



**STILL JOINING  
FORCES?**

A follow-up study of links between  
ordinary and special schools

**Felicity Fletcher-Campbell**

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## **PART ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Following the implementation of the Education Act 1981, a large-scale study of support for ordinary schools in meeting special educational needs was undertaken at the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER); the research, which was carried out between 1983 and 1986, was sponsored by the then Department of Education and Science. Three aspects of support were singled out for scrutiny and became the main prongs of the study: Local Authority support services (Moses *et al.*, 1988); in-service training and professional development (Hegarty and Moses, 1988); and, particularly relevant to the present report, links between special schools and ordinary schools (Jowett *et al.*, 1988). For the purposes of the study, links were assumed to be any sharing of pupils, staff or material resources between special schools and ordinary schools; the sharing could be one-way or reciprocal, and involve one or all of the elements. The research on links comprised a questionnaire survey of all the special schools (298) in a quarter of the local education authorities (LEAs) in England and Wales (selected using random number tables) and a series of detailed case studies on nine well-established link schemes.

### **Developments in the late 1980s/early 1990s**

Since the NFER research was undertaken, there has been considerable change within the education system which has, implicitly and explicitly, affected special education. Not only has there been curriculum development on a national, and unprecedented, scale (by way, for example, of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) and then the national curriculum) but there has also been the reallocation of

management responsibilities and financial resources subsequent to the Education Reform Act and its ensuing circulars. LEAs are now limited as to the proportion of their total spending on education that they can retain centrally for services such as learning support and advisory work; a far greater degree of control regarding how LEA budgets are spent now lodges with schools. Furthermore, both ordinary and special schools are now able to opt out of LEA control and become grant maintained with responsibility for special education being, in some areas, shared between the LEA and the newly created Funding Agency for Schools (FAS). At the time of writing, it is unclear as to the impact that this may have on link arrangements. Another factor in the educational environment is that, now that they are funded mainly through numbers on roll, ordinary schools (and, possibly, some special schools) are in direct competition with each other for pupils and the parental vote.

Alongside these specific changes have gone, *inter alia*, LEAs' reviews of their provision for special education and their efforts to realise more fully the 1981 Act; a greater repertoire of experience of integration practice on which practitioners may draw; the need for ever closer scrutiny of efficient use of resources, given the context of financial stringency within local government; and increased parental awareness of educational options for children with special educational needs (culminating in the extension, in the Education Act 1993, of the right to school choice to parents of children with special needs).

Each of these has had an effect on the operation of special schools. On the one hand, the curricular developments have accentuated the idea that special schools are part of a continuum of provision: some TVEI consortia were helpful in bringing special and ordinary schools together in a task group, while the national curriculum has introduced a common language and framework for teaching for all schools. Pupils in special schools now have the same right to the breadth of curriculum offered in ordinary schools regardless of any discrete programmes to meet

their particular needs that may, additionally, be available in special schools. This has helped reduce the curricular isolation of special schools and mitigate perceptions that special schools are doing something remote from ordinary school life.

However, the delegation to ordinary schools of the greater proportion of their budgets (and the extension of this to special schools following circular 7/90 (DES 1990)) has meant not only that it is more difficult for LEAs to encourage a coherent response to link arrangements and to allocate specific funding accordingly but also that initiatives that were hitherto undertaken out of 'goodwill' or on an informal basis are now being more rigorously costed as, increasingly, they have to appear under a budget head. One effect may be that greater pressure on resources in ordinary schools may combine with greater pressure resulting from the implementation of the national curriculum to make ordinary schools more reluctant to put much effort into link schemes. On the other hand, a keener awareness of the complexity of differentiation needed if all pupils are to be meaningfully involved in the curriculum has made some ordinary schools increasingly aware of the value of the expertise resident within special schools. The necessity for ordinary schools to expand the pool of expertise and skill from which they can draw to meet needs has been underlined by the requirements of the *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (DFE, 1994) and by the extension to parents of children with special educational needs of the right to express a preference as to the school that their child attends.

A study of LEA support for special educational needs, undertaken shortly after the implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988 (Fletcher-Campbell with Hall, 1993) established that many of the patterns of provision identified by the earlier NFER project (Moses *et al*, 1988) were being maintained but that the recent legislation had had a considerable impact on the management of that provision. The study by Fletcher-Campbell with Hall did not investigate link arrangements in any depth



although the activities of special schools were reported. Thus, a decade after the start of the previous NFER project and the implementation of the Education Act 1981, it was decided to re-run the survey on link arrangements between special and ordinary schools in order to explore the way in which the situation had developed over the years and to investigate any effect of the administrative and curricular changes brought about by the Education Reform Act, 1988. The 1993 survey was sponsored by the NFER.

### **The 1993 survey**

A questionnaire, based on the previous survey for points of comparison, but including some additional questions relating to the current policy context, was sent to all special schools (maintained, non-maintained and independent), a total of 1525 schools, at the beginning of 1993. Written reminders were sent at the end of March, at the beginning of the Summer term and in May. Telephone contact was made with the remaining non-responding schools in July. Those schools on the original list which turned out to be hospital schools, or support services/centres with no pupils on roll, were eliminated from the survey.

A total of 898 schools returned questionnaires, representing a 60 per cent response rate (or slightly higher, given that some of the original sample were services rather than schools). The most common reason for refusal to participate was lack of time through pressure of work. A small number of schools (21) were facing imminent closure and thus felt response was inappropriate. Most of the questionnaires were completed by the head teacher; in a small number of cases the response came from teachers with specific responsibility for link arrangements.

As an additional follow-up exercise, the nine schools which had been the subject of case studies in the previous NFER project

were contacted by telephone in order to discover how their link schemes had changed in the intervening years.

Although the 1993 sample was different from the earlier sample (larger and administered to all LEAs in England and Wales) and the response rate was lower (60 per cent as opposed to 90 per cent in the 25 LEAs surveyed), it was possible to identify general trends and some of the concerns about link arrangements felt by staff in special schools.

## **Outline of the report**

This report does not make a case for links or enter into any discussion about their overall value, the way in which they are established or administered, or their implications for teachers and pupils. This has already been done in great detail in the report of the previous project (Jowett *et al.*, 1988) and readers unfamiliar with the background issues and context are referred to that study. It is also acknowledged that information collected by questionnaire often, characteristically, raises far more questions than it answers: for example, as some respondents to the survey pointed out, quantitative data give no indication of quality. Detailed research studies provide evidence that effective integration is not easy and that situations are invariably complex (Hegarty *et al.*, 1981; Bennett and Cass, 1989; Gilbert and Hart, 1990; Fletcher-Campbell *et al.*, 1992). No claims can be made about the efficacy of the interventions or their appropriateness for the pupils involved. However, although some respondents made it clear that they felt that there was no value in collaborative arrangements with ordinary schools or, at least, with those ordinary schools which were available to them, the vast majority spoke favourably of such arrangements, albeit drawing attention to the considerable investment of time involved and the practical pressures militating against prevalent goodwill.

It is also acknowledged that the perceptions of those actually involved in link arrangements – the teachers, assistants, parents and pupils – were not elicited. Thus the picture is, inevitably, partial. However, it helps to foster awareness that statistics about numbers of pupils on special school rolls may be misleading. The NFER data indicate that pupils, though officially in segregated provision, may, in reality, spend varying amounts of time in the special school. Quantitative data from a number of schools complement the many individual case studies of integration practice which can be found in the special education journals.

Part two presents background statistical data about the number and size of special schools and the principal need for which they provided. Part three describes the movement of teachers, classroom/welfare assistants and pupils going from special schools to ordinary schools, the amount of time involved and the activities engaged in. A similar description in part four is given of movement from ordinary schools to special schools. Resourcing issues are discussed in part five. Part six reports on other issues relating to link activity. Part seven gives a brief outline of the 1993 link arrangements in the case study schools of the earlier NFER survey, and part eight comments on the messages that emerge from the data.

## **PART TWO: THE SCHOOLS IN THE SAMPLE**

### **Status**

Most of the schools in the survey (813 – 91 per cent) were LEA maintained; there were 45 (five per cent) non-maintained schools and 40 (four per cent) independent schools. The status of the sample was thus almost identical to the distribution of special schools nationally where, of a total of 1549 special schools, 90 per cent are LEA maintained, five per cent are non-maintained and five per cent are independent (source: NFER Field Research Services' Register of Schools). At the time of the survey, no special school was grant maintained.

### **Principal needs**

Schools were asked to specify the principal special educational need for which they made provision: the majority of schools in the survey catered for pupils with learning difficulties; schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties were the next largest category. Table 1 shows the distribution. The position is similar to that of the previous study when schools for pupils with learning difficulties predominated (table 2).

