

Including Pupils with Down's Syndrome

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS AND LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS
– SECONDARY –

A JOINT PUBLICATION BY THE DOWN'S SYNDROME ASSOCIATION
AND THE SCOTTISH DOWN'S SYNDROME ASSOCIATION



AIM OF THIS BOOKLET:

Many more pupils with Down's syndrome are now entering mainstream schools. This is the result of several factors. Pressure from parents with support from voluntary organisations led to the 1981 and 1993 Education Acts which encouraged LEAs to integrate pupils with special needs into mainstream schools if the parents so wished; more recently the 1997 Green Paper, Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs, with its push for inclusion, proposed that more pupils with SEN should attend mainstream schools.

Inevitably, many teachers will find the idea of including pupils with Down's syndrome into their classrooms daunting and will initially be apprehensive. However, experience shows that most teachers have the skills to understand these pupils' particular individual needs and are able to teach them effectively and sensitively.

This booklet is to inform teachers about the learning profile typical of pupils with Down's syndrome and good practice in their education, thus paving the way to successful inclusion. It also includes a number of quotations drawing on a specific case history of a pupil attending a mainstream secondary school.

WHY INCLUSION?

There are many reasons why a pupil with Down's syndrome should be given the opportunity to attend mainstream school. Increasing amounts of research have been published enhancing knowledge about the capabilities of children with Down's syndrome, and their potential to be successfully included, while parental awareness of the value and the benefits of inclusion has grown. Moreover, inclusion is non-discriminatory and brings both academic and social benefits.

ACADEMIC

- Research shows that pupils do better academically when working in inclusive settings.

SOCIAL

- Daily opportunities to mix with typically developing peers provide models for normal and age-appropriate behaviour.
- Pupils have opportunities to develop relationships with others from their local community.
- Attending mainstream school is a key step towards inclusion in the life of the community and society as a whole.

Successful inclusion is a key step towards preparing pupils with SEN to become full and contributing members of the community, and society as a whole benefits. Typically developing peers gain an understanding about disability, about tolerance and how to care for and support other pupils with special needs. As David Blunkett writes, in his Foreword to the 1997 Green Paper, "[where] all children are included as equal partners in the school community, the benefits are felt by all".

A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

However, successful inclusion does not happen automatically. Experience shows that one of the most important ingredients in successfully implementing inclusion for pupils with special needs is simply the will to make it succeed. The attitude of the whole school is therefore a significant factor: a positive attitude solves problems of itself. Schools need a clear and sensitive policy on inclusion and senior management teams which are committed to the policy and supportive towards the staff, helping them develop new skills within their classrooms.

SOME FACTS ABOUT DOWN'S SYNDROME

- Down's syndrome is the most common form of learning disability, - about 1 in every 1,000 live births a year.
- It is caused by the presence of an extra chromosome. Instead of the usual 46 chromosomes, a person with Down's syndrome has 47.
- All children with Down's syndrome will have some degree of learning difficulty ranging from mild to severe.
- Although Down's syndrome is genetic, environmental factors play an important part in development as with any pupil.
- Pupils with Down's syndrome vary as widely in their development and progress as typically developing pupils.
- Generally speaking, pupils with Down's syndrome develop more slowly than their peers, arriving at each stage of development at a later age and staying there for longer. The developmental gap between pupils with Down's syndrome and their peers widens with age.

A SPECIFIC LEARNING PROFILE NOT JUST DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY

Pupils with Down's syndrome are not just generally delayed in their development and therefore merely in need of a diluted curriculum. They have a specific learning profile with characteristic strengths and weaknesses. Being aware of the factors that facilitate and inhibit learning will allow teachers to plan and implement meaningful and relevant activities and programmes of work. The characteristic learning profile and learning styles of the pupil with Down's syndrome, together with individual needs and variations within that profile, must therefore be considered.

The following factors are typical of many pupils with Down's syndrome. Some have physical implications; others have cognitive ones. Many have both.

FACTORS THAT FACILITATE LEARNING

Strong visual awareness and visual learning skills including:

- Ability to learn and use sign, gesture and visual support.
- Ability to learn and use the written word.
- Modelling behaviour and attitudes on peers and adults.
- Learning from practical curriculum material and hands-on activities.

FACTORS THAT INHIBIT LEARNING

- Delayed motor skills - fine and gross.
- Auditory and visual impairment.

