogy is to empower, to encourage growth and enthusiasm for lifelong learning and to foster individuality, it has to be a conscious process. It may not be written as an element of the formal curriculum and its essence is spontaneity. Yet a valuing of differences requires conscious choices. One of the ways in which this form of pedagogy is most powerfully expressed is in the school assembly. This is the forum in which achievements are celebrated and values reinforced.
**Example 1: Assembly A**

(field note)

A story is chosen to celebrate difference. It is about several children from different ethnic minorities and their friend, Martin the green Martian. There are then two songs sung, one on ‘Eid’, a Muslim festival (which is topical) and one on ‘The Friendly Robot’. This is sung to a pop beat with guitar accompaniment. There is a recognition of the children’s own culture—both religious culture and popular culture. Sometimes the music selected is classical. It varies. There is not a message that high culture is better but that there is room for many different ways.

**Assembly B**

The 4 year old blind boy, ‘Mohammed’, comes to assembly with his LSA. The assembly celebrates the children’s achievements in many different ways. Three boys from the early years unit showed the school the seeds they had grown in pots and the shoots that had come up in just six days. The deputy head talks it though and they are applauded. ‘Jane’ shows her homework, a paper theatre and a book. She has done this on her own initiative. Her mum made the book. She read out her story (inaudible, but there was no ‘Speak Up!’). Mums and parents are asked to come if they want to. Two Asian boys read out their Japanese Haiku poems. One boy read a poem inspired by a paperweight. The other boy’s poem was about a cat. A group of pupils, including a girl with William’s syndrome, present the torches they have made in the science class.

There are many different forms of achievement which are celebrated in assembly. They include different aspects of learning, not always narrowly academic or about sporting prowess. The breadth of achievement allows for a level of inclusion which respects individuality. Mohammed has played the piano for the school in assembly, as that is one of his skills. Other children share their varied hobbies and creativity. There is not a culture of competition, in which they are
Differentiation and valuing differences constantly being measured in relation to others. Celebrating differences accepts that we are not the same and that being individual is positive. At the same time there is a valuing of the collective, shared perceptions and experiences of Muslims, Hindus and Christians. The assemblies celebrate all the main festivities like Easter and Christmas, Ramadan and Eid. For many of the children, whose written English may be limited, this is an opportunity to display their deep knowledge of their own religious faith. These opportunities provide affirmations of a valuing of difference in a multi-cultural society. Another inclusive aspect of assemblies is the use of signing in British Sign Language to accompany many of the songs, led by the headteacher or deputy.

This display of respect for another minority language brings the ethos of inclusion into its widest relevance, in which awareness is raised as something of value in and of itself and not just in relation to individual needs.

Example 2: Cultural capital (Bourdieu)

(field note)

The school is about five minutes’ walk from the Thames. The class of 5–6 year olds are taken on a walk to the river by the teacher and LSAs. They were also taken on this same walk last year. Several of the children said, ‘Do you remember when we went on that walk with you?’ They had not been to the river since.

They were being prepared for the walk with an LSA who is a Bengali speaker and translates for them. The teacher was making use of a high staff ratio to go for the walk, as there were too many children with behavioural difficulties in the class to do the walk otherwise.

(field note)

In the early years unit at lunchtime. The children are at group tables. There are vases of artificial flowers on a tablecloth for each table. It is a little touch, a small token, but it makes lunch special—a rich, social time.
School can add ‘quality of life’ experiences to children’s lives and this may be in very small but significant ways. Bourdieu’s ‘cultural capital’ theory illustrates that learners are advantaged or disadvantaged by the value systems, habitual experiences and exposure to cultural norms within their homes. This school both values the diversity of children’s experiences and recognizes the need to contribute to their cultural capital. It is a balance of respect and the extension of experiences.

### Example 3: Staff development

*(field note 8 March 2000)*

**Staff meeting an managing the Literacy Hour**

*(handout from headteacher; my comments in italics)*

1. Organization: discuss with group how your literacy session is organized. Set out an ‘alternative clock’. Try to be realistic about how long you spend on each session, how it is organized, how long the total time spent is and do you manage a plenary?

- word or/and sentence;
- shared text (reading and writing);
- guided group/independent work;
- plenary.

The head says she realizes that planning is a huge issue which people spend a long time on. Teachers share their practice e.g. one began planning in detail in September and spends all weekend planning. All the teachers in the school spend about three hours a week in planning. The head says that, ‘Adapting the Literacy Hour to be relevant for all our children is our aim, because if some are left out that is not good enough’. The learning support teacher says to the other teachers, ‘It is important for all adults working with you to know your planning’. The head asks teachers to use each other as a resource.
2. Which parts of the session are going well? Why? Which parts are you less pleased about? Why?

Teachers say, ‘The timekeeping of some parents means that some children always miss the first fifteen minutes’, and ‘In Key Stage 1 the carpet session is very well focused. The Literacy Strategy has really helped the focus and it is put across at an appropriate level.’

Planning:

- How long do you spend planning?
- What form does it take?
- What would make it easier?

Some teachers feel there is a problem of using limited extracts rather than whole books. They also feel it is important to spend some time listening to teachers reading the books. They fear that ‘shared reading’ can kill a text.

3. How do you organize the independent work session? Do you think the children are learning during this time?

4. How do children record their work (if any)? How do you mark the work? Do you make any assessments in this time? How?

There was a debate about the pedagogy of ‘carpet time’. Teachers were saying, ‘Children are spending more time that they used to on the carpet, both in the Literacy Hour and at other times.’ ‘There used to be the library van coming regularly and the children liked that. We no longer have it. It’s had to be sacrificed.’ The head’s management style is not to give instructions (top-down) but to get ideas from them (brainstorming from the prompt sheet in small groups). There is a real feeling of openness and sharing. Teachers are very open about their practices. The LSAs also give frank feedback. One says that, ‘It can get boring. I feel like a spare part’. The head is very good at staff development: asks questions, stimulates, provokes, opens up ideas, gets them
responding and contributing. They are very open about their difficulties. There is nothing to hide.

Lots of teachers say they supplement the Literacy Hour with additional reading, offering a selection of differentiated books to encourage reading, getting children to make more use of books. The learning support teacher says she sees children on the carpet a lot and less time spent on practical activities. She is very impressed with the quality of carpet time work—the link between the text and spoken word is very effective. A teacher admits she finds it very difficult to fit all the Literacy Hour tasks into one hour. She has decided to do some of it later in the day.

All the teachers use the Literacy Hour slightly differently. One noted that there was no longer time to have story-time at the end of the day. Others tried to retain this.

This staff meeting was very interactive and open. Staff worked in small groups, mixing key stages and mixing teachers and LSAs. They were encouraged to explore and evaluate strategies. The priority was meaningful learning for all the children because, as the head said, ‘If some are left out that is not good enough’. Adaptation will take many forms and I saw a variety of them. Sometimes it meant some children, with particular difficulties in writing, working on a separate task with an LSA, guided by the teacher. Other times it meant a child (who could present very challenging behaviour) choosing to work on his own with the support teacher in an adjoining room, because he wanted the quiet. The carpet time Literacy Hour work I observed was always stimulating and structured, often really demanding in terms of thinking skills.

My perceptions are that adaptation to meet individual needs does not need to lead to a low level of expectations of all learners generally. The expectations were high and the carpet time sessions required a high degree of alertness and thoughtful responses. Teachers kept these times very controlled, children not shouting out but putting up their hands with answers and responses. The teachers were well aware of those in the group who were not putting up their hands, were responding inappropriately or who simply looked bemused. They were conscious of the need to balance high expectations with adaptations to accommodate differences.

The staff meeting on the Literacy Hour seemed to me to characterize
the attitudes of staff in this school. They recognized some of the difficulties and challenges in the Literacy Hour but were not negative. Their focus was on problem solving to meet individual needs. The sharing and openness, which is a feature of staff relations, helps to resolve any difficulties faced in such situations. Less experienced staff learn from the more experienced and there is a culture of learning and trying things out. Some of the teachers have developed considerable specialist skills in relation to specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), children with Down’s syndrome, Asperger’s syndrome and autism, and physical and sensory disabilities. There is an inbuilt impetus to differentiate and adapt which greatly strengthens problem-solving approaches.

**Reflections: Why balance differentiation with the valuing of differences?**

The polarization which has often existed in debates on inclusive education has been destructive of coherence on what is the best way forward. On the one hand, there are those who adhere to a model of differentiation, which is only about individual education programmes. At the other extreme, there are those who resist individual support at any pedagogic level, with the implication that celebrating differences equates with the denial of difficulties in learning. Neither extreme is helpful. The case study shows how a successfully inclusive school is one which makes use of many different teaching approaches within a culture which celebrates differences.

There is some one-to-one withdrawal for individual specialist support. There is some small group work withdrawal for work on phonics, for example. There is some setting in ability groups for maths. There is also a wide range of differentiated tasks and activities going on in the classroom at some stages and whole-class teaching at others. In other words, many methods are seen as valid, if they are seen to work for meeting individual needs. This balances with a sense of community fostered in the school which is supportive and strengthening, encouraging a wide range of expressions whilst creating common values regarding equality, fairness and consideration.

The following chapter will be further developing this balance between supporting individual needs and creating a community which is strong enough to be able to work through problems. It relates directly to both aspects of this balance: ensuring that a community is safe and secure for all its members, whilst containing and supporting some individuals whose behaviour challenges that security; being able to
differentiate in teaching approaches to a highly specialized level, comparable to that found in a good special school. These are two of the key tests in determining the efficacy of any school which purports to be really inclusive.

Summary of main points

- A three-stage model of ‘differentiation’ is presented: a traditional model; an inclusive learning model; a valuing of differences model.
- Staff are given opportunities to develop and extend their skills in adapting pedagogy.
- There is support for making use of many different teaching and learning strategies.
- The approach is to work through problems together and find ways of connecting.

Issues for debate

Differentiation has become a more sophisticated process than it once was, opening up possibilities for imaginative variety and responsiveness.

If differences are celebrated and not seen as a problem, the way in which teaching and learning operates will reflect this positive attitude.

A connective pedagogy is one which can draw upon many ways of teaching as long as the key objectives are to meet individual needs and to work through problems as they arise.