**Table 1: Type of special schools which returned questionnaires : 1993 survey**

	%
Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	23
Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)	26
MLD & SLD	5
Specific Learning Difficulties	1
Sensory Impairment	3
Communication Difficulties (including Autism)	3
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	20
Physical Handicap (including epilepsy)	6
Other	3
No response	10
	100
	N = 898

**Table 2: Type of school in previous NFER sample**

	%
Moderate Learning Difficulties	34
Severe Learning Difficulties	36
Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties	17
Physical Handicap	8
Other	5
	100
	N = 268

Source: Jowett *et al.*, (1988), table 2.1

## Age range

The majority of the schools returning questionnaires had a wide age range; nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) were able to take pupils all through the years of statutory education (table 3).

**Table 3: Age range of special schools responding to questionnaire (order of frequency)**

	%
Nursery to 17+	30
KS*1 - end KS4	25
Nursery - end KS4	11
Nursery - end KS2	8
KS3 - end KS4	8
KS3 - 17+	5
KS1 - end KS2	3
Missing **	2
	100
	N = 898

\* KS = key stage of the National Curriculum

\*\* 16 schools only gave *either* minimum age *or* maximum age, so *range* could not be identified

As a result of this profile, any one special school is likely to have to establish links with ordinary schools in both the primary and the secondary sectors.

## Size

Schools were asked to give the number of actual pupils on roll as in January 1993 and also their designated roll. As will be seen from table 4, the samples were not equivalent, with different numbers of missing values (and these were not necessarily from the same cases) for the two totals. About three-quarters of the schools in the sample had up to a hundred pupils.

**Table 4: Numbers on roll of special schools returning questionnaires (as at January 1993)**

	designated %	actual %
1 - 50 pupils	25	34
51 - 100	41	42
101 - 150	19	16
151 - 200	4	3
200+	1	1
No response	10	4
	100	100
	N = 898	N = 898

A statement of size, showing a comparison between the actual and designated rolls of those schools which provided both figures (794 cases) is shown below (table 5). As will be seen, nearly half the schools in this sample had empty places while only seven per cent exceeded their notional roll by more than five per cent. It should, perhaps, be noted that with the advent of Local Management of Special Schools (LMSS), the size of the place element and the use to which units of resource for any unfilled places is put will, clearly, be of significance.

**Table 5: Actual size of special schools as percentage of designated size (as at January 1993)**

	%
up to 75%	16
over 75% to 95%	31
over 95% to 105%	34
over 105% to 125%	6
over 125%	1
Missing data*	12
	100
	N = 898

\*104 responding schools did not supply both sets of data

Respondents were also asked to give the number of pupils on roll in January 1989. Fewer were able to do this, in some cases the question being irrelevant as a new school had been formed out of a merger. Table 6 indicates that just over a quarter (28 per cent) of special schools in the sample had increased their size by over five per cent over the past three years while a similar proportion (26 per cent) had decreased in size.

**Table 6: Actual size of special schools as at January 1993 as percentage of size in January 1989**

	%
up to 75%	7
over 75% to 95%	19
over 95% to 105%	21
over 105% to 125%	18
over 125%	10
Missing data*	25
	100
	N = 898

\* A quarter of responding schools did not supply both sets of data

## Numbers of teachers and assistants

Information was requested about the number of full-time equivalent teachers and assistants at the schools in the sample (table 7).

It will be seen that in the schools in the sample, on average, teachers could expect classroom assistant support for under half the time; staff with nursery nurse (NNEB) qualifications were scarcer (median value was one NNEB per school) though it could be expected that NNEB staff were primarily engaged with the younger pupils.



**Table 7: Special schools' staffing establishment (full-time equivalent)**

	teachers %	classroom assistants %	NNEB %
0	0	17	35
1 - 5	9	40	44
Over 5 - 10	38	23	11
Over 10 - 15	32	10	4
Over 15 - 20	10	3	1
Over 20	5	2	0
No response	6	5	5
	100	100	100
	median =10	median=4	median=1
	N = 898		

## The links

Of the 898 schools returning questionnaires, 740 (83 per cent) reported that they had some type of link with mainstream establishments (table 8).

**Table 8: Special schools reporting links : 1993 survey**

	%
Links	83
No links	17
No response	0
	100
	N = 898

This is a small increase compared with the earlier NFER survey, when 73 per cent of the schools surveyed had links with ordinary schools, though it should be noted that a further ten per cent had plans for a link (table 9).

**Table 9: Special schools reporting links in previous NFER survey**

	%
Links	72
Plans for a link	10
Previous link now defunct	2
No links	15
	100
	N = 268

Source: Jowett *et al.*, (1988), table 2.2

The number of ordinary schools with which these 740 special schools were linked ranged from one to over 20 (table 10)

**Table 10: Number of ordinary schools with which special schools were linked**

	%
1 - 3	41
4 - 6	28
7 - 10	12
11-20	8
20+	5
No response	6
	100
	N = 740

The incidence of high values suggests various developments. First, that special schools are increasingly operating extensive support services: indeed, a number of questionnaire responses made reference to this and one identified links with up to 88 schools, despite the fact that discrete support services, organised by the LEA but based at the special school premises, were not included in the analysis. Second, the large number of links serve as a reminder, articulated by some respondents, that special schools often serve a wide geographical area. It is often

desirable that pupils are reintegrated into their local school, so that they can be part of their home community. This entails having link arrangements with a considerable number of ordinary schools throughout the area served by the special school – and, of course, there are implications in terms of teacher travelling time (see table 11). One respondent noted that, over the past year, 53,061 miles were travelled by 24 teachers and 44,830 miles by classroom assistants who were all members of staff at the school. Third, as has been pointed out above, all-through schools have to consider both primary and secondary sector links (and, of course, middle schools where there is a three-tiered structure). Fourth, the high numbers of links forged by some special schools can be accounted for by the fact that some special school placements are part-time – especially those for younger pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Part-time placements (for example, for two days a week), which were often the best provision for particular pupils, were considered to make savings by cutting down on travelling time, but to increase the degree of liaison required. Fifth, not all links were active at any one time, especially where special schools were engaged in consultative work with ordinary schools and where ordinary schools made bids to the special school for particular projects; passive links were, however, potentially open.

In conclusion, the high number of links in some cases highlight the continuum of educational provision and the way that, ideally, special and ordinary schools are complementary, using each other as and when appropriate. It might be the case that ordinary schools had links with more than one special school. The NFER research did not explore this but it is clear that it would be of considerable benefit to ordinary schools if they were able to draw on a range of expertise represented by the particular specialisms of different special schools.

**Table 11: Average weekly travelling time spent in link activities by special school staff**

	teachers	assistants
	%	%
up to 30 minutes	18	15
30 - 60 mins	17	10
1 - 2 hrs	13	10
2 - 4 hrs	11	7
over 4 hrs	8	3
no time taken	6	7
no response	27	48
	100	100
N = 740		

**PART THREE:  
MOVEMENT FROM  
SPECIAL SCHOOLS TO  
ORDINARY SCHOOLS**

**Pupils**

Of the 740 special schools with link arrangements, 631 (85 per cent) reported having pupils going to ordinary school at least once a week; this represented 70 per cent of the 898 schools participating in the survey. This statistic demonstrates that comments on the degree of segregation in LEAs do need to look at the practice behind mere numbers on roll. In the previous NFER research, only half of the special schools surveyed had pupils going to ordinary schools on a regular weekly basis. Tables 12 and 13 show the amount of time that primary and secondary age pupils spent in mainstream schools and the number of pupils involved at the respective schools in the 1993 survey.

**Table 12: Special schools with primary age pupils spending different amounts of time in ordinary schools**

	1 - 5 pupils	6 - 15	16 - 25	25+	median no. of pupils	total schools	no. of responses
up to 3 hours	139	97	27	15	5	278	353
over 3 - 5 hrs	105	22	1	1	2	129	502
over 5-10 hrs	87	7	1	2	2	97	534
over 10-15 hrs	56	2	0	0	1	58	575
over 15-20 hrs	29	3	0	0	1	32	599
over 20-25 hrs	11	3	0	0	1	14	617
over 25 hrs	30	3	2	1	1	36	595

**Table 13: Special schools with secondary age pupils spending different amounts of time in ordinary schools**

	1 - 5 pupils	6 - 15	16 - 25	25+	median no. of pupils	total schools	no. of responses
up to 3 hrs	109	70	23	13	5	215	416
over 3-5 hrs	95	40	6	2	3	143	488
over 5-10 hrs	78	16	3	0	2	97	534
over 10-15 hrs	42	5	0	0	2	47	584
over 15-20 hrs	18	1	1	0	1	20	611
over 20-25 hrs	12	7	0	0	1	19	612
over 25 hrs	56	14	2	1	2	73	558

It will be seen that the majority of pupils were involved for the shorter lengths of time. The median values suggest that most schools were making arrangements for a limited number of pupils. In most cases it would seem that pupils were selected and did not go automatically in a class group.

