

Introduction

This introduction sets the scene for the rest of the book by outlining:

- ways in which schools and other educational settings are becoming more diverse
- how these changes are leading to schools working in partnership and taking shared responsibility for children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- the increasing expectations of what schools will provide and their role within the community
- how the changing needs of children and young people, and the way they are described, needs to be borne in mind alongside these other changes.



How schools are changing

The last two decades have seen an unprecedented growth in the diversity of schools that have been created. In addition, schools have taken on new roles and responsibilities. Some of these changes can be summarised as follows:

- children and young people being encouraged to be active participants in the learning process
- parents and carers being seen as partners in their children's education
- schools becoming more varied in terms of how they operate
- educational settings engaging with a range of outside bodies
- the expectation that education, health and social care will work closely together.

This book explains some of these changes and provides examples of how a variety of schools, settings and services have used the opportunities created by new ways of working to provide more effectively for children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The common thread linking these changes has been the move to schools working in partnership, both with each other and with other agencies.

The journey to greater diversity

There have been many attempts to change the structure and status of schools. Although some of these have been mainly to do with secondary schools, all

have had an effect on the primary phase as well. The 1944 Education Act (sometimes referred to after its originator, R.A. Butler, as the Butler Act) was the one that made secondary education available to all pupils, apart from those who, because of their limited intellectual capacity, were considered to be *ineducable*. (A similar Act was introduced in Scotland in 1945.) The Act proposed a tripartite system of education, with the most academically able who passed the 11+ examination going to a grammar school and those who did not pass being sent either to a technical school or to a secondary modern school. As very few technical schools were built and only a minority of pupils passed the 11+, this left the majority of pupils starting their secondary education with a sense of failure. This situation continued until the 1970s, when comprehensive education largely replaced the idea of dividing pupils according to their academic ability and students of all abilities (apart from those who were in the remaining grammar schools or in special schools) began to be educated together. Today, there are still a few parts of the country where children sit the 11+ and, despite many efforts to dismantle them, 164 grammar schools remain.

Specialist schools

The argument about whether or not it is right to admit pupils according to their ability came back to some degree in the 1990s, when the government introduced the idea of specialist schools. These schools are able to admit up to 10% of pupils on their aptitude for the subject in which the school specialises, although very few have chosen to do so.



Key points: Specialist schools

- The Specialist Schools Programme began in 1994, with the aim of enabling secondary schools to become centres of excellence in their chosen specialism.
- Specialist schools receive additional funding and as well as raising standards in their own schools, they are expected to establish partnerships with other schools, so that expertise and experience can be shared.
- Specialist schools have the option of calling themselves colleges rather than schools and many have chosen to do so.
- The programme is also open to special schools that have secondary-aged pupils.

The creation of specialist schools was a significant step towards encouraging schools to work together and to share responsibility for the progress of their pupils. This is in contrast to previous years, when competition between schools was seen by government as the key to raising standards. (Further information and case studies of specialist schools appear in Chapter 2.)



Questions for reflection

1. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of some schools catering for more academically able pupils?
2. Do you think there is a clear distinction between ability and aptitude? If so, how would you define the difference?
3. Does this distinction hold true for all subjects? For instance, is it easier to recognise an aptitude for sport or the arts, than an aptitude for maths?

Not long after the Specialist Schools Programme had become established, the next major addition to new types of schools were the academies, which came into being at the turn of the century. Originally known as *City Academies*, the word *city* was dropped so that academies could be established in rural areas as well as inner cities.

Academies

The original aim of the academies program was to drive up standards by replacing schools that are seen as ‘failing’ in terms of their low examination results, with a new breed of schools that have greater autonomy. Often situated in areas of deprivation, these academies occupy new buildings (or move into them as soon as possible after becoming academies), whose architecture is often far removed from the traditional secondary school. The modern buildings and additional resources, both in terms of funding and support from outside sponsors, are seen as giving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, greater opportunity to engage with learning.



Key points: Academies and independent schools

Academies are described as state-maintained independent schools, which seems a contradiction in terms, but they are independent in the sense that they are funded directly from Whitehall, rather than by the local authority (LA) in which they are situated. Academies are supported by sponsors.

Independent Schools are sometimes referred to as private schools, or, confusingly, as public schools. They are independent of the state and funded by fees from parents. There are about 2300 independent schools and about 250 of these are special schools. Independent and non-maintained special schools, (the latter having fees paid by LAs rather than parents) often cater for pupils at the most complex end of the SEND continuum.

Most academies have been secondary schools, although the number of all-through academies has increased. In My 2020, an Academies Bill was introduced by the Coalition Government, to enable primary and special schools to become academies. (Examples of academies, and further information about them, is given in Chapter 4).

Trust schools

After the emergence of specialist schools in 1994 and academies in 2000, a further development in the diversification of schools was the creation of trust schools. These were signalled in the white paper, *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (DfES, 2005a). A school has to be a foundation school (which was an option some schools took up under the 1998 Act), before becoming a trust school.