Differentiation includes the recognition that children learn in many different ways and that it is all right to create responses that accommodate these differences without prejudice.
Introduction

This chapter will examine the ways in which the case study school responds to challenging behaviour from some children in the context of classroom management. It will look at how teachers and LSAs are supported through strategic planning, at the extent to which specialist strategies are adapted for use in a mainstream setting and at the balance between whole-class and individualized teaching.

There is a wealth of research on this issue as it is at the very heart of inclusive education. Those pupils or students who challenge the system with their disruptive and disaffected behaviour and attitudes threaten inclusive values. It is much easier to include individuals whose needs are primarily those of physical access. They are not confronting the status quo. Disaffected and disturbed learners tend to highlight weaknesses in institutional policy structures. They widen the existing fissures and can create uncomfortable fractures. Recognizing that much has already been written on challenging behaviours, I do not wish to go over old ground. Using examples drawn from my case study data, I shall present an argument to suggest that the maintenance of a consistent approach to the management of behaviour which is shared and owned by the whole school community, staff and pupils, is the bedrock of a coping school. A successfully inclusive school is one which copes well with its potential problem areas; it is not one which takes on challenges it cannot deal with.

Strategic planning and support systems

The shared collaboration of an inclusion team of five people, rather than a reliance on just the one SENCO, is central to the strength of
strategic planning. It means that the school has created its own priorities, with parents as an integral part of the team, and that dependence on external resources becomes less of an issue. This internal commitment is vital. It makes the difference between working together when situations get difficult and giving up quickly because there is no will to work things through. This level of management commitment is so deeply ingrained at Harbinger, that there is less need for formality in strategic planning. Staff are secure in the support systems. Communication is excellent in this school.

Mandy explains that the staff meet every morning from 8.45 to 9am to talk through issues of the day. She says that,

We have informal support structures where everybody knows that a difficult child is not your fault. You don’t have to take on the guilt for that. We have very good communication with our educational psychologist who will always come up with strategies if we ask her. Our SENCO has regular meetings, at least once a term, for all children at any stage of the Code of Practice, and we share our IEPs and our different ways of doing them. Teachers feel less threatened when they share problems. It’s always been a culture of this school that you don’t take on someone’s behaviour as your problem. It’s a whole-school problem and the whole school has to work at it. So, if there are problems with a child, at the morning meeting I’ll say, ‘We’re having problems with this child. Any adult who sees them must handle them in this way, so they get a consistent message through the day that we are a strong team.’ We do have some children with very challenging behaviour. In most cases, we have very good relationships with parents. Teachers go to their homes. They seem very willing to come to school to discuss things.

As Peter stresses, ‘It is very important that everyone is working together in a real way, not just paying lip-service.’ This is redolent of his ‘dump and hope’ image: inclusion has to operate at a genuine level, not on the rhetorical surface. It is about acted-out value systems, consistently applied.

Mandy recognizes that the informality of their behaviour policy now needs to be formalized. She reflects that:

Sometimes people do feel, ‘We haven’t got anything written down’, but it’s learned from observations, shared in some way. At our first staff meeting on our behaviour policy, one of our new teachers
said she was amazed at how rarely you heard a raised voice and that everyone seemed to be coming at it from the same line and she felt secure about it.

This reflects my own observations in the field note in which I gave my first impressions in Chapter 4. The calm is so impressive. There is an atmosphere of reasoned dialogue, rather than confrontation. Children are listened to with respect. Yet, this overtly child-centred approach does not make this an anarchic school, in which children with disruptive behaviour are allowed to intimidate and undermine staff and other children. It is a school which feels safe and secure.

Peter explains their attitude in the following way:

The way the institution perceives behaviour is important. I’m not saying we’re soft. I think we’re very, very strict and firm about what we expect from children. But it’s because we see behaviour and emotions as an extraordinarily complex business that we don’t just put boundaries up and say, ‘You will not do this and we will punish you by suspending you.’ Once you take that stand, what you’re saying is, ‘We don’t accept that a child is necessarily going to be better off somewhere else.’ Once the institution has
got the idea that we’re going to work things through as much as possible, you’ve immediately got a safer place for children to be in. It is a holding space.

As the SENCO reflects, the approach within Harbinger is more psychodynamic than behaviourist, with an emphasis on underlying causes and an attitude of ‘I don’t dislike you. I don’t like your behaviour’. She says that where specialist techniques are used, they are accessible to the whole class even when they may seem to be very specialized in origin.

In the following section, examples will be discussed which reflect the following aspects: high expectations of all children; use of specialist practices for all; individualized behaviour programmes.

**High expectations for all children**

This example is about ‘high expectations’ in relation to behaviour and achievement. It illustrates two key aspects of a school culture which genuinely and proactively supports inclusive education.

### Example 1: Inclusive values

(field note 12 January 2000)

The teacher asked two Muslim boys, who were standing in front of the class with three others to present their readings, to sit down on the floor as they had fidgeted and talked and distracted others when they had been asked to support their peers in the rehearsal for the Ramadan assembly. They were told off in front of the class for not supporting others. The teacher asked them why they had been asked to sit down. She asked them what they had done wrong. It was made very clear why the teacher was challenging their behaviour. It was made clear both to them and to the rest of the class. They had acted selfishly instead of supporting others and being helpful. It therefore gave a powerful message to all of the class about community values and the valuing of all contributions.

Two of the others involved in the readings were Muslim girls. The fifth contributor was a boy with emotional and behavioural difficulties. He was included in the preparation for the Ramadan assembly, having been selected from many
possible alternative contributors, and he did a very good, powerful reading.

His delivery was loud and clear. The teacher rightly said it was the best and he was much praised. It is important to demonstrate to all the class what he could get praise for, when he was often in trouble; eg. he had a behaviour chart on the wall to record his daily behaviour.

First, it clearly demonstrates that inclusive education is not just about including children with disabilities, and challenging behaviours. That is only a partial dimension of it, yet it persists as the stereotypical scenario for many theorists. It is also about establishing and maintaining inclusive values in every aspect of daily life in school. In this instance, the teacher made a clear and emphatic teaching point about how we should treat others with respect and dignity. The incident was not dramatic. The boys concerned were not violently disruptive or verbally aggressive. It may well have been ignored by many teachers as mere low-incidence irritation. Here, it was used to teach inclusive values and to give a strong message to the girls, and to children with SEN labels, that they are worth listening to with respect. In a subtle way, the teacher is challenging dominant value systems of gender hierarchy and negative notions of special needs. In an inclusive school community, these elements of the hidden curriculum, or what I term ‘deep culture’, are as integral to being inclusive as are the learning support structures and resourcing.

Second, this example illustrates high expectations in achievement. The boy with emotional and behavioural difficulties is very capable in many aspects of the curriculum, including reading aloud and maths. He was the best reader in the presentation. He was also in the top group for maths. Yet, he has undeniably complex difficulties in relation to high levels of distractibility, emotional immaturity and attention-seeking behaviour. In some LEAs, he would certainly be in a special school. Here, he is getting one-to-one teaching support in some areas, a high level of LSA support and his own behaviour programme whilst, at the same time, being able to join his peers in demanding academic tasks in which he can excel. For an academically able child with behavioural problems, the mainstream setting offers a broad and challenging curriculum and the stimulus of a diverse peer group.

One of the major problems in responding to children with emotional and behavioural difficulties is that the behaviour and the programmes
to address it can predominate to the extent that academic needs are neglected. In this example, the whole class were shown how well this boy could present his written work and his self-esteem was fostered in relation to high achievement rather than good behaviour. This balance seems to me to be very important if children with EBD are to be valued members of their mainstream school community.

**Use of specialist practices for all**

**Example 1: Not denying differences**

(field note)

In the Literacy Hour, the class were working very quietly. The emphasis is on achievement. The whole school are doing a task for preparing writing on ‘Dreams’ as a way of assessing levels through the school by giving them all the same task and sharing the results. The sense of community is very important.

In this class there are two children with behavioural difficulties. One is a boy whose last school could not cope with him and so he came here. He was already on stage 3 of the Code of Practice. He may become statemented or, if he continues to improve, he may be able to continue without a statement. The other is a girl who has pushed other children over in the playground and made herself sick in class to get attention. She sees an educational psychologist every week. She arrives a quarter of an hour late for class, walks in and says, ‘Sorry I’m late.’ The teacher says, ‘Thank you for saying “Sorry”. Sit down quickly now.’ She is firm but does not humiliate. She is strong but not oppressive. During the writing time, children go into groups to write. The tables have been planned and are on a map on the wall. I asked the teacher if there was a reason for the planning of the tables. She said it was carefully planned. For both the Literacy and Numeracy Hour tasks, this class of 10–11 year olds were set in ability grouping, which varied according to their skills in the different areas. A connective pedagogy is a mix of tailor-made,
individualized teaching and learning and whole-class teaching and learning. It is about balance, about progressive, positive learning, recognizing individual needs, not denying them. It is also about showing respect and value for differences.’

One of the factors which I suggest helps this particular school to cope so effectively with children whose behaviour can be challenging is that it is sufficiently confident to be openly differentiating at every level. There is no denial of difference, either in academic ability or in emotional stability, in a misguided effort to be visibly inclusive. Inclusion has so often been equated with a notion of equality which denies difference. I think this is a mistake and has led to much scepticism and mistrust in relation to inclusive education and its supposed benefits. There is a strong sense of the values of equality of opportunity in this school which is reflected in the way staff communicate with pupils and is modelled by them in peer relationships. Respect for individual differences is part of the inclusive community. Alongside this is a recognition that different needs require different approaches. The distinction between mainstream and specialist pedagogy is blurred, as what works well for individual needs is often adapted for a broader use.

Example 2: Making learning fun

(field note 26 January 2000)

‘Sue’ is a very good teacher. She makes learning fun—interesting, meaningful, exciting, challenging. They are exploring words that sound the same but are spelt differently (e.g. no/know; steal/steel). The children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are evidently more emotionally immature than the rest of the class. They act younger and get quickly frustrated. She makes literacy tasks fun, for example, in designing an anti-smoking poster. Listening and putting hands up, not shouting out, is very difficult for the emotionally immature kids. Sue has to remind a boy with behavioural difficulties that his shouting out is not fair to the others who are patiently waiting with their hands up. Part of the learning is to work cooperatively and collectively, to
be aware of the needs of others. That is why this boy is helped to learn to recognize the needs of others by being included but not being allowed to spoil or disrupt the learning of the others in the group. Sue says to him, ‘Well done. I didn’t even notice you sitting there this morning.’ He usually sits next to her but was sitting among the group today. He gets praise for not-attention-seeking, rather than a telling off when attention-seeking. A good example of positive reinforcement.

