

A case study examining the inclusion of children with special educational needs in a mainstream primary school

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*A Case Study Examining the Inclusion of Children
with Special Educational Needs in a Mainstream
Primary School.*

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Submitted to the University of Dublin, Trinity College,
15th August, 2013

“I hereby declare that this is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for the award of a degree at this or any other University. I agree that the library may lend or copy this dissertation on request”.

Louise Callan

15th August, 2013

Summary

The study aims to find out how inclusive one particular primary school is with regard to students with special educational needs. For the purpose of the study the school is called Rose Hill Primary School. There have been many changes in policy and legislation relating to the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. This study aims to examine the extent to which Rose Hill Primary School meets the criteria for an inclusive school. The study examines the inclusivity of Rose Hill School in relation to the ten themes of inclusion drawn up by the National Council for Special Education's Consultative Forum (NCSE, 2010). The ten themes are:

1. Provision of Information
2. (Appropriate) Physical Features
3. Inclusive School Policies
4. An Individual Education Plan (IEP)
5. Student Interactions
6. Staffing and Personnel
7. External Links
8. Assessment of Achievement
9. Curriculum
10. Teaching Strategies

To address the inclusivity of Rose Hill School a case study research design was used to ascertain multiple perspectives by means of interviews. Those interviewed were the principal, eight teachers, two special needs assistants and four parents. The four parents had children with different special educational needs. One child had Dyspraxia, another had Down Syndrome, a third had Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD and the fourth had a mild learning disability. A profile of each of the four children was compiled from information obtained from their teachers, special needs assistants and parents.

Results of the Study

The researcher believes that Rose Hill Primary School has made significant progress on the road to becoming an inclusive school. The case study highlights the obstacles which are preventing Rose Hill Primary School from becoming even more inclusive towards children with special educational needs. The study shows the importance of having adequate resources and supports in place in the school to ensure that inclusion benefits everyone involved. It also shows how important it is that teachers receive training in the area of special education and the need for teachers to liaise with professionals such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists.

The study shows:

- there is a willingness among all members of the school community to include children with special needs;
- the attitudes of teachers and all members of the school community contribute to making Rose Hill Primary School inclusive;
- the principal has an important role to play in making the school inclusive;
- revealing insights by the four parents into the degree of inclusivity in Rose Hill School.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| ADHD | Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder. |
| AS | Asperger's Syndrome |
| ASD | Autistic Spectrum Disorder |
| CPD | Continued Professional Development |
| DCD | Developmental Coordination Disorder |
| EP | Education Psychologist |
| EPSEN | Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 |
| GLD | General Learning Disability |
| HSE | Health Service Executive |
| IEP | Individual Education Plan |
| NCSE | National Council for Special Education |
| NEPS | National Educational Psychological Service |
| SEN | Special Education Needs |
| SENO | Special Education Needs Organiser |
| SERC | Special Education Review Committee |
| SNA | Special Needs Assistant |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation |

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study looks at one particular mainstream school to find out how inclusive it is with regard to children with special needs. For the purpose of this study the school is called Rose Hill Primary School.

The study looks at how all children are taught in the school and how the needs of children with special educational needs are catered for. In order to pursue this enquiry a case study research design was used to ascertain multiple perspectives through interviews in Rose Hill Primary School. Four groups of people were interviewed in the school – the principal, eight teachers, two special needs assistants and four parents (Appendices, A, B, C, D). The researcher's interview questions were based on the ten themes of inclusion drawn up by the National Council for Special Education's Consultative Forum (NCSE, 2010) (Appendix O). The four parents interviewed had children with different special educational needs. One child had Dyspraxia, another had Down Syndrome, a third had Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD and the fourth had a Mild Learning Disability (Appendices F, G, H, I, J). A profile of each of the four children was compiled from information obtained from their teachers, special needs assistants and parents. The findings are presented in Chapter Four.

Background to the Study

Policy decisions which have led to increasing inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools have been influenced by international developments and agreements such as the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education, UNESCO (1994), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN) (1989) and the UN International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

The Special Education Review Committee (SERC) report of 1993 has impacted greatly on the way children with special educational needs are taught and included in mainstream schools. The SERC recommendation (Government of Ireland, 1993, p. 22) for “as much integration as is appropriate and feasible with as little segregation as is necessary” has been reflected in Irish policy documents on special education.

The Education Act 1998 (Government of Ireland, 1998) established the right to an appropriate education for all children. Since then there has been significant legislation which has influenced thinking, policies and practices around inclusive education. These include the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Equality Acts 2000-2008, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the Disability Act 2005. This legislation has been complemented by department circulars, research and task force reports and curricular, planning, policy and practice guidelines. There have been significant increases in the level of resources in mainstream schools for children with special educational needs in terms of discrete teachers for learning support, resource, and language support as well as special needs assistants. In addition, there has been the formation and growth of bodies such as the National Council for Special Education, National Educational Psychological Service, the National Education Welfare Board, the Special Education Support Service and the Primary Professional Development Service.

Personal Context

The researcher has been teaching for twelve years in Rose Hill Primary School. It is a mainstream school with a total number of two hundred and forty pupils. There are nine mainstream teachers, one resource teacher and one learning support teacher, two special needs assistants and the principal. It is a co-educational primary school and it caters for children from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

In relation to children with special educational needs in Rose Hill Primary School, the research question is: to what extent does Rose Hill Primary School meet the criteria for an inclusive school in relation to the ten themes of inclusion drawn up by the National Council for Special Education's Consultative Forum (NCSE, 2010) (Appendix O)?

1. Provision of Information
2. (Appropriate)Physical Features
3. Inclusive School Policies
4. An Individual Education Plan (IEP)
5. Student Interactions

6. Staffing and Personnel
7. External Links
8. Assessment of Achievement
9. Curriculum
10. Teaching Strategies

Definitions Used in the Study

The EPSEN Act 2004 (Government of Ireland, 2004, p.6) provides a legislative framework for inclusive education. It offers the following definition of special education needs which informed this study:

“special educational needs” means, in relation to a person, “a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition”(Government of Ireland, 2004, p. 6).

The Act does not define inclusive education but provides that:

A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with— (a) the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or (b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated(Government of Ireland, 2004, p. 7).

Inclusive Education

There are many definitions of inclusion and it is important to note that there are no specific definitions of it in either the Education Act 1998 or EPSEN Act 2004. Bailey (1998, p. 173) speaks of inclusion as “being in an ordinary school with other students, following the same curriculum at the same time, in the same classrooms, with the full acceptance of all, and in a way which makes the student feel no different from other students” (Bailey, 1998, p. 173). Others see it as an ongoing process of “increasing the participation of students in the cultures and curricula of mainstream schools and communities” (Booth, 1996, p. 96). Irish teachers, school personnel and parents need to be convinced that inclusion is not just an aspiration but that it can be a new certainty. There is a need to produce evidence of effective, inclusive school policies and classroom practices in Ireland (Rose, 2002 and Kavale, 2001).

An Outline of the Chapters

Chapter Two reviews the literature. This chapter outlines how changes in special education policy and provision have altered the way children with special educational needs are educated. It looks at the definitions of inclusion and the policy and legislation regarding special needs education. It examines the ten themes of inclusion drawn up by the National Council for Special Education's Consultative Forum (NCSE, 2010). It discusses the principles of inclusion and what practices are needed in schools to make inclusion work.

In Chapter Three the techniques that were used to carry out this research and to establish its reliability and validity are discussed. The research was conducted in accordance with appropriate ethical principles as required by the School of Education, Trinity College, Dublin. A case study, preceded by a pilot study, was conducted in Rose Hill Primary School to examine how inclusive that school is in the education of children with special educational needs. Interviews were conducted to get a multiple of perspectives on the inclusiveness of the school. Transcripts were written for each interview and thematic analysis was used to find "repeated patterns and meanings in the data collected" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 12).

Chapter Four presents the findings of this study. It presents the data from the interviews that took place in Rose Hill Primary School. Profiles of the four children in the study compiled from information obtained from their teachers, special needs assistants and parents are discussed in this chapter. All interview participants considered Rose Hill School to be an inclusive school. The positive attitude of teachers and all staff members towards inclusion is seen as a key factor in making Rose Hill School inclusive, as is their willingness to put inclusive practices into effect. All participants did, however, feel that the school could become more inclusive. Lack of essential resources, training for teachers in the area of special education and lack of support from outside agencies are some of the factors acting as barriers to inclusion in Rose Hill School.

Chapter Five provides analysis of the results under five main headings – successful inclusion, leadership, teachers, special needs assistants and parents. These five headings are relevant to the study. The researcher discusses and compares the

results in Chapter Four with the literature discussed in Chapter Two and the findings of other researchers.

In Chapter Six the researcher summarises the findings in the study and makes recommendations on how Rose Hill School can become more inclusive.

Chapter 2:Literature Review

This chapter examines how children with special educational needs are accommodated in mainstream schools. The researcher will consider what resources and supports are needed to accommodate children with special needs to ensure optimum outcomes for such children. In the past, children with special educational needs tended to be educated separately from their peers in separate schools. Where this happened there was little contact between children with special educational needs and other children. This chapter outlines how changes in special education policy and provision have altered the way children with special educational needs are educated (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 1). A major policy initiative was that, in order to meet the educational and developmental needs of children with special educational needs, schools had to become inclusive. To guide schools to become more inclusive the NCSE's Consultative Forum has drawn up ten themes as principles of inclusion. The researcher will examine briefly each of the principles of inclusion.

The inclusive policy of enrolling pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools was influenced by international developments, changes to national legislation and rulings by the courts. The significant international impetus was provided by the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994). The main national legislative provisions are the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equality Acts 2000-2008, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the Disability Act 2005. The most significant examples of relevant litigation taken by families against the state include the O'Donoghue (1993) and Sinnott (2000) cases. The rulings of the courts in these cases resulted in significant changes in educational provision for children with special educational needs (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011).

As a result of the policy of inclusive education, more children with special educational needs are being educated in mainstream schools with their peers. The ESPEN Act 2004 provides for the education of all children, including those with special educational needs (Carey, 2005, p. 153). The EPSSEN Act 2004 "imposes very specific obligations on principals and teachers in the area of special needs" (Meaney et al. 2005, p. 216). The school principal has the overall responsibility for providing

for children with special educational needs and ensuring that their needs are met (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 61). Questions arise as to how the intake of children with special education needs is being managed in primary schools and whether the participation of these children in primary schools has resulted in satisfactory outcomes for children with special education needs. Many mainstream teachers lack experience in teaching children with special educational needs (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 61).

Special Needs Education – Background and History

It was generally believed that children with special educational needs were different from their peers and that their social and learning needs were so different to those of other children that they required separated education outside the mainstream school (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 38).

During the first half of the twentieth century there was little or no progress in the development of educational provision for people with general learning disabilities, then called mental handicap. It was not until the mid nineteen-fifties that a number of voluntary organisations and religious orders took the initiative to establish schools for students with such disabilities. Subsequently these schools were officially recognised as special national schools by the Department of Education.

The first special school for children with general learning disabilities to be recognised by the state was St. Vincent's home for Mentally Defective children in 1947 (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). Special schools were set up in most counties during the nineteen-fifties and sixties. In some instances, where the establishment of a special school was not feasible, special classes for students with mild general learning disabilities were attached to mainstream primary schools. A small number of these classes accommodated students with moderate general learning disabilities. For decades special schools were the focus of the education of pupils with special needs (Pijl et al, 1997). By the mid-1970s there was a network of over 100 special schools and there were a growing number of special classes in mainstream schools (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). The separate system used to be seen as an expression of care for pupils with special needs. However, this view of special education has gradually changed.

Since the 1990s there have been major developments with regard to special education. These developments came about in response to international trends and developments and because of pressure from parents, teachers and advocacy groups (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 41). Today in the field of special education there is a strong emphasis on creating inclusive learning environments that can cater for pupil diversity (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 42).

The Special Education Review Committee (1993)

The publication of the report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) was one of the most important events in the modern history of special education in Ireland (Armstrong et al. 2000). The SERC report was the most comprehensive and best informed report Ireland had ever seen (Swan, 1994). The SERC report influenced policy decision making and the delivery of special education provision in the years that followed (NCCA, 1999). The SERC report provided a blueprint for the development of special education that continues to influence policy decisions up to the present day (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). The report documented serious shortfalls in provision for children with special educational needs, highlighting inadequate curricular provision, constraints on integration in schools and a lack of specialist training for teachers (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011).

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action

In June 1994 the Irish government was one of the ninety-two governments that signed up to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) which encouraged the move from segregated to inclusive education. The Salamanca Statement affirmed the right of all children to an education “Every child has a fundamental right to an education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning” (Salamanca Statement, 1994, p. viii). It affirmed that those with special educational needs must have access to mainstream schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered environment capable of meeting these needs.

Legislation in the period 1998-2005 involving children with special educational needs:

The Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and 2004 and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 provide a legislative framework for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

The Education Act 1998 was an important step in Irish educational policy as it was the first piece of legislation in the history of the state that outlined the legal rights and responsibilities of the Irish Government relating to education, (Carey 2005, p. 136).

The Education Act 1998 provided that all children have the right to an education. Children with special educational needs must be able to be active participants in their education. The Act requires that:

“the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or other special needs, are identified and provided for” (Education Act, 1998, Part 9, a).

Apart from providing the first legal definition of “disability”, its significance in relation to special education was in preparing the way for further legislation including the EPSEN Act 2004 (Carey, 2005).

The Education Welfare Act 2000

This Act requires that schools make sure that all children regardless of a disability or special educational need participate fully in all school activities (Carey, 2005, p. 143).

The Act also stipulates that every child in the state must participate in and benefit from a minimum level of education. This Act established the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) to investigate unexplained, prolonged and poor school attendance. The functions of the NEWB are to provide a system to support and encourage students to attend school regularly and to specify the requirements of a code of behaviour (Carey, 2005, p. 145).

The Equal Status Act 2000 and The Equality Act 2004

The Equal Status Act 2000 promotes equality of opportunity for all citizens in the State (Carey, 2005, p. 146). It prohibits discrimination on nine grounds, one of them being disability. The Act requires schools to accommodate students with special educational needs so far as is feasible (Carey, 2005, p.146). This Act has significant

implications for children with special educational needs. It provides that children with special needs should be educated in a mainstream school where it is possible (Carey, 2005, p. 149). Children should not be excluded from a school activity because of circumstances or behaviours arising from a special education condition (Carey, 2005, p. 149).

The Equality Act 2004 is not specifically related to children but it further outlines the rights of people with disabilities in Ireland. It is important to mention this Act for the purpose of this research as it highlights the rights of people with disabilities in the workplace. This implies that they must have rights in school also.

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004 outlines procedures for assessment of special needs and for ensuring provision of appropriate intervention services. This is the most significant piece of legislation in the history of the State related to the education of children with special educational needs (Carey 2005, p. 153). It established the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which gives parents a key role in the decision-making process. The EPSEN Act 2004 imposes specific obligations on principals and teachers in the area of SEN (Meaney et al. 2005). In line with the EPSEN Act 2004, it is current government policy that children with SEN should be included in mainstream schools and classes to the greatest extent practicable. The term “special educational needs” is defined in the EPSEN Act (2004) as meaning, in relation to a person:

a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition (EPSEN Act, 2004).

The EPSEN Act 2004 stipulates that the principal has the important duty of ensuring that children with special educational needs are catered for in their school. School leadership is considered a crucial factor in the establishment of an inclusive learning environment. For a school to be really inclusive all staff members including the principal must have a positive attitude towards the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools. According to Carey (2005, p. 163) this Act puts too

much responsibility on school principals who are already over-burdened with a huge number of tasks to carry out.

This Act provides that the child with special educational needs should be involved centrally in some of the critical decision-making processes that affect him/her (Shevlin and Rose, 2010). The Act also established that parents have a right to be consulted in all areas involving their child's education. Provisions and opportunities for students to be centrally involved and consulted in some of the critical decision making processes that would affect him/her were included in the publication of the EPSEN Act 2004 as illustrated in the process outlined for the formulation and implementation of the "education plan" (Government of Ireland 2004a, pp. 13-15 Sections 8 and 9). However, due to economic constraints, full enactment of this legislation was deferred in 2008 and the statutory obligation on schools to introduce a system of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) has not been implemented.

The Disability Act 2005

This Act provides for the assessment of the health and educational needs of persons with disabilities and assures that appropriate planning will be put in place to ensure this (Carey, 2005, p. 163). The Act establishes the position of Assessment Officers who have the responsibility for carrying out or for arranging for the conducting of an assessment of a person with a disability (Carey, 2005, p. 164). Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 relates to the legal right to access an assessment for children of school age. At the time of writing, this legal entitlement is only available for children aged five and under, because in October 2008, full implementation of Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 was deferred as a result of the decision not to commence similar elements of the EPSEN Act 2004a, which also relate to assessment.

The National Council for Special Education

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) was formally established in 2005 as a result of the ESPEN Act 2004 to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs, with particular emphasis on children. The NCSE has a statutory role to carry out research in special education. In 2008 the NCSE sought advice from its Consultative Forum on what constitutes an inclusive education for the purpose of the EPSEN Act 2004. The Consultative Forum is a

statutory committee established under the EPSSEN Act 2004 for the purpose of assisting and advising the Council on matters relating to its functions. The Consultative Forum subsequently proposed that the NCSE would develop an inclusive education framework and self-evaluation tool for schools, which they could use on a voluntary basis, to assess and develop inclusive practices. In 2008, the NCSE sought advice from its Consultative Forum on what constitutes an inclusive education as defined in the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSSEN) Act 2004. The consultative forum came up with ten main themes of inclusion (NCSE, 2010). It was determined by the forum that for a school to be truly inclusive it must meet criteria under the following thematic headings:

1. Provision of Information
2. (Appropriate) Physical Features
3. Inclusive School Policies
4. An Individual Education Plan (IEP)
5. Student Interactions
6. Staffing and Personnel
7. External Links
8. Assessment of Achievement
9. Curriculum
10. Teaching Strategies

Theme 1: Provision of Information

Open and regular communication is crucial to effective collaboration between the school, parents, and the wider community (NCSE, 2010, p. 53). Misunderstandings may be avoided if parents are informed in relation to their child's needs and progress (Norris and Closs, 2003). Information enables people to make appropriate choices, and is therefore an important tool in working positively with parents and the wider community (NCSE, 2010, p. 53).

Theme 2: Physical Features

In order to provide a truly inclusive school, the physical environment needs to be safe and accessible to all students, including those with physical and sensory disabilities. Many of the issues relating to the design and layout of the physical environment can

only be addressed at the planning stage for school buildings and are more of a concern for educational authorities, builders and architects (NCSE, 2010, p. 56).

Theme 3: Inclusive School Policies

All schools in Ireland are required to have policies on responding to special educational needs (NCSE, 2010, p. 60). To be relevant and effective, these policies must be developed within the school, involve the whole school community, and be drafted in consultation with all key stakeholders, including parents (NCSE, 2010, p. 60). All policy statements should be clear and built upon a vision of inclusion. They should be reviewed and updated regularly.

Theme 4: The Individualised Education Plan (IEP)

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 places a strong emphasis on ‘education plans’ and, while the provisions of this act are not yet fully implemented, they will have the effect of making the preparation of individual education plans mandatory for students who have been clearly assessed as having defined special educational needs (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011).

To create an effective IEP, parents, teachers and the student must be involved in designing an educational programme to help the student succeed (NCSE, 2010, p. 64). This involves setting targets, and monitoring and evaluating progress on a regular basis. The ultimate aim is to set realistic targets so the child can achieve to the best of his/her ability and function as independently as possible (NCSE, 2010, p. 65).

Theme 5: Student Interactions

Including all children in our education system enhances the education experience for all those involved (NCSE, 2010, p. 67). According to (Staub and Peck, 1995) students become more understanding and more accepting of diversity (NCSE, 2010, p. 67).

Theme 6: Staffing and Personnel

Teachers, special needs assistants and support staff are central to the success of inclusion. It is therefore important that all staff working in an inclusive environment possess the skills and knowledge to deal with the challenge of inclusion. It is equally

important that staff work together constructively as a team, to ensure that all students are effectively included in the educational environment (NCSE, 2010, p. 70).

Theme 7: External Links

The provision of adequate funding, resources, and support services is fundamental to the successful implementation of inclusion. Schools need to work with agencies, health services and supports outside the school (NCSE, 2010, p. 76). This will not only involve active collaboration with government agencies and public services, but also partnership with professionals and parents.

Theme 8: Assessment of Achievement

For students with significant learning difficulties or disabilities, it is important to recognise that progress can be achieved in many different ways apart from increases in academic knowledge or skills (Westwood, 2007). Young people with special educational needs may have issues around motivation and self-esteem, and for this reason it is important to recognise their achievements and progress. This can help improve their confidence, encouraging them to engage in class activities (NCSE, 2010, p. 80). There are different types of assessment i.e. informal assessments, portfolio assessments, self-assessments and peer assessments (NCSE, 2010, p. 80).

Theme 9: Curriculum

All students, regardless of their needs, should be provided with appropriate access to mainstream curricula (NCSE, 2010, p. 84). Children with special educational needs can have access to a broader curriculum through the use of additional resources and differentiation (NCSE, 2010, p. 85).

Theme 10: Teaching Strategies

Teachers should use a variety of teaching strategies. Within the classroom, certain teaching strategies have been identified as helpful to the inclusion of students with special educational needs. Examples include co-operative teaching, co-operative learning, collaborative problem-solving and differentiation (NCSE, 2010, p. 89). The way instruction is delivered in the mainstream classroom needs to be flexible enough to meet the diverse requirements of all students.

O'Donoghue Case (1993) and Sinnott Case (2000)

Litigation undertaken by families has had a significant impact on the development of policy on special needs education. Two cases in particular (O'Donoghue, 1993; Sinnott, 2000) impacted on public opinion and policy in educational provision for children with special educational needs (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). The O'Donoghue Case in 1993 involved the education of an eight year old boy with special educational needs. The High Court found in favour of the applicant and determined that children with special needs were entitled to primary education and that the state was obliged to make the necessary modifications to the curriculum and teaching to ensure that they could make the best use of their capacities (Carey, 2005). The O'Donoghue case had huge significance for Irish education generally and for special education in particular (Meaney et al. 2005). It left the State in no doubt as to its legal obligation to provide appropriate education for all children.