The areas of the curriculum for which pupils went to ordinary schools is of interest, particularly since the introduction of the national curriculum has brought about the broadening of the curriculum in many special schools. Information about this was supplied by 521 special schools. Table 14 suggests that those special school pupils who were going to ordinary schools were, *qua* group, participating in the whole range of the curriculum there, although individual programmes would, of course, vary.

The headteacher of one special school for example, said that the younger pupils could choose from a 'carousel' of activities such as poetry, maths, cookery, art and craft, which changed every half-term.

In addition, 193 schools (26 per cent of those with links) reported that they had pupils who went to ordinary school less than once a week. Only five per cent of schools in the 1983

sample reported that they had pupils going to ordinary schools on a less than weekly basis (Jowett *et al.*, 1988, table 2.11). Most of the 1993 respondents mentioned that the purpose of these visits was for social events, particular aspects of the curriculum (music, PE, projects), outdoor pursuits and trips. Only three cases of work experience were mentioned (this was in comparison with the large proportions of visits by mainstream pupils to special schools for work experience – especially those on ‘caring’ courses). This does not imply that pupils at special schools were not engaged in work experience: rather, that they did not go to ordinary schools for it. For example, a headteacher of a residential school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties commented that pupils assisted in day special schools for pupils with physical handicaps and severe learning difficulties.

**Table 14: Special school pupils’ activities in ordinary schools  
– all ages**

	No. of schools with pupils involved involved in subject	Median %. of pupils involved
Full curriculum	220	6
English	183	4
Maths	165	4
Science	156	6
Technology	204	6
Foreign Language	46	4
PE/dance	218	8
Drama	103	7
Art	190	5
Music	125	7
Topic work	206	6
Social activities	256	11

Figures based on data given by 521 special schools

## Teachers

In two-thirds of the special schools there were teachers going to ordinary schools at least once a week (table 15); the median value was two.

**Table 15: Special schools with teachers going to ordinary schools at least once a week**

	%
0 teachers	30
1-3	47
4-8	15
9+	5
no response	3
	100
	N = 740

A total of 1574 teachers were involved from these schools, nearly half of them for less than three hours a week. Only a fifth of these teachers spent more than half an average school week in mainstream (table 16).

**Table 16: Time spent in ordinary schools each week by visiting special school teachers**

	%
up to 3 hrs	48
over 3 hrs - 5 hrs	17
over 5 hrs - 15 hrs	15
over 15 hrs - 25 hrs	9
over 25 hrs	11
	100
	N = 1574

Figures based on data provided by 486 special schools



Clearly, the proportion of teachers from any one special school visiting mainstream is salient: Table 17 shows the time spent by the teachers by size of school. Size of school was known only for 457 of the 486 schools providing data about the hours spent in mainstream; these 457 schools accounted for 1492 of the 1574 teachers in table 16.

**Table 17: Special school teachers spending various amounts of time in ordinary schools – by size of special school as given by number of the teachers**

	schools with 1-6 teachers %	over 6 to 9 %	over 9 to 11 %	over 11 to 14 %	over 14 %	total teachers %	n
up to 3 hrs	16	16	20	21	27	100	710
over 3-5 hrs	14	14	18	19	35	100	256
over 5-15 hrs	20	8	10	22	40	100	227
over 15-25 hrs	7	2	10	18	63	100	128
over 25 hrs	4	13	8	21	54	100	171

Data based on 457 schools and 1492 teachers

It can be seen that the greater proportions of time were spent by the teachers in the larger schools; this may be a factor of greater flexibility in larger establishments. There was not, however, such a noticeable difference with the smaller amounts of time. There may, thus, have been a greater proportion of teachers having some mainstream contact in the smaller special schools than in the larger ones. The possible reasons for, and effects of, these findings would be worthy of investigation.

The most frequently identified activity in which special school teachers were engaged within the mainstream classroom was teaching – both special school pupils and mainstream pupils (table 18). It should, perhaps, be remembered that this would probably have had a tacit influence on the mainstream classroom and its teacher, even if respondents thought that they were ‘just’ teaching. Advising mainstream colleagues and identifying the

needs of mainstream pupils were discrete categories which respondents could tick; they were probably perceived as more formal/structured activities than the more informal exchanges flowing from teaching together.

Although details were not requested about the nature of any team-teaching that took place, comments made by respondents suggested that special school teachers largely joined mainstream colleagues in their classrooms; the very presence of two teachers within the one classroom would have had an effect on classroom management and teaching techniques. The 'other' category included 'supporting pupils' (apparently differentiated from 'teaching pupils' – which was a category offered on the questionnaire); INSET (again, this was, perhaps, interpreted as a more formal activity than 'advising' or 'consulting'); curriculum planning (perhaps interpreted as more systematic than 'working on curriculum materials'); case conferences; social events, productions, outdoor pursuits and trips; and home/school liaison.

**Table 18: Special schools reporting their teachers engaged in various activities in ordinary schools (in order of frequency task performed)**

	No. of teachers:		
	1-3 %	4+ %	0 %
Teaching special school pupils	55	17	28
Teaching mainstream pupils	51	17	32
Advising colleagues	45	13	42
Liaising about placements	48	10	42
Consulting mainstream colleagues	36	8	56
Working on curriculum materials	33	10	57
Identifying needs of mainstream pupils	25	9	66
Attending staff meetings	18	7	75
Other	22	6	72

Data based on 457 schools

## Classroom assistants

Classroom assistant time can be a critical factor in successful link arrangements. One headteacher, for example, commented that the school's planned extension of link arrangements had had to be curtailed specifically on account of cuts in the classroom assistant allocations. Pupils have to be escorted to other sites and it is unlikely that this can be done by a teacher if only a part of a class goes, unless staffing at the special school is sufficiently flexible or adequate that the remaining pupils can go into other classes, or the headteacher covers, for example.

Just over half (52 per cent) of the special schools with links reported that they had classroom assistants visiting ordinary schools at least once a week (table 19).

**Table 19: Special schools with classroom assistants going to mainstream classes at least once a week**

	%
0 assistants	41
1-3 assistants	38
4-8 assistants	12
9+ assistants	2
no response	7
	100
	N = 740

Figures about the hours spent by assistants in mainstream was provided by 384 special schools, representing a total of 1097 assistants. The situation was similar to that of the teachers: over half the assistants (58 per cent) spent less than three hours in the ordinary school and only 11 per cent spent more than half the school week there (table 20).

**Table 20: Special school classroom assistants spending various amounts of time in mainstream classes**

	%
up to 3 hrs	58
over 3 hrs - 5 hrs	16
over 5 hrs - 15 hrs	15
over 15 hrs	11
	100
	N = 1097

Figures based on data provided by 384 special schools

Table 21 shows time spent by size of school. As with the teachers, the longer periods of time were spent by assistants in the larger special schools, though the smaller amounts of time were more evenly distributed.

**Table 21: Special school classroom assistants spending various amounts of time in mainstream – by size of special school as given by number of teachers**

	schools with 1-6 teachers %	over 6 to 9 %	over 9 to 11 %	over 11 to 14 %	over 14 %	total assistants %	total assistants n
up to 3 hrs	20	18	21	20	21	100	601
over 3-5 hrs	15	19	22	22	22	100	162
over 5-15 hrs	16	16	12	20	36	100	161
over 15-25 hrs	3	11	8	17	61	100	36
over 25 hrs	2	19	19	33	27	100	85

The activities which the assistants engaged in when they visited mainstream are shown in table 22. Mostly, the duties were general ones; the assistants did not seem to be utilised in the more technical tasks such as adapting materials or setting up aids. Whether this was because these activities were not

appropriate, the assistants had not been trained to do them or teachers in ordinary schools were reluctant to use visiting assistants in this way is not known but would seem to be worth investigating in the light of general concerns about the lack of training for, and concomitant underuse of, classroom assistants in ordinary schools.