Sue is very inclusive in her literacy hour teaching. She ensures that there is real learning going on at different levels. She asks lots of different children. Getting them to put their hands up is useful. She can see if some are not participating and can help to include them. The task for the teacher is very difficult. It is a constant balancing act to meet the needs of individuals and the group. It is a common concern that including children with behavioural and learning difficulties will be destructive to the achievements of others. She sets very high academic standards. The class all have a draft book and a best book. They learn to plan their literacy tasks and then do them in best (very good practice for secondary school).

This ‘constant balancing act’ includes the merging of specialist and mainstream practices. If teachers consciously praise the positives and ignore the negatives, where possible, then this practice has

Figure 10  Playing group games in the lunch break, in the Early Years unit
implications for all learners, not just those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is a deliberate modelling of how positive reinforcement cultivates positive behaviour patterns. This is a school in which shouting at children and humiliating them is not common practice. Part of the inclusive values shared by the whole staff is that respect for individuals is acted out. This is not to say that destructive behaviour is accepted. It is made very clear to children why their behaviour is being confronted, as this example illustrates.

Example 3: Giving a rationale

A boy with behavioural difficulties throws a rubber to another boy which goes across the room and hits Sue on the arm. She responds very firmly. She stops all class activity, and asks, ‘Who threw that?’ She waits for him to say he threw it to another boy and asks him to come over to her. She explains why it is not appropriate behaviour. ‘It hit me on the arm and it hurt. If it had hit anyone on the head or in the eye, it could have really hurt them. Don’t ever do that again.’ He says he is sorry to her. It is a lesson to the class in why such behaviour is inappropriate.

The focus is on the behaviour and not the child. It is not ‘What else could we expect from you?’, which is a deficit model of a disruptive child and a demonization of individual children, but an explanation of why that kind of behaviour is anti-social. This is a feature of applied behavioural psychology which is adapted and effectively employed within the school. The use of strategies drawn from the specialist and mainstream sectors are part of a flexible approach to teaching and learning.

Although these methods are used effectively, there is no formal framework as in some mainstream schools where specific packages of programmes to promote good discipline in an assertive manner are taken on as a whole-school behaviour policy. This school seems to have developed its response to challenging behaviour in a gradual and organic way, such that it feels natural, comfortable and confident. The atmosphere in the school is calm and controlled. There is no feeling that children with emotional and behavioural problems are making the school unsafe or anarchic. The staff are in control. This is
achieved without shouting or draconian sanctions but with calm, thoughtful consistency of response.

**Carpet and circle times**

The two cornerstones of supporting inclusive education in this school are to respond to individual needs and to work through problems. This does not just apply to how teachers and LSAs work together as a collaborative team. It also relates to how children and staff work together to address problems and issues of mutual concern.

The use of ‘carpet time’ and ‘circle time’ for modelling empathy and for linking outside concerns and internal needs is an integral element of an inclusive ideology. It recognizes that all of us, children and adults, are more than the sum of our parts. Our educational needs cannot be neatly separated from our emotional needs and the awareness of this can avoid unnecessary discomfort or even distress. Peter says of ‘carpet time’ (when all the class sit close together on the carpet around the teacher):

It was built-in from ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) and was in Tower Hamlets schools when I came here from Liverpool in 1987. The quality of what goes on varies. Here, what goes on goes back to vision. When kids come in from play, they’re carrying so much with them about what’s going on in the playground and social groupings, fights, whatever. If you don’t work some of it through, have a place they can come back into, you’ll see there are some kids who are just not learning, they’re too full of what happened. At the beginning of the day, they can come in from home with emotional stress from domestic rows or having to rush to get to school. It’s a place to take stock, to tell the children what they are going to do that day and the order in which it will happen.

Circle work developed here organically, away from other initiatives. The use of carpet time has grown out of that. It is modelling a way of being. How else do you spread messages and have a shared vision? If you don’t address issues in a shared space, how do you grow? It is a nice, comforting space. We have plenaries on the carpet. It is about reflection and taking stock.

(interview, 16 June 2000)
Example I: Use of carpet time to manage learning

(field note, 21 January 2000)

‘John’s’ class of eight year olds. The Literacy Hour. The class sit close to John on the carpet. They play ‘change the consonant’. He begins with ‘pit’ and they have to make real words. They do ‘pit-hit-sit-lit-bit’. He uses the whiteboard very effectively to illustrate the sequence, ensuring that all the class are attending. The closeness of ‘carpet work’ helps teachers see who is learning and who is not learning and looks distracted or confused. John gives them work on ‘connectives’ and asks for what he calls ‘willing volunteers’. Some children put their hands up. An Asian girl and white boy hold up cards with two halves of a sentence and the class has to select a connective from the choice of ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘or’. The class voted for the one they felt worked best. The teaching style is not directive but encouraging, to ensure participation. It is a visually stimulating way of teaching punctuation to the whole class, which caters for a variety of learning styles. It uses the children to hold the sentences up and all the class are asked to respond. They are not told ‘this is right’ but are allowed to come towards it. They are given a section from a story with the use of ‘and’ throughout. The class are asked to change the ‘and’s’ as an oral, group task. It is helpful to all the learners because they can gain from the teacher and others. John gives clear instructions about the writing task. The LSA is very clear about what her small group is being asked to do. Three children with additional needs are on the same table with the LSA for the literacy hour tasks. The LSA works one-to-one with a girl who is very easily distracted. At the end of the task, the class share their sentences and the three best ones are selected. Although a wide range of learning styles are accommodated, there is a very high standard of expression.

Here, carpet time is used for teaching and learning, yet it also has implications for containing challenging behaviour. Where pedagogy is inflexible and didactic, it is likely that some learners will not
understand, will get lost and become frustrated or disaffected. Challenging behaviour is often a direct challenge to the constraints of pedagogy. John’s class reflects the overall approach at Harbinger. He mixes varied learning styles, so that children who learn best through visual and oral stimuli are not disadvantaged by an emphasis on written text. This is a level of responsiveness which is encouraged throughout the school. As the SENCO says:

We stress the need to look at each child and ask, ‘What are their learning patterns? How do they best learn?’ We use a whole range of learning strategies, as there are different learning styles. Text does dominate but that is not always the strength of a particular child. We try to come at things from different angles.
(interview, 7 January 2000)

Example 2: Circle time for acknowledgement and preparation

One morning I joined a group of five to six year olds, their teacher and LSA. One girl’s mother had just had a new baby, so the teacher gave her a doll to hold and encouraged her to talk about the baby. She then prepared the class for a visit from the local city farm, who were bringing some snakes in for the children to see and touch if they wanted to.

The space was used here to recognize the outside events in the lives of individual children and to help the group get ready for a new experience. There is a strong sense of the ‘wholeness’ of lived experiences and of the importance of communication with children to avoid anxiety, frustration and confusion where possible.

This overt emphasis on good communication is a real antidote to the kinds of difficult behaviours which can result from children not understanding what is expected from them or what is going to happen to them.
Example 3: Circle Time to develop strategies

One girl, ‘Jane, has been presenting some problem behaviours. The class teacher and specialist teacher get together in a circle time with the class to discuss and acknowledge the good choices Jane makes, followed by some bad choices she makes. They ask the class to support her in making good choices in the future. They write up a list of good choices together and they write some bad choices. They choose three good choices she is going to work on each week. They will use a chart to record when she makes good choices, marking them with little stickers. When she has made good choices five times, she receives a sticker to wear. They will encourage staff and children to compliment her on achieving a sticker. At the end of the week, if she has been generally successful, she will be rewarded with her favourite activity, painting in the ‘sky room’. Her teacher and the specialist teacher will negotiate a suitable time for her to spend 45–60 minutes in the sky room. If she makes a bad choice, staff are to speak to her once, then ignore her. They will write her name and ‘1’ on the board. If she refuses to comply, they will write ‘2’ on the board. If again, they will write ‘3’. On ‘3’, she will go to the SENCO, with work if possible, to have time out of class, work out what should happen and return when able to cope again. If a second bad choice is made, followed by three non-compliances, she will go to the head or deputy in her absence.

This procedure is typical of what might well occur in a special school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. In certain respects, Harbinger brings together the features of those strategies which work effectively in special schools with an inclusive ethos. This is a culture which is not afraid to move beyond boundaries. It makes use of what works well for the children it serves. As it takes several children who have been rejected from other mainstream schools as too difficult to teach, this means that it crosses the boundaries into specialist strategies. It is a school which uses experts but does not have an unhealthy dependence upon them.
Through processes like Circle Time, the whole school community works through problems to support troubled individuals but also to ensure that these individuals are not allowed to create an imbalance in agreed values.

**Supporting individual differences**

**Example 1: Using a specialist practice**

For a child with autism in Year 1, the teacher uses the timetable from TEACH (a specialist programme for autistic children) for the whole class, to show them what is going to happen in the day. This gives reassurance to the whole class, as well as to that individual child. One of his targets in his annual review was that he would do 50 per cent of what the rest of the class was doing, rather than the parallel curriculum which he was doing until recently. We also have an expert in specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) who withdraws individual children to work for short sessions but who also uses her expertise in supporting children at Key Stage 1, so they don’t fall through the net. She uses her skills with all the children, not just those with specific learning difficulties. Where specialist techniques are used, they are accessible to the whole class, even when they are very specialized (e.g. for a blind child).

Interview with SENCO, 7 January 2000)

There is a recognition of the value of specialist practices and the importance of inclusion for all. Rather than making useful strategies available only to statemented children, they are adapted and applied more broadly. Whatever aids successful learning is shared. This is an open, accessible policy which supports inclusive education and is of particular significance for managing challenging behaviours. Teachers develop a range of strategies, some adapted from specialist techniques, which help them to cope confidently with classroom management. The respect shown by teachers to children has created an atmosphere in which making choices is encouraged. Behaviour management is built around the notion of making good or bad choices,
with the inference of individual responsibility for action. There is not a culture of ‘Do as I say, or else’, but much more one of ‘Make your own choice’. This is the obverse of leniency as it gives responsibility to the child who then has to address the consequences of their choice. It also means that children with emotional and behavioural difficulties can make good choices which win them respect.