- Speech and language impairment.
- Short-term auditory memory deficit.
- Shorter concentration span.
- Difficulties with consolidation and retention.
- Difficulties with generalisation, thinking and reasoning.
- Sequencing difficulties.
- Avoidance strategies.

A brief account of each of these inhibiting factors follows, with some strategies to address them which make use of the pupils' likely strengths and weaknesses in order to build a successful teaching programme. Many of these strategies will be recognisable as basic good teaching practice and so will be equally suitable for other pupils in the school.

Visual impairment

Although pupils with Down's syndrome tend to be very good visual learners and are able to use this strength to access the curriculum, many have some sort of visual impairment: 60-70% being prescribed glasses before the age of seven and it is important to allow for any specific visual impairment they may have.

STRATEGIES:

- *Place pupil near front of class.*
- *Use larger type.*
- *Use simple and clear presentation.*

Hearing impairment

Many children with Down's syndrome experience some hearing loss, especially in the early years. Up to 20% may have a sensorineural loss, caused by developmental defects in the ear and auditory nerves. Over 50% are likely to suffer from a conductive hearing loss due to glue ear caused by frequent upper respiratory tract infections which often occur as a result of smaller sinuses and ear canals. It is particularly important to check pupils' hearing, as this will affect their speech and language.

Clarity in hearing can also fluctuate daily and it is important to ascertain that inconsistencies in response are due to hearing loss rather than lack of understanding or poor attitude.

STRATEGIES:

- *Place pupil near front of class.*
- *Speak directly to the pupil.*
- *Reinforce speech with facial expression, sign or gesture.*
- *Reinforce speech with visual backup - print, pictures, concrete materials.*
- *Write new vocabulary on the board.*
- *When other pupils answer, repeat their answers aloud.*
- *Rephrase or repeat words and phrases that may have been misheard.*

Fine and gross motor skills

Many children with Down's syndrome have poor muscle tone and loose joints, (hypotonia), affecting their motor co-ordination. Pupils may have more difficulty participating in team games and small group or partner activities with set objectives may need to be provided. In the classroom, the ability and speed at which pupils with Down's syndrome can write can be particularly affected. (See section on Writing Skills).

Speech and language difficulties

Pupils with Down's syndrome typically have a speech and language impairment and should be seen regularly by a Speech and Language Therapist who can suggest individualized activities to promote their speech and language development.

The language delay is caused by a combination of factors, some of which are physical and some due more to perceptual and cognitive problems. Any delay in learning to understand and use language is likely to lead to cognitive delay. The level of knowledge and understanding and thus the ability to access the curriculum will inevitably be affected. Receptive skills are greater than expressive skills. This means that pupils with Down's syndrome understand language better than they are able to speak it. As a result, their cognitive skills are often underestimated.

COMMON FEATURES OF DELAY IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:

- Smaller vocabulary leading to less general knowledge.
- Difficulty learning the rules of grammar (leaving out connecting words, prepositions etc) resulting in a telegraphic style of speech.
- Ability to learn new vocabulary more easily than the rules of grammar.
- Greater problems in learning and managing social language.
- Greater problems in understanding specific language of the curriculum.
- Difficulty in understanding instructions.

In addition, the combination of having a smaller mouth cavity and weaker mouth and tongue muscles makes it harder to physically form words; and the longer the sentence, the greater the articulation problems become.

Speech and language problems for these pupils often mean that they actually receive fewer opportunities to engage in language and conversation. It is more difficult for them to ask for information or help. Adults tend to ask closed questions or finish a sentence off for the child without giving them much needed time or help to do it themselves.

This results in the pupil getting:

- Less language experience to enable them to learn new words and sentence structures
- Less practice to improve their clarity of speech.