**Table 22: Special schools reporting their classroom assistants engaged in various activities in ordinary schools (In order of frequency)**

	No. of assistants:		
	1-3 %	4+ %	0 %
Accompanying pupils to mainstream schools	58	20	22
Assisting with combined groups of pupils	55	19	26
Supporting pupils' physical needs	37	16	47
Assisting special school pupils	39	5	56
Accompanying pupils on trips	21	6	73
Adapting materials	12	4	84
Setting up aids	9	2	89
Other	11	1	88

Data based on 377 special schools

Classroom assistants from 135 (18 per cent) special schools visited mainstream less than once a week. The tasks identified were mostly supporting and accompanying pupils in mainstream. Only in a handful of schools were assistants involved in social activities, outdoor pursuits or trips.

In the earlier NFER study, 83 assistants were going to mainstream from 45 (23 per cent) of the 197 special schools with link arrangements. Three-quarters of these were for less than three hours a week; 15 per cent for 3-5 hours and 4 per cent full-time. They mostly 'accompanied' pupils (Jowett *et al.*, 1988:9).

**PART FOUR:  
MOVEMENT FROM  
ORDINARY SCHOOLS TO  
SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

The movement of pupils and staff from special schools to ordinary schools is, of course, only one side of the equation. The issue is not just that of reintegrating pupils with special educational needs into ordinary classrooms, important though that is. If the special school is perceived as part of the continuum of educational provision and a resource centre with its own particular expertise, then it is logical to expect complementary movement from ordinary schools to special schools. A section of the NFER 1993 questionnaire considered such movement.

**Pupils**

Of the 740 special schools with links, a third (239) reported that pupils from ordinary schools came to them at least once a week. The predominance of low values for the numbers of mainstream pupils involved suggests that class groups were rarely involved (table 23).

**Table 23: Special schools with links reporting mainstream pupils visiting at least once a week**

	<i>%</i>
0 pupils	67
1-5	15
6-10	6
11-20	7
20+	5
	100
	N = 740

According to comments made by some of the special schools visited by mainstream pupils, the most common purpose for the visits was work experience – only applicable, of course, to older secondary pupils – followed by social events (including outdoor pursuits) and project work. Less regular visits were made to 193 special schools; the same reasons were given in the same ranking – work experience was identified by half the relevant schools. One head teacher did not welcome visits from mainstream pupils, considering that they could disrupt the special school's 'strong academic tradition'. There was negligible reference to pupils with special educational needs in ordinary schools visiting special schools for specialist support such as tuition in braille, or in literacy for pupils with hearing impairments.

The movement here seems to have remained much the same. In the earlier NFER survey, 81 (30 per cent) of the sample of special schools had mainstream pupils visiting them on a regular weekly basis, with a further 35 (13 per cent) less than weekly (Jowett *et al.*, 1988:20). The 1983 survey separated out reasons for visits by type of school; most of the visits were to gain access to specialist services, except in the case of schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties, where visits were made for work experience. The 'other activities' (such as social events and outdoor pursuits) identified by the 1993 respondents were not mentioned by their predecessors.

It is, perhaps, worth commenting here about the content of pupil movement. Some respondents made the point that their most successful joint work was when pupils from both schools met on common ground – for example, for special projects or outdoor pursuits – where there were common learning aims and pupils with special needs had the opportunity to excel over their peer from the ordinary school. The message given by such activities is, clearly, different from that emanating from an activity in which one group is engaged in a different way from the other – as in the case of pupils from ordinary schools going to special schools for work experience.

## Teachers

Fourteen per cent (110) of special schools with links reported that teachers from ordinary schools came in on a regular weekly basis. This was only a slight increase on the earlier figures when ten per cent of the schools in the sample had weekly visits from mainstream teachers (Jowett *et al.*, 1988, table 2.10).

In the majority of the cases in the 1993 survey, only one or two teachers were involved (table 24).

**Table 24: Special schools with links reporting mainstream teachers visiting at least once a week**

	%
0 teachers	78
1-2 teachers	12
3+ teachers	3
no response	7
	100
	N = 740

The 110 special schools concerned received a total of 186 mainstream teachers, 157 of whom spent less than three hours a week there. Only 29 (15 per cent) mainstream teachers were reported as spending over three hours a week in a special school (table 25).

**Table 25: Mainstream teachers spending various amounts of time each week in special schools**

	%
up to 3 hrs	85
over 3 hrs - 5 hrs	9
over 5 hrs - 10 hrs	4
over 10 hrs	2
	100
	N = 186

Figures based on 110 special schools reporting these visits



In the earlier study, this proportion was 29 per cent (Jowett *et al.*, 1988, table 2.10).

Information about what mainstream teachers did when they visited the special school was provided by most (106) of the schools concerned. The principal activities were teaching – both special school and mainstream pupils – and consulting special school colleagues (table 26).

**Table 26: Special schools reporting mainstream (m/s) teachers engaged in various activities in the special schools (in order of frequency)**

No. of m/s teachers:	1-3	4+	0
	%	%	%
Teaching special school pupils	52	5	43
Teaching mainstream pupils	38	2	60
Consulting special school colleagues	27	4	69
Liaising about placements	27	1	72
Working on curriculum materials	19	3	78
Attending meetings	18	2	80
Advising special school colleagues	18	1	81
Other	25	3	72

Data provided by 106 schools

The 'other' category included taking pupils to participate in outdoor pursuits, social activities, music and PE, and attending for INSET (the latter seemed to be distinguished from 'consulting special school colleagues' – a given category on the questionnaire). Just under half (46 per cent) of special schools surveyed in 1993 had visits from mainstream teachers on a less than weekly basis for observation, curriculum planning, INSET, case conferences, advice about teaching techniques and to investigate future links. Mainstream teachers or headteachers often accompanied prospective pupils with their parents on their initial visits to the special school.

In the earlier survey, just over half the weekly visits were to enable teachers in mainstream schools to benefit from the expertise and resources available at special schools; the other half were for direct work with pupils. A greater proportion of visits were made on a less than weekly basis and included liaison regarding placements, open days, behaviour management groups and workshops.

### **Classroom assistants**

Little would seem to be happening as regards mainstream classroom assistants visiting special schools: 81 per cent of special schools in the sample indicated that no visits were being made and a further 11 per cent of responses had missing data (table 27).

**Table 27: Special schools with links having mainstream classroom assistants visiting at least once a week**

	%
0 classroom assistants	81
1-3 classroom assistants	7
4+ classroom assistants	1
no response	11
	100
	N = 740

The survey identified a total of 89 mainstream classroom assistants involved in 58 special schools. Most came for specialist training (information technology, signing) or to accompany pupils for social events, outdoor pursuits or various productions. The majority were only involved for small amounts of time (table 28).

**Table 28: Mainstream classroom assistants visiting special schools at least once a week**

	%
up to 3 hrs	80
over 3-6 hrs	11
over 6 hrs	9
	100
	N = 89

Classroom assistants made visits less than once a week to 83 special schools, primarily for observation, in-service education and training (INSET) and advice about equipment.

In the earlier sample, only 12 schools (out of the sample of 268 – 4 per cent) had classroom assistants coming from ordinary schools. Most of the regular contact involved working with pupils alongside the classroom teacher. There was only one instance of an assistant making regular visits for ‘resources, advice and training’ although two special schools ran short training courses for newly appointed mainstream assistants (Jowett *et al.*, 1988:17).

## PART FIVE: THE FINANCING OF LINK ARRANGEMENTS

The questionnaire asked for information about the means by which link arrangements were financed – the *source* of funding had not, of course, been a critical issue in the previous survey in the mid-80s. The headteachers of 625 schools responded to the question, giving 876 responses (table 29)

**Table 29: Means by which link schemes were financed**

by mainstream school	120
by special school	439
by LEA	317
	876

Data based on 625 special schools

The number of responses indicated that there was joint funding. A few respondents gave details of this (for example, mainstream funded supply cover; the LEA provided the teachers and the special school the travel costs; the LEA provided costs of transporting pupils to and from ordinary schools; the LEA provided teacher travel costs – for visiting pupils in mainstream). Money from the Urban Fund was also mentioned in a few cases. A number of special schools indicated that curricular links were only possible via independent, 'self-help', fund-raising efforts. About a quarter of those responding indicated that the link arrangements operated on goodwill; as LMS became embedded, this could not continue and fears were expressed about the future of links. One headteacher observed:

*We are heavily dependent on the goodwill and resources of the mainstream school because the special school receives neither staffing nor funding to support pupils during reintegration into mainstream education.*

This was particularly critical in the light of the data about the source of schools' funding.

As the NFER survey was undertaken before a significant number of LEAs had drawn up plans for Local Management of Special Schools (LMSS) following circular 7/91 (DES 1991), it was not surprising that most of the schools in the sample had not experienced delegated budgets, although about a quarter of them had partially delegated budgets and about half were expecting a delegated budget in the future. Table 30 shows the position regarding delegation.