Example 2: Making choices

(field notes)

‘Tom’ asks to go to the adjoining computer room to do his writing. He is very easily distracted and asks to work on his own. It is the first time he has done this. The language support teacher is working with him there. He then asked for one other child to join him there. The teacher agreed to take this other child in too. A real listening to the views of the child and a respect for them.

Children are really listened to in Harbinger. I see this as a significant factor in their successful management of challenging behaviour. So often, it is communicating frustration and an inability to get heard which emerges as challenging behaviour. Where there is a listening culture, this is modified as efforts to understand what is being communicated increase. The role of the school counsellor is clearly central, to listen to children and to staff and to help them work through the stresses involved in coping with frustration and emotional pain.

As headteacher Mandy says, ‘Our system is very powerful and dangerous at times so it is important to have a counsellor.’ Listening and offering choices is potentially dangerous as it requires that the institution is continually responsive and receptive to change. It is a culture of compromise to accommodate differences.

Summary of main points

- Responding to difficult behaviours is a whole-school problem, not an individual problem.
- Staff work together to achieve a consistent, cohesive response.
• Any values which are not inclusive are challenged by staff who share a common vision of inclusive education.
• Behavioural psychology is adapted, where appropriate, to help reinforce positive behaviours.
• Classroom management strategies include the use of circle time and carpet time.
• Working to ensure the relevance of pedagogy helps to address challenging behaviours.

**Issues for debate**

When does a mainstream school become a special-mainstream school (and does this matter)?

Are there risks in getting a reputation for being good with children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties? Can it potentially tip the balance for the well-being of the overall school community?

What are the issues for secondary transfer? This is a key concern regarding many of the children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and autism.
Chapter 7

The effective use of support staff

Introduction

This chapter will examine the ways in which learning support assistants (LSAs) are used in the school. It will set the context by explaining how senior management (the head, SENCO, deputy head and Quality Assurance teacher) perceive their role and the way they are used in the school, before bringing in the perspectives of a sample of LSAs in the school. The key role of LSAs in supporting inclusive education is a controversial issue. They are recognized as being central to effective inclusion and their training is increasingly seen as important both for their professional development and for the school.

At the same time, there is often a degree of discomfort expressed nationally about the increasing use of non-teachers to support individual needs, with the inference that this can lead to an impaired quality of learning. The ways in which LSAs are used in schools differ considerably, even within the same borough or county.

For example, when talking to LSAs who all worked for the same county council, I learned that whilst some felt they worked really collaboratively with teachers, others felt they were ‘kept in the dark’ and used in a very limited way. Others were given too much responsibility, for example, being expected to write the IEP (Individual Education Programme) for a child as one of their tasks. This diversity of experience in one authority made me realize that the way in which LSAs are deployed is related to the particular school itself, as well as to the LEA and county policy.

The focus of this chapter, therefore, is to evaluate the extent to which the use of support staff reflects the school’s policy towards inclusive education.
Operating as a collaborative community

The headteacher, Mandy, says of the school:

One of the attractions of this school is that it is such a pleasant place to work. You don’t come here feeling, ‘Oh God, not another week’. It is very friendly. There is very little divisive behaviour in the staff. They are a very strong group. Maybe it is the type of people who come to work here. If they can cope with the kind of respect we expect them to show the children, obviously they then show it to others.

This is an important element of the effective use of support staff. They feel valued and respected in this collaborative community. There is not a strong sense of hierarchy and differential power relationships. The ethos is one of sharing skills and supporting one another. As Mandy says, not all potential staff would wish to work in such an ethos. Some teachers like hierarchies and some have deep prejudices which they would not wish to challenge. In a school like Harbinger, these attitudes would be consistently questioned in such a way that a teacher who was not prepared to change would not be comfortable.

Supporting LSAs

There has been a joint training programme in the needs of the Literacy and Numeracy Hour, with the neighbouring primary school during 1999–2000. Although the teachers really miss the LSAs when they are out of the classroom, they realize how valuable this training is.

Time to reflect and learn from experience is precious, as the SENCO recognizes:

The challenge is finding time to communicate, to let them know what you are wanting. The training on literacy and numeracy with the local primary school is useful for new and long-established LSAs. For those who’ve been here a long time, when they were first employed they were mixing paint and doing some chores, not working in teaching sessions. The challenge is to extend the expectations of the job, when pay structures do not reflect the new challenges of the job. ’ (my italics)
This is an ongoing dilemma. LSAs are increasingly seen as integral to successful inclusion. Theirs is no longer a peripheral, supporting role but a key teaching and learning collaboration.

New training courses, like the diploma offered at Mid-Kent College of Further and Higher Education, are designed both to increase knowledge and skills and to provide the steps towards gaining the qualifications which can lead to career development. Currently, there is an over-reliance on the job fitting well into women’s domestic lives rather than a national programme to provide the means to increase salary and status.

Using LSAs

The collaborative nature of Harbinger means that LSAs are used in an equitable way. This is most careful worked out. As Peter says:

I didn’t realize, until I came here, how unusually the budget is used here. Most primary schools have a budget where part of the budget is used for SEN. Very rarely does it get used for SEN. It can get absorbed into the general running of the school. Here, the way it is used is that nearly all the school’s disposable income is put into people—learning support assistants, primary helpers, not including LEA-funded LSAs.... This really helps if you’re trying to meet individual needs. Put your money into personnel; share those personnel out fairly: that is the only way forward. Nobody else does it like that. We joined the national Audit into SEN funding in primary and secondary schools. We were found to be the largest spending primary school on SEN in the whole country. You see that when you go into classrooms. There are lots of adults around.

This is a school where LSAs are seen as crucial to its effective operation, even before the LEA has allocated funding. They prioritize support systems and ensure that teachers feel that they are getting help to address individual needs. The SENCO describes the use of LSAs as a two-tier process:

Tier 1: We have LSAs attached to children through statements, each with a file with the statement, an annual review and IEP. They keep records on the children, with IEP targets in mind. Recording is based on learning intentions, how the child is coping and their next step, negotiated with the teacher. They are encouraged to share achievement with the children.
Tier 2: There are other children in the class at stages 3, 2 and 1 of the Code of Practice. They are allocated LSA support in relation to this: at stage 3, two and a half hours a week; at stage 2, half an hour; at stage 1, quarter of an hour. Then each teacher gets an allocation of LSA hours for their class, based on their needs. Teachers are responsible for ensuring the children then get their entitlement.

This emphasis on equity is closely linked to recognizing different individual needs and to collaboratively working things through. There is a recognition of staff needs too, as Peter says:

LSAs have individual needs too, interests they want to develop. So, for example, some of them have been especially trained in doing phonics and specific learning difficulties work. The great benefit of this is that you end up with really skilled personnel in your class. You can ask them to do this work with this group and they’ll feedback to you what you need, to monitor how children are progressing and to identify where they need extra input.

The combination of using the school budget for personnel and encouraging the development of skills and increased specialist knowledge has made this an exceptionally well resourced school. Peter recognizes this exceptionality when he does INSET across the LEA. As he says:
I did some INSET for SENCOs on IEP targets for Numeracy at stage 3 and I talked about what we do here and, for me, it was not a very big issue. You’ve got a stage 3 pupil. They’ve got two and a half hours of LSA time a week. If I’ve got 2 in one class, it adds up to five hours. In effect, I could have those children working in a small group for Numeracy in several sessions a week so they’re getting individual targeted support from a skilled person. There are statemented children not getting that much support. So, for me it supports my target rights but, for some SENCOs, they don’t have access to that kind of support. They were lucky if they had maybe one primary helper between three key stage 1 classes, for example. That is about the way this school uses its budget.

Within this scenario, LSAs at Harbinger can feel that they have the scope to really make a valuable contribution to what is happening in school for the children and teachers they support.

**The LSA perspective**

Taking a sample of LSAs, their experiences are discussed in relation to the following issues: examples of practice; involvement in IEPs; value of bilingual support; experiences of training; feelings about the job.

**Examples of practice**

It is generally getting to know the child, getting them to trust you, I suppose. Once you do get to know the child, you know their boundaries. You know what they can do and what they can’t do. If the teacher is setting a maths task, for example, nine times out of ten the teacher will set the task for that child as well. Generally, knowing the child, you’ll know what they can and can’t do in something like maths or English. I know a lot of them have to go out of the class if they can’t do the task in maths and English. You do work closely with the teacher and just get to know the teacher and the child. The teacher knows the child as well as you do, obviously helped by other teachers meeting. You get a set time to sit and talk or there is the staff meeting, and you can say, ‘He didn’t quite manage this’ or ‘He didn’t quite manage that’. That’s how you get round it. You set it to how they will understand, starting from basics upwards.
The children I work with, I try to get them involved with what the rest of the class are doing, the level of the other children, so they’re included in everything. They’re not sitting outside in a room on their own. It’s not always possible. In maths, for example, I’ll try to make a game of the times table. When they have problems with language, I’ll adapt it to their level…(in relation to a pupil with spina bifida) She gets twenty-five hours’ support a week. One LSA does seventeen and a half hours, another LSA does the Literacy Hour (five hours) and another LSA does two and a half hours of physical help with changing the catheter…It is good for her to have several LSAs she can trust and turn to. Sometimes it gets stressful and the LSA needs a break too.

To work in different classrooms is good. Everyone is so different. It’s good learning for us as well. For me, it’s good to have other people to turn to and to ask advice. It helps getting different points of view. I mainly do one-to-one work to support children. The teacher sets the work and I listen to the instructions. After that, I take the child away and I give that child extra support, adapting the work to the child’s learning abilities, adapting resources that the child can use. In the Early Years Unit, I do bilingual support to children, teaching literacy and numeracy in their first language. I take a group out at a time, break down the work into basic levels to their learning ability and then go from there. I work with two statemented children in the morning and with groups in the Early Years Unit in the afternoon. With the statemented children, one needs bilingual help and one needs prompting to do her work.