STRATEGIES:

- *Give time to process language and respond.*
- *Listen carefully - your ear will adjust.*
- *Ensure face to face and direct eye contact.*
- *Use simple and familiar language and short concise sentences.*
- *Check understanding - ask pupil to repeat back instructions.*
- *Avoid ambiguous vocabulary.*
- *Reinforce speech with facial expression, gesture and sign.*
- *Teach reading and use the printed word to help with speech and language.*
- *Reinforce spoken instructions with print, pictures, diagrams, symbols, and concrete materials.*
- *Emphasize key words, reinforcing visually.*
- *Teach grammar through print - flash cards, games, pictures of prepositions, symbols etc.*
- *Avoid closed questions and encourage the pupil to speak in more than one-word utterances.*
- *Encourage pupil to speak aloud in class by providing visual prompts. Allowing the pupil to read information may be easier for them than speaking spontaneously.*
- *The use of a Home-School Diary can help pupils in their communications with members of staff.*
- *Develop language through drama and role-play.*
- *Encourage the pupil to lead.*

Poor auditory short-term memory and auditory processing skills

Other speech and language problems in children with Down's syndrome stem from difficulties with their auditory short-term memory and processing skills. The auditory short-term memory is the memory store used to hold, process, understand and assimilate spoken language long enough to respond to it. Any deficit in short-term auditory memory will greatly affect pupils' ability to respond to the spoken word or learn from any situation entirely reliant on their auditory skills. In addition, they will find it more difficult to follow and remember verbal instructions.

STRATEGIES:

- *Limit amount of verbal instructions at any one time.*
- *Allow time for pupil to process and respond to verbal input.*
- *Repeat individually to pupil any information/ instructions given to class as a whole.*
- *Plan for visual translation and/or alternative activity.*

Remember: children with Down's syndrome are strong visual but poor auditory learners. Wherever possible, they need visual support and concrete and practical materials to reinforce auditory input.

Writing skills

Producing any form of written work is a highly complex task. Difficulties in short term auditory memory, speech and language, fine motor skills and the organising and sequencing of information make a considerable impact on the acquisition and development of writing skills for many pupils with Down's syndrome.

PARTICULAR AREAS OF DIFFICULTY:

- Taking notes and dictation.
- Sequencing words into correct sentences.
- Sequencing events/information into the correct order.
- Organising thoughts and relevant information on to paper.
- Lengthy written tasks.

STRATEGIES:

- Investigate additional resources to aid writing as a physical process - different types of writing implements, pencil grips, larger lines, boxes on page to encourage size of letters, lined paper/squared paper, writing board.
- Encourage the use of cursive script to aid fluency.
- Provide visual support: e.g. flash cards, keywords, picture cues and sequences, sentence cues.
- Provide alternative methods of recording:
 - scribe;
 - underline or ring correct answer;
 - cloze procedure;
 - sentence card sequences;
 - picture card sequences;
 - use of computer with specialist software e.g., whole word computer programmes.
- Ensure that pupils are only asked to write about topics which build upon their experience and understanding.
- If copying from board, select and highlight a shorter version for the pupil to copy, focusing on what is essential for that pupil or use cloze method on previously made worksheet.
- Pace any dictation appropriately, include repetition and ensure vocabulary is chosen to suit the ability of the pupil.

Spelling

Spelling is a particular issue which may need to be addressed. Some pupils may enter secondary school able to write and spell independently whilst others may still be at a very limited stage in their spelling and may need some additional input. Many pupils with Down's syndrome may still be spelling words purely from visual memory. Moreover, the use of phonics as an aid to developing reading and spelling in primary school may have been problematic for the pupil with Down's syndrome. It requires accurate hearing and discrimination of sounds as well as problem-solving skills, all of which tend to be areas where pupils with Down's syndrome experience difficulties. It will thus not be possible to rely exclusively on such techniques when tackling

spelling in secondary school. However, in order to develop and expand their reading skills, they will need to learn some phonic skills but development in this area may be slower than that of their peers.

STRATEGIES

Due to delayed speech and language skills and limited vocabulary it is important to:

- Teach words that are within their understanding.
- Teach words aimed to promote their speech and language development.
- Teach words required for specific subjects.

It may also be necessary to draw on approaches more familiar in the primary school, such as:

- Teach spellings as visually as possible, e.g. look-cover-write-check, flash cards.
- Colour code similar letter groups/patterns within words.
- Provide (small quantities of) spellings to learn at one time.
- Reinforce meanings of abstract words with pictures and symbols.
- Provide a word bank arranged alphabetically with pictures to reinforce meaning.
- Teach simple basic word families.

Shorter concentration span

Many children with Down's syndrome have a short concentration span and are easily distracted. In addition, the intensity of supported learning, especially in a one-to-one situation, is much higher and the pupil tires much more easily than an unsupported pupil.