The Sinnott case involved the education of Jamie Sinnott who had a severe form of autism and mental and physical dysfunction. In the Sinnott case (2000), the High Court (Justice Barr) concluded that Jamie Sinnott had received “not more than two years of meaningful education or training provided by the State, despite incessant efforts by his mother to secure appropriate arrangements for him” (Whyte, 2000, p.205). Justice Barr ruled that the State was obliged to provide lifelong education for people with severe/profound general disabilities. This ruling was appealed by the State to the Supreme Court which determined that the State's obligation to provide a primary education for a person with severe/profound general learning difficulties ends when that person reaches the age of eighteen (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 56).

Special Educational Needs Policy

All teachers should be involved in the development of the school's special educational needs (SEN) policy and be fully aware of the school's procedures for identifying, assessing and making provision for children with SEN (Gross, 2002). Where a school is making special education provision for a child, the school must inform the parents of that special provision. There should be full records of the actions taken and of the outcomes. Schools will have to provide evidence of their planning for children with SEN (Gross, 2002). Parents' views must be taken into account in planning

appropriate provision for children with SEN. For all children with (SEN), parents are entitled to information on:

1. The school's special needs policy
2. The support available in the school
3. Procedures for acting on parental concerns
4. The involvement parents can expect in assessment and decision-making, emphasising the importance of their contributions
5. Services provided by the local authority for children with SEN
6. Local and national voluntary organisations which may be able to give advice or information

(Gross, 2002).

Principles of Inclusive Education

The term “inclusive education” is an educational system that includes a large diversity of pupils and which differentiates education for this diversity (Pijl et al. 1997). In many countries the effort to achieve a more inclusive system has resulted in the education of pupils with special needs in mainstream schools and in a declining number of pupils placed in separate special schools (Pijl et al. 1997). Inclusive education looks at both the rights of students and how education systems can be transformed to respond to diverse groups of learners. It is important that learning is made more meaningful and relevant for all students. A number of studies have found that the attitude of teachers towards educating pupils with special needs is very important if a school is to be inclusive (Pijl et al. 1997). If mainstream teachers do not take responsibility for the learning needs of pupils with special needs as an integral part of their job, they will try to make someone else, often the resource teacher, responsible for these pupils and will in this way cause segregation to occur in the school (Pijl et al. 1997). The focus of inclusion is on the need for schools to change their culture and practices in order to achieve enabling education for all (Barton, 1997).

Inclusion is about the child's right to participate as fully as possible in school activities and the school's duty to accept and accommodate the child's right (Thomas and Vaughan, 2005). Continued segregation of disabled and non-disabled students can

only help to foster stereotypes, while inclusion has the potential to eliminate stereotypes by enabling young people to learn about each other's common humanity as well as their uniqueness (Thomas and Vaughan, 2005). Inclusive education demands that a mainstream school considers all pupils in its area as fully belonging to the school and all of its varied activities. Each child has the same right of access to an education. The promotion of the voice of the child with special educational needs has been recognised as an important element in the development of a more inclusive educational system (Florian 1998 and Mittler, 2000).

The Rationale for Inclusion

The most compelling rationale for inclusive education is based on fundamental human rights. Education is a fundamental human right, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1989). Children with or without disabilities have the same rights to educational opportunities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989).

Inclusion in Schools:

Inclusion in education involves valuing all students and staff equally. It involves increasing the participation of students in and reducing their exclusion from the culture, curricula and communities of local schools. Inclusion also involves restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality. Inclusion is also about improving schools for staff as well as for students (Thomas and Vaughan, 2005). Until there are fully inclusive communities and fully inclusive neighbourhoods, it is hard to see how schools can be fully inclusive (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009). Inclusion is not primarily an educational or professional issue but an issue of basic human rights concerning everybody (Wertheimer, 1997). There is a growing consensus throughout the world that all children have the right to be educated together. Both the Salamanca statement (1994) and the UN standard rules (1993) emphasise that people with disabilities must be involved in every aspect of the education process (Wertheimer, 1997). In striving to develop inclusive education there is a danger of seeing it as an issue for disabled people and their supporters rather than something concerning everyone (Wertheimer, 1997).

The promotion of inclusion will depend greatly upon the strategies which teachers adopt to ensure that all pupils participate fully in learning for as much of the time as is possible (Tilstone et al. 1998, p. 30). All students should be provided with a curriculum which is relevant to their needs through a range of well-planned, shared learning experiences. Inclusion recognises the right of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, to be taught alongside their peers, while acknowledging their common and differing needs (Tilstone et al. 1998, p. 40). In order to promote inclusive education, what is taught in schools, how it is to be delivered, and how resources, both human and material, are managed must be decided through collaborative decision-making and planning (Clark et al. 1995). The success of inclusive education depends upon the ability of teachers to respond to diversity in the classroom (Clark et al. 1995).

The involvement of pupils in the management of their own learning can have a positive effect upon pupil self-esteem (Tilstone et al. 1998, p. 95). Understanding teaching and learning styles is a major key to the development of inclusive learning. Inclusive practice has to take into account how individual pupils learn most effectively. The use and development of effective language skills is central to inclusive learning. Many authors (e.g., Steele and Mitchell, 1992; Farrell, 1997) have noted improved chances of successful inclusion where children join their mainstream peers. This may be due to younger mainstream pupils having fewer negative preconceptions of people with learning difficulties than older pupils (Tilstone et al. 1998, p. 214). Inclusion that works well involves not a reform of special education but a reform of the mainstream (Pijl, 1997). It is an issue of school reform and school development rather than a process of fitting children into existing structures. Inclusion is sometimes defined as the provision of appropriate high quality education for pupils with special needs in mainstream schools. In education this means that pupils with special needs are entitled to have their special needs met in a mainstream educational system that embraces a wide diversity of pupils and that differentiates education in response to this diversity (Pijl, 1997).

Inclusion in education can be seen as one of the many aspects of inclusion in society. Inclusion involves bringing support services to the child rather than moving the child to the services (Pijl, 1997). An inclusive school must be flexible. Teachers with

positive attitudes toward inclusion more readily change and adapt the ways they work in order to benefit students with a range of learning needs (Bender, Vail and Scott, 1995). Advocates of inclusion believe that students should not be removed from the mainstream classroom regularly to receive help. They believe by doing this it highlights their disabilities, disrupts their education and violates their rights (Putnam 1998).

For inclusion in schools to work there must be:

- Visionary educational leadership
- Collaborations between everyone concerned
- Refocused use of assessment
- Support for staff and students
- Appropriate funding levels
- Parental involvement
- Curriculum adaptations and instructional practices

(Lipsey and Gartner, 1997, p. 780).

Successful Inclusion

An inclusive ethos implies that all children should be educated together for curricular and social reasons. The success of inclusion depends crucially on how teaching is organised and how interaction among pupils is structured and facilitated. The way a class is physically organised can have important implications for inclusion. The following are very important if inclusion is to work – attitudes of staff, school policy and quality of management (Thomas and Vaughan, 2005, p. 113). Successful inclusive schools have a culture of acceptance. Inclusion is about removing barriers, improving educational outcomes and removing discrimination. The opportunity for greater academic attainment, improved skills, increased self-esteem and benefits to the non-disabled are some of the many benefits of integrated education (Dyson et al. 2004). Other key elements required for successful inclusive schools include an appropriate physical environment, adequate teaching resources, curricular inclusion and a meaningful, collaborative role for parents (Armstrong et al. 2000).

In general, Irish research indicates that teachers have positive attitudes towards all students with SEN (Dagg, 2004). The importance of teacher attitude towards pupils with SEN has been highlighted in the literature (Butler and Shevlin, 2001). However, although teachers are generally happy to include students with SEN in their classrooms, they are less confident about the inclusion of children with behavioural difficulties or Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). For example, research conducted in Ireland by Shevlin et al. (2012) indicates that challenging behaviour is cited as the main reason for continued forms of segregation, with teachers reporting that social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are on the increase “in terms of severity, complexity and prevalence... (and)...that the support systems are inadequate or too slow to respond” (Shevlin et al. 2012, p. 12).

If schools are to be really inclusive then it is critical that they plan to meet the needs of all students through effective early identification assessment and individual educational planning (Westwood, 2007). Teachers, special needs assistants and support staff are central to the success of inclusion. Teachers must have appropriate skills. If inclusion is to work, the way students are taught in the mainstream classroom needs to be flexible enough to meet the diverse needs of all students. The effective delivery of support is crucial for successful inclusion (Westwood, 2007). There is general acceptance in the research literature that all teachers are qualified to teach children with SEN. Although some children need additional support, there is no special pedagogy which has been shown to be especially useful with children who have disabilities or learning difficulties (Thomas and Vaughan, 2005, p. 164). By teaching an inclusive curriculum a teacher may need to alter the format of the lesson, change the arrangements of the groups, change the way instruction is delivered, use different materials and provide alternative tasks. However, if schools, children and teachers, are to receive optimum support to meet the needs of children with SEN in mainstream schools, appropriate resources and adequate funding are necessary.

Teamwork

Teamwork is very important. Children with learning difficulties need classrooms in which there is collaborative learning, negotiation, oral problem solving and discussion among pupils (Gross, 2002). Group work is very beneficial to children with special needs because it increases the resources they can draw on. Children can learn from

many sources – from computers, games and books as well as people, peers, parents and teachers. Meeting individual and special needs is about finding out by observation and by asking which way works best for each child and making sure that the system allows for flexibility and pupil choice in matching resources to learners (Gross, 2002). It is about making learning more meaningful for students (Stevens and O' Moore, 2009).

Where inclusion is working very well there is collaborative teamwork, a shared framework, family involvement, effective use of support staff and procedures for evaluating effectiveness. Inclusion represents the opportunity to participate rather than something that can be made available. This requires changes in professional thinking and practice (Tilstone et al. 1998, p. 21).

Differentiation

Differentiation is important in an inclusive school. Differentiation is a way to promote greater access to the curriculum for all students, including students with special educational needs. Differentiated instruction acknowledges that students learn at different rates and in different ways (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). According to the Department of Education (2007):

Instruction can be differentiated, for example, in relation to the level of difficulty of the subject matter, the style of presentation of a lesson, the pace of the lesson, the lesson structure, the style of questioning, the sequence of learning activities to be undertaken by the student, the degree of access to additional resources for an individual student, and the degree of access to additional teaching support for an individual student (Department of Education, 2007).

Children should be removed from the classroom as seldom as possible to avoid missing out on class work (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). Differentiation is the key to successful curricular inclusion (King, 2006). Differentiation of support is achieved through using alternative teaching methods, resources and groupings to meet individual's needs. The purpose of differentiation is to promote student success in learning (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011).

Barriers to Inclusion

Many class teachers lack confidence in their ability to develop inclusive classrooms because they are dealing with children with special needs and they feel they lack experience in this area (Gross, 2002). Teachers need to be able to work with a specialist to identify appropriate learning objectives, in both academic and social areas for the child.

It is important that schools are able to provide a good education for all its pupils. Farrell (2000) in (Tilstone and Rose 2003, p. 9) suggests that the placement of some children with special educational needs (especially those with severe behavioural problems) in a mainstream classroom may pose a threat to the rights of their mainstream peers to receive a good education. There are many concerns that inclusion in mainstream schools of students with SEN, negatively affects the achievement of other students in that school and lowers academic standards overall (Black-Hawkins et al. 2007). Some believe that pupils with SEN benefit socially from inclusion though at the expense of their academic skills (Hegarty, 1993).

The physical fabric of buildings can be a problem in embracing inclusion. Some school buildings are not suitable for children with disabilities or SEN and this can cause problems for children with SEN (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009). Attitudes of staff regarding the inclusion of children with special educational needs in a mainstream school can be a barrier to inclusion (Butler and Shevlin, 2001). Collaboration among all staff members is also essential. Teachers must receive training for the inclusion of children with SEN.

How Irish Schools are Implementing Inclusive Practices

According to the study carried out by Drudy and Kinsella (2009), there are insufficient teachers in the education system in England and Ireland who possess the expertise in special needs education to support mainstream teachers in teaching all their pupils, including those with special educational needs. There is no consistent model of inclusive practice evident across the majority of Irish schools (Drudy and Kinsella, 2009). Inclusive practices tend to vary from school to school. According to Drudy and Kinsella (2009), Irish schools have not undergone the restructuring that is required to effectively meet the needs of the vast majority of pupils who have special

educational needs. Schools need to make huge changes by adapting curricula, teaching methods, materials and procedures in order to meet the needs of all children in their schools (Ainscow, 1999).

Educational Intervention and Development:

The importance of appropriate educational interventions is of paramount importance for children with special educational needs (INTO, 2000). Research has proven that interventions are most successful when the programmes are intensive, targeted, well planned and documented, provided in small groups and delivered by expert teachers to meet the needs of the individual child (INTO, 1995 and DES, 1999). Quality intervention can be very beneficial to the child with special educational needs. They can reduce difficulties of certain disabilities and help to prevent additional problems (DES, 1999).

Moving Towards Schools for All:

Concrete materials are very useful in making learning more interesting. There should be an appropriate amount of time allowed for practice and reinforcement of new skills and concepts (DES, 2007, p. 105). Differentiation has been identified as a key feature of enabling students with SEN to access a broad and balanced curriculum.

Differentiation involves attempting to cater for the individual needs of the pupil while teaching in an ordinary classroom (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011).

Conclusion:

There have been significant changes in special education policy and practice. Special education has become the concern of the general education system (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 268). Children with special needs have been included in the mainstream school. Resources have been put in place but there are not always adequate resources available to enable schools to become fully inclusive. Although there is abundant literature on inclusive education there is little practical information and guidance on how the theories and principles underlying inclusion translate into effective teaching practices (NCSE, 2010).

Moving towards inclusion can be a slow process and many factors need to come together for successful systemic change (Topping and Maloney, 2005). Inclusive

education has the potential to benefit all students, their families and the whole school community. For inclusion to happen in schools there needs to be the development of enabling policies, local support systems and appropriate forms of curriculum and assessment (NCSE, 2010). The ten themes of inclusion are there to guide schools to become more inclusive.

Attitudes of all members of staff in a school are central to the process of including children with special educational needs in the mainstream school. Teachers and all staff members need to be willing to include children with special needs. The literature has shown how schools need to make changes by adapting curricula, teaching methods, materials and procedures in order to meet the needs of all children.

Chapter 3: Methodology:

Introduction

The main aims of the study and the research questions are included within this chapter. The research methods are then explained with the reasons for adopting the approach outlined. This is followed by a description of the participants in the study, a summary of the methods of data collection, an explanation of how the data was analysed, an outline of the ethical procedures in accordance with which the study was conducted and a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to gather data relating to the perceptions of the inclusive nature of the school from the principal, eight teachers, two special needs assistants and four parents. The four parents had children with different special educational needs. One child had Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD, another had Dyspraxia, a third had a Mild Learning Disability and the fourth had Down Syndrome. For the purpose of the study the school is called Rose Hill Primary School. The researcher wanted to get multiple perspectives on the issue of including children with special educational needs in Rose Hill Primary School.

To achieve this purpose -

- 1 A comprehensive review of relevant literature relating to the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools was carried out, and
- 2 the principal, teachers, four parents and two special needs assistants from Rose Hill Primary School were interviewed by the researcher.

The researcher wanted to find out:

- Does Rose Hill Primary School meet the criteria for an inclusive school as set out by the principles identified within the ten themes of inclusion drawn up by the NCSE's Consultative Forum (NCSE, 2010)?
- Has the implementation of a policy of inclusion had a bearing on the running of the school and, in particular, on the organisation and conduct of classes?

- Does the admission policy of the school comply with the principles of inclusion as set out in the ten themes of inclusion (NCSE, 2010)?

A case study of the school was conducted. The research carried out was qualitative in nature. The research data was collected by means of (a) semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher with the principal, eight teachers, two special needs assistants and four parents and (b) profiles of the children of the four parents were compiled from information obtained from their teachers, special needs assistants and parents.

Qualitative Research Method

The aim of the qualitative researcher is to provide insights into the lives, experiences and understandings of the research participants. However, only partial understandings of such situations can be provided (Opie, 2004).

Denzin (1978) stated that qualitative research involves the researcher viewing “human conduct from the point of view of those they are studying and is part of a studied commitment to actively enter the worlds of interacting individuals” (Denzin, 1978, p. 8). While qualitative research has the advantages of allowing the researcher to gain knowledge from the direct experience of the participants in the study, and provides an opportunity for data to be presented in the language of the participants, it also has limitations (Opie, 2005, p. 151).

Case Study

A case study can be viewed as “an in-depth study of interactions of a single instance in an enclosed system” (Opie, 2005, p. 74). As in the case of this study, the focus of a case study is on a real situation with real people in an environment familiar to the researcher (Opie, 2005, p. 74). A case study must be methodically prepared and the collection of evidence must be systematically undertaken (Opie, 2005, p. 74).

Interviews

“Interviews highlight the role of human interaction and the importance of the social context in generating knowledge” (Kvale, 1996). They allow for deeper, more nuanced descriptions of participants’ lives, and opportunities to clarify

misunderstandings experienced by the interviewee, than other methods of data collection (Cohen et al. 2000; Kvale, 1996). Interviews tend to have better outcomes, where the interviewer has good relationships with the interview participants (Opie, 2004, p. 29).

Interviews should encourage respondents to develop their own ideas, feelings, insights, expectations or attitudes thereby “allowing the respondents to say what they think and to do so with greater richness and spontaneity” (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 81). Conducting an interview and analysing its content requires considerable interpersonal skills. As Oppenheim (1992) notes “The interviewer should be able to maintain control of the interview, to probe gently but incisively and to a pleasant measure of authority and an assurance of confidentiality” (Oppenheim, 1992, p.70).

However, interviews have their limitations. “The quality of data can be affected by issues of mutual trust, social distance, power, uneasiness of respondents to questions, different meanings attached to words and the subjectivity, bias, control, and the skills and attributes of the interviewer” (Cicourel, 1964 and Woods, 1986 cited in Cohen et al.2000).

Semi-structured interviews were used in this case study as they provided “more latitude of response than the structured interview” (Opie, 2005, p. 115). In a semi-structured interview the interviewer can ask the initial question which he or she can follow with supplementary questions. However, the flexibility of the semi-structured interview may cause problems as there is the possibility that researcher bias may distort the data (Opie, 2004, p. 115).

To support evidence from data through interviews, the researcher also checked policy documents to see if the school is actively pursuing a policy of inclusion with regard to children with SEN. In order to do this the researcher consulted the policy documents of the school. These policy documents included a policy on the provision of education for children with special educational needs, an enrolment policy and an assessment policy (Appendix E).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this research. Thematic analysis is a foundation method for qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Thematic analysis involves searching across a set of data, for example a number of interviews, to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 10). Writing is an essential part of thematic analysis. The writing in thematic analysis is not something that takes place at the end of the process as it does with statistical analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 11). The writing should therefore begin in phase one, with the jotting down of ideas and potential coding schemes and continue right through the entire coding analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 11). The coding analysis process starts when the researcher begins to look for patterns of meaning and matters of potential interest in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 12). It is important that the researcher is familiar with the content of the data. The data should be read repeatedly in an active way, i.e. by searching for meaning and patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 13). The process of transcribing interviews is an excellent way for the researcher to become familiar with the data (Riessman, 1993, p. 11). It is relatively easy for a researcher to carry out a good thematic analysis on qualitative data even when a researcher is still learning qualitative techniques (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be useful for producing qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 20).

However, “Thematic analysis has limited interpretative power beyond mere description, if it is not used within an existing theoretical framework that supports the analytic claims that are made” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 21). Other disadvantages appear when thematic analysis is considered in relation to some of the other qualitative analytic methods. For instance, unlike narrative or other biographical approaches, the researcher may be unable to retain a sense of continuity and contradiction in relation to any one individual account in cases where contradictions and inconsistencies across individual accounts may be revealing (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 21).

Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

Reliability as defined by Anastas (1999, p.316) is “demonstrating that the data are what they are, independent of the accidental circumstances of the data collection process”. Wellington (2000) describes reliability as “the extent to which a test, a method or a tool gives consistent results across a range of settings and if used by a range of researchers” (Wellington, 2000, p. 200). Bell (1993) defines reliability as “the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions” (Bell, 1993, p. 103). In qualitative research, reliability of the findings can be difficult to assess as the research is “so personal to the researcher and there is no guarantee that another researcher would not come to radically different conclusions” (Mays et al, 1995, p 109). Validity can be defined as “the degree to which the data has been interpreted in the right way” or as making a realistic decision about what the data means (Anastas, 1999, p. 316). Wellington defines validity as “the degree to which a method, a test or a research tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure” (Wellington, 2000, p. 201). Data validity can be inhibited by the interests and opinions of the individual researcher. What a researcher considers important maybe influenced by his/her interests and opinions. Therefore the significance placed on similar information by different researchers may not be consistent.

Achieving validity in interviewing is a recurring problem (Cohen et al. 2000). To counteract this problem a conscious effort should be made by the interviewer to lessen the impact of his/her bias. Every interviewer should be aware of the tendency whereby the interviewer sees the respondent in his/her (i.e. the interviewer's) own image and to seek answers that support preconceived notions and misunderstandings by both interviewer and respondent (Cohen et al. 2000). Kirk and Miller (1986, p. 29) argue that “type three error,” that is, asking the wrong question is the source of most validity errors. It may also be the case that the researcher and participants unintentionally influence each other. An interviewee may give the answer he/she feels the researcher is looking for.

The criteria that have traditionally been used to judge the quality of research are validity, reliability and objectivity (Scaife, 2004, p. 71). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested that a better indicator might be the trustworthiness of the research.

Trustworthiness as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) involves “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability”.