The value of bilingual support

Even though they don’t understand what’s going on in English, if you translate that, they can understand what’s going on in the class. Having someone there who can speak their language and report back to the teacher is helpful to them and their parents. I translate for the parents as well, in annual reviews and even in the office. Sometimes, when parents come in and they have problems, I’m called in to translate. I like it…Sylheti, a Bengali language, is what I speak. It is more or less the form which every single Bengali child in the school speaks. Most of the parents speak the way I speak. The people from Dakar speak another language. I’m from Sylhet and the parents speak my way.
Involvement in IEPs

I’m involved a lot. I’m involved when they’re written, so I can give my ideas. I try to follow them whenever possible. The teachers I work with usually give me a timetable so I always know what they are going to be doing. So that gives me time to plan and make resources. They support me all the way. I work with Margaret, the support teacher, as well and she sets me work for the week. So, I get lots of help.

The teacher sets the tasks. We get asked questions about what we think and do. This time, with the IEP, I did it with the child about what they liked, what they disliked and what they’re good at and not good at. She looked at what she’s good at and what she needed to get better at. Basically, we don’t write the IEP but the teacher knows the tasks we set. We go to the reviews with the parents.

We meet up on a termly basis. We go through every target set in the IEP to see if the child has met that target or needs time or extra help to overcome it. Then we set new targets if we need to. We attend annual reviews with the SENCO and teacher.

Experiences of training

I’ve been on two courses now. We’ve done Literacy and maths. In this job, you learn new things from the children. I’ve learned through talking to a specialist teacher and the nurse and physio who come in. They help by saying if I’m pushing her too far or if I can push her further. If you’ve got it, you’ve got it. It’s very helpful to go on training courses and meet other people. The LSAs in this school, we always talk if we’ve got a problem, ‘How can I tackle that? How do you think I should do that?’ We help each other and try different ways of dealing with things. When we do come across something we can’t deal with, there’s always someone who can help.

When I started here, I’d only had experience in youth work. From that, I came as a primary helper in the nursery. From that, I started as an LSA and then working my way up, with a statemented child and then another. I’ve gone on short courses, attending once
a week. I’ve also done a City and Guilds course, Support for Learning Services.

I’ve been gaining experience as time goes by. It changes with each new child coming in. I find myself learning more from a different child who needs a different type of support. You learn from them as well as teaching them. I’m extending my experiences and getting a wider insight into education and teaching.

**Feelings about the job**

It’s lovely. My children have been to this school. I’ve still got one here now. I knew the working of the school. As a parent, it was great, so I knew that working here would be just the same. As a parent, you were always kept in touch with everything that was going on. It was friendly. They include you. You are asked if you want to do any voluntary work. You could come in any time of day if you wanted to. As a parent, it made you feel safe. You’re not kept out of the classroom and kept away from your child. You’re asked in if you want. I knew working here would be a nice environment too.

I absolutely love it. The teachers are brilliant, the children are absolutely wonderful and it’s a brilliant school. When I was at college, I went into different schools. On courses, I’ve heard different things about how they treat LSAs. They treat us wonderfully here.
If I could stay here for ever and ever, I would. I just love it. The teachers tell the children to treat me the same way they treat them. I think that’s brilliant.

I’ve been here five years. I like working with children. I’ve a brother with Down’s syndrome, so I’ve been around disability. He’s twelve years old. He used to come to this school as well. He’s now at a special secondary school. I enjoy my job. You learn things from the children. You’re teaching them. It’s like vice versa. From that child, you can come to another and use some of the same techniques.

**Concluding reflections**

It is clear that LSAs are an integral part of the strategic planning whereby this school is able to respond to individual needs. Two particular issues emerged from the interview data: the difficulty of replicating this high level of support in mainstream secondary schools; the evidence for improved levels of achievement in children who were getting excellent support from teachers and LSAs.

The first issue is problematic as it is very frustrating if children are unable to go with their peers into the local secondary school just because the high level of individual support they have been receiving is no longer available. Of course, it is recognized that secondary schools have to contend with competing in the league tables and seeking out high achieving pupils to boost their ratings. This makes taking on a pupil with significant learning difficulties and, perhaps, difficult behaviours a huge challenge which it is hard for them to justify as cost-effective.

The second issue is a measure of quality assurance, which is a theme to be developed in the next chapter. How do we show that the LSA input is of value? One way, is to illustrate that some children move from stage 3 to stage 2 or even stage 1 through the LSA individual support they have received.

This demonstration of the value of effective inclusive education is important to collate, if it is to be seen as a measure of quality teaching and learning and not as anything specifically outside the mainstream. The role of the learning support assistant is particularly significant in the revised Code of Practice (DfEE 2000), in which more responsibility is placed on mainstream teachers to support learners who are experiencing difficulties in the classroom context.

They can only do this effectively with the help of skilled, well informed
learning support staff. As this case study example illustrates, learning support staff can feel valued and committed. However, this is not always the case and ensuring that they are suitably trained, monitored and remunerated for their services is a challenge within new initiatives in inclusive education.

**Summary of main points**

- The learning support assistants are working with the SENCO who maintains regular communication with them.
- Their services are shared in an equitable way among teaching staff, in relation to how many children they have in their class who are at different stages of the Code of Practice.
- They work with parents as well as with a range of children and are able to offer bilingual support where appropriate.

**Issues for debate**

It is important to have a consistency of approach to behavioural difficulties, with both the teachers and LSAs agreeing on what is appropriate.

It is valuable to share the teaching of statemented children between LSAs and teachers to give the child individual access to the teacher at times and to relieve the LSA from the stress which one-to-one support can give.

LSAs are now often well-informed and experienced and if they are treated as part of a collaborative team, the school will get best value from their services.
Chapter 8

Quality assurance and inclusive education

Introduction

If inclusive education is not just about the inclusion of disabled children in mainstream but involves all learners, then its effectiveness should surely be measured in terms of quality assurance. Supporting inclusive education as an ideal requires a demonstration of its contribution to measures of quality learning. It might be speculated that the last twenty years has seen shifting models of practice: in the 1980s, an assimilation and ‘goodwill’ model; in the 1990s, a disability rights model; in 2000, a quality assurance model. There is a residual resistance to the concept of quality assurance among educators, many of whom see it as antipathetic to the real issues of learning. Yet it does not have to be viewed as negative. The procedures of quality assurance measures can be laborious and tedious, leading many teachers to feel that they get drowned in unproductive paperwork. This side of it is destructive. Perhaps we need to stand back from the overwhelming detail of such accounting and try to evaluate its purpose.

Any legitimate form of quality assurance at the various stages from primary to higher education is there to assess the quality of the student experience. This is the key criterion: what do the consumers (learners) get for their (and the taxpayers’) money? It is important to focus on this. If quality assurance measures do influence the way institutions respond to individual needs, then they are there to challenge complacency and inertia. It is all too easy for institutions to stay within their habitual practices ‘because it is what we have always done’, disregarding changing consumer requirements. Inclusive education is about responding to individual needs in a problem-solving way. This approach is one which needs a listening institutional community. As any counsellor will confirm, actually hearing what people say is difficult. It requires empathy. For some schools, colleges
and universities, hearing what students really want means offering new resources, developing a broader curriculum and even abandoning some cherished practices which are no longer valued by learners. This can be painful and staff will need sensitive support from senior management to cope with uncomfortable changes. One of the key factors of inclusive education is this notion of a ‘listening institution’ which is receptive to change.

This chapter will evaluate inclusive education in relation to that quality assurance criteria of the student experience, value for money and a ‘listening institution’. In order to do this, the analysis will move sequentially from the macro to the micro contexts: making some international comparisons; examining the current developments of the British Code of Practice relating to ‘special educational needs’; looking at the LEA perspective in East London; focusing on the OFSTED report of the case study school.

As this is the penultimate chapter of the book, it is appropriate that it should set this individual case study of supporting inclusive education into a much wider, but still relevant, context. The final chapter is reflecting on the concept of a connective pedagogy, which has been a recurring theme throughout the book. A dominant feature of this connectedness is the communication of a wider context: in which ideas are exchanged in the global village networks; consultation is sought from educators on developing national legislation; local education authorities implement policy; individual schools are inspected and assessed for quality assurance.

Returning to the three features of looking through an inclusive lens, this analysis will be examining strategic planning, seeing how schools and other educational institutions have to look out to changing needs and in to their own resources and exploring the extent to which this requires new developments beyond the boundaries of the status quo.

**An international perspective**

My international examples have been selected specifically from the United States and Canada. This is for two main reasons: because these are countries in which inclusive education as a concept and a reality is more advanced than anywhere else in the world; and because they reflect individualistic as opposed to community value systems and, as such, are prime examples of quality assurance, value for money, consumer-driven societies.
An example from Canada shows the relationship between new technology and an increased cause of acquired disability among young people in North America and Canada. According to the Center for Disease Control, about 600,000 children sustain traumatic brain injuries in the US each year. Kinross (2000) gives the example of Brad, in high school in Ontario, Canada, who had an accident which left him with an acquired brain injury (ABI). She says that at Bloorview MacMillan Centre, Ontario’s largest rehabilitation facility for children with disabilities, they have developed the world’s first online course on the educational impact of brain injury called ABI: Integrating Students in the Classroom. She describes this development as it has evolved:

Video conferencing technology was recently placed in the classes of two Ontario students who are being reintegrated into their regular schools following acquired brain injury (ABI). The pilot project, developed by an ABI research team at Bloorview MacMillan centre, provides teachers with instant support from ABI education specialists at the rehabilitation facility, whenever they need it. ‘The idea is to be able to address problems as they arise, on the spot, without teachers having to wait three weeks for a meeting with us,’ explains Glenda Hymes. ‘The project also gives students contact with the rehabilitation team they’ve grown close to during their recovery.’ Glenda Hymes and Pamela Speed follow a caseload of 250 students who are returning to school throughout the Greater Toronto Area. Many of these students’ teachers have never worked with a child with ABI, and have little training in how to meet their unique educational needs. Yet because of the size of their caseload, Hymes and Speed cannot physically travel to each school on a timely basis. Computer-based video conferencing was seen as a way to provide immediate support.