STRATEGIES:

- Build a range of short, focused and clearly defined tasks into the lesson.
- Vary level of demand from task to task.
- Vary type of support.
- Use peers to keep pupil on task.
- Consider validity of double lessons - is the second half more useful for reinforcement and consolidation purposes?

Generalisation, thinking and reasoning

Where any child has a speech and language impairment, thinking and reasoning skills are inevitably affected. They find it more difficult to transfer skills from one situation to another. Abstract concepts/subjects can be particularly difficult to understand and problem-solving may be affected.

STRATEGIES:

- Do not assume that the pupil will transfer knowledge automatically.
- Teach new skills using a variety of methods and materials and in a wide range of contexts.
- Reinforce learning of abstract concepts with visual and concrete materials.
- Offer additional explanations and demonstrations.
- Encourage problem-solving.

Consolidation and retention

Pupils with Down's syndrome generally take longer to learn and to consolidate new skills and the ability to learn and retain can fluctuate from day to day.

STRATEGIES:

- *Provide extra time and opportunities for additional repetition and reinforcement.*
- *Present new skills and concepts in a variety of ways, using concrete, practical and visual materials wherever possible.*
- *Move forward but continually check back to ensure that previously learned skills have not been overwhelmed by the new input.*
- *Consider additional sessions in the timetable to reinforce basic skills.*

Structure and routine

Many children with Down's syndrome thrive on routine, structure and clearly focused activities. Unstructured and informal situations are often more difficult for them. Equally, they can be easily thrown by any change. They may need more preparation and may take longer to adapt to changes in the classroom and to transitions.

STRATEGIES:

- *Teach timetable, routines and school rules explicitly, allowing time and opportunities to learn them.*
- *Provide visual timetables: use the printed word, pictures, drawings, signs and symbols.*
- *Ensure pupil is aware of the next activity.*
- *Stick to routine as much as possible.*
- *Prepare pupil beforehand if you know there is going to be a change, and inform parents.*

Behaviour

There are no behaviour problems unique to children with Down's syndrome. However, much of their behaviour will be related to their level of development. So, when problems occur, they are generally similar to those seen in typically developing pupils of a younger age.

In addition, pupils with Down's syndrome have grown up having to cope with more difficulties than many of their peers. Much of what they are expected to do in their everyday lives will have been much harder to accomplish due to problems with their speech and language, auditory short-term memory, motor co-ordination, shorter concentration span, and learning difficulties. The thresholds that trigger problem behaviours may therefore be lower than with their typically developing peers, i.e. they are likely to become frustrated or anxious more easily. Having Down's syndrome does not lead inevitably to behavioural problems; but the nature of their difficulty makes these pupils more vulnerable to the development of behaviour problems.

A particular aspect of problem behaviour is the use of avoidance strategies. Research has shown that, like many pupils with special needs, pupils with Down's syndrome tend to adopt such strategies, which undermine the progress of their learning. Some pupils tend to use social behaviours to distract adult attention and avoid learning and seem prepared to work only on tasks which fall within a very narrowly defined cognitive range.

In the secondary years, the increasing cognitive demands will often be at the root of inappropriate behaviour. Recognition of this is critical in responding to behaviour problems. It is important to remain alive to the possibility of avoidance, to separate immature behaviour from deliberately bad behaviour, and to ensure that the pupils' developmental, not chronological, age is taken into account, together with their level of oral understanding. Any reward offered also has to take account of these factors.

STRATEGIES:

- *Ensure the rules are clear.*
- *Ensure that all teaching and non-teaching staff are aware that the pupil with Down's syndrome must be disciplined at all times along with their peers, and are aware of the strategies to be employed.*
- *Ensure that all staff are firm and consistent at all times.*
- *Agree the name of a key person who will act as first point of contact in cases of difficulty.*
- *Ensure that the pupil, staff and peers know the contact person, what procedure to follow and where to go if there's a problem.*
- *Use short, clear instructions and clear body language for reinforcement: overlong explanations and excessively complex reasoning are not appropriate.*
- *Distinguish the "can't" do from the "won't do".*
- *Investigate any inappropriate behaviour, asking yourself why the pupil is acting so. For example:*
 - *is the task too hard or too easy?*
 - *is the task too long?*
 - *is the work suitably differentiated?*
 - *does the pupil understand what is expected?*
- *Ignore attention-seeking behaviour within reasonable limits: it is aimed to distract.*
- *Reinforce the desired behaviour immediately with visual, oral or tangible rewards.*
- *Ensure that the LSA is not the only adult having to deal with the behaviour. The class teacher has ultimate responsibility.*
- *Ensure the pupil is working with peers who are acting as good role models.*