Pilot Study

A pilot study is important as it may help to eliminate any ambiguous, confusing or insensitive questions (Opie, 2004, p. 116). In this research a pilot study was conducted to ensure the clarity of the questions and to determine the interpretation of the volunteer participants. Four teachers, one parent and one SNA were presented with draft interview questions to be used in the study. Interviews were then carried out with those participants based on the draft questions. Following the interviews, feedback was obtained from the participants and the interview questions to be used in the study were revised and finalised. Through conducting the pilot interviews the researcher was made aware of the importance of negotiating the method of recording interviews well in advance with the participants (Opie, 2004, p. 16).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations apply throughout the research process. Researchers must make sure that they have taken all possible safeguards to avoid doing wrong to anyone involved in the research (Sikes, 2004, p. 32). Within research design, researchers need to think carefully about the consequences of adopting particular methodologies and procedures to conduct their research (Sikes, 2004, p. 26). Accessing research populations raises a number of ethical issues. Gaining the permission of teachers, parents or children for example, may be appropriate in some cases but not in others (Sikes, 2004, p. 27). In this study, permission was sought from all the participants taking part in the interviews. The researcher arranged for the children to be observed by their SNAs and teachers having first obtained parental permission for this to be done. The notes taken in the course of the observations were given to the researcher.

The ethical issues arising in relation to the interviews and observations were informed consent, confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time (Cohen et al, 2000). The right to withdraw at any time was not exercised by any of the participants in the study. Informed consent was obtained in writing and all participants were assured in writing that they and the school would be anonymised in writing and all identifiable features deliberately changed. It is also important for the researcher to take into

consideration the time demands that participating in the research will impose on the respondents (Sikes, 2004, p. 28). It is important to remember that research affects people's lives. Understanding this will help to ensure that research is ethical and can be justified (Sikes, 2004, p. 32).

The researcher was careful not to ask misleading questions. The researcher also took care to avoid supplying answers to her own questions by allowing respondents sufficient time to formulate their own answers.

Limitations of the Study

Time and resource constraints placed limitations on the research. The research was conducted over a ten month period. The researcher conducted a case study in one school only. A case study does not set out to implement any changes as a result of its findings. "Although findings may result in recommendations being made, this is not part of the research process" (Opie, 2004, p.79). However, despite these limitations, steps were taken to ensure consistency, reliability and validity. Therefore, it is considered that the study has generated plausible and credible findings.

Reflections on Research Methodology

A case study approach was used in the study. "A case study can be viewed as an in-depth study of interactions of a single instance in an enclosed system. The issue of numbers for a case study is therefore meaningless" (Opie, 2004, p. 74). The case study approach was therefore a useful and appropriate way to study the inclusiveness, or otherwise, of Rose Hill School.

Clear reasons should be given for the sample chosen in the study. The aim is to choose "those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). It is therefore crucial that the sample selected is in keeping with this logic and able to be clearly justified and articulated. In the study the four parents were chosen as they all had children with special educational needs in the school. In addition, the principal and teachers and SNAs directly involved in the education of the children were also involved in the case study. For ethical reasons the researcher deliberately did not choose to ask children themselves to participate in the study and any observations that were

drawn from were made on the part of SNAs and teachers in the course of their usual work practice and as such did not generate a need to disrupt the children's day to day activities. It was crucial that parents were aware that the researcher was availing of these insights to contextualise data gathered through interviews. The consent of the parents was sought appropriately.

The use of interviews yielded additional information from the participants in the study, i.e. more detailed and nuanced information than would have been obtained if questionnaires only had been used. As the study progressed it became clear that people were willing to give more information in an interview situation than they would have in response to questionnaires. In the study respondents developed and elaborated their own "ideas, feelings, insights and attitudes" (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 81). The researcher gained more information than she had anticipated through the use of interviews. In the study an appropriate venue for each interview was used which offered privacy for the respondents. The respondents expressed themselves happy with the venue used to conduct the interviews. Careful consideration was made regarding the seating arrangements. Questions were given to the respondents prior to the interviews. Consent was sought from all participants on the method of recording the interviews, i.e. dictaphone. The participants expressed appreciation for being consulted on how the interviews were to be conducted and recorded.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter the techniques that were used to carry out this research, and to establish its reliability and validity, are discussed. The research was conducted in accordance with appropriate ethical principles. A case study, preceded by a pilot study, was conducted in Rose Hill Primary School to examine how inclusive that school is in the education of children with special educational needs. Interviews were conducted to get a multiple of perspectives on the inclusiveness of the school. Transcripts were written for each interview and thematic analysis was used to find "repeated patterns and meanings in the data collected" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 12). The findings of the research are set out in chapter 4 and discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

Fifteen interviews were conducted in Rose Hill Primary School to get a multiple of perspectives on how children with special needs are included in Rose Hill Primary School. There were four groups of people interviewed – the principal, eight teachers, two special needs assistants and four parents (Appendices A,B, C, D). The four parents had children with different special educational needs. One child had Dyspraxia, another had Down Syndrome, a third had Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD and the fourth had a Mild Learning Disability (Appendices F, G, H, I, J). A profile of the four children was compiled from information obtained from their teachers, special needs assistants and parents.

All names used in this chapter are pseudonyms as it is important to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in the study. The interview questions were based on the ten themes of inclusion as drawn up the NCSE's Consultative Forum.

Questions of common interest were put to all four groups. In addition to the questions that were common to all the interviews, questions of specific relevance to each group were put to the relevant group.

How Inclusive is Rose Hill School?

All participants from the four groups of people interviewed considered the school to be inclusive. They commented on the “lovely welcoming atmosphere” in the school and the “willingness of all staff members to do their best for all the children in the school” (Appendices L2, L3). A newly appointed teacher in the school commented on the “friendliness” of all the staff members and how there is a willingness among everyone to help each other (Appendix L8). The teachers felt that there was a whole-school approach towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the school. One teacher believed that the school was inclusive because “parents are constantly telling me how inclusive the school is” (Appendix L3). The principal also considered the school to be inclusive “as no child has ever been refused entry into the school because the school was not able to cater for their needs”. The principal did, however, comment on the physical fabric of the school building and pointed out that

the school is not fully accessible to students with a physical disability because the building has two storeys and no lift. There are no children with such disabilities in the school at present (Appendix K).

Teachers also commented on how they try to use different teaching strategies when teaching in order to cater for the needs of all the children in their classes. The teachers in the school have started team teaching this year (Appendices L1, L2). This is where two or more teachers teach together in a classroom. Teachers perceived that this was working well and one particular benefit of team teaching is that children do not have to be withdrawn from the classroom to receive special tuition.

One SNA commented on how the principal and teachers know all the children in the school by name. “There is a special effort in the whole school to know everybody individually” (Appendix M1). She thinks this is important because it enhances children’s self-esteem and helps them to become more confident. Another SNA, when asked what she likes most about her job, replied “I love seeing the children make progress” (Appendix M2). She found the school to be inclusive as everyone is treated the same. “Children with special educational needs are given the same opportunities as everyone else”.

The four parents interviewed also considered Rose Hill Primary School to be inclusive. The parents commented on how they are kept informed of everything being done for their children. The parents acknowledged that “even though there is little funding for resources needed in the school, teachers make the best use of the resources they have”. One parent expressed the view that the school is inclusive as “all children are educated together regardless of their needs”. She commented on the fact that even though her child has a learning disability, she has never complained about feeling different or left out (Appendix N4). Two of the parents and one teacher mentioned how all children regardless of their needs are encouraged to take part in sport and games. Two parents commented on how their children being involved in sport in the school has really helped their self-esteem (Appendices N1, N4). One teacher mentioned how the “hurling and football teams try to include everyone” (Appendix L7).

One parent who has a child with Down Syndrome discussed how, in her opinion, the principal helped make the school inclusive. “The principal is so positive and proactive and has a vision for the school” (Appendix N2). She also liked the way the principal was “honest and realistic” about all matters affecting the school’s ability to fully meet her child’s needs (Appendix N2). All four parents commented on how there is very good communication between the teachers and parents in the school. They are informed of everything that is happening in the school both individually by teachers and by means of newsletters, school website, text messages and phone calls (Appendices N1, N2, N3, N4).

How Can Rose Hill School Become More Inclusive?

More resources for Children with Special Educational Needs

While the participants all agreed that Rose Hill School could be more inclusive if there were more resources available in the school for children with special educational needs, one parent expressed the view that the best resource any school can have is “...a good teacher. There is no computer programme or learning aid that can substitute a good teacher” (Appendix N4). As regards the additional resources needed, the teacher who is teaching the boy with Down Syndrome commented on how she had to improvise her own resources as she did not have adequate school resources to teach the boy. For instance, his disability means that he needs information to be presented to him visually. As there are few school resources in this regard, the teacher has to make her own pictures and models to teach the boy (Appendix L5).

More Training for Teachers in the Area of Special Education

All the teachers commented that they did not receive appropriate practical training in college in the area of special educational needs. The instruction they received was purely theoretical. All eight teachers would like more practical training. One teacher (who is currently a resource teacher) commented on the fact that most of the courses are aimed specifically at learning support or resource teachers. According to her, most of these courses are not available to mainstream teachers (Appendix L1). The principal disagrees with this view pointing out that there are courses available for teachers to participate in but that teachers have not opted to do these courses. He

thinks he could do more to promote the participation of teachers in courses designed to help teachers teach children with special educational needs. However he perceives a difficulty in that: “You don’t want to undermine people by telling them that they should do a certain course” (Appendix K).

Better Links with Outside Agencies

Four of the eight teachers and two of the parents interviewed felt that there were few links between the school and outside agencies and professionals such as speech therapists and occupational therapists (Appendices L1, L3, L4, L7, N2 and N4). One parent expressed the view that teachers need to have close links with speech therapists and occupational therapists. “These professionals could advise the teachers on the best way to maximise the child’s learning potential” (Appendix, N2). This parent also thought that teachers should have access to training for basic signing systems such as “lámh” and “Hanan” (Appendices P, Q). This parent also stated that teachers should be given the opportunity to visit a “service provider” like St. John of Gods. The principal, while agreeing in principle with this suggestion, saw practical difficulties in establishing and maintaining links with outside agencies. He cited in particular the demands that maintaining such links would make on teachers’ time (Appendix K).

Access to all Extra-Curricular Activities in the School

The parent of Eoin, who has Down Syndrome, suggested one way she felt the school could be more inclusive (Appendix N2). Her child was unable to attend a mixed activity camp held in the school on a Saturday by a teacher in the school. The teacher told the mother that she would not be able to manage Eoin by herself. Eoin’s mother expressed disappointment with the teacher’s view as, in her view Eoin is a member of the school community and, as such, he should be given the same opportunity as all his peers to take part in extra-curricular activities being held in the school. She acknowledged that Eoin could be difficult to manage, but she felt that the teacher was remiss in failing to talk directly with her, as Eoin’s mother, on how she, the teacher, might be able to manage Eoin’s participation in the camp. Eoin’s mother said she would have been willing to attend the camp herself or to pay someone, such as an SNA, to attend the camp with Eoin.

I strongly believe that if we want to make our school inclusive, then we must actively promote inclusivity. This means that all children should be invited

to participate in whatever is open to them and their peers. We can't call ourselves inclusive and then not insist that people who are using our school for purposes outside the curriculum can discriminate on the ground that they couldn't manage a child with special needs (Appendix N2).

Books and Posters about Children with Special Educational Needs

Two SNAs and two parents commented on how the availability of books about children with special educational needs would benefit all the children in the school (Appendices M1, M2, N3, N4). An SNA felt such books would be especially beneficial if they were brought home by children and discussed with their parents (Appendix M2). Another teacher thought there should be more posters on school walls depicting children and adults with special educational needs and disabilities (Appendix L1).

How to Discuss Children with Special Educational Needs?

One parent expressed the opinion that the language used to discuss children with special needs should demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity to their special needs. Eoin's mother would like teachers and children to be aware that her son "is not a Down Syndrome boy but that Eoin is a boy with Down Syndrome". She thinks it is important to talk to all the children about the different kinds of needs that children and people can have (Appendix N2). The principal expressed a similar view. He feels: "It is important for children to be in the same school as children with special needs. It is beneficial for all children" (Appendix K).

The Challenges Teachers and SNAs Face When Teaching Children with Special Educational Needs

Lack of Essential Resources

Eight teachers commented on how lack of essential resources for teaching children with special needs made it more difficult for them to teach these children (Appendices L1 – L8). Among the resources teachers perceived to be necessary were: computers, iPads with earphones and concrete materials. Teachers and the principal expressed the view that, notwithstanding the excellent goodwill of the school staff, it is difficult to carry out plans without, what they considered to be the necessary resources and supports in place.

Lack of Time

The lack of time to accommodate the diverse needs of children in the classroom was identified as a difficulty by many teachers. One teacher said that her biggest challenge was “finding the time to help the children in her class with special educational needs while, at the same time, looking after the needs of the other children” (Appendix L7). Teachers perceived a difficulty in finding time to plan for team teaching, which is of particular benefit to children with special educational needs, given the many demands on their individual time.

Differentiation

Differentiation means using alternative teaching methods, resources and groupings to meet individual needs. The purpose of differentiation is to promote student success in learning (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). There was evidence from the findings that teachers acknowledge the need for differentiation in their classrooms. However, a challenge which emerged from the study was the difficulty teachers appeared to have in carrying out the planning required to differentiate successfully. Four teachers commented on the “lack of time to differentiate lessons to cater for the needs of all children in their class”.

Lack of Support from Outside Agencies

Particular reference was made to the lack of support from and engagement with non-teaching auxiliary services (Appendices L1, L3, L4, L7). A number of participants talked about the need for improved resources and support from non-teaching professionals such as psychologists and health and social-related service providers (Appendices L1, L3, N2). Lack of input from speech and language therapists and occupational therapists in particular emerged as a recurring theme when analysing data from one parent interview and four teacher interviews (Appendices L1, L3, L4, L7, and N2).

Lack of Space

Lack of space was viewed by some of the interviewees as a challenge and a barrier to inclusion. The parent of Eoin who has Down Syndrome talked about how Eoin needs to move around and do exercises regularly as he finds it very difficult to sit still (Appendix N2). There is little space in the classroom for him to do this. Teachers

talked about how they had little space in their classrooms to designate as special areas for activities such as reading or music. Another teacher mentioned how she found her classroom “too small” especially with regard to one boy, Daniel, in her class who has Asperger’s Syndrome and ADHD (Appendices H, I) and who needs to leave his seat and move around the classroom regularly (Appendix L6).

The Profiles of the Four Children in the Study

The four children in the study were observed by their class teachers and SNAs. These observations were asked for and provided in consultation with the teachers and parents to provide context for discussions which specifically drew on these children as examples of children with SEN. The teachers and SNAs noted their observations in observation sheets provided to them by the researcher. The researcher also obtained information about the children from their parents. The four children had different special educational needs. Eoin is a boy in Junior Infants who has Down Syndrome, Andrew is a boy in second class who has Dyspraxia, Daniel is a boy in fifth class who has Asperger’s Syndrome and ADHD and Lucy is a girl in fifth class who has a Mild Learning Disability.

Andrew

Andrew has dyspraxia (Appendix F). When doing group work Andrew puts his head down and finds it difficult to interact with the other children. Andrew often puts his hand up to answer a question and then forgets why he has put his hand up. Andrew finds writing extremely difficult. His difficulty appears to include a degree of physical pain. Andrew will only attempt to write when helped and encouraged by his teacher. Andrew likes to play on his own and has been observed during yard time skipping in geometric patterns while moving his hands up and down in the air. However, when it is his class’s turn to play football during yard time Andrew becomes actively involved and seems to really enjoy it.

Eoin

Eoin has Down Syndrome (Appendix G). He is a six year old boy who is in Junior Infants. Eoin is frequently absent from school due to illness. Socially he has made great progress this year. He interacts well with his peers. His favourite part of the day is “yard time”. He loves playing with his friends. Even though his speech is

limited, he can communicate well with his peers. Eoin has a short concentration span and finds it difficult to sit still in the classroom. He often makes non-verbal noises in the classroom. His SNA observed the other children's reactions to these noises and was surprised to observe that none of the children paid any attention to them. His SNA needs to bring him for walks regularly and lets him do stretches and other movements outside the classroom. There is a pictorial timetable in the classroom specifically for Eoin, but it is also of benefit to other students. Eoin learns mainly from information presented visually. The teacher has made sure that there is a strong emphasis on visual learning for Eoin.

Daniel

Daniel is a boy in Fifth class with Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD (Appendices H and I). He has an SNA to assist him throughout the school day. Daniel has a very poor attention span. He finds it difficult to control his behaviour. He is often reluctant to engage in activities that require prolonged effort. Daniel finds it difficult to concentrate and refuses to partake in any activity which does not interest him. When interested in an activity, he will take an active part. He finds it very difficult to interact with his peers. He is domineering, tries to insist everything is done his way and has no concept of the need to compromise. Daniel has poor muscle tone and finds it very difficult to sit on his chair in class. Daniel needs to get up and walk around the classroom regularly. He is easily distracted. He is also susceptible to noise. Sudden, unexpected noises often upset him. During a music lesson, for instance, he was observed to put his hands over his ears when he apparently did not like the music being played.

Lucy

Lucy is a girl with a mild general learning disability in fifth class (Appendix J). She finds it difficult to express her feelings and ideas. Lucy experiences difficulties with reading, writing and comprehension. The children in her class are reading a novel. As Lucy cannot read well, the SNA reads the book to Lucy in another room. Lucy has difficulty understanding mathematical concepts. In the classroom Lucy was observed to be attentive and conscientious. To help her overcome the difficulties she experiences, the SNA gives her extra instruction. Lucy gets on well with her peers

and is a member of the girl's football team. According to Lucy's Mum, this helps her self-esteem (Appendix N4).

The Parents Who Participated in the Study

The parents of Andrew, Eoin, Daniel and Lucy participated in the interviews. The information garnered was central to this research. It is, therefore, important to consider what the parents had to say in detail.

Andrew's Mother (Appendix N1)

Laura sent her child to Rose Hill School because it was a small school and her nephew was a past pupil of the school. Andrew was diagnosed with Dyspraxia in Junior Infants. Laura feels there are adequate resources in the school to cater for Andrew's needs. She said that "anytime I asked for anything I got it". Her child doesn't have an SNA but he receives "resource hours" and receives special tuition from the resource teacher in the school. Laura is happy with the progress he is making. She feels there is good communication between the teachers and parents in the school. Laura is informed of everything Andrew is involved in and the progress he is making. She has concerns about how he will cope socially in school. To help develop his social skills Laura sent him to "football for all". This is football coaching that caters for children with special needs. This has really helped Andrew to improve his social skills. It has also improved his motor skills. Laura observed that Andrew really enjoyed participating in "football for all". The school has accommodated Andrew by enabling him to play football during yard time. Fourth, fifth and sixth classes used to be the only classes who could play football during lunch time but now second and third class can play also.

Andrew is taken from the class to receive his resource hours. He doesn't really like leaving the classroom this year, but Laura is happy he is receiving this special tuition and tries to encourage him to attend. She hopes that by participating in this special tuition Andrew will improve his writing and motor skills. Laura's primary concern is for Andrew to be happy. Laura considers the school to be inclusive. She feels the teachers are aware of Andrew's condition and finds them sensitive to his needs. Laura thinks that Andrew is treated the same as all the other children in the school.

Eoin's Mother (Appendix N2)

Sarah has a child with Down Syndrome. She decided to send her child to Rose Hill School following advice received from a member of staff in St. John of God where her child had attended. Sarah found the principal's attitude to be positive when she asked him if Eoin could attend the school. "He was very positive but realistic and honest which was brilliant". Sarah commented on how the principal has been extremely supportive and she thinks he has a great "vision for the school".

Sarah does not think there are enough resources in the school to teach children with special educational needs. She feels there needs to be a speech therapist in the school who could work with Eoin once a week and advise the teacher what he/she could do to help Eoin. Teachers could also get insight from a speech therapist. Sarah believes that teachers need more training in the area of special education. It would be beneficial to teachers and their pupils if the teachers were trained in communication techniques such as "Lámh" (Appendix P) and "Hanan" (Appendix Q). Teachers need to be able to communicate with children who are "non-verbal". The teachers have begun teaching some "lamh" signs to children in the school. Sarah is delighted that the school has taken this initiative since Eoin started school.

Sarah hopes that Eoin's speech and motor skills will improve. She hopes he will become more independent and confident. Sarah thinks that communication between parents and teachers is vital. Sarah considers that she receives good support from all the staff in the school. Sarah communicates daily with Eoin's class teacher by writing in a notebook. She writes down how Eoin is feeling each morning and gives insights into other important things that are happening in the family, e.g. a birthday, so that the teacher can converse meaningfully with Eoin. The teacher also writes in this notebook making Sarah aware of all the things Eoin has done in class each day. Sarah believes the school is inclusive. Sarah stressed that it is important for the school community to be sensitive about the language used when talking about her son Eoin. "Eoin is not a Down Syndrome boy, but a boy with Down Syndrome".

Sarah feels that there is one way the school could be more inclusive. All children in the school should be allowed partake in after-school activities held in the school. There was a camp in the school pre-Christmas, organised by a teacher in the school.

The teacher told Sarah that Eoin could not attend the camp as his needs were too great for her to manage on her own. Sarah was upset. She felt she had not been given a chance to discuss Eoin's needs with the teacher and to make suggestions as to how any perceived difficulty might be overcome. Sarah felt aggrieved that all Eoin's classmates were able to attend this camp but Eoin could not, even though he too is a member of the school community.

Daniel's Mother (Appendix N3)

Niamh has a child in fifth class. He was diagnosed with ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome in fourth class. Niamh sent Daniel to Rose Hill School as many family members had attended the school. Niamh is delighted Daniel has an SNA this year. The SNA really helps him with his work and praises him. This is important because Daniel has low self-esteem. Niamh finds Daniel's SNA to be understanding. She feels that there is good communication between her, the principal and the teachers in the school. The principal sometimes, "...rings me at 6 o'clock in the evening to tell me how Daniel's day has gone and to have a chat". Niamh feels she is listened to. She worries about Daniel going to secondary school because she is unsure if Daniel will receive the same help he receives now in Rose Hill Primary School.

Niamh finds the school inclusive. Daniel started play therapy in the school. He was able to choose four of his classmates to participate in play therapy. Daniel really benefits from the play therapy and Niamh thinks it has helped him to become more self-confident and happier in himself. She believes it is important that Daniel is in a mainstream school.