**Table 30: Position regarding delegation to special schools**

	1993 %	forthcoming %
fully delegated	7	54
partially delegated	25	14
managed by LEA	38	3
no response (inc. independent schools)	30	29
	100	100
	N = 898	N = 898

What would seem to be of concern was the fact that only 11 per cent of schools in the survey (102) were able to confirm that there was an element for link arrangements in their authority's LMSS scheme (table 31).

There was some uncertainty about the position, indicated not only by the 'don't know' category of responses but also by the missing data. The missing data here indicated either uncertainty or that the school was of independent or non-maintained status.

As only 9 per cent of schools in the sample were not LEA-maintained, it could be assumed that over half of the schools in the sample were unsure about their LMSS formula. However, of the (745) negative or uncertain responses, a quarter (185) said that an element was 'under consideration' as their authority's LMSS scheme had not been finalised.

**Table 31: Position regarding element in LMSS schemes for link arrangements**

	1993 %	forthcoming %
element for links	11	17
no element for links	29	19
don't know	19	34
no response	41	30
	100	100
	N = 898	N = 898

One respondent noted that '*lack of decisions and information about mainstream links is a cause for professional concern*'. Of those 153 schools which stated that their LEA had an element for links in its LMSS formula, 67 made comments about its inadequacy: these were, variously, that resourcing was 'planned but not delivered', was 'insufficient', and was subject to restrictions (for example, only for some special educational needs, for full-time not part-time placements, or only for college links). A respondent noted that in her LEA, four special schools were to be given lump sums to establish learning support centres – for resources and to provide INSET – but no funds were available to aid the integration of pupils on a practical level within the classroom. Fourteen respondents made a comment to the effect that equality of access was a principle on paper only and was not supported by adequate funding. One wrote:

*It is a cause for serious concern that the LEA has not devoted resources historically to mainstream linking, nor will it be included in the [delegated] budget for the school from April 1st, 1993. We have had great ambitions both for our outreach and integration work which have been severely restricted or indeed curtailed completely for lack of funding.*

## PART SIX: OTHER ISSUES

### Transfer of pupils from special school to ordinary school

Special schools were asked to give the number of pupils who had transferred to ordinary schools since September 1990. Table 32 gives the responses.

**Table 32: Special schools with links reporting pupils transferred to ordinary schools since September 1990 (as at Summer term 1993)**

	%
0 pupils	30
1-5 pupils	36
6-10	11
11-20	6
20+	3
no response	14
	100
	N = 740

If the missing data represent no transfer, then 44 per cent of schools had no pupils fully reintegrated into ordinary schools in the three years prior to the survey. This could indicate the appropriateness of the placement; for example, one headteacher observed that better identification of needs in mainstream meant that pupils came to special schools at a later age and tended to stay there, other strategies having already been attempted in the ordinary school. On the other hand, the data could indicate the absence of positive links and, thus, the lack of opportunity for



such integration; one headteacher commented that a special school placement 'should not become a life sentence'. Another wrote:

*Most pupils would now find it difficult to return to a post-ERA mainstream school ... Local schools are in keen competition. MLD pupils bring down the batting averages.*

Qualitative data from the questionnaires suggest that the transferred pupils may have been on the roll of special schools for a planned limited period only – that is, for short-term placements. About half the headteachers of schools with links (371) gave reasons for pupils' return to mainstream. The vast majority of these referred to completion of remedial work, improvement in medical conditions, changed needs or greater pupil confidence. A few considered that the original placement at the special school had been inappropriate. For example, the headteacher of a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties wrote:

*In the case of two of these [full transfer] pupils, they were originally assessed for a special school in other LEAs. It is doubtful that they would have been excluded to segregated provision if assessed in this LEA.*

Only nine headteachers mentioned the force of LEA integration policy, and 32 the fact that enhanced resources in mainstream meant that integration was facilitated. Parental demand for mainstream places was mentioned by 47 respondents. One headteacher commented that six pupils in one year had declined the opportunity to transfer to an ordinary high school, despite the availability of good support; they decided that it was 'too big'. The issue of student preference regarding placement is one that has been given little attention (though see Wade and Moore, 1993) but may assume greater importance in the light of the greater rights given to children under the terms of the Children Act 1989.

Headteachers of schools catering for pupils with severe learning difficulties pointed out that the next stage for their pupils was often placement at a school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties as an intermediate stage before an ordinary school placement. Such a response does, of course, raise questions about the nature of provision available in ordinary school and about perceptions of the appropriate placement for a pupil with severe learning difficulties; it is contingent rather than inevitable.

### Support in ordinary schools

The additional support available in the receiving ordinary school is an important factor: comments about this were made by 330 of the schools with links. Table 33 shows the nature of the 536 instances of support identified by these 330 schools.

**Table 33: Special schools reporting use of external support for their pupils in mainstream classes**

mainstream specialist teacher	174
mainstream classroom assistant	88
LEA advisory teacher	88
LEA provided support teacher	53
LEA provided classroom assistant	111
other	22
	536

Based on 536 responses from 330 special schools

As 410 schools ticked none of the option boxes, it might be assumed that many of these received no external assistance. Indeed, there were a number of comments to this effect. One special school headteacher remarked that additional support in mainstream was not desirable: pupils should be able to function

with the minimum support. This headteacher considered that full-time placement in mainstream, if it depended on adult supervision, was inappropriate and led to a high level of dependence; special school pupils needed a certain skill level in order 'to compete' (his words) with their able-bodied peers. However, the situation may not be a clear-cut one of 'being able to cope' or 'not being able to cope'. Change in need may be concomitant with change in contextual variables. For example, the deputy head of a special school wrote:

*There is at present a growing concern that children who have successfully integrated back into mainstream at 5-7 years are coming up against the problem of a widening gap in their ability and the ability of their classmates at junior school. It is more difficult to get resources (for teacher or ancillary support, IT) after a couple of years of 'successful' integration when this has not been necessary previously. Goodwill and confidence are thus being eroded.*

A number of respondents wrote comments to the effect that no extra assistance was available in mainstream and that special schools always took responsibility for their pupils in ordinary schools. This, clearly, has implications for the resourcing of links. If, as the survey data would suggest, pupils are going to mainstream classes in small numbers, the arrangements are particularly intensive in terms of teacher time, as the pupils remaining at the special school have to be taught while a teacher or assistant goes with their peer(s) to mainstream. It would appear that, at the moment, it is not common for mainstream schools to take full responsibility for pupils from special schools and they would not seem to perceive any obligation to provide support from within their own resources. This is understandable if mainstream schools are hardpressed for resources to support the pupils on *their* roll who have special educational needs but no statement. As a headteacher of a school for pupils with

emotional and behavioural difficulties remarked:

*The mainstream teaching staff have enough problems of their own without extra stress from us.*

Another headteacher commented that the mainstream support of pupils from special schools (especially those with emotional and behavioural difficulties) was better undertaken by special school teachers who knew them rather than by other staff, such as LEA peripatetic support teachers, who might not necessarily have established any previous relationship with the pupil(s).

Special schools did seem to be using the information technology resources in ordinary schools. Table 34 shows the use made by the 364 schools who responded to this question. One special school headteacher, however, commented that he only used the ordinary school for expertise: his school had ample equipment and was planning to build an IT centre.

**Table 34: Special schools using IT facilities in ordinary schools**

hardware	299
software	308
expertise	233
	840

Data based on 364 special schools

## **Other links**

Respondents were asked to identify other ways in which they had links with ordinary schools other than via one-way or reciprocal teacher and/or pupil movement. Table 35 shows other occasions for links.

**Table 35: Other opportunities for links between special and ordinary schools**

INSET	
– national curriculum & assessment	1218
INSET	
– SEN (including professional support groups)	818
Head teachers' associations	671
TVEI consortia	617
IT projects	208
Other	80
	3612

Based on 3612 responses made by 674 special schools

The 'other' category included festivals, Compacts, community education projects, mini-enterprise, local cluster groups and the use of facilities.

### **Changes in movement between special and ordinary schools**

Headteachers were asked to comment on the perceived change in movement between their schools and ordinary schools over the past four years. About a third reported an increase in movement both from the special school to the ordinary school and *vice versa*. On the basis of qualitative comments, some respondents may have interpreted increase in movement to special school as a greater number of referrals rather than a greater degree of collaborative activity. The responses are shown in table 36.

An increase in movement can, of course, indicate a greater degree of communication, while a decrease in movement suggests less communication.