(Kinross 2000:58)

The advantage of this process is that they can jointly problem-solve learning issues by transferring images and files. The disadvantage is that some students, whilst they might enjoy using the technology, resent having to use the separate resource rooms set up for the video conferencing as it sets them apart from other students. Teachers also find it challenging to seek this form of consultation and to learn how to use the new technology. These pioneers reflect that video conferencing has a future role in the regular classroom but it will require a complete change of classroom culture ‘from a classroom that is a cocoon to a
classroom that is wired to the world and has students and teachers who dare to step out of the classroom virtually and find out what is happening elsewhere' (ibid.). In a very real sense, this offers an example of a future connective pedagogy which brings access to relevant expertise directly into learning situations. It is interesting that this technology has developed in one of the richest countries in the world, where head injury due to car and motorbike accidents is a feature of affluent youth. These are young people who were in mainstream schooling and who suddenly find themselves acquiring a disabled identity. This pioneer development has arisen from that specific context, in which the sudden transformation accentuates the insistence on inclusion. Yet it may well have application beyond ABI. What it offers is an example of pedagogy which extends boundaries and brings new resources to the mainstream context. In so doing, it enriches the student experience and enhances the quality of their learning.

Improving the student experience also involves listening to parents. A mother of a teenage boy with learning disabilities who attends a junior high school in Alberta, Canada, says to teachers:

Please don’t be daunted by the need to adapt curriculum. We would be glad to sit down with teachers at the beginning of each term or unit of work and make suggestions. But the principle is, in our view, a simple one, however challenging the practice may be: our child should do math when other kids are doing math; he should engage in free reading when other kids are doing so; he should participate in group work to the best of his ability. Here’s a great opportunity for creativity and for thinking about what the curriculum really means.

(McWhir 1996:3)

If quality assurance is about trying to meet consumer needs, then it is clear that schools must listen carefully to parents as consumers of educational services. Many well-informed parents in different countries are now wanting inclusive education to be fully inclusive which means using withdrawal from the whole-class setting as infrequently as possible. This is challenging for teachers but, as this parent indicates, the school professionals are only part of an inclusive education team. Perhaps one of the key features of inclusive education, as distinct from mere integration, is that it centrally involves parents as consumers. It is a subtle but powerful shift of power. Because parents know and value their child for their many, diverse qualities beyond the narrowly
Quality assurance and inclusive education

This helps to develop the holistic approach to learning which is a characteristic of an inclusive ideology. As this same parent explains:

Please value our child’s achievements and tell us about them. You may learn to see as real achievements subtle gains you’ve never paid much attention to before—a perceptible improvement in social skills, an ability to focus on independent work for a longer period than in the previous term. Those are wonderful reasons to celebrate. (p.3)

Such an emphasis relates closely to the quality of student experience, in which personal growth beyond the testing criteria can be valued and recognized.

Amatangelo (2000) looks at the role of teachers in contributing to the successful development of more inclusive educational settings. The specific example is in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes in Texas, US. It is about the inclusion of children who would otherwise have been in self-contained, segregated classes in the Pre-School Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD).

This example is a positive model of strategic planning. Child development centres plan with the special education director, the campus principal, the PPCD teachers and speech therapists to develop an inclusive programme for three year old children with a very wide range of physical disabilities and learning difficulties.

They set specific, clear goals, as, for example:

The goals of the practice are: to fully include PPCD three year olds in an inclusive community setting with same age typically developing peers; to show gains in all developmental areas; to foster parental involvement in the educational process of their child; to foster public school and community partnerships; to provide opportunities for parents of children with disabilities to have quality child care options; to allow for a smooth transition from an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program to the public school setting and later into a Pre-K setting at their home campus.

(Amatangelo 2000:2)

In order to meet these goals, there are a clear sequence of processes occurring annually, including the following: screening; parental involvement in reviews; regular consultations with the whole team; staff development sessions; surveys distributed to parents in late Spring.
to evaluate the effectiveness of the inclusion project; a programme evaluation survey completed by the CDC directors and teachers involved in the programme. Roles and responsibilities of the PPCD and CDC staff are made explicit, with guidelines for everyone from the campus principal and special education director to the teachers, therapists and paraeducators (the British LSAs). An example of the detail of these guidelines is in those for the CDC (mainstream) teachers:

The CDC teachers are responsible for providing a safe and nurturing environment where the children feel successful. The environment should allow for the children to develop new skills at different rates, realizing that children require a variety of instructional strategies to develop new skills. The CDC teachers are invited to attend ARD (Annual/Review/Dismissal) meetings. They planned with the PPCD (specialist) teacher on a weekly basis to develop lesson plans and activities to meet the IEP objectives of the PPCD students and secure appropriate materials within the CDC site. The CDC teachers are invited to attend monthly staff developments provided by the school district.

(ibid., p.5)

This degree of strategic planning illustrates how inclusive education does not have to be in the ‘dump and hope’ category but can be as detailed and efficient as the most carefully regulated forms of quality control.

The results of this development are measured in terms of accountability: IEP records indicate that 71 per cent of the students mastered 50 per cent or more of their objectives; the parent survey showed 85 per cent of parents noting growth in communication, socialization and self-help skills; 100 per cent of program evaluations completed by CDC teachers indicated good rapport and working relationships were developed and that natural friendships had developed without regard to disability. This type of research analysis is useful to inclusive education proponents as it clearly illustrates how the process is manageable, assessable and good value for money. These are all key aspects of quality assurance alongside the value of the student experience. It also demonstrates the importance of openness to learning among mainstream teachers. In a programme like this one, they are being guided, supported and rewarded every step along the way. The strategic planning and collaborative, systematic structures create a secure framework in which they can learn new skills and ask for help when they need it.
The British context and the Code of Practice

A revised SEN Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Pupils with Special Educational Needs (DfEE 2000) has been sent to LEAs, headteachers and governors of schools and other interested parties in July 2000. This is to invite comments for the revision of the Code which has been in force since September 1994 and will be replaced by the new edition in September 2001. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) has also asked for comments on an attached guidance on good practice in decision-making. This has been based on research conducted by the Special Needs Research Centre at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. As this research was based on detailed case studies in a sample of ‘effective practice’ schools, it is this which will be the focus of my analysis as it relates most specifically to the issues raised in this case study of Harbinger School. Highlighting the student experience, this will be evaluated in relation to the SEN Code of Practice concepts of ‘School Action’ (the response of the class teacher working with the SENCO) and the ‘School Action Plus’ (the use of external support services).

The SEN Thresholds guidance is to help decision-making and to complement the SEN Code of Practice. The emphasis is on a ‘graduated response’ which means that ‘for the vast majority of pupils, it is the actions taken by their class teachers in ordinary settings that are key to helping them make progress and to raising achievement.’ (DfEE 2000:8) The focus is on an ‘inclusive curriculum’ in which a wide range of teaching strategies are used.

The two thresholds of School Action and School Action Plus are illuminated by the use of case study examples. There is a recognition that, at the higher threshold, it is likely that additional action may be required in the form of LSA time, specialist teacher input and individual tuition. These caveats are, however, made:

Forms of action which sometimes call for few resources are as effective as those which are more heavily-resourced; the most effective forms of action are often those which are taken in the ordinary classroom; the effective coordination of services and resources that are already available (including those from the voluntary sector) may be more effective than the pursuit of additional resourcing.

(DfEE 2000:11)
These caveats are valuable to use as measures of the student experience. Recognizing that different strategies and resources work for different individuals, this level of receptivity and flexibility is to be encouraged. The sequence of case study examples, each focusing on an individual learner, is most useful for thinking through the process of decision-making relating to action. It links with the balance of ‘meeting individual needs’ and ‘problem-solving’ which are the hallmarks of a successfully inclusive school like Harbinger. What I particularly like is the emphasis on the school’s action to meeting individual needs rather than on the deficits of the child. There are clear reasons given why specific attainment targets were not being met but there is also a rounded picture presented of the child which makes them more than just a ‘subject’. Where these ‘threshold’ examples will be particularly useful is in staff development where teachers can compare their responses and ‘special actions’ with those taken by the case study teams.

An example given of School Action Plus is that of a girl having problems in accessing the National Curriculum, literacy and maths in her primary school. This could clearly lead to a ‘dump and hope’ model of inclusion if not addressed. The school involved the LEA Learning Support Service (LSS) teacher, who drew up a programme to supplement on going curriculum differentiation and parental support. This is delivered by an LSA in two small-group sessions per week monitored by the LSS teacher. The LSA also works individually with the girl for short periods of time most days to reinforce teaching points in a setting where she can fully concentrate (e.g. sometimes out of the main classroom). This detailed approach to meeting individual needs is one demonstrated in the case study school, Harbinger. Where it is seen as necessary, children are withdrawn for one-to-one individual support to reinforce teaching points or to help with their specific difficulty (e.g. speech and language, dyslexia). Individual programmes to supplement the existing curriculum differentiation are in place. This School Action Plus approach is not contradictory within an inclusive school. It is about responding to evident needs. This requires a level of modification which may entail some one-to-one or small group withdrawal work. I find it interesting that Harbinger seems to be well established in its own version of School Action Plus as part of its overall strategy. Without such a comprehensive range of approaches, it could not possibly respond appropriately to the kinds of learners it so inclusively welcomes into its community.
LEA approaches in east London

Harbinger School is located in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which is next to the London Borough of Newham. These are both multi-cultural areas, with a challenging range of educational and social needs to be addressed. There are many children in their schools whose first language is not English and there are also some who have only recently arrived in Britain as refugees fleeing war zones in other parts of the world. Responding to diversity is an essential part of their quality assurance. Both are boroughs which have developed an impressive reputation for their policies and practices on multi-cultural education. I think that this heightened level of awareness helps to foster an effectively inclusive school. Where there is already a sensitivity to difference, it is more likely that a wide range of differences will be accepted. The very heterogeneity of such communities fosters an attitude which is fundamentally inclusive.

This extends to listening to girls’ voices in schools. In a recent research project, a team from Newham looked at how girls were identified as having EBD, at how they were supported and at what the girls understood of this process (Haddock and Cruddas 2000). Drawing from a DfEE funded research report on supporting children with EBD in mainstream schools (Daniels et al. 1999), they were looking at the five common features of good practice which had been identified: effective leadership; sharing values; a consistent and well-monitored behaviour policy; understanding EBD, teaching skills and a challenging curriculum. Using this as an evaluation framework (or, as I suggested, ‘viewing through an inclusive lens’), they interviewed students in small groups of not more than 12 and followed this with individual interviews of over 50 per cent of the girls from the groups. They found that there was often a sophisticated level of understanding of social inclusion. The girls identified emotional issues for both boys and girls as barriers to learning and participation. They understood that challenging behaviours came from unresolved emotional issues and they advocated ‘emotional work’ for all young people. The report made this recommendation for LEAs:

Within the context of inclusive education, the promotion of strategies and techniques to support emotional literacy that works towards removing barriers to learning and participation.