SUPPORT

A Learning Support Assistant (LSA)* will support most pupils with Down's syndrome in secondary schools. However, the type of support the pupil receives can have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of the inclusion and it is important that the role of the supporter is planned in advance and carefully established to everybody. In addition, in order to ensure inclusion in the lesson, it is vital that the pupil receives some personal interaction with the class teacher.

The following are useful guidelines when considering the role of the LSA:

IN TERMS OF THE PUPIL:

- To increase access to the curriculum and develop learning.
- To ensure the pupil learns new skills.
- To help develop independence.
- To help develop social skills, friendships and age-appropriate behaviour.

IN TERMS OF THE TEACHER:

- To help differentiate or further modify lessons and activities planned by the teacher.
- To provide feedback to the teacher.
- To provide opportunities for the teacher to work with the particular pupil with Down's syndrome either individually or in a group, by exchanging roles.

It is also important that the LSA is seen as belonging to the whole class, giving help to all pupils in need of it, and not seen, as only belonging to the pupil with Down's syndrome. In this way, other pupils in the class can benefit from extra help and care too. The teacher must not abdicate responsibility for the pupil with Down's syndrome to the LSA.

One-to-one & withdrawal

In addition, support should not consist only or even primarily of the LSA working with the pupil in a one-to-one situation, especially if it involves withdrawal from the class, which should be avoided if possible. Although there will be times when some one-to-one is needed, this should be given only when absolutely necessary and should be within the classroom if at all possible.

**The term Learning Support Assistant is used for convenience, throughout this text. There is some regional variation throughout the UK and in Scotland new funding 1999-2000 created a new staffing level within schools, Learning Support Assistant/Auxiliary: Classroom Assistants whose role it is to prepare resources etc for the teacher. The term Special educational needs Co-ordinator or "SenCo" is used. However, in Scotland the title is "Principal Teacher Learning Support".*

STRATEGIES:

Be aware that too much one-to-one support can result in the pupil failing:

- To benefit from the stimulation and models provided by the peer group.
- To learn to work co-operatively.
- To learn how to work independently.
- To develop social relationships with their peers.

How many LSAs?

In secondary school the opportunity often arises to consider several ways of organising support. Generally speaking, it is not advisable to have one LSA to support a pupil. It can create over-familiarity and over-dependency on one adult and is very intense for both pupil and LSA. Encouraging pupils with Down's syndrome to become independent in their learning and social skills is also an important aim at secondary level and a single LSA may not promote these skills.

In addition, having to cope with a range of different subjects at secondary level is difficult for one LSA: some will have more expertise at supporting a pupil in one subject than another. Many secondary schools have LSAs who are subject-based, covering perhaps two to four subjects each. This enables them to become more subject expert and improves liaison between them and the subject teachers. Most pupils with Down's syndrome are able to cope with this arrangement as long as the range of LSAs is not too great and a consistent routine is kept to.

Planning support

SenCos*, class teachers and support staff need to meet regularly to plan, communicate, feedback and monitor progress. A communication book for all involved to record plans, notes, ideas and feedback is often invaluable, especially where more than one LSA is involved with the child.

When planning support, it is important to decide:

- **Who** will differentiate the work and how?
- **Who** is to find or make additional resources?
- **When** this is to happen and how often?

The class teacher or SenCo is ultimately responsible for differentiating activities but many LSAs are capable of adapting the activities further, if and when necessary. However, any extra time that this involves must come out of the LSA's support hours and time should be allocated for this to happen.

Decide when the child should work:

- In whole class activities.
- In groups or with partners in class.
- In groups or with partners in withdrawal area.
- As an individual independently or one-to-one.

And when the child is to be:

- Unsupported.
- Supported by peers.
- Supported by the LSA.
- Supported by the class teacher.

Plan an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to target specific areas needing special attention.