Lucy's Mother (Appendix N4)

Ellen has a girl with a mild learning disability. Her child is in fifth class. Ellen decided to send Lucy to Rose Hill School as the school has a good reputation as a caring, welcoming school. Ellen thinks the school has limited resources but the staff make the best of the resources they have. Ellen believes the most important resource a school can have is "a good teacher. There is no computer programme or learning aids that can substitute a good teacher". Ellen hopes her child can achieve her potential in Rose Hill Primary School. Being involved in sport has really helped Lucy

in school. “Lucy doesn’t feel different to anyone else in the school”. Ellen thinks there is great communication between teachers and parents in the school.

Ellen remembers when she was in school in 1974. There was a special building in the school for children with special needs. Ellen’s best friend was one of the children sent to this special building. Ellen missed her friend when she was separated from her and could not understand why this should be the case as her friend had an outgoing personality while she herself was shy and retiring.

Ellen thinks the school is inclusive. She thinks all children are educated together irrespective of their needs. “Although Lucy has a learning disability she feels the same as everyone else and has never complained about feeling different or left out”. She commented that there is a good emphasis on sport in the school. Even though girls are in the minority they are as equally involved as boys in the school’s sporting activities. Ellen believes that being involved in sport has really helped Lucy’s self-esteem. Lucy goes to “language therapy” classes outside school. Ellen believes language therapy would really help Lucy and indeed many other children in the school.

The four parents interviewed are happy that they have sent their children to a mainstream school. Overall the four parents feel that their children are given the same opportunities as the other children in the school. The four parents interviewed believe that teachers and staff in the school do what they can to help all children in the school even if this is with limited resources and funding from the Department of Education.

Concluding Comments

The researcher's aim was to establish how inclusive Rose Hill Primary school is with regard to children with special educational needs. A multiple of perspectives on inclusiveness was obtained by means of interviews. Those interviewed were: eight teachers, four parents, two SNAs and the school principal. All interview participants considered Rose Hill School to be an inclusive school. The positive attitude of teachers and all staff members towards inclusion is seen as a key factor in making Rose Hill School inclusive, as is their willingness to put inclusive practices into effect. All teachers interviewed believe that they use a variety of teaching strategies to teach their students. All participants did, however, feel that the school could become more inclusive. Lack of essential resources, training for teachers in the area of special education and lack of support from outside agencies are some of the factors acting as barriers to inclusion in Rose Hill School. The data obtained from the four parent interviews gave a revealing insight into the degree of inclusivity in Rose Hill School, as the parents have no vested interest in seeking to portray the school as inclusive. Profiles of the children of the four parents were drawn up as it was important for the study to include insights into the experiences of the children to further contextualise the discussion within this case study.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

Introduction

The chapter provides analysis of the results under five main headings – successful inclusion, leadership, teachers, special needs assistants and parents. These five headings are relevant to the study. In conducting the thematic analysis in conjunction with the review of the literature, these themes emerged as the major headings under which sub themes were interrogated.

Achieving successful inclusion requires the involvement of parents, all school-based personnel, support staff and the students themselves (NCSE, 2010, p. 28). Apart from the students, the other personnel who need to be involved in inclusion can be divided into four groups, i.e. the principal, teachers, special needs assistants and parents. The researcher thought it was important to analyse the data obtained from the interviewees drawn from each of the four groups as, in the opinion of the researcher, the interviewees gave honest and revealing answers to the questions put to them during the course of the interviews.

The principal's role and views on the issue of inclusion are analysed under the heading Leadership. "Visionary leadership is essential for inclusion" (NCSE, 2010). The principal demonstrated by his answers that he has the vision necessary to promote the inclusion of children with special needs in the school. This was forcefully demonstrated by the principal's stated view that all the children in a school benefit when children with special needs are part of the school community (Appendix K).

The teachers, special needs assistants and parents gave important insights into how the children with special needs are included in Rose Hill School. For instance, the parents consider that all the staff in the school have a positive attitude towards the children with special needs and consider it important that those children be fully included in all school activities (Appendices N1, N2, N3, N4). The parents believe that the principal has the vision necessary to promote inclusion in the school. The staff, in their responses to the questions put during the interviews, demonstrated openness to inclusion and a clear idea of what was needed to make the school fully inclusive (Appendices L1 – M2).

The NCSE's Consultative Forum has drawn up ten themes of inclusion as a guide to help schools to determine how inclusive their school is. These have been used to assess the extent to which Rose Hill Primary School is inclusive. The researcher will discuss these themes under the five main headings in this chapter. The researcher will analyse the data to determine where these themes are relevant to the findings shown in Chapter Four and where these themes are not relevant. The researcher wishes (a) to explore how the findings fit into the existing body of knowledge and (b) to consider if these findings are consistent with current theories, or if they give new insights. The literature discussed in Chapter Two will be addressed and new, relevant literature will be introduced.

Successful Inclusion

The following are important if inclusion is to be successful – attitudes of staff, school policy and quality of management (Thomas et al, 2005, p. 113).

The attitudes of staff in Rose Hill School towards inclusion were seen by all the respondents as a key factor in making Rose Hill School inclusive. The four parents interviewed commented on the good communication between teachers and parents in the school. The principal is seen by the four parents as having a “vision for the school”.

Inclusion can be defined as “A means to remove barriers, improve outcomes and remove discrimination” (Lindsay, 2003, p. 3). Three of the four parents interviewed in Rose Hill School believe that their children with special needs are treated the same as the other children in the school (Appendices N1, N3, N4). They believe that children with special needs are encouraged to take part in sport and extra-curricular activities in Rose Hill School. One teacher commented on how, “the hurling and football teams encourage all children to join their teams” (Appendix L7). One parent, however, was concerned that her child (Eoin) was unable to partake in a Saturday camp which took place on the school premises. The teacher told the mother that she would be unable to manage Eoin by herself. Eoin's mother expressed disappointment with the teacher's attitude as, in her view, Eoin is a member of the school community and, as such, he should be given the same opportunity as all his peers to take part in extra-curricular activities being held in the school (Appendix N2).

Other important elements required for successful inclusive schools include an appropriate physical environment, adequate teaching resources, curricular inclusion and a meaningful collaborative role for parents (Armstrong et al, 2000).

Physical Features (Theme 2)

Class size and overcrowding can act as barriers to creating a safe and inclusive environment that supports learning (NCSE, 2010). Studies have shown that students in overcrowded schools score significantly lower in both maths and reading comprehension than similar students in less crowded conditions (Rivera-Batiz and Marti, 1995). The respondents commented on how they thought that the physical environment of Rose Hill School was a barrier to full inclusivity for everyone in the school (Appendices, L3, M1). All the respondents alluded to a perceived lack of space in classrooms. Teachers talked about how they had little space in their classrooms to designate as special areas for activities such as reading or music (Appendices L6, L7, L8). One teacher mentioned how she found her classroom “too small” especially to accommodate one particular boy in her class, Daniel, who has ADHD and Asperger’s Syndrome. Because of his special needs, Daniel has to leave his seat and move around the classroom regularly (Appendix L6). The principal commented on how the layout of the school building means that all areas of the school are not accessible to children with certain physical disabilities as the school has two storeys and no lift (Appendix K). At present no children with such physical disabilities attend Rose Hill School. The principal envisages that this could be a problem in the future.

Adequate Resources and Services

A necessary resource for children who have motor coordination or motor control problems would be the services of an occupational therapist. Where such a service is not available, a teacher can liaise with an occupational therapist for advice on appropriate activities to help children with these particular problems. These activities, which may involve balancing, catching, throwing and crawling can be incorporated into PE lessons (Carey, 2005, p. 64). The SNAs in Rose Hill School mentioned how they are already taking children with special needs out of class to perform these activities (Appendices M2, N1). It would improve inclusivity if these activities could be incorporated into PE lessons involving all pupils.

Where the services of a speech therapist are not available, teachers can get advice from speech therapists on activities appropriate to the classroom.(Carey, 2005, p. 64). This would enable teachers to incorporate speech and language skills into their lessons. While there is no substitute for a child receiving support from an occupational or speech therapist, there are things teachers can do when this support is not available (Carey, 2005, p. 64). Carey (2005) believes that “if supportive services are not readily available, we have to do something to assist” (Carey, 2005, p. 64). If adequate resources or services are not available to teachers for teaching children with special educational needs then teachers must improvise and make these resources themselves (Carey, 2005, p. 63). Six teachers commented on the lack of specialist resources in the school for children with special education needs (Appendices L1 – L6). However, two teachers followed Carey’s (2005), guideline and said that, in the absence of specialist resources, they have improvised their own resources for children with special educational needs in their classrooms (Appendices L2, L5).

One of the key arguments in favour of inclusion is that “any exclusionary practices are morally unacceptable” (NCSE, 2010). Exclusion in any form may have damaging effects on individuals and groups within society (NCSE, 2010). The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggests that everybody can benefit from inclusion (NCSE, 2010). Advocates of inclusion suggest that there are many children and young people who do not ‘fit in’ or who perceive themselves as ‘not fitting in’, and that an inclusive school is one where everyone is welcome and everyone ‘fits in’ (NCSE, 2010). Three of the four parents interviewed commented on how their children felt they “fitted in” in the school (Appendices N1, N3, N4). Two parents mentioned that being involved in sports activities in the school helps their children feel that they are part of the school community (Appendices N1, N4). One parent, however, commented that her child had been excluded from a summer camp that took place in the school because the teacher could not cope with his needs (Appendix N2).

“Inclusive practice requires significant changes to be made to the content, delivery and organisation of mainstream programmes and is a whole-school endeavour which aims to accommodate the learning needs of all students” (Ainscow et al, 2006, p. 2). The comments of the teachers made it clear that they try to put dictum into practice by

using different teaching strategies and techniques to facilitate the needs of all the children in their class.

Summary

To have successful inclusion there must be positive attitudes on the part of staff, visionary leadership, adequate resources and services. The staff interviewed demonstrated positive attitudes to inclusion. This was corroborated by the responses given by the parents during their interviews. The principal showed that he has the vision and leadership qualities needed to promote and implement inclusion. The parents also consider that the principal has the requisite vision and ability to lead. The respondents identified the issues which prevent Rose Hill School from becoming fully inclusive. These are:

- deficiencies in the physical fabric of the school building, i.e. lack of access to second floor and inadequate space in classrooms;
- lack of access to the services provided by outside agencies, e.g. speech and occupational therapists.
- lack of specialist resources in the school.

Leadership

According to the literature, visionary leadership is essential for inclusion (NCSE, 2010). The school principal must have a positive, supportive attitude in order for there to be successful inclusion of children with special educational needs in a mainstream school (NCSE, 2010). The school and staff together must make a commitment that all students are welcome in the school regardless of their needs. Teachers and staff must work to have inclusive classes, and to break down the barriers to learning and participation that may exist (NCSE, 2010).

“When the principal has an open attitude to including children with special educational needs, he or she brings the entire staff along with them on that journey” (Carey, 2005, p. 64). According to Carey (2005, p. 65), “under the leadership of a principal with vision, who is aware of the legislation and departmental guidelines, provisions can improve, strategies can be shared, solutions explored and innovative programmes can be implemented, reviewed, revised and refined” (Carey, 2005, p.65).

The results in Chapter Four show that the principal had a vision for the school and he was willing to offer encouragement to his teachers so that, together, they could do what was best for all the children in the school. The four parents commented on the principal's "vision" for the school and his "supportive and understanding" attitude (Appendices, N1, N2, N3, N4). The principal in Rose Hill School commented on how it is important for children to be in the same school as children with special needs. "It is beneficial for all children" (Appendix K). According to Griffin and Shevlin (2011, p. 266):

The success or otherwise of creating inclusive schools will depend to a large extent on how successful we are in designing appropriate support structures within schools and in developing a knowledgeable staff who are capable of supporting learning within their own classroom and engaging in collaborative relationships with support staff (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 266).

The principal has a key role in supporting staff and providing the many resources and supports that are needed to make a school inclusive (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 267). The principal in Rose Hill School mentioned that he thinks Rose Hill School could learn from "good practices that are taking place in other schools" with regard to the inclusion of children with special educational needs. The principal makes every effort to get the supports and resources required to cater for the needs of all the children in the school. As one parent commented "They [Principal and teachers] are getting the help the children need" (Appendix N1).

Inclusive School Policies (Theme 3)

All schools in Ireland are required to have policies on responding to special educational needs (NCSE, 2010). While Rose Hill School does not have a policy dealing specifically with inclusion, the school's policies on enrolment, assessment and the treatment of children with special needs are all designed to embrace and include children with special needs in the school (Appendix E). "If schools are to be truly inclusive then it is critical that they plan to meet the needs of all students through effective early identification, assessment, and individual educational planning" (Westwood, 2007). The policies in Rose Hill School provide an adequate framework for the type of planning envisaged by Westwood (2007).

Student Interactions (Theme 5)

Including all students in our education system will enhance the learning experience for all students (NCSE, 2010). Children benefit from being educated with children with special needs. The benefits include increased understanding of the difficulties faced by children with special needs and the capacity to accept diversity (Staub and Peck, 1995). In this study the principal believes that children with special needs should attend mainstream schools:

If you have a school with children with special needs children attending it you get a much better understanding of society. Some people might think it is great to send their children to a school where there are no children with special needs but how is that fantastic? If they meet someone with special needs they won't know how to react (Appendix K).

Clearly, the principal accepts that all the children in the school benefit from the inclusion of children with special needs. Research has found that children with special needs benefit from attending mainstream schools as their communication and social skills improve (Guralnick et al. 1995). One parent commented how she feels her child's social and communication skills have improved in Rose Hill School (Appendix N2). Interaction between children with special needs and other children is actively promoted in Rose Hill School and is a normal facet of daily life in the school.

External Links (Theme 7)

The principal in the study expressed the view that there was very little communication between the school and outside agencies. He acknowledged that the fostering of such communication was primarily the responsibility of the school principal as, generally speaking, teachers do not have the time to do this. The principal commented that "if there is a social worker or a speech therapist with a child, there should be a link with the school" (Appendix K). Four of the teachers and two of the parents interviewed commented on the absence of links between the school and outside agencies (Appendices L1, L3, L4, L7, N2 and N4). Teachers and staff in a school may not always have the expertise necessary to teach and accommodate children with special needs and, therefore, it is important to get advice and help from outside agencies (NCSE, 2010, p. 77). The eight teachers interviewed in Rose Hill School felt that they would like closer links between the school and outside agencies.

This theme also focuses on the importance of the school establishing and maintaining links with the parents of children with special needs. The four parent interviews all showed that the parents felt there was good communication between them the teachers and the principal (Appendices N1, N2, N3, N4). Some researchers have found that there are often instances of poor relationships between teachers and parents of children with special needs. For instance, Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) found that parents of pupils with special educational needs characterised their relationships with school personnel and other professionals as stressful, frustrating and alienating. Teachers, on the other hand frequently report difficulties in working collaboratively with parents (Turnbull and Turnbull, 2001). Other research studies demonstrate that parental involvement enhances pupil performance and achievement and also promotes non-academic outcomes, like school attendance, self-esteem and good behaviour (NASEN, 2000, Rich, 1987, Swap, 1993). Drawing from the data in Chapter Four it is evident that the difficulties encountered by Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) are not a major issue in Rose Hill School and the positive non-academic outcomes found by NASEN, (2000), Rich (1987) and Swap (1993) are being achieved in Rose Hill School.

Assessment of Achievement (Theme 8)

“Educational systems which over-emphasise academic achievement, competition and league tables pose a serious dilemma for inclusion and it is recognised that this issue requires attention so that vulnerable pupils are not disadvantaged or left behind” (EADSNE, 2003). The principal commented that many different competitions are held in the school and everyone is given the opportunity to take part. There are not just awards for “the best” but there are awards for “best effort” and “most improved” (Appendix K). The principal also affirmed that he thinks it is important that children with special needs attend Rose Hill School. However, he pointed out that schools have to submit the children’s English and Maths results to the Department of Education and, in his opinion, “...some schools are going to try and refuse children with special needs because their results overall won’t look as good” (Appendix K).

Summary

An analysis of the four parent interviews shows how important the parents considered the role of the principal to be in making Rose Hill School inclusive. All four parents talked about how the principal was “supportive and understanding”. The parents all considered that they received support from the principal. He was perceived as having a “vision” for the school and this they believed helped make the school inclusive. The principal did, however, feel that there were few links between outside agencies and the school. He perceived this to be his responsibility and would be making efforts to improve this area. He also saw the increasing reliance on league tables as a serious barrier to inclusion.

Teachers

“Central to successful inclusion are mainstream teachers who take ownership of inclusion and who believe in their own competence to educate students with special educational needs” (Thomas et al. 1998). Teachers must use a variety of teaching strategies (Theme 10) to support effective inclusion of students with special educational needs. These include scaffolding, modelling, contingency management and other effective instructional methods (Flem et al, 2004). The teachers in Rose Hill School commented on the different teaching strategies they use while teaching children in their classrooms. One teacher mentioned the importance of being “flexible” as “children learn in different ways” (Appendix L4). Collaboration and teamwork are also essential aspects of inclusive practice, according to recent research (Lindsay, 2007). Critical to the success of teamwork is having enough time for planning and reflecting together (Hunt et al. 2003). One definition of inclusion is “A belief that all children can learn and that all benefit when this learning is done together” (Dyson and Millward, 2000, p. 17). In Rose Hill Primary School the teachers in the school have begun “team teaching” this year. As mentioned in Chapter Two children with learning difficulties need classrooms in which there is collaborative learning, negotiation, oral problem solving and discussion between pupils (Gross, 2000). Teachers in Rose Hill try to differentiate when they can (Appendices L1-L8). Differentiation is the key to successful curricular inclusion (King, 2006). The purpose of differentiation is to promote student success in learning (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011).

Teachers, special needs assistants and support staff are central to the success of inclusion. Theme 6 of the ten themes of inclusion is “staffing and personnel”. When the respondents were asked what makes Rose Hill school inclusive, they all commented on how the attitudes of teachers and staff help to make a school inclusive (Appendices K - N4). It is important that all staff and personnel working in an inclusive environment possess the skills and knowledge to deal with the challenge of inclusion (NCSE, 2010). The withdrawal model of support, which is the predominant model of resource teaching provision in Ireland, operates by withdrawing students on a one-to-one or small group basis from the classroom (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). This model has limitations in terms of building inclusive schools according to Ring and Travers (2005). Parents expressed the view that they were happy their children were receiving special tuition even if it was by withdrawing the children from the class (Appendix N1, N3). Children are withdrawn from class to receive special tuition in Rose Hill School but the teachers have also begun team teaching this year. In 2001, McCarthy observed that in Ireland 87.5% of resource teachers continue to use “withdrawal” as a model of delivering specialised instruction for children with SEN (McCarthy, 2001). Many teachers said they prefer withdrawal as they feel they cannot give pupils with SEN enough time due to large numbers of pupils in their classes. They feel they lack the specialised training necessary for pupils with SEN. Teachers felt they did not have enough time to collaborate with other teachers to help support children with SEN. Only 22% of teachers questioned in recent research use “team teaching” whereas 88% of teachers in the USA use it (Stevens and O’ Moore, 2009).

Team Teaching

The Guidelines on the provision of special education at post primary education level (2007) and the NCCA documents on the same topic (2006) recommend the provision of support within the classroom. “Team teaching occurs when two or more teachers jointly deliver instruction to a diverse group of students in a single physical space” (Cook and Friend, 1995, p. 1). This type of teaching promotes the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the mainstream classroom. Team teaching takes the stigma arising from withdrawal away from any one student and provides a better learning and teaching environment for all (SESS, 2011). All children learn from each other. Children become more accepting of individual differences when

they are all taught together in the same classroom. During team teaching students with SEN can benefit from their peers acting as role models. All pupils gain equal access to the curriculum through team teaching (SESS, 2011). It allows for collaboration between teachers. Overall, teachers in Rose Hill School are happy with team teaching in the school even though it involves more preparation. Teachers in the senior classes particularly like this approach as they feel that children with SEN prefer not to be withdrawn from their classes for special tuition. On the other hand, the teachers of the infant classes have noted that children like being withdrawn from the classroom and seem to consider it special treatment.

Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

Many teachers become stressed and anxious about teaching children with special education needs (NCSE, 2010). However, teachers can become less anxious if they have access to training, resources and additional supports (Lindsay, 2007). “Research suggests that when inclusion is carefully managed and planned, mainstream teachers gradually move from an attitude of scepticism to wanting to collaborate as part of a team” (Wood, 1998). The eight teachers in the study commented that they lacked essential resources and training to teach children with special educational needs. Four teachers mentioned that they would prefer if there were better links between the school and professionals such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. According to Winter and O’Raw (2010) “successful inclusion in schools is determined more by teachers’ attitudes, values and beliefs than by location, policies or practices” (Winter and O’Raw, 2010). The results show that in Rose Hill Primary School the willingness and attitudes of teachers and the principal in the school were big factors in making the school inclusive. The principal commented that “the teachers try their best to cater for the needs of all students in their class” (Appendix K). Teachers commented that the whole school community does what it can to cater for the needs of all children in the school. The four parents interviewed noted that the teachers do their best for all the children in the school even with a lack of resources and funding (Appendices N1, N2, N3, and N4).

Teacher Training

Teachers must be both competent and confident in their teaching ability (NCSE, 2010). Teacher training, both pre-service and in-service, is essential to develop the skills necessary to teach successfully in inclusive settings (NCSE, 2010). Mittler states: “Ensuring that newly qualified teachers have a basic understanding of inclusive teaching is the best investment that can be made” (Mittler, 2000, p. 137). All teachers in the study commented that they did not receive appropriate practical training in college in the area of special educational needs. The instruction they received was purely theoretical. All eight teachers would like more practical training. Six of the eight teachers interviewed have had no training in the area of special education since they left college. Teachers felt that they would benefit from more training in this area. One teacher felt that the school did not have a good support network for teachers (Appendix L3). She felt she would benefit from a trained psychologist speaking to the staff about different types of special needs and strategies that can be used when teaching children with special educational needs. Another teacher wanted to learn how to identify children with special educational needs (Appendix L2). One parent commented that in her view the training teachers receive should be targeted, e.g. if a teacher has a child in her class with Down Syndrome, he/she should receive training on the special needs of children with Down Syndrome and how these needs can be accommodated in a mainstream classroom (Appendix N2). The teacher in Rose Hill School who taught the child in question carried out her own research on the condition to enable her to teach the child as effectively as possible (Appendix L5).