Key points: Foundation status and trust schools

Under the Standards and Framework Act (1998), there were three categories of maintained schools:

1. Community schools – these are run by the LA, which employs the staff, owns the buildings and land, and decides on the arrangements for admitting pupils.
2. Voluntary controlled (VC)/voluntary aided (VA) schools – these are generally church schools and the relevant church shares some of the responsibilities with the LA.
3. Foundation schools – in common with VC and VA schools, these schools have a greater involvement in how they are run. The land and buildings may be owned by the governing body or by a charitable trust.
4. Trust schools did not exist at the time of the 1998 Act, but came about as the result of the 2006 Education and Inspections Act (DfES, 2006a). They are foundation schools which are supported by a charitable foundation or 'trust'.

A trust may consist of one school or a group of schools. Primary, secondary and special schools can all become trust schools. (Additional information about trust schools is given in Chapter 4, together with some examples.)

Although specialist schools, academies and trust schools have been described separately, a school may fit more than one of these descriptions. For instance, specialist schools may become trust schools and academies are able to develop specialisms. All three types of schools have taken forward the idea of working with a range of partners. The white paper *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future: Building a 21st Century School System* (DCSF, 2009c) sees partnership arrangements, including federations, as being central to the education system of the future. (Federated schools and co-located schools and services are described in Chapter 3.)

Changing expectations of schools

Although there are many different types of schools now in existence, they are all concerned with the idea of partnership working in one way or another. While the majority of schools have always preferred to work collaboratively rather than to be in competition with each other, the

atmosphere created by the standards agenda, with its emphasis on judging schools very publicly on a narrow range of outcomes, has not been conducive to partnership working, particularly as schools have such very different intakes and challenges. Being judged in this way has also discouraged schools from welcoming pupils with SEND, as they are more likely to have a negative impact on the school's performance.

While a strong element of competition remains, collaboration between schools is being encouraged through the new structures that have been mentioned, as well as through the formation of a number of partnerships between groups of schools. These have become necessary as no school on its own can cover everything it is expected to do, from becoming an extended school, to secondary schools needing to give their students access to the full range of options from 14–19. One of the most crucial links, particularly for children and young people with SEND, has been the joining up of the education service with health and social care.

The effects of ECM and the Children Act (2004)

The changing expectations of what schools will provide have stemmed from the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* (ECM) (DfES, 2003) and the Children Act (DfES, 2004a) that followed it. The effect on schools of the ECM agenda has to be set in the context of what the Act has meant at national and local level. This has changed the face of the whole education system. After the Act, the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) became the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The title of Secretary of State for Education disappeared and was replaced by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. Local education authorities (LEAs) as separate entities became subsumed within a local authority's (LA's) children's services department, mirroring the demise of the DfES. As a consequence, Directors of Education or Chief Education Officers (CEOs) were replaced by Directors of Children's Services. In May 2010, the Coalition Government changed the name of the Department back to the Department for Education (DfE).

Extended schools

The expectations of schools in The Children Act were underlined by the government's ten-year strategy, *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* (DCSF, 2007). This confirmed that by 2010, all schools would be expected to provide access to a range of extended services. The word 'access' is important, as it means that individual schools will vary in terms of what each will provide. Not every school has the capacity to develop a full range of services, but every school can make a contribution, as well as signposting to where other activities are available.

Children's centres

Children's centres offer early education and childcare, as well as wider family support and access to health services on a single site, although exactly

how much a particular children's centre offers depends on the needs of the neighbourhood where it is located. (Case studies of extended schools and children's centres are provided in Chapter 5.)

There is no doubt that the extended schools agenda has put extra pressure on schools, which some may see as detracting from their core purpose of educating pupils. Others view it as a way of raising standards, because of the wider approach it offers to supporting children's learning from an early age, together with that of their families. What is certain is that schools have become radically different institutions from those that existed even ten or twenty years ago.



Questions for reflection

1. What do you see as the positive side of having a number of different types of schools?
2. Do you think there are negatives as well?
3. In your opinion, are extended schools in danger of losing their focus on improving teaching and learning, or do they add a new dimension to it?
4. What do you see as the benefits of children's centres and extended schools for children with SEND?

The changing needs of children and young people

So far, this chapter has considered how schools are changing in terms of the variety of schools that exist and the roles they are expected to play. Alongside these changes, the nature of children's needs, and how they are described, is constantly changing too.

Terminology

The term special educational needs (SEN) originated from the Warnock Report of 1978 and the subsequent Education Act of 1981. It is a much broader term than 'handicapped' which was the term used pre-Warnock. Indeed, the full title of the Warnock Report was the *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People*. Warnock used the umbrella term *SEN* to focus on the needs of children as individuals rather than thinking of them in terms of categories of need, such as maladjusted or educationally sub-normal (two of the terms in use at the time). It was also to recognise a much larger group of children than the 2% who, at that time, were educated in special schools.