Learning Support Base

In secondary schools, it is necessary to decide the way the learning support resources are organised and managed. It is desirable to establish a learning support base, probably no more than a room, which can act as a focus for these resources. If used well, such provision allows a wide range of opportunities to facilitate inclusion. It is available to be used in a wide range of ways to all staff as well as Sencos, LSAs and other support staff.

It can be used:

- to find and store information and resources and to prepare new resources;
- to teach groups and individuals, where withdrawal is necessary, especially for additional classes in basic skills or life skill courses;
- to offer opportunities for lunchtime activities (clubs, board games etc) for pupils who may benefit from more supervised and structured settings;
- To provide opportunities to undertake homework, supported and under supervision, perhaps using LSAs on a rota;
- To provide a safe base.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

All pupils with Down's syndrome benefit from mixing with typically developing peers. They are often very keen to do the same as their peers and generally use them as role models, for appropriate social behaviour and motivation for learning. This type of social inclusion, where the other pupils are setting normal expectations for age-appropriate behaviour and achievement, is extremely important for pupils with Down's syndrome. In addition, friendships and social experiences from the secondary school years are very important in forming future relationships and helping youngsters adapt to different social situations. Even so, many often need additional help and support in learning the rules for normal and appropriate social behaviour. They do not learn well from incidental learning and will not pick up conventions instinctively as do their peers. They may take longer to "learn the rules" than their typically developing peers.

In addition they may not have sufficient language skills to form friendships easily and sustain them. They may become increasingly aware that they are

different, making it harder to mix with their peers as the developmental gap between them and their peers grows wider with time.

Therefore, pupils may need additional help to:

- establish appropriate patterns of behaviour;
- work independently;
- work co-operatively;
- participate and respond appropriately;
- develop friendships.

STRATEGIES:

- *Independence and the gaining of social skills should be an integral part of the pupil's Individual Education Plan.*
- *Raise whole school awareness of learning disabilities.*
- *It is important that peers become familiar with the pupil with Down's syndrome, understand their strengths, weaknesses and capabilities, and recognise that they have the same emotional and social needs as themselves.*
- *Encourage co-operative learning. Working with partners or in small groups is very successful.*
- *Consider setting up friendship rotas or a buddy system.*
- *Use peers to support travelling to, from and around the school, lining up, coming in, going to and from lessons, break and lunch.*
- *If there are lunchtime or after-school clubs provide support to encourage attendance.*
- *Encourage independence skills and practical skills in school, in the home and in the community.*
- *Encourage self-awareness, identity, self-esteem and self-confidence.*

Robert is embarking on a long journey in this respect but he is winning. At first there were problems at break and lunchtimes because Robert wanted to be with the students who made him the centre of attention. Some older boys were encouraging him to perform like a clown until he became excited and very silly. The boys were advised that they were not exactly helping him and Robert was encouraged to attend a lunchtime club run by LSAs for vulnerable students. Robert still enjoys socialising out and about in the school but is beginning to learn about friendships. The other day he was very upset (for about five minutes!) because he didn't have a girlfriend like the other boys - yes, he copies other students, but that is why he attends a mainstream school. Robert has taken part in visits including a day trip to France to practice his French. He has been included in many school and form activities like singing in the Christmas concert and swimming for his form in the Swimming Galas.

THE CURRICULUM

The developmental gap between pupils with Down's syndrome and their typically developing peers widens with age, often becoming a major issue in the secondary years. Some pupils may be still working towards level 1 (W) in certain subject areas on entering secondary school, but others will be working towards higher levels. Abilities in reading and literacy skills tend to be higher than ability in number.

Curriculum planning and differentiation tend to become more challenging over time and they are at their most complex by the time a pupil reaches Key Stage 4. This is recognised in The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs which recommends:

- focusing at Key Stage 4 on educational and vocational skills, independence and social competence and pupils' skills in self-assessment.

There is a fine balance between the subject content and a pupil's individual needs. Some areas of the curriculum will be much more accessible than others. How much of the curriculum is appropriate for a pupil with Down's syndrome to study will vary with each individual, and the quality of the learning experience has to be assessed as much as the learning outcome. The keynote is flexibility in approach and content.

Curriculum planning at this stage may involve drawing upon a wide range of material and include programmes of study from any Key Stage where the level is more appropriate to the pupil. It may be that the lesson for the pupil with Down's syndrome should focus on one key point only. Good differentiation, careful grouping and peer support, additional adult support when necessary and additional use of visual and concrete resources can all help the pupil with Down's syndrome gain some knowledge, skills and understanding from most lessons.