Teachers’ Needs

Many teachers are concerned about their ability to teach diverse groups of children, planning their time, how high to set expectations and how to assess the students (NCSE, 2010). Putnam (1998) acknowledges that it is not always easy to teach children of very different abilities in the same class (Putnam, 1998). Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) concluded from teachers’ feedback that the following factors are essential for successful inclusion - time for planning, training, material resources, personnel resources and class size (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996, p. 61).

The teachers in Rose Hill Primary School commented that they felt they did not have essential material resources for teaching children with special educational needs in their classrooms (Appendices L1 – L8). Two teachers commented on the lack of space in the classroom to cater for the needs of children with SEN. Scruggs and Matropieri (1996) have recommended that a class size should be fewer than twenty when students with SEN are included in the class. In Rose Hill School all the classes have thirty children or more. The classrooms in the school are small. The small classroom sizes, together with the larger than recommended numbers in the classes, means there is a lack of space in the classrooms for special activities.

Curricular Inclusion (Theme 9)

All students, regardless, of their needs should be provided with appropriate access to mainstream curricula (NCSE, 2010, p. 84). Accessible and flexible curricula can be a key to creating schools that meet the needs of all students (NCSE, 2010, p. 85).

Curriculum must take into consideration the different abilities and needs of all students. It must be capable of being adapted to meet diverse needs. “Strategies such as flexible time frames for work completion, differentiation of tasks, flexibility for teachers, time for additional support and emphasis on vocational as well as academic goals can be useful” (UNESCO, 2005). The students with special educational needs in Rose Hill School are offered the same curriculum as their peers to the full extent possible. Differentiation is important if all children are to receive the same curriculum (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011). Some material is modified for the children in Rose Hill School and some children have access to computers and laptops. It is hoped that all children with special educational needs in Rose Hill School would have access to a computer in their classroom in the future (Appendices L2, L5). Differentiation is used by all teachers in the school. Teachers in Rose Hill Primary School find that pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties need to leave the classroom from time to time (Appendices L3, L6). Two teachers in particular talked about how the children in their classrooms needed to be removed from the classroom because of their emotional and behavioural difficulties (Appendices L3, L6). All eight teachers commented how the SNAs are invaluable when a child needs to be taken out of the class (Appendices L1 – L8).

Teaching Strategies (Theme 10)

Inclusion as defined by the NCSE's Consultative Forum is a process of:

- addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners through enabling participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and
- removing barriers to education through the accommodation and provision of appropriate structures and arrangements, to enable each learner to achieve the maximum benefit from his/her attendance at school (NCSE, 2010, p. 39).

The promotion of inclusion will depend greatly upon the strategies which teachers adopt to ensure that all pupils participate fully in learning for as much of the time as is possible (Tilstone et al, 1998, p. 30). The way instruction is delivered in the mainstream classroom needs to be flexible enough to meet the diverse requirements of all students (NCSE, 2010, p. 89). Teachers interviewed in Rose Hill School use a variety of strategies while teaching. They use modelling and group work and find these very effective when teaching children with special educational needs. The teachers find having an SNA in the classroom useful when repetition or extra explanations are needed. Teachers find group work beneficial especially for the children with SEN as the other children in the group are able to help them. Many teachers find group work important for improving children's social skills. One teacher commented that group work enhances the self-esteem of the participating children with special needs.

Summary

The teachers in Rose Hill Primary School have positive attitudes towards the inclusion of children with special needs. The parents acknowledge that the teachers make every effort to meet the needs of their children in the school. The positive attitudes of the teachers with regard to inclusion in the school are considered important by all the respondents in making the school inclusive. Teachers in Rose Hill School believe they lack adequate resources and training in order to fully meet the needs of children with special needs. According to Griffin and Shevlin (2011) adequate resources and appropriate training are essential if the needs of children with special needs are to be met. Analysis of the data convinces the researcher that the teachers lack confidence in their abilities to cater for the needs of children with

special needs, and that the problem is exacerbated by inadequate resources and external supports.

Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)

The recent increase in the numbers of special needs assistants working in schools is due to more children with special educational needs attending mainstream schools (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p.263). The SNAs duties are “of a non-teaching nature” and involve assisting the child with general activities (clothing, toileting, feeding) and classroom activities (helping pupils with typing, writing or computers) (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 263). Teachers must be trained in how to work with another adult in the classroom (NCSE, 2010). Ofsted (2002) reported better quality teaching in classes with special needs assistants. The SNAs knowledge and skill must be acknowledged and utilised fully but the teacher has ultimate responsibility for the student and the programme being implemented (NCSE, 2010). Lack of training and clarification of roles for SNAs have both been highlighted as issues (Lindsay, 2007). SNAs must receive training and have expertise in the area of special education (Farrell, 2000). Teamwork between the teacher and special need assistant is essential to successful inclusion (NCSE, 2010). The two SNAs interviewed said that they have good working relationships with the teachers (Appendices M1, M2). The two SNAs in Rose Hill School plan and work together with the teachers and they are also involved in the constructing of the IEP (Individual Education Plan) for the children with special educational needs. One SNA commented that “we are using IEPs for the children and I love when they reach their targets whether it is a short term or a long term target” (Appendix M1). All eight teachers discussed the importance of having an SNA in the classroom to cater for the needs of children with special needs.

Summary

Teamwork between the teachers and SNAs is important if inclusion is to be successful. Analysis of the data obtained from the two SNA interviews shows that there are good working relationships between the teachers and SNAs in Rose Hill School and that the SNAs are clear about their roles in the classroom. The good working relationships and the clarity about the proper role of SNAs facilitates the inclusion of children with special needs. The teachers in Rose Hill School consider

that the presence of the SNA in the classroom is invaluable in including children with special needs.

Parents

The factors that influence parents' choices of provision are relatively under-researched (NCSE, 2010). According to (Giangreco, 1997) central to inclusive practice is the acceptance that the family is part of the collaborative team. He believes the following assumptions are crucial to working effectively with families in the interests of inclusion:

- families know certain aspects of their children better than anyone else
- families have the greatest vested interest in seeing their children learn
- the family is likely to be continuously involved with the child's education programme throughout his or her entire school career
- families have the ability to positively influence the quality of educational services provided in their community
- families must live with the outcomes of decisions made by educational teams all day every day (Giangreco, 1997, p. 196).

“Parents of children with special educational needs want teachers who have taken the time to learn about their child's condition, its signs and symptoms, its educational implication, its behavioural implication and its impact on learning and development” (Carey, 2005, p. 105). The parents in the study feel that teachers in Rose Hill School have, in the case of each child in the study, an awareness of the child's condition and are willing to do what they can to help the child (Appendices N1, N2, N3, N4).

Parents want teachers to be willing to adapt the curriculum and their teaching strategies to teach children with special educational needs (Carey, 2005, p. 105). The parents in the study observed that teachers are willing to try new things to help their children (Appendices N1, N2, N3, N4).

“Knowledge about children can only be derived when there is open and respectful communication between parents and teachers” (Carey, 2005, p. 106). All four parents commented that there is good communication between the teachers and parents in the school. One parent, Sarah, communicates daily with Eoin's class teacher by writing in a notebook. Sarah writes down how Eoin is feeling each morning and gives

insights into significant family events, e.g. a birthday, so that the teacher can converse meaningfully with Eoin. The teacher also writes in this notebook making Sarah aware of all the things Eoin has done in class each day (Appendix N2). Another parent commented that she feels there is good communication between her, the principal and the teachers in the school. She feels she is listened to. The principal sometimes, “...rings me at six o’clock in the evening to tell me how Daniel’s day has gone and to have a chat” (Appendix N3). The four parents mentioned that they are informed of their child’s progress and everything that is happening in the school both individually by teachers and by means of newsletters, school website, text messages and phone calls. Provision of information is one of the ten themes of inclusion.

The Individual Educational Plan (IEP) (Theme 4)

Members of staff and parents are involved in planning the IEPs for students with special educational needs in Rose Hill School. To create an effective IEP, parents, teachers and the student must come together to look closely at the learner’s unique needs, and design an educational programme to help the student succeed (NCSE, 2010). Planning the student’s IEP is best achieved through such collaboration (NCSE, 2010). It involves setting appropriate goals, and monitoring and evaluating progress on a regular basis. The aim is to set realistic targets so the child can achieve his/her potential (NCSE, 2010). “However, one of the most frequent complaints voiced by parents is that they are not involved in this process, and they often feel that their contribution is not regarded as of equal importance to that of the professionals” (Pinkus, 2005). Maximising the opportunity for parental involvement in the IEP process should therefore be a key objective, and it is important to make the experience as supportive and positive as possible (NCSE, 2006). Parents in this study feel that they are actively involved in the making of IEP plans. They are also shown by the teachers in Rose Hill School how they can help their child at home. One parent said that she feels “the teachers in the school do their best to find out anything they are unsure of”. This parent also thinks that “the teachers do what they can for each child in the school”(Appendix N1).

Students tend not to be involved in drawing up their IEPs in Rose Hill School. Children in the senior classes could be more involved in developing their IEPs. Active student involvement in drawing up the individual student’s IEP improves self-

esteem, increases motivation and cooperation (Jelly et al, 2000), and can often provide important, unexpected and illuminating information (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004).

Summary

The parents interviewed in the study feel happy that the teachers and staff members in the school are doing what they can to include children with special needs in the school. The data obtained from the four parent interviews gives a revealing insight into the degree of inclusivity in Rose Hill School. Their views have a particular relevance as the parents have no vested interest in seeking to portray the school as inclusive or otherwise.

Conclusion

Successful inclusion requires positive attitudes on the part of staff, visionary leadership, adequate resources and the support of appropriate services.

During their interviews, the teachers and SNAs in Rose Hill School demonstrated positive, open-minded attitudes to issues relating to inclusion. They exhibited support for the principle that children with special needs should be educated in mainstream schools together with other children, while at the same time having an awareness of the practical difficulties involved and a vision of how such difficulties might be overcome. For instance, some of the teachers showed a willingness to use their own resources and initiatives to overcome difficulties they experience in accommodating children with special needs in their classes. It was also clear from the interviews that there are good working relationships between the teachers and the SNAs who support them in the classroom.

The principal of the school evinced the necessary vision and leadership qualities to put in place a fully inclusive school. In his view, all members of the school community benefit from the inclusion of children with special educational needs in Rose Hill School. While recognising the existence of certain practical difficulties arising from shortcomings in the school fabric, e.g. a two storey building with no lift, and from an absence of support arising from a lack of contact with the providers of

appropriate outside services, he exhibited a resolve to do what is needed to overcome such difficulties.

It was notable that the parents in their interviews believe that the staff in Rose Hill School support inclusion in principle and that they, in practice, demonstrate commitment to accommodate children with special educational needs in their classes.

There was significant unanimity among respondents in identifying the issues preventing Rose Hill School from being fully inclusive. These included issues relating to the school building, limited access to appropriate services provided by outside agencies and lack of specialist resources in the school. There was a significant degree of unanimity among respondents as to how these deficiencies might be overcome.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

Creating an inclusive learning environment is a complex task. According to the participants in this research study, significant progress has been made but some obstacles remain to be overcome before Rose Hill School can be considered fully inclusive.

The study reveals that, for the most part, Rose Hill Primary School is an inclusive school. This inclusiveness is evident from the school's inclusive admissions policy, the use by teachers of differentiation to facilitate the needs of all children in their classes, and the willingness of all staff members to do what they can to ensure that the needs of all the children in the school are fully met.

Rose Hill School can become even more inclusive. The respondents identified certain factors which they considered prevented the school from being fully inclusive. These include: an absence of appropriate continuing professional development; time constraints, which make it difficult for teachers to collaborate and co-ordinate to the extent required; inadequate physical resources; and lack of appropriate supports from external professionals such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists.

The participants agree that a positive attitude on the part of teachers is critical to developing an inclusive learning environment. Positive, accepting attitudes by teachers towards children with special needs create the basis for inclusive practice. However, positive attitudes alone will not make a school inclusive.

From the study it is clear that respondents feel that including children with special needs in the mainstream school requires adequate funding, proactive leadership, ongoing professional development and the development of collaborative relationships between schools, parents and support agencies.

The Ten Themes of Inclusion (NCSE, 2010)

For a school to be fully inclusive The NCSE's Consultative Forum have drawn up guidelines to be followed to make a school fully inclusive (NCSE, 2010). These guidelines are called the ten themes of inclusion (Appendix O). The ten themes were considered in the study to determine the extent to which, in each case, Rose Hill School complies with the themes of inclusion.

Rose Hill was found to comply with the following themes:

Theme 1 Provision of Information

Parents in the study feel that they are informed of their child's progress in the school. They receive information in various ways, i.e. person to person contact, phone conversations, text messages, newsletters and meetings. All school policies are available for everyone to view on the school website.

Theme 3 Inclusive School Policies

The school has a policy on the provision of education for children with special educational needs, an inclusive enrolment policy and an assessment policy (Appendix E). The school complies, therefore, with the terms of Theme 3.

Theme 4 An Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Parents play an important role in the making of the IEP plans for children with special educational needs in Rose Hill School. There is a whole-school approach towards the implementing of IEPs. The IEPs are reviewed every month.

Theme 5 Student Interactions

Interaction between children with special needs and other children is actively promoted in Rose Hill School and is a normal facet of daily life in the school.

Theme 6 Staffing and Personnel

All staff members are willing to do what is required, individually and collaboratively to promote an inclusive environment in the school. Inclusion is promoted on a whole-school level in Rose Hill School. Teachers implement their own programmes in their classrooms to help children with special educational needs. Some teachers use their

own initiative to improvise resources when the resources available in the school are inadequate to meet the needs of the children with special needs.

Theme 8 Assessment of Achievement

The achievements and progress of all children including those with special needs are recognised in Rose Hill School.

Theme 9 Curriculum

The students with special educational needs in Rose Hill School are offered the same curriculum as their peers to the fullest extent possible.

Theme 10 Teaching Strategies

Teachers in Rose Hill School use a variety of teaching strategies. They try to choose appropriate strategies to accommodate for the needs of all children in the school. Teachers in the school have begun team teaching this year. This is working well.

There were two themes of inclusion with which Rose Hill School was not fully compliant.

Theme 2 Physical Features

According to this theme, in order to provide a truly inclusive school the physical environment needs to be safe and accessible to all students, including those with physical and sensory disabilities. Rose Hill Primary School is a two storey building without a lift. Accessing the upper storey is difficult, and in some cases impracticable, for children with physical disabilities

Theme 7 External Links

According to this theme, the provision of adequate funding, resources, and support services is fundamental to the successful implementation of inclusion and will require the establishment of links with agencies, health services and supports outside the school (NCSE, 2010). This will not only involve active collaboration with government agencies and public services, but also partnership with professionals and parents (NCSE, 2010). The staff and parents in Rose Hill School have little contact with outside agencies. There needs to be more collaboration between staff and

professionals such as speech therapists, occupational therapists and psychologists. Six teachers commented on the lack of specialist resources in the school for children with special education needs.

Recommendations

Teachers need more training in the area of special education. One way this could be achieved, without the need for extra funding, would be to liaise with teachers in other schools and examine how they include children with special needs in their schools. In this study the principal thinks there is much to learn about how we might improve the inclusion of children with special needs in Rose Hill by visiting schools that have good inclusion policies and practices.

There needs to be more collaboration between teachers in Rose Hill School and outside agencies. Teachers cannot be expert in every area of special education and it is important they receive the supports appropriate to the needs of the individual children in their classes.

Some children in Rose Hill School could benefit from having a sensory room in the school. These rooms enable children with special needs to stimulate their senses. Exposure to a sensory room would enable children to return to their classrooms with heightened alertness and, hopefully, enhanced ability to listen and learn.

A selection of books could be in every classroom with stories about children with special educational needs. There could be more pictures around the school of children with special educational needs. Some of the children in the school have been exposed to the cartoon “Punky” which is about a girl who has Down Syndrome.

Teachers could observe their own colleagues teaching and gain insights into different teaching techniques. Teachers in the study commented that they would like to learn about different teaching strategies. Observing their colleagues would be one cost effective way to achieve this aim.

Future Research

The attitudes of children without special needs towards children with special educational needs could be explored as their attitudes may have a bearing on the inclusive environment in the school. As this cannot be achieved directly by questioning children, insights could be gained by observation and by developing appropriate lesson plans and class activities e.g. role-play, open forum discussion and group work tasks. In addition, interviews could be conducted with a wider sample of parents, i.e. parents of children with special needs and parents of children without special needs. It would then be possible to compare how different parents perceive the attitudes of their children to matters pertaining to inclusion.

Concluding Comments

“Education is vital for all children including those with special educational needs if they are to become significant participants in society” (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 267). Teachers have a very important role to play in creating the learning environments that enable children to reach their potential (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 267). Responding effectively to the needs of children with special educational needs can enhance the educational opportunities for all children in the school. “By using differentiation and allowing all children to access the curriculum we are creating inclusive schools” (Griffin and Shevlin, 2011, p. 268).

“Inclusion is a vision, a road to be travelled but a road without ending, and a road with all kinds of barriers and obstacles, some of them invisible and some of them in our own heads and hearts” (Mittler, 2000). The researcher believes that Rose Hill Primary School has made significant progress on the road to becoming an inclusive school.

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Appendix A
Questions for the Principal

Policy Development:

- 1 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs. Would you consider this school to be inclusive?
- 2 To what extent do you consider that management and teachers support the adoption of a whole-school approach to the education of students with special educational needs?
- 3 Does your school's admissions policy accommodate the admission and participation of students with special educational needs?
- 4 Is your school's discipline policy/code of behaviour suitably flexible to take account of individual difference? Do you think that more flexibility needs to be exercised in those regards with children with special educational needs?
- 5 Is team teaching used to meet the needs of children with special educational needs in your school?

Professional development:

- 7 How aware are members of staff of their roles and responsibilities regarding students with special educational needs?
- 8 Is there a designated teacher responsible for liaising with colleagues and other relevant professionals as part of the school's policy to meet the needs of students with SEN?
- 9 Are all members of staff encouraged and facilitated to participate in appropriate professional development in special education?
- 10 Does your school actively promote parental involvement and facilitate contact between parents and teachers?

Curriculum development:

- 11 How do you support students in class academically or socially? Do teachers use differentiation?
- 12 Are co-curricular activities that support and enhance learning and extra-curricular activities open and accessible to all students?
- 13 Are the needs and interests of all students taken into account when determining the range of subjects, levels and programmes offered?

Quality of teaching and learning:

- 14 Do teachers effectively use and vary their teaching strategies and methodologies to meet the needs of all students?
- 15 Does your school offer an appropriate, safe and stimulating environment for all students, e.g. sense of belonging and security, work displayed on walls, appropriate physical arrangements?
- 16 How do you assess children? Are there any challenges in the assessment procedures?

Appendix B
Interview Questions for Teachers

- 1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?
- 2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?
- 3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?
- 4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?
- 5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?
- 6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?
- 7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?
- 8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?
- 9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.
Would you consider this school to be inclusive?
If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?
If no, what should the school do to make it more inclusive?
- 10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

Appendix C
Interview Questions for Special Needs Assistants

1. How would you describe your job?
2. What do you like most about your job?
3. Describe a typical day?
4. An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?

If no, what should this school do to make it more inclusive?

5. What are the most significant challenges in the role of an SNA?
6. What would you consider to be the biggest challenges that you face when supporting students with special educational needs in the classroom?
7. Looking to the future: What suggestions would you make to help promote the inclusion of students with special needs in this school

Appendix D
Interview Questions for Parents

1. Why did you decide to send your child to this school?
2. What factors influenced you in making this decision?
3. Do you think there are adequate resources in this school to cater for children with special needs?
4. What resources would you consider essential for teaching children with special needs?
5. What do you hope your child will achieve in this school?
6. How important do you think it is to have good communication between teachers and parents?
7. An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs. Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?
If no, what could this school do to make it more inclusive?
8. How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

Appendix E

Extracts from Rose Hill School Policy Documents

Enrolment Policy

Rose Hill School, within the contexts and parameters of the Department regulations and programmes, the rights of the patron as set out in the Education Act and the funding and resources available, supports the principles of:

- ◆ Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational needs.
- ◆ Equality of access and participation in the school.
- ◆ Parental choice in relation to enrolment.
- ◆ Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

Enrolment of children with special needs

Children with special needs will be resourced in accordance with the level of resources provided by the DES to the Board of Management. The Board may request a copy of the child's medical and/or psychological report or where such a report is not available may request that the child be assessed. The purpose of the assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the educational and training needs of the child relevant to his/her disability or special needs. Also to profile the support services required. The BOM will seek to ensure that there will be in place the provision of appropriate resources by the DES to meet the needs specified in the psychological and/or medical report.

Special Educational Needs Policy

Beliefs and Principles

In Rose Hill we aim to create a tolerant and understanding atmosphere where each child feels safe and parents are assured that their children are well catered for in a safe learning environment.

We value the uniqueness and importance of every pupil and seek to help them to form a sense of their own worth through developing self-confidence, self-expression and the ability to relate with peers and others, while at all times making allowance for diversity among people. The school recognises the important role of parents in the development of the pupils and it welcomes them as partners with management in achieving what is best for all our pupils.

Aims

To enable each and every pupil to make the most of his/her potential, while endeavouring to overcome, or at least mitigate any limitations, be they social or other that may apply in any individual circumstance.

To enable each pupil to function happily as a child according to his/her specific abilities and potential, while also ensuring that he/she will be enabled to avail of whatever opportunities become available at the further levels of education.

These aims will be achieved most effectively through a whole school policy and approach that targets the Learning needs of the lowest achieving pupils. This will be achieved through consultation with teachers, parents and others on behalf of the pupils. Central to this process will be the enhancement of classroom-based learning and it will include supplementary teaching by the Learning Support Teacher and Resource Teacher.