**Table 36: Special schools' perceptions of changes in movement**

	from special to ordinary schools %	from ordinary to special schools %
Increase	37	34
Decrease	14	10
No change	41	47
No response	8	9
	100	100
	N = 898	N = 898

Clearly, reasons for change related to a particular response. Cross-tabulations were produced but the existence of nearly 100 response variables combined with the three degrees of change meant that cells were very small. Thus reasons for change were analysed according to whether they were perceived as positive or negative factors in facilitating links. The emergent categories were very similar to those resulting from the final question of the survey which asked respondents to list up to three of the most important factors in facilitating or securing links with ordinary schools, and three factors which were considered to inhibit link arrangements. Facilitators were identified by 677 schools, making a total of 1805 responses (tables 37 and 38); and inhibitors were identified by 716 schools, making a total of 1806 responses. There were up to 100 variables across the two questions, reflecting the tremendous range of concerns about different aspects (such as support, the curriculum); different needs (such as access for pupils with physical disabilities and the particular needs of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties); different personnel (governors, teachers, pupils,

parents); finance; and logistics (geographical proximity, inflexible timetables). This meant that individual cells were small and statistically insignificant. However, looking at the responses as a whole, definite positive and negative factors emerged. Taking only those cells which represented more than 10 per cent of cases, the following facilitators are identified in table 37.

**Table 37: Principal factors facilitating link arrangements**

	%
Positive staff attitudes	58
Good relations between special & ordinary schools	51
Positive LEA policy	18
Initiatives of individuals	15
Joint planning	11
	100
	N = 1805

Data based on responses from 677 special schools

Other facilitators were:

- good understanding of special needs in ordinary schools
- special school expertise available to ordinary school
- appropriate courses in ordinary school
- TVE facilities
- inter-school staff movement

On the same basis, the following inhibitors emerged (table 38):

**Table 38: Principal factors inhibiting link arrangements**

	%
Lack of LEA finance	38
Inadequate staffing	27
Lack of access	19
Negative staff attitudes	18
Lack of time	16
Absence of LEA policy	15
Pressures of national curriculum in ordinary school	14
	100
	N = 1806

Data based on responses from 716 special schools

Other inhibitors were:

- inflexible time-tables
- pressure of work in ordinary schools
- the 'stigma' associated with pupils with behavioural difficulties

It will be seen that some inhibitors, such as LEA policy and staff attitudes, are merely negative versions of the facilitators.



## PART SEVEN: THE CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

As mentioned previously, the research on links undertaken by the NFER in the mid-80s studied in depth the integration practice of a sample of special schools which had been selected to represent the range of link schemes in operation at the time. In 1993, telephone contact was made with each of these schools to ascertain whether they were still joining forces and their link schemes had survived or developed. For a full description of the activities of these schools in the mid-80s, readers are referred to chapter three of the earlier report (Jowett *et al.*, 1988). A brief summary of previous activity will be given followed by an outline of the position at the end of 1993. The schools appear in the same order, and using the same pseudonyms, as in the earlier NFER study. Interestingly, all those interviewed (except at Fyfield House) – mostly the headteacher but the integration teacher in one case and deputy head in another – had been at the schools in some capacity at the time of the mid-80s research so were able to talk with authority about the intervening years.

### *Powell's Orchard School*

In the mid-80s Powell's Orchard had 100 pupils with behavioural difficulties aged between two and 16. The majority of pupils had part-time places and were supported in mainstream places; in eight secondary schools, there were also external groups established for mainstream pupils with behavioural difficulties.

In 1993, the school had the same number on roll and was catering for the same age group and principal need. It had links with 83 ordinary schools and all 30 of its teachers were involved in ordinary schools by way of supporting the reintegration of Powell's Orchard pupils; special school pupils who were in ordinary school on a part-time basis; and mainstream pupils who were not on the special school roll.

Powell's Orchard teachers were involved in all the authority's secondary schools and were available to all its primary schools. Ordinary schools made bids for support and INSET and Powell's Orchard decided which to support. Clearly, not all 83 links were active at any one time but they were kept open. Forty-two pupils were partially integrated into ordinary schools and engaged in the full range of curriculum subjects there; since 1990, 29 pupils had transferred to the roll of an ordinary school.

In the primary phase, most of Powell's Orchard's involvement was in project work rather than supporting individual pupils, though the latter was done. In secondary schools, however, there was less project work and more individual counselling and in-class support. This was in response to secondary schools' increasing requests for one-to-one counselling following the contraction of the LEA's counselling team. It was observed that girls' emotional and behavioural difficulties, such as depression, eating disorders and self-mutilation, tended to emerge at puberty. The interventions were aimed at maintaining pupils within their ordinary schools.

Powell's Orchard was fortunate in having had a post of staff tutor with a remit of staff training. However, the two other special school staff tutor posts in the authority had been withdrawn and the position at Powell's Orchard was uncertain. The present post-holder saw the role as crucial. The school tried to appoint good classroom teachers for the primary classes and good subject specialists for the secondary classes, but these staff needed specific training to work not only with the pupils at Powell's Orchard but also for their support work with teachers and pupils in ordinary schools.

As regards the future, special education in the authority was in the process of reorganisation and it was proposed that the number of full-time places at Powell's Orchard be reduced. Any support work engaged in by Powell's Orchard would be on a buy-back basis: the LEA undertook to underwrite staff salaries for one year, after which they would have to be financially viable. There were considerable administrative issues which were only just beginning to emerge as arrangements were discussed (for example, if an ordinary school was 'buying in' a particular special school teacher and that teacher was off sick for a fortnight, what would happen to the funding?).

### ***Oakdale School***

In the mid-80s, Oakdale was designated for pupils with severe learning difficulties. It had 77 pupils on roll, aged between two and 16, of whom about fifty per cent had profound learning difficulties. About 35 pupils attended the main site; the remainder were in classes in nearby primary and secondary schools.

In 1993 Oakdale was unique within its LEA in that although it had 44 pupils age 2-16 with severe or profound learning difficulties on roll and had a governing body – thus being, technically, a school – it no longer had any buildings of its own and operated from special classrooms within mainstream schools. Although the pupils with profound handicaps had settled in well into the mainstream sites, they spent little time in mainstream classes – integration was mainly social. The headteacher considered that much more integration could be achieved with more staffing.

The roll had fallen on account of the greater integration into ordinary schools on a full-time basis of pupils who might, in other areas and other LEAs, be in special schools; and also as a result of the high price of housing in the area – there was very little inward movement of young families.

Oakdale was engaged in outreach to 18/20 schools, some of which were secondary schools – this represented a new development as Oakdale had previously focused on primary aged pupils 'to give them a good start at school'. The headteacher of Oakdale commented that the national curriculum had had a big influence on the way they could work in secondary schools: timetables were tighter and there was increasing pressure to achieve 'good results'. There was a general reluctance to withdraw pupils. The headteacher also observed that although special needs co-ordinators in ordinary schools were expert in helping pupils with literacy and numeracy difficulties, the Oakdale staff had greater experience with emotionally vulnerable pupils who needed personal and social education and confidence-boosting on a one-to-one basis.

Oakdale's headteacher was given cover for one day a week to enable her to provide INSET for special and ordinary teachers: there were an increasing number of calls for help from ordinary

schools. But she commented that, at present, the INSET provision was patchy and *ad hoc*: there was a lack of overall planning. The delegation of budgets to ordinary schools did not take account of this unevenness of provision and her perception was that it was still a case of articulate parents getting what they wanted. The headteacher expressed concern about the training situation generally, especially since the withdrawal of specialist initial teacher training for severe learning difficulties. There was a particular issue concerning classroom assistants as there had been a considerable change in recent years as to what they did within the ordinary classroom: increasingly they were being 'left to get on with it' by the ordinary classroom teachers. Thus, unless the assistants were confident in working with the child and his or her particular needs, the child was in danger of being further isolated within the ordinary classroom.

The headteacher considered that Oakdale had maintained the initiatives started in the mid-80s and made some progress but it was all still 'bolt-on' and would not progress substantially until there was adequate planning. She anticipated that LMS would bring difficulties. Oakdale was comparatively well-staffed (up to DFE guidelines) but when the total special schools budget was distributed according to a formula, its base classes would be 'understaffed' in that there would be more pupils per teacher than hitherto. The headteacher thought that, under greater pressure during the day in the classroom, teachers would feel less inclined to do liaison work, which was presently done out of goodwill anyway.

### ***The Priory School***

In the mid-80s, the Priory School catered for 56 primary pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It gradually introduced ordinary school placements, with the aim of full transfer to the ordinary school roll, and engaged in follow-up work with reintegrated pupils.

In 1993, with a slightly higher roll (65) and serving a similar age range, the Priory School had links with 24 schools. It still provided for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties but the severity of the cases had intensified so, technically, they could have done with enhanced staffing. The teacher interviewed said that pupils had to be carefully selected for

integration and represented the 'easier' cases who would not need so much support; were there more resources, pupils with a greater degree of behavioural difficulty could have been integrated.