Supporting the Target Setting Process, DfEE, (1998) is a useful booklet to help schools set targets and assess achievement for pupils with SEN who are working below Level 1 and between Levels 1 and 2 of the National Curriculum in English and Maths. Performance criteria in personal and social development are also included.

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Many pupils with Down's syndrome, as with many pupils with SEN, do not cope well with a number of classroom practices, common in many secondary schools such as whole class teaching, learning through listening, and follow up work based on the completion of unmodified text activities or worksheets. Therefore, teachers may need to look at

their classroom practice and the whole learning environment of the class, so that activities, materials and pupil groupings are all taken in account.

It is important, for example, to utilise the motivation of many pupils with Down's syndrome to learn from their peers. For some purposes, ability will be less important than pupils' learning styles and attitude/behaviour. However, much grouping in secondary schools tends to be based upon ability. In addition, pupils with SEN tend to be withdrawn as a small group - perhaps to work in a Learning Support room.

This type of low ability grouping is probably appropriate in certain circumstances, but too much denies pupils opportunities to learn from others with a wider range of ability and in different situations. In addition, pupils with Down's syndrome often take their cue from those with whom they are working and will tend to pick up any behavioural problems displayed within the group. If work is suitably differentiated, pupils with Down's syndrome can benefit from working with more able pupils who may be good role models in terms of motivation and behaviour and need not always be placed with other pupils with SEN.

INDEPENDENCE AND LIFE SKILLS

Developing independence and life skills for pupils with Down's syndrome in order to prepare them for living in the community is as important as it is for all pupils. However, most of their peers will learn these skills automatically whereas the pupils with Down's syndrome will need additional help. These pupils need not be taught in isolation, however, as there are always other pupils who will benefit from such additional sessions. Life skills can also be taught through accredited schemes (see below).

When it became apparent that he was struggling in his Maths lessons, Robert and a few others in the class were put on individual programmes. In addition Robert and another student were withdrawn from mixed ability History lessons for a term to enable them to have more concrete experience of learning money handling skills. The visits in the community took place at this time to maximise opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills as well as life skills. Robert also built a model of Stevenson's 'Rocket' as his contribution to the Industrial Revolution being taught in History at the time. However Robert has missed very little of the curriculum. He still learns French and has made steady progress in most subjects.

HOMWORK

Difficulties with language and short-term memory can make remembering what is expected for homework particularly difficult for pupils with Down's syndrome so communication over homework is particularly important. It can also take a pupil with Down's syndrome much longer to complete homework than their peers so it is important that all homework is suitably differentiated in terms of content and time.

STRATEGIES:

- *Homework to be differentiated.*
- *All homework to be written down in full in Homework Book/Planner/Home-school Diary.*
- *Add short and concise additional explanation, linking in to lesson.*
- *Ensure date for completion is written down for parents and pupil.*
- *Add key words, symbols or diagrams - these will act as strong visual reminders, with the additional benefit of helping the parents understand too.*
- *Homework Explanation Book - can be a useful accessory for this type of additional material.*
- *Include all relevant information: which book to write in, relevant sources etc.*

Homework has been one of the biggest problems especially during Year 7. Much discussion and note writing took place between home and school to ensure that Robert completed his homework. Sometimes the homework was set at too high a level for Robert and this had to be communicated to his teachers. At one point Robert's teachers were asked to restrict the homework to only one subject per night.

ACCREDITATION AT KEY STAGE 4

By the end of Key Stage 4, there will be a wide range in the level of attainment achievable by pupils with Down's syndrome. Some will be capable of achieving a GCSE grade in certain subjects. Where this is not possible, however, suitable and appropriate alternatives should be offered. Moreover, such schemes should have national recognition. It is important, therefore to address a number of questions when planning the curriculum for pupils with Down's syndrome at Key Stage 4:

- Are suitable accredited alternatives to GCSE offered, e.g. Entry Levels; Certificate of Achievement?
- Are Life Skills Courses provided, e.g. Asdan Youth Award?