Specific Aims

- To enable as far as possible for these pupils to participate in the full curriculum for their class level.
- To develop positive self-esteem and positive attitudes about school and learning in these pupils.
- To enable these pupils to monitor their own learning and become independent learners.
- To provide supplementary teaching and additional support and resources for these pupils in English.
- To involve parents in supporting their children's learning through effective parent-support programmes.
- To promote collaboration among teachers.
- To establish early intervention programmes.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities:

Learning Support is a Whole School Responsibility.

The principal teacher has overall responsibility for the school's Learning Support programme and for the operation of services for children with special educational needs.

Effective communication and consultation with parents will be critically important to the success of our learning support programme.

- ❖ Meet with parents of each pupil who has been selected for diagnostic assessment.
- ❖ After diagnostic testing meet with each pupil's parents to discuss the outcomes of the assessment, the learning targets in the child's Individual Profile and Learning Programme, the actions to be taken by the school to meet those targets and the ways in which attainment of the targets can be supported at home.
- ❖ Communicate on an ongoing basis with the parents of each pupil who is in receipt of supplementary teaching so that progress can be positively affirmed and any difficulties in implementing the pupil's learning programme at school or at home can either be anticipated and avoided or addressed without delay.
- ❖ Consult with the parents at the end of the instructional term to review the pupil's attainment of agreed learning targets, to discuss the level of supplementary teaching that will be provided in the next instructional term, and to revise the pupil's individual profile and learning programme.
- ❖ Consult with parents when supplementary teaching is to be discontinued.
- ❖ Demonstrate techniques and strategies to parents that will enable them to help with their child's development in such areas as oral language, reading, writing and maths.

Assessment Policy

This policy was formulated on a School Development Planning Day on January 22nd 2008. It was devised in response to the recommendations of the N.C.C.A. Guidelines “Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum”.

Rationale

The policy was revised to reflect on and improve existing practice in the light of the publication of the N.C.C.A.Guidelines. The core of the policy is that all children should experience success at school. This policy endeavours to identify at the earliest possible opportunity, children who may have learning difficulties and to put in place a whole school response to their needs.

The school adopts a holistic approach to the education and development of each child, and the enhancement of teaching processes. An effective Assessment policy identifies early interventions that need to be put in place to ensure that enhancement, increased confidence and raised self-esteem is achieved.

Aims

The primary aims / objectives of the policy are to:

- 1 To benefit pupil learning*
- 2 To monitor learning processes*
- 3 To generate baseline data that can be used to monitor achievement over time*
- 4 To involve parents and pupils in identifying and managing learning strengths or difficulties*
- 5 To assist teachers’ long and short term planning*
- 6 To coordinate assessment procedures on a whole school basis.*

Guidelines

Purposes of assessment

- 1 To inform planning for, and coverage of, all areas of the curriculum
- 2 To gather and interpret data at class/whole school level and in relation to national norms
- 3 To identify the particular learning needs of pupils/groups of pupils including the exceptionally able
- 4 To contribute to the school’s strategy for prevention of learning difficulties
- 5 To monitor pupil progress and attainment
- 6 To enable teachers to modify their programmes in order to ensure that the particular learning needs of individual pupils/groups are being addressed
- 7 To compile records of individual pupils’ progress and attainment
- 8 To facilitate communication between parents and teachers about pupils’ development, progress and learning needs
- 9 To facilitate the involvement of pupils in assessment of their own work.

Appendix F
Dyspraxia
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)
Signposts (Special Education Support Service)

Students diagnosed with DCD find it exceptionally difficult to acquire the movement skills that are expected of them in everyday life and are often referred to as “clumsy”. Students may have difficulty co-coordinating their movements, perceptions and thoughts. They have difficulty doing everyday tasks such as buttoning shirts, using a knife and fork, and may confuse left and right. In school, activities such as writing, visual arts, and physical education may pose problems. In play, difficulties may be observed in tasks such as running, jumping, hopping and catching a ball. In the classroom, the student may bump into and drop things and tend to find drawing and writing difficult. Students have difficulty with organisational skills. Often students may appear to have a lot of information but are unable to record that information in a logical and meaningful order. Their written work does not match their apparent verbal ability (SESS, 2008, p. 42).

Tips for Learning and Teaching

- Structure the classroom environment to minimise the possibility of furniture/fittings causing a problem for the student. Ensure seating allows the student to rest both feet on the floor with the desk at elbow height and with the additional option of a sloping surface. Position the student where he/she has a direct view of the teacher. Provide an uncluttered personal workspace for the student.
- Directly teach organisational skills through making lists, sequencing events and using timetables.
- Provide an alternative means of recording work (e.g. computer/specifically differentiated worksheets).
- Break down assignments into smaller components.
- Avoid giving more than one worksheet at a time and allow for the worksheet to be attached to the desk when a writing implement is being used (e.g. tape or clip paper to the desk, or use a non-slip mat under the copybook to stop it slipping).

- Fold worksheets in half and have the students come up to you when the first half is completed and allow the student a break before continuing with the work.
- Limit copying from the black/white board.
- Be aware that growth spurts at particular phases of development may intensify problems for the student.
- Provide clear and unambiguous instructions and check that the student understands what is required of him/her.
- Use visual support in implementing the curriculum.
- Use visual demonstration and verbal instructions to reinforce teaching.
- In Physical Education make participation and not competition the goal.
- Encourage a partner/buddy relationship with another student or students.
- Thicker pencils, pencil grips or pencils with triangular barrels may be easier for the student to hold.
- Mind-mapping can be invaluable in helping the student to organise his/her thoughts.

(SESS, 2008, p. 43)

Appendix G
Down Syndrome
Signposts (Special Education Support Service)

Down Syndrome is a genetic condition caused by the presence of an extra chromosome. While students with Down Syndrome may share certain physical traits, each student is an individual and the level of general learning disability will range from mild to profound. Students with Down Syndrome have strong visual learning modalities. Teaching reading to students with Down Syndrome should be characterised with a strong emphasis on visual learning. When teaching number concepts concrete materials can be used. Activity based learning is very beneficial to children with Down Syndrome. Students with Down Syndrome generally demonstrate good social skills, which can be constructively utilised to increase learning and teaching opportunities. Routine is very important. It is important to allow adequate time for the student to process language and respond. Group work is also very beneficial. It is important that children engage in tasks with other children who can act as appropriate role models (SESS, 2008, p. 4).

Rate of Development

All children with Down Syndrome have some degree of learning disability, with most falling in the mild to moderate range. This affects their development and rate of learning (Hallahan and Kauffman, 2007). Children with Down Syndrome develop more slowly, arrive later and stay longer at each stage of development than their peers. Even though their rate of learning is slower, they are capable of making progress in all areas of development (Buckley and Sacks 2001a; Lewis 2003; Wishart 2005). The developmental gap between children with Down Syndrome and their peers widens with age. This does not mean that they have stopped making progress, it simply means that their rate of development is not keeping pace with their chronological age.

What Teachers Can Do To Help?

Give opportunities to progress through the same stages of development as other children but allocate more time at each stage for repetition and over learning. Consider developmental level rather than chronological age when making decisions

about programme content and instructional approaches while also ensuring that materials are age-appropriate. While children with Down Syndrome have a distinctive profile, they also share characteristics with children who have general learning disabilities (SESS, 2008, p. 4).

Tips for Learning and Teaching

- Tactile demonstrations and activities appeal to many students with Down Syndrome.
- Allow adequate time for the student to process language and respond.
- Structure learning and teaching opportunities to enable the student to engage in tasks with other students, who can act as appropriate role models.
- Be aware that the student may become unnecessarily dependent through the availability of excessive one-to-one support.
- The teaching of phonics and phonological awareness should not be neglected.
- Students with Down Syndrome generally demonstrate good social skills, which can be constructively utilised to increase learning and teaching opportunities.

(SESS, 2008, p. 5)

Appendix H
Asperger's Syndrome
Signposts (Special Education Support Service)

Asperger's Syndrome is characterised by subtle impairments in three areas of development: social communication, social interaction and social imagination. There is no clinically significant delay in cognitive development or in language acquisition. However, students with Asperger's Syndrome have communication difficulties and may speak in a monotonous or exaggerated tone and at great length about a topic that is of particular interest to them irrespective of the reaction of the listener. Students find it difficult to interpret social signals and interact with others (SESS, 2008, p. 30). They often excel at memorising facts and figures but exhibit difficulty thinking in the abstract ways required for subjects such as English or Religious Education. Students may have additional motor co-ordination and organisational problems such as a tendency to compartmentalise thinking, difficulties in managing time and completing work, eating, drinking and sleeping irregularities, an inability to block out distractions affecting attention span, inappropriate eye contact, and sensory and perceptual sensitivities. Asperger's Syndrome affects students in the average to the above average ability range (SESS, 2008, p. 30).

Tips for Learning and Teaching

- Students require direct teaching in social skills.
- It is necessary to structure opportunities for students to use social skills in different situations.
- Use stories to teach social communication/interaction.
- Develop a "Buddy system" with mainstream peers.
- Directly teach jokes, puns and metaphors.
- Provide precise instructions for students to follow.
- Always refer to the student by name as he/she may not realise that "everyone" includes them.
- Keep verbal instructions brief and simple.
- Pre-empt the student's anxiety arising from being presented with unstructured or unfamiliar situations without prior warning/explanation.

- Devise and implement a structured play/leisure programme.
- Adjustments may need to be made to the classroom to address the student's under sensitivity/oversensitivity to noise, smell, taste, light, touch or movement.
- Elicit relevant information regarding the student's eating, drinking and sleeping irregularities.
- Structure the classroom environment to reduce distractions.
- Use computers to support the student's learning and teaching opportunities.

(SESS, 2008, p. 35)

Appendix I
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Signposts (Special Education Support Service)

The behaviour of students with ADHD is characterised by poor sustained attention, impaired impulse control, an inability to delay gratification and excessive task-irrelevant activity. Students may often fidget with their hands or feet, appear restless, leave their seat in the classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is required, may run about or climb excessively in situations where it is inappropriate, have difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly and may often talk excessively (SESS, 2008, p. 59). Students with ADHD find it difficult to plan and control their behaviour. They often seem unaware of danger and have a tendency to rush into things. They also find listening to, remembering and following through on instructions difficult and fail to finish school work. Students are often reluctant to engage in activities that require prolonged effort, are easily distracted and often have difficulty organising materials required for participating in learning tasks. Students with ADHD have difficulty with sustained play and are often disliked by their peers because of their aggression, impulsiveness and inability to take responsibility for their actions. Students with ADHD are often on medical treatment to mitigate the impact of the disorder on their daily lives (SESS, 2008, p.59).

Tips for Learning and Teaching:

- Facilitate easy transitions between lessons. Consider the use of a clear signal to mark the end of one activity and the beginning of another.
- Encourage and promote support for the student from peers.
- Enforce classroom rules consistently.
- Pre-establish consequences for misbehaviour.
- Provide regular, consistent and constructive feedback to the student. Reward more than you punish. Immediately praise any good behaviour or accomplishment.
- React to inappropriate behaviour by suggesting a positive alternative.
- Use concrete materials and computer-assisted instruction.
- Structure teaching carefully and present new material in a step by step manner.
- Ensure you have student's attention prior to issuing instruction.

- When directing a question towards the student make sure you say his/her name first as a signal for the student to pay attention.
- Seat the student at the front with his/her back to the rest of the class.
- Seat among well-focused peers, preferably those whom the student views as significant peers.
- Try not to have the student seated near distracting stimuli such as doors, windows, high traffic areas, etc.
- Keep instructions simple and as near to the one-sentence rule as possible. Be consistent with daily instructions.
- Give extra time for certain tasks as often students may work slowly.
- Use teacher-modelling and direct instruction in order to demonstrate effective ways of completing a task.
- Use a variety of learning and teaching resources that are motivating for the student.
- Interact with the student in a calm manner.
- Ensure classroom routines are predictable.
- Provide advance warning that something is about to happen/finish as these students can experience difficulties at transition periods.
- Utilise checklists for the student to work through when doing tasks and homework.

(SESS, 2008, p.61)

Appendix J

Mild General Learning Disability

Signposts (Special Education Support Service)

Students with mild general learning disabilities have significantly below-average general intellectual functioning. This is reflected in a slow rate of maturation, reduced learning capacity and inadequate social adjustment. Mild general learning disability may also manifest itself in delayed conceptual development, difficulties in expressing ideas and feelings in words, a limited ability to abstract and generalise what they learn, limited attention-span and poor retention ability, slow speech and language development, and an underdeveloped sense of spatial awareness. Students may experience difficulty with reading, writing and comprehension and have poor understanding of mathematical concepts. A student with a mild general learning disability is likely to struggle with both the content and presentation of his/her work. Some students may display poor adaptive behaviour, inappropriate or immature personal behaviour, low self-esteem, emotional disturbance, general clumsiness and lack of co-ordination of fine- and gross-motor skills. Students' self-esteem can be affected. Insofar as IQ (Intelligence Quotient) may be used as an indicator of mild general learning disability, such students' cognitive functioning range from IQ 50 to 70 on standardised IQ tests (SESS, 2008, p. 92).

Tips for Learning and Teaching:

- Establish a supportive relationship with the student.
- Focus on what the student can do rather than what he/she cannot do and build on his/her strengths.
- Include lots of praise and encouragement as part of the student's learning and teaching experience.
- Simplify language, repeat words and clarify meanings.
- Observe the student's learning style and differentiate learning and teaching accordingly.
- Provide the student with tasks that are within his/her capacity.
- Enable the student to experience success through identifying realistic learning objectives for each lesson.

- Consider a multi-sensory approach to spelling that provides opportunities for the student to follow the look, copy, trace, picture, cover, write and check sequence technique.
- Use short sequential steps when teaching.
- Build opportunities for over-learning and repetition in lessons.
- Differentiate questioning as well as teaching.
- Give the student opportunities to generalise knowledge and skills.
- Help students to realise that making mistakes is part of the learning process.
- Utilise active learning, participation and collaboration with peers.
- Pay particular attention to language and communication in all areas of the curriculum.
- Use a wide range of learning resources (e.g. visual aids, concrete objects, computer software and accessible texts).
- Provide worksheets that minimise the amount of writing required.
- Provide immediate feedback and opportunities for self-assessment.

(SESS, 2008, p. 93)

Appendix K
Interview Transcript
Principal

Policy Development:

- 1 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs. Would you consider this school to be inclusive?**

I would. It is inclusive in so far as no child has ever been refused entry to the school because of the school not being able to cater for their needs. Whether or not we can do more with what we have I don't know. A lot of parents traditionally haven't sent their children to mainstream schools as they feel the schools didn't have the adequate resources. Part of the problem is that we don't have the funding from the Department of Education. For example, this year we have got some funding from the department for children with special needs through SNA support and some small additional resources. If we were to look at all the children in this community and involve them all with different needs we can't really cater for children with a physical disability as this school is a two storey building and there is no lift. We would have to have a child with a disability stay in a classroom downstairs for the eight years and that is not fair on them. We could have a child with a breathing problem and they would find it very difficult to go up the stairs. I would consider the school to be reasonably inclusive because parents have always found the staff very accommodating and there is a willingness in this school to do what we can. No parent has come to me looking for their child to come to the school and we have been unable to meet that child's needs.

- 2 To what extent do you consider that management and teachers support the adoption of a whole-school approach to the education of students with special educational needs?**

I think everyone is in favour of it and nobody would resist. I wouldn't say there is a whole school approach and to develop something like that would probably take years. We have a lot to learn about teaching children with special needs. Some of it is new to us. Every teacher is open here to the idea of including children with special needs in the classroom. There is a lot we can do around doing it better as a team. We probably need to work on using our resources as well as we can with the needs of the children in mind.

3 Does your school's admissions policy accommodate the admission and participation of students with special educational needs?

Yes I am very happy with that. We have a special needs policy. There could be better practises in other places. A lot of this falls back to the teacher in the end. There has to be an understanding from people who want certain things done with their children. You can't do everything in the class all day every day. You can't do everything you are expected to do from every lobby and action group.

4 Is your school's discipline policy/code of behaviour suitably flexible to take account of individual difference? Do you think that more flexibility needs to be exercised in those regards with children with special educational needs?

You find that the practise that is happening in the classroom is different to that in the policy. Teachers have identified that they have to deal with some children in a different way to other children. If you were to apply everything in the discipline policy to children with autism or ADHD who have behavioural problems some children would be expelled very quickly. Teachers are modifying the discipline policy and coming up with behavioural charts. Teachers have taken the initiative of doing this.

5 Is team teaching used to meet the needs of children with special educational needs in your school?

Yes it is.

Professional development:

6 How aware are members of staff of their roles and responsibilities regarding students with special educational needs?

Probably, they don't know all the legislation. I am learning things myself at the moment. Teachers are really willing to learn and are aware that it is part of their responsibility as a teacher. Everybody is very open to teaching children with special needs.

7 Is there a designated teacher responsible for liaising with colleagues and other relevant professionals as part of the school's policy to meet the needs of students with SEN?

The deputy principal's role is to coordinate special needs in the school.

8 Are all members of staff encouraged and facilitated to participate in appropriate professional development in special education?

I probably should do more to get people to do extra learning outside the classroom but I don't want to put pressure on people. Most courses teachers have done, they come back to me with great feedback. You don't want to undermine people by telling them that they should do a certain course.

9 Does your school actively promote parental involvement and facilitate contact between parents and teachers?

Yes definitely.

Curriculum development:

10 How do you support students in class academically or socially? Do teachers use differentiation?

Teachers do it but it varies on teachers' energy levels. Some days you might have the energy and other days it might be harder. Some teachers have a greater appreciation of the area of special needs.

11 Are co-curricular activities that support and enhance learning and extra-curricular activities open and accessible to all students?

That is a difficult one as extra-curricular activities are outside school time. If you have someone doing an extra-curricular activity in their own time it can be the case that the child isn't included. If you are running an Irish dancing class in the community centre a teacher doesn't have to take a child with special needs but when it is run in the school it is more difficult to refuse a child. From a parent's point of view it is difficult to understand that a child can't do an extra activity after school because there is no SNA available for their child.

12 Are the needs and interests of all students taken into account when determining the range of subjects, levels and programmes offered?

As much as possible

Quality of teaching and learning:

- 13 Do teachers effectively use and vary their teaching strategies and methodologies to meet the needs of all students?**

There are more things we can do. Teachers try to do the best with the resources that we have in the school. I am sure there are better ways of doing it and people are open to that.

- 14 Does your school offer an appropriate, safe and stimulating environment for all students, e.g. sense of belonging and security, work displayed on walls, appropriate physical arrangements?**

Lack of space is a problem. I think teachers are very conscious that children with special needs are looked after. We have lots of different competitions – art, poetry etc and we try to make sure everyone is involved. There are not just awards for “the best” but there are awards for “the best effort” or the “most improved”. Everyone gets an opportunity to win. We could have more books for children about children with special needs and that cartoon on TG4 called “Punky” for children is very good. The more we normalise it for children the better. We need to make sure everyone is aware of the “lámh signs”. On Fridays the fifth class kids do different jobs for half an hour around the school. I am getting them to teach the “lámh” signs to the children in the school. We should probably do more. Kids should have an understanding of what cerebral palsy is. We have a resource centre next door and we don’t use it. We could teach children about mental illness and then you are breaking down the stigma of it. How many teachers do you know that are suffering from mental illness but are terrified to say so?

- 15 How do you assess children? Are there any challenges in the assessment procedures?**

There are lots of challenges. There are lots of tests but the longer you spend assessing the less time those children are learning. Unless you are very qualified and you can read and understand them there is no point to them. My friend is an educational psychologist and she said some of the psychologists just can’t read those tests that they are doing properly. So when they do the tests and you get a report back you might look at it and think that doesn’t give a good reflection of what you thought the child was like. Some of the tests are complicated and some of the psychologists can’t analyse the data. It is up to me to make sure that we link in with other agencies. It is a wonderful thing if it is done properly but it takes a huge amount of work. The

teachers don't have time to do it. If there is a social worker or a speech therapist with a child there should be a link with the school. If something comes up we should fight for it if we need it. Most children with special needs have a gentle side and bring out the best in other children also. A lot of this stuff is about society and linking people with society. Everyone here is very open to teaching children with special needs. What is the best ways of doing things? There could be a better way. We have to learn ourselves and find out about places where things are working very well. The National Council for Special Education is very good and I'm not sure they have a facility where we say to them these are the kind of kids we have in our school, are there places where this is working well? We need to look at other schools where things are working very well. We need to learn what's going on from good practices in other schools. There are lots of people who have retired who have great skills who, could link up with people in the community and be coordinators. You have to be honest and realistic with parents. I am sure there will be other children in the community with needs like Eoin who has Down Syndrome who will come to the school.

Once we know what the situation is we try our best to meet the child's needs. You have to be careful that teachers have the resources they need. We have to give our English and Maths results to the Department of Education and some schools are going to try and refuse children with special needs because their results overall won't look as good. If you have a school with children with special needs children attending it you get a much better understanding of society. Some people might think it is great to send their children to a school where there are no children with special needs but how is that fantastic? If children meet someone with special needs they won't know how to react.

Appendix L1
Interview Transcript
Teacher 1

- 1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?**

I have taught in the mainstream classroom and as a learning support teacher. In the learning support room it is high incidence children that are taught.

- 2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?**

No, but we could do with more.

- 3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?**

Differentiation – differentiating for those children with special needs so they are not aware that you are differentiating as you need to protect their self-esteem. Lack of support from outside agencies and lack of assessments are challenges. We can only assess children twice a year and we have to prioritise. Making allowances for a child with behavioural problems is another challenge. If you have to make allowances for them what do the other children think? Not having an SNA for the child who needs one can be a problem. There is also a lack of specialist resources in the school.

- 4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?**

Very important for particular children, depends on their needs. You need an SNA if the child has behavioural problems and needs to be removed from the classroom sometimes.

- 5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?**

I do but it's good to review it every so often to make sure you are not relying on one particular style. They need a variety of different styles. You have to change your style to teach different children. Differentiation is very important.

- 6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?**

Yes for the most part. I know we have been wondering about one particular child doing a camp at the weekends.