SEN and disability

Over time, the term 'disability', which is used by the health service, has broadened as well. At one time, it was used mainly to describe those who had a physical disability, but it now covers a wide range of disabilities. In 2001, SEN and disability were brought together in the SEN and Disability

Act (often referred to as 'SENDA') (DfES, 2001a). Although the two terms are not synonymous, there is now a large degree of overlap and the acronym *SEND* has come into use. In Scotland, the term *additional educational needs* (AEN) is used to cover SEND and other vulnerable groups, such as looked after children, the disaffected and those at risk of exclusion. Sometimes the term AEN or additional learning needs (ALN) is used in England, and, when it is, it generally encompasses this wider group as well as SEND.

Changing descriptions within SEND

Although Warnock wanted to shift the focus away from categorising children to concentrating on their needs as individuals, 30 years after the work of the Warnock Committee, an increasing number of labels is being used. Partly this is a result of better diagnosis and partly it is because new needs are being recognised. Improved diagnosis means that, for instance, children on the autism spectrum are given that label rather than being seen as having communication or behavioural difficulties; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is treated as a separate diagnosis within behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), and dyslexia is no longer used synonymously with specific learning difficulties (SpLD), because dyscalculia, dyspraxia and dysgraphia are recognised as well.

A second reason for an increase in labels is the appearance of new disorders. These include new and rare chromosomal disorders which are being identified, as well as needs that are arising from premature babies surviving after being born increasingly early. Some of these babies will have conditions such as foetal alcohol syndrome disorder (FASD). The incidence of FASD is said to be as high as that of autism (roughly one in a hundred) and it is another condition that was rarely mentioned until comparatively recently. As it is caused by the mother's drinking affecting the development of the baby's brain while in the womb, unlike most conditions, FASD is entirely preventable.

The combination of better diagnosis plus the emergence of new conditions, means that there has also been a marked increase in children and young people being assessed or diagnosed as having co-existing conditions, such as autism and ADHD, or dyslexia, dyspraxia and a specific language impairment (SLI).

Addressing changing needs

What this means is that all types of schools are on the receiving end of children with more complex needs, whether that complexity is caused by the severity of their learning difficulty or by having a combination of conditions. With a reduction in special school places and the trend ever since Warnock to include pupils in their local schools, mainstream schools are seeing pupils who would previously have been in special schools, while special schools have moved from catering for specific needs to having a much more diverse

and complex population. Pupils who have moderate learning difficulties (MLD), for instance, are no longer to be found in specialist provision, unless they have other needs as well.

There is also a heightened awareness and interest in SEND. More information has been put in the public domain since the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Information Act was passed in 2008 (DCSF, 2008). This means that the government annually has to publish information on children with SEN which includes:

- the characteristics of children with SEN
- their attainment levels
- their absences and exclusions from school
- the views of pupils with a learning difficulty from the Tellus 3 survey.

(There is further information on the Tellus surveys in the next chapter).

In the last few years, there has been an unusually large number of reviews, reports and inquiries focusing on SEND, including: Sir Alan Steer's work on behaviour (DfES, 2005b and DCSF, 2009b); a review of CAMHS, the child and adolescent mental health service (DCSF and DoH, 2008a); John Bercow's review of services for speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) (DCSF, 2008b); Sir Jim Rose's report on the teaching of children with dyslexia (2009g); Brian Lamb's inquiry into increasing parental confidence in the SEN system (DCSF, 2009h) and the current Ofsted SEN Survey, 2009/10. These demonstrate the growing interest in how to help pupils with SEND, and will be referred to in subsequent chapters.

As no school on its own can be expected to meet the needs of every child in an era when learning is expected to be more personalised to the individual, and, at the same time, children's needs are becoming more complex, it is encouraging that, regardless of the type of provision, partnership working is coming to the fore and, with it, fresh opportunities to draw on a wider range of expertise and experience that may benefit children and young people who have SEND.

Summary

This chapter has considered some of the many ways in which schools are changing, both in terms of the diversity of schools that now exist, the expectations of what schools will provide, and the move towards working in partnership, both with each other and with a broad range of other services and organisations.

Consideration has also been given to the changing terminology around SEND and the growing complexity presented by children and young people, whether in mainstream or specialist provision, which highlights the importance of schools and services working collaboratively, so that expertise can be shared and additional opportunities presented to those for whom learning does not come easily.

Further reading

- Department for Children, Schools and Families (2009) *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future: Building a 21st Century School System*. Available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem
- Dittrich, W.H. and Tutt, R. (2008) *Educating Children with Complex Conditions: Understanding Overlapping and Co-existing Developmental Disorders*. London: Sage.
- Hill, R. (2008) *Achieving More Together: Adding Value Through Partnership*. Leicester: Association of School and College Leaders.
- Todd, L. (2007) *Partnerships for Inclusive Education*. London: Routledge.