There is, in fact, a range of high quality alternative qualifications available to schools for pupils working below the level of GCSE or Foundation GNVQ. Many of these are accredited as Entry Level qualifications. Syllabuses are designed for pupils at Key Stage 4 who are at levels 1, 2 or 3, or who are borderline GCSE candidates. Some, as in many of the Certificates of Achievement, offer progression towards GCSE or key skills units. Many are designed to allow co-teaching with GCSE courses, thereby enabling the teacher to enter candidates for both GCSE and Certificate of Achievement in the same subject, or to defer entry decisions until January or February of Year 11.

THE FUTURE

Each year, we hear more and more accounts of young adults with Down's syndrome who are working and living independently, gaining more qualifications and experiences, learning to drive and succeeding in a wide variety of jobs. Creating appropriate opportunities for them to understand their world, to learn and to progress to their full potential is the first step towards preparing them for true inclusion into the community and to go on to take their place as full and contributing members of society.

Robert will be having his 14+ Review this year and we will be helping him to plan for the future. At Key Stage 4 he will be able to take a number of practical subjects geared for less academic students. He may take accredited courses including Youth award and Certificate of Achievement or GCSE examinations. Robert will take part in Work Experience and may choose to attend link courses at the FE College. The school aims to give Robert the means to be a normal and happily adjusted member of his local community, and in so doing are attempting to encourage Robert's fellow students to be aware of the needs of others.

EQUIVALENTS IN YEAR GROUPINGS AND KEY STAGES

SCOTLAND	ENGLAND & WALES
P1 - Infants	Reception
P2 - Infants	Year 1 - Key Stage 1
P3 - Infants	Year 2 - Key Stage 2
P4 - Junior	Year 3 - Key Stage 2
P5 - Junior	Year 4 - Key Stage 2
P6 - Upper Primary	Year 5 - Key Stage 2
P7 - Upper Primary	Year 6 - Key Stage 2
S1 - Secondary	Year 7 - Key Stage 3
S2 - Secondary	Year 8 - Key Stage 3
S3 - Secondary	Year 9 - Key Stage 3
S4 - Secondary	Year 10 - Key Stage 3
S5 - Secondary	Year 11 - Key Stage 4
S6 - Secondary	Year 12 - Key Stage 4

■ GCSE = Standard Grades past.

■ Highers follow on at present from A Levels and Scottish 6th Year Studies.

■ Post 16 Qualifications: Scottish Vocation Qualification (SVQ) will be provided for in the new "Higher Still".

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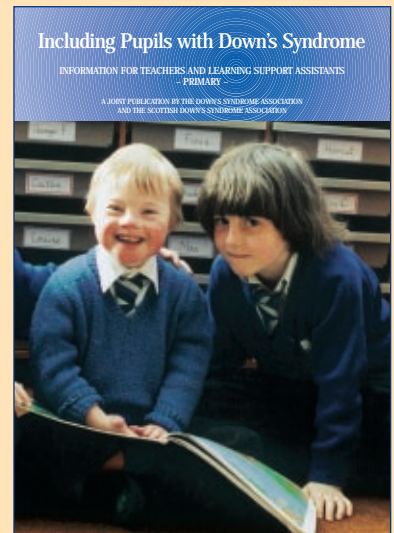
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

- JANE BEADMAN, *Educational Psychologist, Devon LEA*.
- BARBARA BIEBRACH, *SenCo, Bicester Community College, Bicester, Oxon*.
- GILLIAN BIRD, *Psychologist and Director for Consultancy and Education, The Down Syndrome Educational Trust, Portsmouth*.
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- DR. STEPHANIE LORENZ, *Independent Educational Psychologist, Manchester*.
- CECILIE MACKINNON, *Education Liaison Officer SDSA*.
- ERIC NICHOLAS, *Development Officer, DSA*.



Including Pupils with Down's Syndrome

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS AND LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

... PRIMARY ...

A JOINT PUBLICATION BY THE DOWN'S SYNDROME ASSOCIATION AND THE SCOTTISH DOWN'S SYNDROME ASSOCIATION

To obtain the accompanying booklet on Primary Education, please contact the DSA.



HELP FOR PEOPLE WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME



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helping people realise their potential

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PUBLICATION
12

LG/11/01/5K/SE1

A charitable company limited by guarantee
Registered Charity No. 1061474
Registered Company No. 3310024 (England and Wales)
Registered Office: 155 Mitcham Road, London SW17 9PG

This booklet was published with the kind support of: D.S.A. Liverpool Branch