- 7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?**
Differentiation and taking into account their abilities and targeting their strengths.
You need to give children activities geared towards their needs. You need to boost their self-esteem.
- 8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?**
No certainly not in college but I have taken courses recently which have been very good. Once you get into the area of special needs there are more courses available to you. The education centre does offer free courses that we should do. There are more things there than you realise.
- 9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.**
Would you consider this school to be inclusive?
If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?
If no, what should the school do to make it more inclusive?
I would. It is a very welcoming school and it is open to whatever the children's needs are and we foster a caring attitude towards them and this is a big step to start off with. We do our best for all of them. The attitudes of the teachers and the principal towards inclusion make it inclusive.
- 10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?**
Improving our resources. We need regular meetings with the special educational team. The principal and teachers need to discuss assessments and children's needs. We need to foster better links with outside agencies i.e., therapists, social workers and psychologists. These services are so underfunded and so stretched work wise. They still appreciate when you contact them. They don't have the time. We need to have a relationship with outside agencies. We should be more in contact with the SENO. The NEPs psychologist is out on maternity leave so we can't talk to her. We could have books about children with special needs. We should include pictures of children with disabilities in our classrooms. We could also have iPads and laptops for children with special needs.

Appendix L2
Interview Transcript
Teacher 2

- 1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?**

I have taught children with ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome.

- 2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?**

It depends on how severe the child's needs are. I made a lot of the resources. I made a behaviour chart for the child with ADHD and I made timetables for him and colour coded books. I didn't have the amount of resources a child would have in an Asperger's unit. I had to make the resources myself.

- 3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?**

You need to get the differentiation right. You have the dilemma of deciding should you give them different work than the other children and if you do you have to prepare it and you have to find time to explain things to them. They need the extra help and time from me. The worry about the children with special needs is a big challenge.

- 4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?**

It's very important. Children with severe needs need full time help on certain tasks. It's hard to help everyone. When I didn't have an SNA I would find that children with special needs wouldn't do tasks on their own. It is great having an SNA in the yard. Sometimes children need to be taken out of the classroom and you need an SNA for this.

- 5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?**

I use all of them and especially modelling, peer tutoring and group work. The ADHD child must have something active but then you have to be careful that they do not get too hyper. Group work is important for social reasons. If the class are interested in a topic they will get on with their work and it brings children with special needs into groups, where they might not have been accepted before.

6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?

It is very much encouraged and it is very important.

7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?

I give them clear instructions and constantly encourage them. I constantly have to remind them to start their work and make sure there are adequate resources for them. Sometimes I give them an extra worksheet with more information on it. It saves me going over it with them. I give them an instruction sheet also. I try and give challenges based on their ability. Sometimes children with Asperger's Syndrome might not have a great imagination so they write about themselves or their experiences. I get the children with special needs to sit in close proximity to me.

8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?

Probably not. I did a course in college. It was all theory. I had no practical work. I taught in an Asperger's Syndrome unit for a couple of months when I was subbing. Most of my training was on the job. I learned as I went along. I would love more training.

9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

Yes I do. We are not a very wealthy school and there are not many resources but any children who are taken in with special needs are given the best that the school can give them. The teachers really encourage them in this school. There is a lovely welcoming atmosphere in the school. The attitudes of the teachers, SNAs and the principal are all very positive towards inclusion.

10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

Funding for a "soft room" with different balls etc where children can go to and relax would be of great benefit to the school. It's a chill out room. Lack of space though is the problem. Computers and iPads would be beneficial for children with special needs. The more training given to teachers the better. I would love to know how to spot or identify children who have special needs. I don't know enough about the different special needs children can have.

Appendix L3
Interview Transcript
Teacher 3

1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?

I am teaching a child with ADHD and she is on the Autistic spectrum. I taught a child a few years ago who was legally blind. She had an SNA. She had a big computer and everything was magnified for her. She was very enthusiastic and loved learning. I had to differentiate things for her but she was so enthusiastic it was easy.

2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?

No I don't have adequate resources. There are not adequate resources in my classroom. I have to make my own resources. There are no areas Katie can go to when she needs time out. I have a beanbag but the space where it is, is very small. I don't have resources for a child with autism. If she needs time out she goes to a corner but there is very little space in my class.

3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?

I don't have the right support network. It would be great if there was a psychologist well educated in the area who could come in and give us support and advice on teaching children with special needs. Katie doesn't have her own computer and this would really help her. It would be great to talk to someone if we have a query or were not sure how to approach something. I am not always sure what the right thing is to do.

4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?

It is extremely important. I have Junior Infants and the child in my class had no SNA from September to December and it was very difficult. When I got an SNA for Katie it was unbelievable the difference it made. Katie has emotional and behavioural difficulties and has to leave the classroom from time to time. I have more time to help other children with an SNA. Katie took up a lot of my time. The classroom is a lot calmer. If she needs help or support the SNA is there straight away and I can help other children. Having an SNA benefits her and the other children.

5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?

I use modelling. A child who is more capable sits beside a child who needs help. Children who are more capable demonstrate things on the board. Children who find difficulties sometimes learn better from their peers. I do a lot of group work with team teaching. Team teaching is great as there is a teacher with each group. The teacher is with them all the time. Two teachers come into the classroom for team teaching. I have to differentiate a lot.

6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?

All children are encouraged. They do Irish dancing and recorder. The child in my class has no problem doing extra-curricular activities but other children with special needs find it very difficult.

7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?

I have to make sure Katie's needs are met and there is something in the lesson that is relevant to her. If she loses concentration I have to watch her.

8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?

To be honest no. I only had one module in college and it wasn't practical. I didn't have a special needs placement. I need more training in school.

9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

Parents are constantly telling me how inclusive this school is. The attitudes of the teachers make it inclusive. The attitudes of the SNAs are very important too. Teachers try their best in the school. There is a willingness among all staff members to do their best for all the children in the school.

10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

Funding and grants to get other materials.

Appendix L4
Interview Transcript
Teacher 4

- 1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?**

Yes I have. I am a resource teacher. I am teaching children with specific learning disabilities, moderate learning disabilities, emotional and behavioural problems and children on the autistic spectrum.

- 2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?**

It depends on the disability. Children with a moderate learning disability I would have concrete materials. Children with specific problems like Down Syndrome there is a lack of training and resources for teachers. Schools should liaise with outside agencies and that doesn't happen. There is a huge problem with time to meet people in outside agencies.

- 3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?**

The main problem is the lack of consistency, trying to find time to liaise with outside agencies and with the teachers and the principal.

- 4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?**

I don't teach a mainstream class. It depends on the special needs of the child. Most children with SEN have problems with everyday things that we take for granted like going to the toilet or dressing themselves and they need an SNA for these reasons. If a child needs to be taken out of the classroom you need an SNA.

- 5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?**

I would take some children for one to one, group teaching and then I go into the class. I would use peer tutoring, active learning. You have to find out how does the child learn and decide from there. You need to be very flexible. You must use differentiation.

- 6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?**

Absolutely.

- 7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?**

Finding what their strengths are and building on them. For example, if they are having difficulties with maths but they love computers you could find a programme on the computer that best suits them. If they are not interested, it will not go in.

- 8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?**

I am originally Montessori trained so I do have an advantage but generally I don't think that teachers have enough training. I teach a child with Down Syndrome this year. I am finding it very difficult to access training for myself. I had one lecture in college on it. I want to learn about the condition and how best to cater for his needs.

- 9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.**

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?

If no, what should the school do to make it more inclusive?

Yes I would. There is a flexible approach in this school. There is a positive school ethos. We have an engaged principal. Children are not just withdrawn from class. The learning support and resource teachers go into the class. The children's needs are being met in the class and they don't feel different. I think they learn more with team teaching as they get peer tutoring and there is a lot of modelling going on.

- 10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?**

Always make sure that their environment meets their needs and that their education is tailored to their needs. Books about children with special needs would be a great idea for children in the school to read. Peer awareness is very important. I think that we are doing the "lámh" signs, which is brilliant (Appendix, 27). The other children can communicate with the boy who has Down Syndrome. The school is covering everything. The attitudes of everyone in the school are important. An influential SENCO is crucial too. You need to have a coordinator in the school. They can be quite influential. You need to be involved with outside agencies.

Appendix L5
Interview Transcript
Teacher 5

- 1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?**

I have taught children that have had dyslexia and ADHD and at the moment I am teaching a boy called Eoin who has Down Syndrome.

- 2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?**

For some subjects like maths I do. But with English I find it hard with Eoin. He can't speak. He can say some sounds and he has no interest in the jolly phonics programme so I find I have to make games for him to make it exciting. He does a lot on the computer. We are looking into getting him an ipad. There is only one computer in the classroom and I need it a lot of the time. He used a computer in St. John of Gods. For English we made lots of sound bags for example pictures of things that begin with s and t.

- 3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?**

One of the main challenges I find is keeping Eoin continually motivated to do things. It is hard to get him to do things. We set up an award system for him. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Trying to find the time to help him myself is difficult. If I didn't have an SNA I don't know what I would do. She does a lot with him.

- 4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?**

It is really important. I am finished three groups of sounds and he only knows four sounds so I need an SNA. She has to keep doing the sounds with him. You can't leave him on his own at all. If the SNA leaves the room I have to sit with him. He needs help with the toilet. Sometimes Eoin needs to leave the classroom and do exercises or go for a walk as he finds it difficult to sit for long and the SNA is invaluable here.

5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?

We use lots of visual resources for Eoin as he is a visual learner. I do lots of modelling. Active learning is very important. He only learns by doing. He writes letters using sand and water and play dough. I differentiate most lessons for Eoin.

6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?

All children have the same opportunities. He has signed up for Irish dancing. It would be great for him but if he needs an SNA in school he will need someone in all activities. The Irish dancing teacher has asked his mum to sit in on the class. He needs someone all the time.

7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?

Keep everything fun.

8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?

I did a little bit in college but that was ten years ago. I am learning from the SNAs as they know more than I do. I am learning lots from Eoin's Mum. I try and Google things to inform myself. I have bought books as well and I am trying to learn as much as I can about Down Syndrome so I can help Eoin as much as possible. I went to St. John of Gods and I learned from them.

9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?

If no, what should the school do to make it more inclusive?

Children are treated the same as everyone else. The attitudes of everyone are very important.

10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

Teachers should get training on ADHD and dyslexia etc and we need more resources. I am using resources for Eoin that his mum gave me. There are not enough resources in the school. Computers and iPads would be great for children with special needs.

Appendix L6
Interview Transcript
Teacher 6

- 1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?**

I have a few children with special needs in my class at the moment. One in particular has Asperger's, and ADHD.

- 2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?**

Yes and no. There is a lack of specialist resources for children with special needs. There is a resource teacher who takes him out for 40 minutes a day. He is going to two resource teachers at the moment. It would be better if there was continuity and he just had the same teacher all the time. I have an SNA. The SNA only started with him this year and he has come on leaps and bounds. He really needs her there all the time. If he gets aggravated or angry, she deals with him so I don't have to leave the rest of the class.

- 3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?**

Catering for the children's needs in a large class and in a small space is a big challenge. The classroom is too small. In particular the child with Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD needs space to move around. He needs occupational therapy and physical exercise to bring his mood up or sometimes he needs exercise to bring his energy levels down. With the small space in the classroom this is difficult. Sometimes he can be brought to the PE hall but we don't have all the resources that he would need.

- 4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?**

I think it is essential for the particular child I have. Daniel has emotional and behavioural difficulties and has to leave the classroom sometimes. It is great that his SNA can take him out of the class when he needs to leave. We don't have access to a multi-disciplinary team like an occupational therapist or a speech therapist. We don't have collaboration with the experts. We are isolated from the health service. I haven't had any contact with the OT. It is very difficult to contact them. Daniel goes

to the Lucina clinic and we have had no contact with them. We have tried to contact them.

5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?

Differentiation is essential. I use concrete materials. I use active learning. For children with special needs you need to explain things to them many times. I use a lot of pictures and concrete materials.

6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?

Yes definitely. Daniel plays football. It is great for his social skills.

7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?

I praise and encourage them as much as I can. You have to be careful who you group children with special needs with. In the case of the child with Asperger's Syndrome and ADHD I put him in a group with children he gets on with. You must differentiate work for children with special needs.

8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?

Yes and no. My degree did cover one module on special needs. It was covered very generally. It would be more helpful if we were given specific training from experts.

9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

Yes I would think it is very inclusive. There is a great level of care for children with special needs in the school. They are treated very well and there are provisions put in place to meet their needs. The whole staff collaborates together. They work together. Everybody helps out. I am involved in the making of the IEP for Daniel. The principal, resource teacher and support teacher and his parents are also involved.

10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

The school could be more inclusive if there was a greater availability of resources. There needs to be more allocation of resource time and more consistency with this resource time. Children should have the same resource teacher instead of two or three teachers.

Appendix L7
Interview Transcript
Teacher 7

- 1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?**

At the moment I have a child with dyspraxia. I have taught children with ADHD and sensory difficulties.

- 2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?**

Yes I do. When I was teaching the child with sensory difficulties the school got a grant and they bought lots of equipment with that grant. I find though that some children need time out from classroom activities and there is very little space in my classroom for this. I would like to have areas children could go to for example a reading, maths or music area.

- 3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?**

Giving them the time they need. If you don't have an SNA it is very difficult to find the time to help the children with special needs while at the same time looking after the needs of the other children.

- 4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?**

I think it is really important. Sometimes children with SEN need time out of class and the boy with sensory difficulties needed time to do his OT exercises and without the SNA he would have been unable to do this.

- 5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?**

I differentiate a lot of work for the children with SEN. I use scaffolding.

- 6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?**

They are. The hurling and football teams encourage all children to join their teams.

- 7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?**

During the lesson I go down to the child to ensure he or she is listening and afterwards I will check they have it completed. I will spend time with them if they have had difficulties.

8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?

I don't think we have done enough in college. Until you have actually experienced teaching children with special needs you don't know what it is really like. I never worked with any children with special needs until I started teaching. I think it would be great to spend a week in a special unit.

9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?

If no, what should the school do to make it more inclusive?

Yes the staff and parents make it inclusive. They are all very accepting. I think the attitudes of the teachers and principal in the school towards inclusion are very important.

10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

There needs to be more training for teachers. I would love if we could link up more with professionals in outside agencies such as speech therapists or psychologists.

Appendix L8
Interview Transcript
Teacher 8

- 1 Are you teaching, or have you taught children with special educational needs in your classroom?**

I am teaching a boy Andrew who has dyspraxia and have taught children in the past with special needs.

- 2 Do you consider you have adequate resources to teach children with special needs?**

With Andrew yes. I had a child with Down Syndrome last year and he took up a lot of my time. He wasn't ready for school. He was sick very often and when he would come back to class it was like starting all over again. Two different teachers from St. Michael's house came in two days a week but it wasn't consistent because of lack of funding. He didn't get on as well with the two women who came in as he didn't see them that often. If there was any change at all he would lose it. He wasn't able for any change at all. I was way behind with the curriculum as I was teaching this boy with special needs. I had another boy in my class with global difficulties also.

- 3 What are the challenges you face when teaching children with special needs?**

Children with special needs find change very difficult. You also need to have space in your classroom for reading and music areas etc and I find I have very little room in my classroom. They need time out from classroom activities.

- 4 To what extent do you think it important to have a special needs assistant when you are teaching a class which includes a child or children with SEN?**

It depends on the child. It's very important if they are more than moderate. You would need an SNA if a child had behavioural or emotional problems and they needed to leave the classroom sometimes.

- 5 Do you use a variety of teaching styles – scaffolding, modelling, peer tutoring, active learning and co-operative group work?**

I think team teaching is brilliant. Andrew loves being in a group as the other children help him. The brighter children don't like group work as much. The children who are less able love group work.

- 6 Are all children, including those with SEN, encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities?**

Andrew was encouraged to play football and this has been great for him. In PE he does get frustrated. Football is very important for him as it is a social outlet.

- 7 How do you ensure that students with SEN actively participate in lessons?**

With Andrew it's quite funny, if he knows the answer he is quite happy to tell you, but if you try to ask him a question he will just say no.

- 8 Do you think you have had the appropriate training to teach children with special educational needs?**

I don't. Our lecturer in college wasn't very consistent. There was a lot of DVDs but no practical work. There should be practical work for teachers. I didn't have any child with special needs in any of my teaching practices.

- 9 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.**

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?

If no, what should the school do to make it more inclusive?

Yes I would to be honest. I think there are a lot of very good teachers and the resource teachers really chat to you and talk to you about your concerns especially as I am only new. The teachers are very friendly. The friendliness of all staff members in the school is brilliant. There is a willingness among all staff members to do their best for all the children in school. Most of the time teachers are good at giving information about children they have taught. The attitude of parents and staff are very important. We shouldn't shy away from it. You should explain to kids that children have different needs so they support them rather than not tell them anything.

- 10 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?**

I think visual timetables are very good to have in all the classrooms. The children know what is going on and it just makes life a bit easier and helps their organisational skills.

Appendix M1
Interview Transcript
SNA 1

1. How would you describe your job?

You are there to assist the teacher and implement further structures for the children. When I arrive in, I check the children have their books ready for the first subject. I watch to see if they are getting distracted. I try and keep them motivated.

2. What do you like most about your job?

We are using IEPs for the children and I love when they reach their targets whether it is a short term or long term target. I am involved in the process of the making of the IEP. The resource teacher, principal and teacher and parents work together. We are all part of the multi-disciplinary team. Regular updates are important. We don't get enough outside help. It is hard to contact places like the Lucina Clinic. We don't get the feedback we need. It's generally because of policies.

3. Describe a typical day?

A typical day would be preparing for the children coming into the classroom and making sure they are taking the correct books out. If there is a difficulty in the classroom like someone doesn't want to work or they are having a bad day I try to use different strategies to help them. Sometimes I do sport with them or physical activities or I do work with them outside the classroom. Sometimes the buzzing in the class can annoy them. Generally during the day I make sure they are on task. We are using the "traffic light" system at the moment. Amanda uses this to increase her independence. If she needs me the red card goes out, green is motoring along and the yellow card means "please stay near me". I am an SNA for 2 children. I think it is great as I am not always on their case. Sometimes I feel sorry for a child when the SNA only has that child because they are never left alone. I am not always on their case. I share my time among the children. I gauge how the children are in the morning and decide then what I should do with them.

- 4. An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.**

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?

If no, what should this school do to make it more inclusive?

It is very inclusive. The principal walked into the class today and knew every child's name. That is huge. Every child likes to be called by their first name. There is a special effort in the whole school to know everybody. Everybody in the school knows the children who have special needs. The teachers make an effort to know all children and especially the children with special needs. Teachers are very caring in the school. There is a special effort in the whole school to know everyone individually.

- 5. What are the most significant challenges within the role of an SNA?**

You can't fix in school what is not happening at home. I find it very frustrating. With regard to Amanda the main thing on her IEP is her independence but her family treat her like a baby. She is spoon fed at home. By the end of the day she is great with me but it is back to square one the next morning. She is being led up to the door and collected at the door. We are trying to get her to get her own books and Dad is at the classroom and annoyed that she is not hurrying up. Dad thinks that we should be getting her bag ready for her. You come across situations where you need to talk to teacher and you can't talk across the kids. You have to retain everything that is happening. You have to bide your time but by the time I ask her it's gone what I needed to ask her. This happens especially in maths. I might struggle myself in explaining things. The number one rule for an SNA is to respect the teacher's role and her control in the classroom. She is the boss. I withdraw from the classroom sometimes at the beginning of the year so the children know the teacher is in charge.

- 6. What would you consider to be the biggest challenges that you face when Supporting students with special educational needs in the classroom?**

When there is a disruption (bad behaviour from the child with SEN) you are trying not to upset the momentum of the class.

- 7. Looking to the future: What suggestions would you make to help promote the inclusion of students with special needs in this school**

We need access to lifts for wheelchairs because a lot of the rooms are upstairs. We need a sensory area and not just for children with special needs. All children need

time out. Some schools have individual work places for children. We could do it in the corridor. In the reading corner you can put some plywood down to make an area for children to go to. Teacher has a corner in the class where she has introduced these tension toys where children can squeeze them. It is great for children with sensory problems. I have seen a boy in the class relaxing with one of these toys. The “squeezy” toys are great for motor skills. Children with special needs need rules and boundaries but I wonder should the consequences be different for them. Children like that, when they are over punished they become complacent with punishment and it loses its effect. They need to know the rules and that if they do something wrong they need to know the consequences there will be. The individual work area is great for children who have behavioural problems. It is important to give children choices. That space would give them the opportunity to walk away. All children need a space they can go to.

Appendix M2
Interview Transcript
SNA 2

1. How would you describe your job?

Basically I look after the kids. Eoin has Down Syndrome. When he arrives in the morning, he plays with the others. Then he goes down for his breakfast. I show him how to put on the toast, set the table and how to butter the toast. I teach him life skills. It takes him ages to eat so that's why he eats it in school. I bring him back to class and he does twenty minutes of work. Some days you get lots done other days you get nothing done. It depends on his humour. Then he has his little break and that takes twenty minutes. I help him to get his lunch out but I try to make him independent and get him to open his lunch box. He points to what he wants. If it is a banana I have to peel it for him. He can eat a yogurt by himself. I have to feed him and do "aeroplane" with it. He goes out to the yard and it is great. He interacts with all the kids. He comes back in after yard and it is hassle to get him to do anything. He goes down to the resource teacher. The first two hours of the day are the best. The teacher needs me in the class because he is so time consuming. He is on a one to one constantly with me. I take him out of the class when he needs "time out" and we do exercises in the corridor. I can't help the other children. I am always with him. I taught a boy with autism last year and I could help other children when I was with him. You could walk around and help other children.

2. What do you like most about your job?

I love the kids. I love seeing the children make progress. Eoin can colour now but when he first came to school he couldn't. You feel great as you are after helping him. I have a different bond with the children than the teachers. I help the children academically and socially. I help the children with everything the teacher is doing.

3. Describe a typical day?

Refer to Question 1

- 4. An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs.**

Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?

If no, what should this school do to make it more inclusive?

Yes it is. Everyone treats them as individuals. They are all treated the same. No one is treated any differently. Children with special educational needs are given the same opportunities as everyone else. There isn't anything really we can do to make it more inclusive. Everything falls into place. I suppose we could have more resources. Sometimes Eoin makes noises but the rest of the class take no notice of him now. In the beginning they did. If you had books about children with special needs they should be sent home. The parents could talk to them about the books.