When pupils were reintegrated, the ordinary school demands varied enormously, some asking for full support before accepting a child and others asking for none. Generally, schools with whom the Priory School had links were very good at 'having a go' – a measure of the trust built up. Ordinary schools knew that the Priory would remove a pupil if the situation became too difficult.

The integration teacher at the Priory pointed out that, once reintegrated, pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties were largely 'free-standing' in that they did not need the continual support that a pupil with physical disabilities, for example, would require. Although she did not like thinking in such terms, the successfully integrated pupils were 'cost-effective': many returned to ordinary schools and were then 'quite normal'. However, the Priory did continue to support pupils – 'you can't just abandon them'. For example, they were currently supporting two 16-year olds, which entailed visiting once a month 'to say hallo and see how they are getting on'. But this took time which meant money. The teacher considered that the LEA should be prepared to pay for all the consequences of integration if it really valued it.

As elsewhere, the future was uncertain as LMSS was to be introduced from April 1994. Some officers had wanted to delegate funding for integration to every special school regardless of established practice *in situ* but others had advocated basing allocations on current practice, with some money withheld so that schools that wished to develop or expand schemes would be able to bid for resources for particular projects.

### ***Standlake School***

In the mid-80s, Standlake was an all-age special school for 100 pupils with physical disabilities. It shared a site with a comprehensive school to which 20 of its pupils went for a variety of subjects, usually after having spent three years of secondary schooling at Standlake.

In 1993, catering for the same age range and principal need, and with a similar roll (110) and staffing (though the 14 classroom assistants had increased to 22), Standlake's integration arrangements had changed in that primary links were healthier than secondary ones.

For primary pupils, there were regular weekly 'day release links' run entirely on goodwill with no specific resourcing. The headteacher pointed out that this was made possible by the co-operation of pupils' mothers who helped with physical support and toileting: this did not necessarily constitute the ideal experience for the child 'who probably does not want mum around'. Standlake also arranged induction links prior to full integration. Links were chiefly with primary schools in the pupils' locality so that they could return to their home communities. Children were now transferring to ordinary school earlier from the nursery class. Primary schools had become much more receptive though pupils normally transferred to the roll of the ordinary school so that it would be able to get funding directly.

The situation regarding secondary schools had deteriorated. Although Standlake was using both secondary schools in the town (previously, only the one on-site had been used), far fewer pupils were involved in links. Thirty-three places had reduced to six and these were for the pupils who needed the least support and who were most able to look after themselves. Thus in the special school there were pupils 'with a good mind trapped in a severely handicapped body'. The perception of the headteacher of Standlake was that the sole cause of this decline in integration links was LMS and the way that resources were allocated. Ironically, on-site access was good (there had been conversions at both schools and the on-site school had had ramps, lifts and adapted toilets at the time of the previous research) and there was a considerable degree of experience in the ordinary school of teaching pupils with physical disabilities.

The headteacher commented on what he felt were unrecognised pressures on resources. First, providing integrated education for some pupils required more staff as the residue group still had to be taught. Second, 'things don't lock in neatly': a Standlake pupil might have to go to the ordinary school for one lesson and then return to the special school for the next. This was resource intensive. Standlake was relatively large: the headteacher did not know how small schools could cope.

Third, the special school base was taking pupils with more severe handicaps than those in the mid-80s but the staffing establishment had not been enhanced. Fourth, parental expectation for all aspects of provision had increased. For example, 'what counted as therapy six years ago would now be laughed at'. There were more demands on what resources were available. Fifth, the school had never been funded for integration work but, under the old system of LEA resourcing, money was 'found'; this was increasingly less possible.

It was the headteacher's perception that the national curriculum militated against pupils with physical disabilities. Concern to provide the national curriculum entailed a thinning of the staffing complement so it was more difficult to reinforce the curriculum as they had previously. For example, most of the physiotherapy now took place after school – in order not to disrupt the ordinary curriculum – so it became 'bolt-on' rather than integrated into the curriculum as an aspect of physical management. There was no longer the opportunity to give the personal attention necessary to reinforce ordinary lessons that pupils did in mainstream classes. Pupils who were intellectually able but had physical handicaps needed extra time; 'the race is now so hard that kids are tired of it all by the time they are 16 so access to the national curriculum is self-defeating'. The headteacher questioned whether it was the optimal situation for a boy with muscular dystrophy and a life expectancy of 21 to be spending about 80 per cent of his life doing what for other pupils would be only about 20 per cent of their lives. He was concerned that curricular choice, as part of a pupil's path through life, was now 'a thing of the past'.

### ***Larkshill School***

In the mid-80s, Larkshill was an all-age special school for 135 pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. It had links with one primary and two secondary schools and two teachers were involved with other area schools. A satellite class at the primary school aimed at full transfer of pupils there. Pupils attended one of the secondary schools for a pre-leaving course; the other secondary school accepted those Larkshill pupils ready to transfer at the age of 11.

In 1993, the headteacher of Larkshill said that he now had significantly poorer links with ordinary schools than he had had in the 1980s; he saw only 'a picture of gloom!'. About four or five years ago the LEA had decided to abandon the policy of pupils integrating full-time into ordinary schools while remaining on the roll of the special school, as this situation was considered incompatible with the authority's LMS scheme. The Larkshill links had depended on the special school teachers supporting their pupils in ordinary schools and needed the necessary staffing resources to allow this. 'Overnight', 45 pupils were no longer Larkshill's and transferred to the roll of ordinary schools; their support teachers also transferred to the ordinary school establishment.

The consequence of this new arrangement was that the special school no longer had control of integration and could not guarantee staff resources to support its pupils in ordinary schools: 'we have to kiss goodbye and hope for the best'. Because teachers from Larkshill were no longer working in ordinary schools they had no 'moles' and no way of exploring the quality of education available in ordinary schools for pupils with special educational needs. The headteacher observed that it was all very well for ordinary schools to have special needs policies but reading these was no substitute for actually seeing, and being involved in, practice. Pressure on ordinary schools meant that the special needs posts were vulnerable. For example, one of the ordinary schools with which Larkshill had previously had links and to which two of the Larkshill teachers had transferred on the advent of the new LEA policy, had cut both special education posts – the teachers had not been replaced when they left.

Pupils at the top of the moderate learning difficulties band were now being placed by the LEA straight into ordinary schools and the more severe cases were coming to Larkshill where, for reasons outlined above, it was now difficult to integrate them. Had the previous arrangements survived, the headteacher considered that Larkshill would have been integrating these more severe cases.

Larkshill was able to engage in some unofficial INSET but there was no staffing to do this on anything but a small scale.



### ***Elm Grange School***

Elm Grange catered for 135 primary age pupils with moderate learning difficulties and had links with one infant and three primary schools. Its support service included a resource centre on which ordinary school teachers could draw but chiefly focused on teaching primary age pupils in ordinary schools using packs of individually prepared structured learning materials for a variety of curriculum areas. Ordinary school pupils were withdrawn from their classes for short individual sessions with the Elm Grange teachers.

By 1993, the model of support for mainstream offered by Elm Grange had altered considerably. This was on account of various factors. First, the school population had changed: about 40 per cent of the pupils had moderate learning difficulties and about 15 per cent had severe learning difficulties (though at the 'top' end of the range) but the main increase was in pupils who had multiple and complex (not profound) difficulties such as sensory and physical difficulties compounding learning difficulties. A few pupils were autistic and a few had associated emotional and behavioural difficulties. Thus the materials which were prepared for use at Elm Grange were more diverse and specific to particular pupils and were not so obviously appropriate for use in ordinary schools. Furthermore, pupils arrived at Elm Grange later than they had previously: they had 'done time' in ordinary schools and were more likely to stay in special school.

The second factor was that Elm Grange had become a pupil support centre and designated as an area resource; this represented a rationalisation of services within the authority. Other support centres had been established in ordinary schools (a development from the units which had previously existed there). Initially, some of these other support centres had purchased Elm Grange materials but as experience and confidence grew, staff in ordinary schools developed their own – the head of Elm Grange thought that this was, in fact, a preferable position. Six Elm Grange teachers visited ordinary schools as part of the learning support centre service.

The third factor was that the authority had introduced a phased assessment procedure; this was similar to, but predated, the national Code of Practice (DFE, 1993). This meant that, whereas previously Elm Grange had focused on early

intervention and staff had spent time in reception classes identifying needs and negotiating strategies with ordinary teachers, the school, *qua* learning support centre, was now not involved until phase (stage) three, ordinary schools now being responsible for early intervention and identification. Whereas, previously, staff had been proactive in the area schools, they now waited until ordinary schools contacted them. In many cases, as the service was organised on a geographical basis, new links had to be forged and old ones abandoned 'because they were one side of the railway line'.