(Haddock and Cruddas 2000:39)
This places ‘emotional literacy’ as a measure of quality assurance in inclusive education. I think this analysis is very important, if we are to fully understand what assessing good quality inclusive education involves. It is about recognizing these two distinguishing characteristics of inclusive education which are that:

- Inclusive education is about responsiveness to difference, which includes ethnicity, gender, disability and sexuality—it is not just about special educational needs.
- An effectively inclusive school is one which values emotional literacy, as this is one of the ways in which the curriculum can be truly responsive to difference.

This is not to imply that good strategic planning is not a key feature of ensuring quality provision but that taking this imaginative and flexible approach to learning is integral to an inclusive ethos.

Tower Hamlets LEA was re-inspected by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) in January 2000, following a critical report in May 1998. The main findings of the re-inspection, published in June 2000, are that the LEA has been successful in improving its strategic planning, that it has high expectations of schools and is willing to take tough decisions. In relation to SEN, the report says:

Following extensive consultation, a new policy, Towards inclusive education in schools: policy and strategy’, was agreed.

This innovative document encapsulates the principles of inclusion identified in the DfEE Green Paper on special educational needs and sets a clear agenda for the future through its detailed action plan…. It has issued clear and comprehensive guidelines to schools on the effective use of resources for SEN.

(summary of OFSTED inspection 2000:3)

Where there is such attention taken to strategic planning for inclusive education at the LEA level, it inevitably supports individual schools, like Harbinger, which are engaged in developing their own action plans. It is surely easier to be an inclusive school if staff at that school know they are supported by an inclusive LEA. This may well be why a number of excellent examples of good practice in inclusive education are to be found in the London Boroughs of Newham and Tower Hamlets, both of which have LEAs which promote inclusive education.
Harbinger Primary School’s OFSTED report

Harbinger was inspected in November 1999. One of the key indicators of quality assurance is the academic performance of pupils after some time in the school in relation to their level of skill on entry to the school. Standards achieved by 11 year-olds in 1999, based on the National Curriculum tests, showed performance in English below average (D) compared with all schools but well above average (A) compared with similar schools. In maths, it was below average (D) compared with all schools but above average (A) compared with similar schools. In science, it was average (C) but well above average (A*) compared to similar schools. The standards achieved in relation to similar schools indicates a good quality measure of achievements and the report says that it is good value for money, in spite of the high unit cost.

If quality assurance is also about pleasing the consumers of services, then the views of parents need to be considered. The parents raised no negative concerns with the inspectors but praised the school for:

The way the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school and to express their views; the valuing of all cultures; children are treated equally and encouraged to do their best; the very good quality of the early years provision; the involvement of the school in the community. The inspectors agree with the parents’ positive comments.

(OFSTED Report 1999:10)

In discussing the characteristics of the school, the inspectors illustrate its inclusive nature:

Nearly 70 per cent of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals (well above average). Sixty per cent of the pupils in the school come from homes where English is not the first language (very high)... The school’s baseline testing shows that a significant proportion of the children start in the reception classes with well below average attainment. About one-third of the pupils have currently been identified with special needs and 11 of these have a Statement of Special Educational Needs and this is well above average.

(ibid., p.12)
This suggests that the school is catering for a far higher proportion of children with additional needs than many other primary schools in the London area. In relation to quality assurance, the implications are that resources have to be directed to meet individual needs and to foster an inclusive community. The report notes that there were no exclusions during the previous year, despite the high proportion of children with Statements.

The areas in which Harbinger was seen to be extremely successful were the following: the early years unit; very good support for pupils with little or no English; very good progress made by pupils with SEN because of high levels of support; positive attitudes to learning in the pupils; high expectations of behaviour and a very orderly environment conducive to learning. A particular note is made of the quality of relationships, which can be directly linked to the importance of ‘emotional literacy’ in a school community. The report says that ‘pupils develop as well-rounded and confident individuals’ (p.18) which is fostered by the use of circle time and the emphasis on showing respect for others.

Whilst the report is most positive about the way in which the school responds to its community, it is critical of the scant evidence of appropriate and challenging provision for potentially more able pupils in teachers’ lesson plans. This is an area now being addressed by the school but it is clearly a difficult issue. Where there is an imbalanced school population towards a high proportion of children with SEN, this means that fostering a challenging curriculum for more able pupils is inevitably put at risk. An ideally inclusive school (and, I suspect, few such exist) would have a balance which was truly inclusive of a range of diverse learners, without any one group being dominant.

Harbinger may be unusual in being particularly successful with children with learning and behavioural difficulties and, therefore, having responded to these needs, but it is not untypical of similar schools. These are often inner-city schools (or ‘downtown’ schools in the US) where the population is multi-cultural and where there are likely to be issues relating to poverty. It is these schools which may be said to be pioneers of inclusive education but they are often being asked to take on too much responsibility, whilst other suburban schools are often avoiding this degree of commitment. There is no easy answer to creating the right balance in inclusive schools, as it is an issue linked to neighbourhoods, parental choice and a competitive league-table educational market.
Summary: Quality assurance and inclusive education

If it is acknowledged that inclusive education is unevenly distributed and that some schools, like this case study example, are including a disproportionately high number of children with SEN, then their quality of delivery has to be assessed in relation to this anomaly. As the Canadian and North American examples illustrate, for schools to be successfully inclusive in the twenty-first century they have to make use of advanced technological resources, be receptive to new pedagogies and be able to work cooperatively and collaboratively with specialist services in a procedure which is accessible to parents. This process is linked to accountability and to meeting changing and evolving needs. The British Code of Practice demonstrates that inclusive education is now well established in the UK system and that there is sufficient good practice now established for others to emulate. The case study LEA and school show how a recognition of the significance of ‘emotional literacy, alongside strategic planning, can validate practices which are of direct benefit to emotionally vulnerable children as well as being of value to all learners. The quality assurance measures, which the OFSTED report used to compare the academic achievement of pupils at Harbinger to those of pupils at similar schools, illustrate good value for money in that the school is helping most of its children make better progress than might have been anticipated. As Peter Mittler reflected, in a lifetime of experience in the SEN field of research, one of the greatest barriers to learning is the low expectations set for children in the past. Schools like Harbinger can be seen to lead the way in showing us how high expectations can achieve unexpectedly positive results.

Summary of main points

- Inclusive education is influenced by new technology, making it a global issue in which good practice can be widely shared.
- There are government thresholds established to assess the quality of inclusive education in colleges and shortly to be in schools.
- LEAs in the UK are increasingly developing their policies on inclusive education within a programme of strategic target setting.
- The case study school is located in an LEA which is supportive of inclusive education and encourages such initiatives.
Issues for debate

A focus on the student experience makes quality assurance relevant to inclusive education.

An effectively inclusive school has to show respect for consumer needs and for good-value-for-money.

Norm-referenced measures are inappropriate in relation to schools which take disproportionately high numbers of children with special educational needs.

Progress in relation to similar schools, is the hallmark of successful inclusion.

Quality assurance relates to ‘fitness for purpose’ and, as such, recognizes difference and diversity.
Chapter 9

Conclusion: Looking ahead

Introduction

In the introductory section of this book, I suggested that SEN is now a public concern and that it is seen as the business of mainstream schools to address basic skills and to meet individual needs. I also indicated that meeting individual needs and responding flexibly to diverse learning styles requires a far broader interpretation of concepts of ‘learning difficulty’ and ‘need’ than that reflected in the old categorical images. Inclusive education is a vision of Utopia, perhaps, but it is also reliant on practical strategies if it is to succeed.

What I have tried to do in this book is to focus on pedagogy because this now seems so central to achieving effective and progressive inclusive learning. Through the use of a case study example, I explored how teachers and LSAs are coping in schools which are working at inclusion. I have examined the support structures and teaching strategies, alongside reflections on attitudes, ideals and aspirations. The practical and affective are complimentary facets, the latter fuelling commitment to the former.

In this conclusion, I shall address the following questions:

1. What special features of this case study makes it an example of effective inclusive learning?
2. How can this approach be extended beyond the primary school stage?
3. Does this case study research relate to current developments in education?
4. What does the term ‘a connective pedagogy’ mean?
5. Is a connective pedagogy a way forward?
Special features of the case study

I shall assess the quality of inclusive education reflected in the case study example by referring back to the criteria by which I said I would judge this provision: first, to ask if it is a school which responds to individual needs and also works problems through; and second, to ask if there are clear demonstrations of strategic planning, looking outside in and inside out and moving beyond boundaries. I shall highlight some ways in which the school meets these criteria.

Strategic planning

This is demonstrated in the way in which resource allocation is so carefully channelled to support effective inclusion, leading to a high staffing ration, effective sharing of specialist services, the additional services of a counsellor, regular staff training and making the support of individual needs into a priority for school funding.

Working problems through

The stable staff work cohesively, with a shared vision of what they are aiming for and with an emphasis on open and collaborative communication with one another, with pupils and, crucially, with parents. There is no blame for individual teachers who are unable to cope but a shared responsibility for problems as they arise.

Looking outside in and inside out

The staff are very open to learning new skills and many have become highly skilled in all kinds of specialisms. There is a culture of self-reflection, in which inner resources are explored in order to respond effectively to challenging behaviours. There is an awareness and sensitivity to cultural diversity and to the many different experiences which children bring in to school with them.

Responding to individual needs

There is a consistent approach to behaviour alongside a respect for others. It leads to a calm, controlled, happy and secure atmosphere. It is pro-active in supporting a caring and thoughtful way of working
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together through the modelling of positive reinforcement and consideration for others.

Moving beyond boundaries

There is an open responsiveness to community needs which takes staff out into local homes and brings parents and local people in to school. The celebration of achievements moves beyond the boundaries of the narrowly academic to include many other forms of success.

Extending this approach beyond the primary school stage

In Chapter 2, I showed how inclusive education could extend beyond the boundaries of schooling into higher education, training programmes and community housing and recreational provision. In each instance, strategic planning is required to focus resources where they are needed. Imagination and a genuine respect for individuals is also involved in making concepts like ‘empowerment’ become a reality and offer an improved quality of service provision.

Many sceptics suggest that the transfer from primary to secondary schooling tends to mark the end of effective inclusive education. This does not have to be the case. In an earlier research analysis, I looked at two secondary schools and showed how they were responsive to the diverse needs of their multi-cultural communities, had high expectations for their learners, encouraged pride in the school and its ethos, fostered staff development and were particularly focused on pedagogy:

In School A, there are many departments which have consistently produced their own teaching materials specifically designed to meet the needs of their intake. They have recently considered buying more course books and are beginning to balance the use of their own and published materials. They have always taught in mixed-ability groups but will be setting by ability in Year 8 science and mathematics from now onwards because of the difficulty of teaching children who are unable to read alongside others who have higher literacy skills. The teachers have been finding the new assessment targets frustrating as all their efforts can go into those pupils who are able to get through the SATs, leaving behind those that cannot. They are trying to concentrate on the Action
points, helping pupils to see what it is they need to do to achieve the next level.

As part of their approach to pedagogy, School B uses black mentors with the credibility to demonstrate that they have moved from a low base to high standing through a process of self-help, showing to the pupils that they can succeed despite disadvantage. The school has also appointed a senior teacher responsible for Community Development, who is working initially with parents. This appointment indicates the importance that both schools place on the role of the wider community in the overall learning experience. It is a pedagogy of community values and community pride.

(Corbett 1999:184–185)

That process of looking outside in and inside out and moving beyond boundaries can also take place in the secondary context, despite the increased restrictions imposed by external assessment criteria.

The relationship between this research and current educational priorities

During the last year, more and more LEAs in England, Wales and Scotland are in the process of establishing Inclusive Education Policies which involve a commitment to strategic planning. These include London boroughs like Haringey and Tower Hamlets, where the case study school is located. However, in order to extend the examples beyond the metropolitan South-East of England, I want to present illustrative developments from Merseyside in the north-west of England, and from Scotland.

The Borough of St Helens, Merseyside, has put out this ‘Inclusion Statement’:

Inclusive education involves the development of curriculum, teaching styles and school organization to enable children to be educated alongside each other in their community schools.

An ‘inclusive’ school will: welcome and celebrate the diverse differences of individuals; not discriminate or alienate a child; listen and respond to the needs of all children and their families.

The LEA will work in partnership to support the development of inclusive schools and will: establish a forum for listening to
children who have experienced exclusion or discrimination to inform future policy and practice; explore the most appropriate and effective teaching and learning styles which will engage all children and enable them to achieve; promote the development of a skilled workforce, free from prejudice, with the necessary skills to address the diverse and developing educational needs of the whole community; disseminate models of existing good inclusive practices; provide sufficient resources to support and ensure inclusive practice.

(St. Helen’s LEA statement 2000)

This borough has displayed its commitment to developing its Inclusive Education policy by creating four new posts of ‘Inclusive Education Officer’, in which experienced teachers are placed in strategic roles to guide and support colleagues throughout the region. This Inclusion Officer Team has a remit:

…to promote and celebrate existing inclusive practice across all educational settings and provide advice and support to staff, governors and where appropriate parents/carers and young people; to keep SENCOs and other staff up to date with key inclusion developments; to assist with the communication network between schools; and to provide training;

to monitor and evaluate the provision made for children with Special Educational Needs in line with the EEA’s statutory functions. (ibid.)

This process is not just an administrative procedure but is intensely practical in its objectives, which include monitoring and evaluating. This will involve the following practical steps: discussions with the class teacher, SENCO, headteacher and other staff; observation of the child in a variety of settings; discussions with the child; discussions with the parent/carer; examination of documentation.

There are schools like Harbinger Primary School in the Merseyside area, as I learned when I visited to contribute to a one-day conference on inclusive education held by the LEA. There are also similarly committed headteachers and school teams, working for a common goal of shared inclusive values. An additional incentive now is both the LEA’s strategic planning and a national policy to inspect schools and LEAs for their inclusive education practices.

An exciting new development in Scotland is the establishment of
new Community Schools which provide what they term an ‘integrated approach’:

New Community Schools will bring together in a single team professionals from a range of services. Improved coordination of existing services is not enough to achieve the fundamental improvement in children’s lives which the government is seeking. Integration of services is essential, and the school is an excellent site for this to become a reality. This will require radically new approaches. Such integrated approaches will enable action to be taken early to meet the needs of vulnerable children through swift identification of problems and immediate referral to support services. Through quick and focused intervention, the New Community School can dismantle barriers to learning and break into the cycle of underachievement. The school itself will be seen to play a wider role in the community and be valued even more highly by all the members of that community.’

(New Community Schools, The Scottish Office 2000:4)

This concept relates closely to the notion I put forward of an inclusive school being ‘beyond boundaries’. This exciting innovation in Scotland moves public sector services forward into a new way of working for the twenty-first century. In launching the government’s initiative to develop New Community Schools throughout Scotland, the following descriptors are presented:

- New Community Schools are central to the Government’s radical plan for modernizing Scottish schools and to its strategy to promote social inclusion.
- Through New Community Schools the Government intends to secure a step change in the attainment of children facing the destructive cycle of underachievement.
- Early and effective intervention to address barriers to children’s learning will ensure that every child has the fullest possible opportunity to maximize his or her potential.
- New Community Schools embody a new approach to identifying and meeting the needs of every child by organizing and focusing the services which support children and their families from their earliest years through their development and education.
- New Community Schools will work with parents and families to raise their expectations for their children and themselves.
and to stimulate their participation in their children’s learning and development.

(ibid., p.4)

What I find particularly significant in this initiative is that it is part of a wider vision to both raise educational achievements and to promote social inclusion. The pilot programme is to be concentrated in disadvantaged areas where children are at particular risk of social exclusion as well as facing barriers to learning. This conception is of ‘inclusion’ being something more than just about education. It is about society, the cohesion of services and political values.

Whilst my case study research is a small contribution to current debates in this area, it can be seen to take its place alongside large-scale LEA and national initiatives which all point the way to future developments. Pedagogy is political. Pedagogy is powerful. My focus on pedagogy is relevant to the thrust towards a social inclusion which recognizes the barriers inherent in many hierarchical systems like schooling.

A connective pedagogy

The examples of current, related initiatives illustrate how a connective approach to services, communities and institutional roles is crucial for radical change in systems. By using the term ‘a connective pedagogy’ I am wanting to open up our understanding of what we mean by ‘teaching approaches’. New technology has radically altered the possibilities, options and scope of how we can learn in the future. The role of teachers has to be flexible and responsive to these changes and their implications for classroom interactions. Students are now consumers of services and critical of much which is unimaginative and dull in teaching styles.

Connective pedagogy is that which draws from many sources according to suitability. It is student-led, not teacher-led. If there are valuable practices from the special sector, then use those in mainstream. If a mix of some one-to-one withdrawal work with small group and whole-class teaching works best for some learners, then do that. It is not narrowly prescriptive. Pedagogy is now increasingly about learning from the learner. What works best for them? How do they like to learn? The connectiveness extends to emotional literacy, to understanding the connections between our feelings, our reasoning and our motivation. It is about making learning fun. After all, in a
technological age, teachers are competing with so many other sources of stimulus. If all this seems simplistic, it is perhaps because there has for far too long been a mystique associated with ‘special education’ which has implied that it is something so very different from what good teachers do naturally in the mainstream school system. A connective pedagogy connects into the skills within imaginative teachers, encourages them to share these and to follow their instinct to try out whatever works best for that particular learner and their own learning style. It is a generous concept, with connection as sharing, supporting and encouraging. It is also a connectedness which recognizes that no teachers or support staff should feel isolated and alone in their teaching tasks but need to feel able to connect in to support systems which are flexible, non-judgmental and safe spaces in which to explore challenges and barriers without blame.
**A connective pedagogy as a way forward**

In their research on the disparate and often contradictory views of education professionals, Croll and Moses (2000) reflected that,

> A Utopian view of inclusion, the desire for ‘a better way of being’, is widely shared; many people contemplating the best sort of education system in the best sort of society would choose inclusive education in an inclusive society. However, they may desire this Utopian ideal without hoping for it. (p. 10)

I suggest that one way to shift this towards a genuine hope and expectation is to ground inclusive education in the bedrock of pedagogy. Like many areas of life, inclusive education can be viewed through a positive or a negative lens. With a positive lens, it is seen as something intrinsically good, about social justice and fairness, about recognizing the unique contribution of every individual learner and about the power of the human spirit. With a negative lens, it is seen as impractical, unrealistically Utopian and a form of misguided liberalism which can only lead to failure and frustration. I feel that confronting and embracing a connective pedagogy can help to get inclusive education more widely accepted as of value to all. It is about extending teaching skills beyond the narrowly conventional and, in so doing, helping more learners to take advantage of a mixture of teaching styles. Imaginative and responsive approaches can extend into local communities and into the mix of cultures within schools and colleges to celebrate diversity within the curriculum and to offer flexibility in assessment procedures. Primary educators have much to teach other sectors as theirs has always been a pedagogic emphasis whereas subject specialisms tend to dominate secondary and beyond.

It is absolutely appropriate that we should be focusing upon pedagogy at this stage in the development of inclusive education. It is over twenty years since the Warnock Report (DES 1978) coined the terms ‘special educational needs’ and ‘integration’. Both were progressive for their time and have, inevitably, gained rigidity with changing perceptions. Assessment of individual need and placement in the mainstream are not enough. If pedagogy is fixed and frozen, it excludes in its very obstinacy. Where it is open, connective to cultural factors and to emotional intelligence, responsive to growth and change, it is a fluid, living spur to learning. This is where advocates of inclusive education
Conclusion: Looking ahead

should be channelling their energies, resourcing and commitments. It is about inclusive learning which can empower individuals to become active and confident citizens, who do not begin their adult lives feeling marginalized and hostile to the dominant culture.

Summary of main points

- It is possible to find examples of inclusive secondary schools, which operate in a similar way to the case study primary school.
- Initiatives to promote and support inclusive education are becoming widespread.
- The concept of a ‘Community School’ which serves wide community needs and works by bringing health, social and education services together is highly inclusive.

Issues for debate

How long will it be before we stop using the term ‘inclusive education’ and start talking about ‘community schools’ and ‘community colleges’ as inclusive environments per se?

What can social service and health service personnel and practices contribute to inclusive schooling?
Why is ‘pedagogy’ a political and fluid concept, related to value systems?

Will other terms simply replace the term ‘inclusion’ and, if so, where will they derive from?
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