The headteacher commented that the new arrangements, although they had several advantages, meant that Elm Grange had lost control over its links with ordinary schools. Previously, he would have been able to decide not to work with an ordinary school if he felt that he could not negotiate what he considered to be the 'right' strategies (even if, in effect, this rarely happened). Now, however, as ordinary schools were the budget holders (there were service agreements) it was not possible to refuse. Practice in ordinary schools varied considerably; in some cases, INSET had been insufficient to facilitate the necessary expertise in special education.

There was still pupil movement between Elm Grange and ordinary schools and there were good relations among all the schools in the area as a result of a strong headteachers' group in which lots of ideas were shared. For example, one group went to the secondary school for technology, one group was working with a comprehensive school on the Youth Award scheme and another was working on this scheme with a special school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. However, there was no intention of transfer or full-time return; it was a matter of sharing the process of education. Part-time placements were increasingly difficult – only about one pupil a year was provided for in this way – as they were intensive in terms of teacher time.

The headteacher commented that the position whereby six of his staff were working in ordinary schools was a demanding one; it took time and energy which would otherwise be directed towards the Elm Grange pupils. Although the work was important for ordinary schools and, also, in terms of professional development, it was not straightforward and represented 'a balancing act'.

### ***Ashdown School***

In the mid-80s, Ashdown was a special school for pupils with physical disabilities. It shared a site with an 11-16 comprehensive where it was planned that there should be a unit to which all the secondary age pupils would eventually transfer. At the time, 25 of the 45 secondary aged pupils were being integrated.

By 1993, the plans had gone ahead as intended and the unit for pupils with physical disabilities had been established in the comprehensive school. In addition, physically handicapped units had opened at a primary and middle school in the area. Ashdown had become a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties, operating temporarily on the site of another special school with which it had amalgamated. There were some links with local schools and with schools in pupils' home areas but it was planned to forge these more positively once the school had moved to its permanent site.

### ***Fyfield House School***

In the mid-80s Fyfield House catered for secondary aged pupils with a hearing impairment. Twenty-eight pupils were spending a considerable amount of time in the nearby comprehensive school; ordinary and special school teachers worked as a team and shared responsibility for pupils.

Fyfield House ceased to be designated for hearing impaired pupils in 1990 as the roll was declining for two reasons. First, the existing pupils had been increasingly integrated into the ordinary school; second, Fyfield House had been a resource for neighbouring LEAs which had subsequently developed their own local provision. A couple of the former pupils with hearing impairments had stayed on into the sixth form of the local comprehensive school and used the residential facility of Fyfield House but, otherwise, the school changed to providing for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The previous links had not helped the new school develop links and the level of integration in 1993 was very low. The headteacher attributed this to a variety of causes. First, there was no tradition in the authority of integrating pupils with

emotional and behavioural difficulties. The headteacher compared the situation with that obtaining in the authority from which he had come, where up to 50 per cent of pupils in EBD special schools had been integrated – though he had heard that this proportion was decreasing as ordinary schools were becoming more reluctant to accept these pupils. Second, the level of difficulty of the pupils being placed at Fyfield House was higher. Third, they were arriving at Fyfield House at an older age, thus having a longer history of ‘failure’ in ordinary school behind them. Fourth, there was currently no additional staffing for integration – this was in contrast to the primary EBD school which had a unit with extra staffing to facilitate integration. Fyfield House could only send pupils to ordinary schools when their need for support was minimal: on account of their higher levels of difficulty and more advanced age, there were fewer potential candidates.

## **PART EIGHT: THE MESSAGES THAT EMERGE**

What were the principal messages emanating from the histories of the link arrangements? None of them is new: each was identified in the earlier, detailed NFER report on links. Their recurrence serves as a sharp reminder that integration is a process. Both maintenance and development need to be worked at. As these brief examples show, initiatives may wax and wane on account of internal or external changes.

First, the choice of placement of pupils with special educational needs (in both ordinary and special schools) has an impact on link arrangements. On the one hand, it is to be welcomed that pupils with less severe difficulties do not enter special schools at all and routinely go to ordinary schools. On the other hand, this may mean that special schools provide for pupils with more severe difficulties whose integration into ordinary schools needs greater effort which the ordinary school, now having a greater proportion of pupils with special educational needs on its roll, may not be inclined, or able, to make.

Second, the curricular environment of the ordinary school is a critical factor. Link arrangements are hampered by ordinary school timetables in which there is insufficient space or flexibility and where there is undue determination of specific outcomes. There would seem to be a danger that the national curriculum, which at its best gives all children access to a broad and balanced curriculum is, in some cases, having the opposite effect in that 'broad and balanced' is determined in relation to the 'ordinary' child and may be inappropriate and restrictive to the extra-ordinary child. Yet there seems to be a widespread reluctance

to 'disapply' as though this is depriving children of their so-called 'entitlement'.

Third, integration is costly. This is but to reiterate a well-worn point. It was evident that in many cases integration was not happening not because it was not possible but because, for some children, it was too costly. Money to fund teacher time had to be available; goodwill and technical facilities alone were insufficient. LMS was cited as having an adverse effect here. Clearly, no firm statement can be made without further evidence but the question does arise of the way that the effects of resourcing policies may be different according to whether the needs of the whole community or segments of it are being considered. Equity is a slippery concept: it may secure a grip in one area of provision but, concurrently, slither away from another.

More than for other areas of education, effective resource allocation for special educational needs is context-dependent. For example, the more extensive the links of any one special school, the more costly they are. Formulae need to take account of this. In particular, the calculation of the funding of special schools should take into account the actual activities in which they engage – as should the resourcing of special education in ordinary schools.

Fourth, link arrangements have substantial training implications: liaison teachers need management skills; teachers from ordinary schools need training in working with pupils with special educational needs which they may not have hitherto encountered; special school teachers need training in working with ordinary school pupils and classroom teachers; classroom assistants in both sectors need to acquire new skills as new demands are made of them. Training needs direct resourcing and time allowances.

## Conclusion

Ordinary and special schools are, indeed, still joining forces. More pupils, teachers, assistants and schools would seem to be involved in 1993 than they were in the mid-80s though interpretation needs to be cautious as samples were different. Caution must also be expressed over merely counting numbers. While the NFER data may help to show that pupils on the roll of a special school may not be restricted to experiencing all their education there, the numbers moving across must be interpreted in context. The effect of a few pupils or teachers moving between sites may be greater than a head count would imply. Just one special school pupil encounters perhaps 30 pupils in an ordinary class and may, thus, help to eliminate a considerable degree of prejudice and fear of the unknown and engender new approaches to teaching. Similarly, the informal interaction of teachers as they work with mixed groups of children in the classroom may be as valuable as more formal and conscious INSET.

The responses to the questionnaire expressed some concern for the future, largely on account of curricular and financial pressures. This is a pity for there is evidence that there are formidable 'forces' on either side which, complementing each other and collaborating, have the potency to cater for the educational needs of *all* children. If the forces are estranged, some needs are going to be unmet and some children are not going to have the optimal curricular experience. The curriculum is not something that is encapsulated in Statutory Orders and Programmes of Study, confined within key stages or evaluated solely by national testing or formal inspections. To restrict it thus is to ignore the social and environmental factors: the curriculum unfolds, and can only be made sense of, within a learning community. The challenge is to provide a range of communities within which pupils with special educational needs may best learn – and

'learn' in the widest sense embracing the different dimensions and strands of that which is to be learned. Strict lines of demarcation inhibit such provision and create structural barriers which result in some children only experiencing the second best. Multi-professional co-operation has long underpinned provision for children with special educational needs but co-operation *between* services is disempowered if there is not co-operation *within* services.

It is hoped that any further survey on links will unquestioningly assert: Still Joining Forces; or, perhaps even better, give evidence of an awareness that there is, in essence, only one force, which is deliberately but flexibly distributed in different environments in order to create optimal opportunities for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs.



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## Still Joining Forces?

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*Still Joining Forces?* presents data from a questionnaire survey undertaken by the NFER, investigating the extent of joint activity that is taking place between special and ordinary schools. It provides evidence about the movement of teachers, pupils and classroom assistants between the two types of school and outlines teachers' perceptions of the factors in the present educational context which facilitate or hinder such activity. The present position is compared with that described in a similar survey undertaken by the NFER in the mid-eighties. It should be of interest to all those who are concerned to enhance the opportunities for the integration of pupils with special educational needs.

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