- 5. What are the most significant challenges within the role of an SNA?**

I hate when the parents come to me and don't go to the teacher first. The parents think that I know the child better than the teacher as I am with them all the time.

- 6. What would you consider to be the biggest challenges that you face when supporting students with special educational needs in the classroom?**

I find trying to get the children focused and trying to get them to work a challenge. It is very hard to get Eoin to do his work. I have to make him colour. He is very stubborn. When he wants to do it he can do it. If he doesn't do something I feel it is a reflection on me. I feel I have let him down. I am with him all the time. He needs help going to the toilet. His mum puts a lot of clothes on him and he struggles to get them down as he doesn't have the fine motor skills he needs. I don't think academically he will achieve much but socially he has come on so much. The other children bring him on. He has his own friends. He has no speech but he can still communicate with the other children and that is a life skill. He can put across exactly what he wants. It is the best place for him. I never worry about him in the yard. We are well secured.

- 7. Looking to the future: What suggestions would you make to help promote the inclusion of students with special needs in this school**

We need to teach the lámh signs (Appendix P) and get books about children with special needs. You don't know if the parents are talking to the children about the fact that Eoin has special needs. I think that it is important. You don't know what the parents know. The kids in the class do know he is different and see his features are

different so when they go to Mc Donald's and there is a child with Down Syndromethere,they are not going to look or stare at them. They accept it. Socially this school is brilliant for Eoin. He is learning life skills. He can use the dishwasher and the toaster. Academically he can count to three and he is trying to learn his sounds but with his speech being delayed it is a bit awkward. I have to make a lot of the resources. When we are doing the sound s we have to look for things that begin with s etc. We have a lucky dip bag so when he picks out a picture he knows it begins with s. Maths is easy to teach him as we have a lot of resources. He can scribble and can write when he wants to. There is a website and the big brown bear goes rrrr and he roars. He loves that. A computer would be beneficial for him. He learns everything through sight. We do maths programmes in the computer room. Change doesn't affect him much. He slots in.

Appendix N1
Interview Transcript
Andrew's Mother

1. Why did you decide to send your child to this school?

It's a small school and my nephew came here.

2. What factors influenced you in making this decision?

I didn't like the school beside me.

3 Do you think there are adequate resources in this school to cater for children with special needs?

Anytime I asked for anything I got it. I was never waiting. Andrew didn't crawl and do certain things when he was a baby. It was when he went to school and started doing the bit of writing I knew there was something really wrong. He couldn't write. He didn't want to do his homework because of the writing. I read an article about dyspraxia and then I realised what he had. I rang a man from the dyspraxia association. I hadn't brought him to the doctor for those symptoms. I got him assessed privately because I would have had to wait otherwise. His teacher at the time said she was putting him down on the list to be assessed as she knew there was something wrong. They don't assess children in junior infants so I would have had to wait. I got help for him. He doesn't have an SNA. He has resource hours. He is withdrawn from the class. As he is getting bigger he doesn't like getting things done for him as other children are wondering why he is getting extra help. He wouldn't go to the resource teacher in the beginning. I had to go up to the school. I want him to get one to one help as he gets a lot of out of it. He goes now as he is promised things if he goes. It's getting a little bit harder as he is more aware that he is different.

4 What resources would you consider essential for teaching children with special needs?

I found when he went to the OT, they did a lot of exercises with him on swings and bouncing on balls. It is after strengthening him. Before, he couldn't climb. The football that started during yard time is the big thing that has helped him. Before the football he would stay on his own in the yard. Socially the football is great for him. I don't want him to be bullied. I feel he has something else other than dyspraxia. He gets up from watching TV and has to jump around. It is something he has to do. He has to be moving. When he is on his own he skips around the yard. During PE when

they are doing different activities he just loves the football and when it's his turn to change activity he won't do anything else. I worry about how he copes socially in school. Two years ago he wouldn't play football. I was told he would never play. He plays with a dyspraxia football team. It's called "football for all". I was told not to put him on mainstream football because of his poor coordination. Children come from all parts of the country to play. I think he is better than my other boy now. He wouldn't kick a ball a few years ago and now he loves it. He is a mover. He fidgets all the time. It would be great to get him special balls to sit on in class.

5 What do you hope your child will achieve in this school?

He gets on well socially, makes friends and is happy. I want him to be happy more than anything else.

6 How important do you think it is to have good communication between teachers and parents?

I think it is brilliant. I am always listened too. Anything I have wanted I have always gotten. There is very good communication between the teachers and parents in the school. We are informed of everything that is happening in the school by means of newsletters, text messages and phone calls when they are needed. The principal is very supportive and understanding. The teachers and the principal are getting the help that the children need.

7 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs. Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

If yes, what factors do you think are important in making this school inclusive?

If no, what could this school do to make it more inclusive?

Yes this school is inclusive. The teachers in the school do their best to find out anything they are unsure of. The teachers do what they can for each child in the school. They are getting the help that the children need. I didn't know anything about dyspraxia but the teachers are more aware of it and they understand it. They are willing to try things. I am listened to. He is not singled out. Andrew fits in. He is treated the same as the others. Andrew was told he didn't have to do Irish but he enjoys it and is getting on well. Academically his writing is the main problem for him. The resource teacher is teaching him to type. He forces himself to write. We have tried all the grips and pencils. It hurts his fingers. The teachers understand that he finds writing hard and they give him less to do. He doesn't really like drawing.

He is not able to fidget with things. He is very sensitive about how different things feel. He likes fluffy textures but doesn't like mousse textures. There are certain things he won't touch. If you are wearing a material he likes he will come over and continuously be rubbing at it. He likes the feeling of some things and others he hates. You can't tell him you are doing something and not do it. You have to do it. You can't change his routine. It is great my two sons are so close in age because my oldest son looks out for Andrew. He speaks up for him.

8 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

They get the help when it is needed. The football is a brilliant thing because he loves it. He was in the small yard last year but the teacher let him go into the big yard and play with his brother and play football. The school accommodated him. He loves going to school when he knows he can play football. It used to be only fourth, fifth and sixth class who could play football during yard time but now second and third class can. He is on his own in the yard if he doesn't play football. He chooses to play on his own and talk to himself. That was ok when he was younger but he is nearly eight now and he can't do that. Kids can be cruel. He is very sensitive and a little thing can knock him right back and once I know now he can play football in school I am happy. If he isn't playing football he plays with his brother during yard time. Last year it was hard as his brother was in the big yard and Andrew wasn't. His brother is brilliant with him. The teachers did try to pair him with other children but he wanted to play on his own. I want him to be happy. I don't want him to be singled out.

Appendix N2
Interview Transcript
Eoin's Mother

1 Why did you decided to send your child to this school?

Eoin had a psychological assessment done by St. John of God's Service Provider when he was six years old. On the advice of the multi-disciplinary team, we decided that mainstream school was the best option for Eoin at this present time. We researched all our options and looked at many different types of schools and felt that Rose Hill School was our preferred option.

2 What factors influence you in making this decision?

We got very positive feedback from the principal. The principal is so positive and proactive and has a vision for the school. The principal was honest and realistic about all matters affecting the school's ability to fully meet Eoin's needs. In my opinion the principal helps make the school inclusive. Eoin has a brother attending the school so we felt that it was good for Eoin to be in the same school. The numbers in the school are small which we felt would help Eoin. We wanted Eoin to go to a school in our area. We feel that children with "special needs" can sometimes be isolated and we feel it's important that Eoin feels part of his community, as his brother is.

3 Do you think there are adequate resources in this school to cater for children with special needs?

No there isn't. Eoin should have access to a speech and language therapist. It would be great for teachers to seek advice from a speech therapist. The teachers need more training in particular areas of special needs. There are many teachers who know nothing about Down Syndrome. They should have training in the area.

If we are going to promote inclusion it should be part of the ethos of the school to learn more about children with special needs and each child is an individual. You can't learn everything about Down Syndrome. I think there is a lot of fear. It's not fair on the teachers and it makes the decision on the parents more difficult. We are very lucky to come to a school who want to take Eoin and the principal has been brilliant and been very supportive. I have heard from parents who have had bad experiences and principals who don't want to take their children.

4 What resources would you consider essential for teaching children with special needs?

The school needs access to a speech and language therapist who would work closely with Eoin and the school. There needs to be access to an occupational therapist. These professionals could advise the teachers on the best way to maximise the child's learning potential. A speech and language therapist is vital and more important than speaking to a psychologist. Eoin can't sit for twenty minutes in class. He needs to do exercises before he sits for twenty minutes. Eoin loves interaction. He doesn't like playing on his own. You have to watch Eoin at home. He might put on a bath of cold water because he loves sitting in cold water. He is not aware of danger the way other children are. He is more of a responsibility. Eoin is six but he does things that three year olds would do. Access to a sensory room would be very beneficial to the school. These rooms are a great way for the child with special needs to stimulate their senses. This would then allow the child to go back into the classroom situation with "an alertness" and hopefully enhance their ability to listen and learn. Access to training for teachers, e.g. Lámh and Hanen (training on how best to promote language, social and literacy skills in children) is needed in the school (Appendices 27, 28). Teachers in the school have begun teaching some "lámh" signs to children in the school and this is brilliant. Also teachers should be given the opportunity to visit a "service provider" like St. John of Gods or Cheeverstown.

5 What do you hope your child will achieve in this school?

I would like to see an overall increase in his development. We would like Eoin to grow in confidence and most importantly to have a positive and happy experience in school. I hope his speech and motor skills will improve. I want him to be more independent.

6 How important do you think it is to have good communication between teachers and parents?

It is vital. It is vital that parents, the principal, teachers and all staff have a good relationship. There is a lot more communication needed when your child has special needs. The teacher must be able to tell you what is happening on a day to day basis and likewise you need to make the teacher aware of any issues your child/family may have, as most children with special needs would be more sensitive to things that are happening around them. We are very lucky as we have a brilliant team in Rose Hill School and his teacher and SNA have been a great support to us and Eoin. From the

word go the principal, his teacher, his SNA and everyone in the school have been brilliant. There is very good communication between the teachers and parents in the school. I have a notebook that his teacher and I write in. I write down what is happening in the house. For example if it was someone's birthday in the family so the SNA and the teacher can ask Eoin about the party because Eoin wouldn't have the speech to express it himself. The teacher writes what he does in school every day.

7 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs. Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

Yes it is. The key thing is the willingness of principal. He is so proactive and very positive and realistic. He was really honest with us. The principal has a drive and vision for the school. He was very willing to take Eoin. Even from a special school we weren't given positive feedback. The principal wouldn't take his name as they never had a child with Down Syndrome and they had a lot of behavioural problems in the school. This was the only mainstream school we considered because his brother is here. The drive and vision the principal has for the school as a whole, is very encouraging for us.

8 How do you think the school could be made more inclusive?

That all teachers are aware what inclusiveness is. The school could become more inclusive by educating people, teachers, parents and staff and by exposing them to children with special needs. It is important to show people that a child with special needs is a "child" firstly; they just have a few extra needs. Eoin is not a Down Syndrome boy but a boy with Down Syndrome. I think it is important that teachers and all staff are aware of the language they use when discussing children with special needs. There was an issue with a camp that was run "inside" the school but "separate" to the school. The teacher said that she didn't feel she would be able to manage Eoin. I was very upset. His classmates could go to the camp so why couldn't he. If the teacher had come to me and said it might be a problem and we discussed it then we could have come up with a solution. If the principal gives the ok for people to use the school as a facility, they need to be aware that there are children with special educational needs. I could have agreed to pay someone to come and be with Eoin at the camp. The principal did say go back to the teacher but I was so upset about it. I have to fight for everything, his speech therapy etc. I get tired of fighting. I have other issues and another child. Sometimes I am not able to. I have met mothers who

are not able to fight for their kids or articulate what they want. I strongly believe that if we want to make our school “inclusive” then, we must actively promote inclusivity. This means that all children should be invited to participate in whatever is open to them and their peers. We can’t call ourselves inclusive and then not insist that people who are using our school for purposes outside the curriculum can discriminate on the grounds that they couldn’t manage a child with special needs.

Appendix N3
Interview Transcript
Daniel's Mother

1 Why did you decide to send your child to this school?

My family have children who go to the school. It is near where I live.

2 What factors influenced you in making this decision?

Close proximity to the school.

3 Do you think there are adequate resources in this school to cater for children with special needs?

At this time yes. Absolutely. The resource hours are brilliant. He is getting a bit older and it's getting a bit tougher in some ways. Other children notice he is different and it is his behaviour. I told him he had ADHD last week. I am sick of trying to hide it from him. He said he didn't have it. I said he is like a little boy he knows who is two years older than him and I said there is nothing wrong with him. I gave him a book about a little boy with Asperger's and he didn't really understand it. The little boy in the book was in the corner of the room with a sleeping bag and he does that. I think story books about children with special needs would be great. Children should know about Asperger's Syndrome. I didn't even know about it.

4 What resources would you consider essential for teaching children with special needs?

Having an SNA is very important.

5 What do you hope your child will achieve in this school?

The same as his peers and that his self-esteem improves. Having an SNA has helped his self-esteem. She gives him praise and that is what he needs. He is told he is not bold and that is a great thing. I don't agree when he misbehaves so I do want him to be punished and treated the same as everyone else. He knows how to play it. His SNA is very understanding. He was in trouble in Croke Park but she told me not to worry about it and I felt much better because it can be very hard and you blame yourself. He is brilliant at home and gets me a cup of tea and breakfast. He really does love me to bits. Routine is very important.

6 How important do you think it is to have good communication between teachers and parents?

Absolutely. There is very good communication between the parents and teachers in the school. The principal is very supportive and understanding. He rings me sometimes at six o' clock in the evening to tell me how Daniel's day has gone and to have a chat. He is very good. I am informed of what is happening in the school through newsletters, text messages and the school website. I am worried about him going to secondary school. He is only getting the help now and he is in fifth class. I am going to send him to Woodland College where they have the resources. He is starting a social group next week with five kids who have ADHD in the Lucina Clinic. They are all leaders so it will be interesting to see how they get on. They all interrupt and they all have their own interests. There will be two ladies and five children. It is all trial and error. It will be every Thursday. He had a speech and language therapist and he didn't cooperate with her one to one

7 An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs. Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

Yes I would. All of the children are doing the same work in the same class most of the time but this is not always possible. They try to include him in everything. Daniel fits in with his classmates. If he doesn't want to do something he doesn't have to.

8 How do you think it could be made more inclusive?

You could have more SNAs and more resource hours in the school. Play therapy started on Monday and it is brilliant. He was able to bring four of his peers with him. All he likes is maths and history. He doesn't like writing and I saw it as laziness but it's not. It is his motor skills and he has poor muscle tone. He is very impulsive. Noise levels affect him. A certain decibel on the radio can cause him to hear a ringing noise in his head. I wouldn't change him for the world. The principal is doing a great job. Daniel didn't receive anything in his first years in the school but he did when he was diagnosed. I would love him to walk away when he feels that anger inside him. He sulks at home but he lashes out at school. He knows he can't hit at home. You could stop him going on trips but that is not fair. You don't know what he is really thinking. Children have to learn about diversity, all kids are different. We all have to be polite. We have to listen to people even if we are not interested.

Appendix N4
Interview Transcript
Lucy's Mother

1. Why did you decide to send your child to this school?

I decided to send my children to this school as I live right beside it (in the local area) and would not have difficulty getting their names on the enrolment list. The school also has a good reputation as a caring, welcoming school. I initially sent my older daughter to the local girls only school but changed her to Rose Hill School for fifth and sixth class as I could see that my son who attended Rose Hill School from Junior Infants was much happier.

2. What factors influenced you in making this decision?

I was influenced by location, reputation and the fact that the school is co-educational. Religion is important to me and I wanted my children to make their communion and confirmation within the school system.

3. Do you think there are adequate resources in this school to cater for children with special needs?

My third child has a learning disability which was diagnosed as a “language processing disorder” by an educational psychologist attached to the school. Initially I did not realise she had any problems as her difficulties only became apparent in an educational environment. She has poor eye sight and has a turn in one eye. She has attended Our Lady's Hospital eye department since she was three. I thought her difficulties might relate to vision. However, the school had the resources to recognise she had a learning problem and the learning resource teacher helped her a lot at this early stage. I think the school could have more resources but the teachers make the best of the resources they have. I think there could be more links with outside agencies such as speech and language therapists.

4. What resources would you consider essential for teaching children with special needs?

The resource which is most essential is a good teacher. There is no computer programme or learning aid that can substitute a good teacher. One to one time spent with a learning resource teacher makes a huge difference. Learning in smaller groups is also beneficial as children with a learning difficulty do not learn much in larger groups.

5. What do you hope your child will achieve in this school?

I hope she reaches her potential. I hope my child will learn to be the most that she can given her limitations. I hope she can become proficient in reading and writing. She has difficulties with maths but could always use a calculator when older. There are no shortcuts in reading and writing

6. How important do you think it is to have good communication between teachers and parents?

Good communication is essential, as it encourages trust, better understanding and two way dialogue as to what the child needs. This is important with regards to homework and difficulties both at home and in school with respect to learning. I think there is very good communication between the parents and teachers in the school. I am informed of everything that is happening in the school. I receive text messages and newsletters regularly. The teacher rings me if she needs to discuss anything with me.

7. An inclusive school is one where all children are educated together for curricular and social reasons regardless of their needs. Would you consider this school to be inclusive?

Yes I think Rose Hill School is an inclusive school. All children are educated together regardless of their curricular needs. Lucy is always in the class. She is part of the class. There is no isolation. I remember when I was in secondary school in 1974. There was a prefab for all the kids who had anything special about them. It was dreadful. Children were very cruel. Someone who had dyslexia was in this prefab. I felt bad because my best friend in primary school was stuck in it. She had dyslexia. She had a great personality and I used to lean on her and I was on my own when she was sent to the special building. It was awful on both of us. Even though Lucy has a learning disability she has never complained about feeling different or left out. Lucy fits in with everyone in her class. Lucy doesn't feel different to anyone else in the school. Children with educational needs are taken from the class for one to one attention and there is an SNA in the class which is a great benefit to my daughter. Sadly this is a limited resource and she had to stay back a year to avail of it. However, I can see that staying back a year is greatly benefiting her development.

8. How you think this school could be made more inclusive?

I think Rose Hill is a very inclusive school in every way. There has been a great effort made to include girls in all sports programmes and my daughter has really enjoyed this. Lucy is a member of the girl's football team and this really helps her

self-esteem. Although she has a learning disability she feels the same as everyone else and has never complained about feeling different or left out. The school has managed to teach her in the same classroom as the other students with occasional absences for one to one help. The school could benefit from more SNAs as unfortunately resources are limited. The school is not attached to a secondary and would benefit from a programme that would allow the school to liaise with a secondary school with regard to students with special needs. Lucy goes to language therapy classes and classes like these in the school would help her and other children. I think books about children with special needs would be great for all children in the school.

Appendix O

The Ten Themes of Inclusion (NCSE, 2010)



| Themes | Examples of inclusive practice |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Provision of information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing information leaflets to parents and schools outlining what inclusive education means publishing admission policies on the school's website ensuring the school's policy on inclusion is disseminated to parents and the wider community |
| 2. Physical features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> constructing a school whose physical layout facilitates inclusion |
| 3. Inclusive school policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developing inclusive policies and plans in consultation with all stakeholders, including parents developing an access and admission policy that is open to all students without discrimination |
| 4. The IEP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involving parents in the development of IEPs managing the IEP supports so that the child does not feel separate or different ensuring the students are achieving their desired goals |
| 5. Student interactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring there are mixed abilities in every class ensuring that students with SEN are included in school social events |
| 6. Staffing and personnel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that support staff are fully integrated into the cohort of school staff ensuring that teachers are equipped to respond to diverse needs among children with a variety of SEN ensuring that teaching occurs in a team format |
| 7. External links | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that external services are liaised with very closely |
| 8. Assessment of achievement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that the achievements of all students are recognised involving children in their own assessment, allowing them achieve against personal goals |
| 9. Curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring there is a mixed ability teaching approach ensuring that all students are able to access the curriculum ensuring there is differentiation of the curriculum |
| 10. Teaching strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using a variety of teaching styles to cater for different student abilities |

Appendix P

Lámh...a manual sign system

<http://www.lamh.org/>



...used by children and adults...

What is Lámh?

Lámh is a manual sign system used by children and adults with intellectual disability and communication needs in Ireland.

Lámh signs are based on Irish Sign Language (ISL).

Speech is always used with Lámh signs.

Lámh signs are used to *support communication*. Signing can be useful because:

1. The person can *see* as well as *hear* what is being communicated.
2. Signing naturally encourages people to slow down a little so there is more time to work out the message.
3. If their speech is unclear or limited, the Lámh user may be more easily understood when they use signs. *This encourages many to try new words and say more.*
4. It encourages eye contact and attention to movement; skills that are important for speech development.

Speech is always used with Lámh signs and only key words in a sentence are signed.

Lámh has 500 signs.

How long has Lámh been in use in Ireland?

Since the early 1980s, Lámh was developed in order to have a standardised, Irish-based manual sign system for those with intellectual disabilities and communication needs.

It is now used by many people throughout Ireland in their daily home, education and work settings.

Communication Skills

Research shows that the appropriate use of systems such as Lámh, can improve a person's communication skills and may support the development of speech.

Appendix Q

Hanen

<http://www.hanen.org/Home.aspx>

Founded more than 35 years ago, The Hanen Centre is a Canadian charitable organisation with a global reach. Their mission is to provide parents, caregivers, early childhood educators and speech-language pathologists with the knowledge and training they need to help young children develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills. This includes children with or at risk of language delays and those with developmental challenges such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, including Asperger's Syndrome.

They fulfil their mission by:

- Creating programmes in which groups of parents and other caregivers learn how to promote children's language and literacy development during everyday activities.
- Training speech-language pathologists/therapists to lead Hanen Programmes and to use the Hanen approach in their day-to-day work with families and educators.
- Developing outstanding, user-friendly materials for parents and professionals that break down the latest research into practical, usable strategies.

The Hanen Approach

The Hanen approach has led the way in changing early language intervention by putting parents first in order to help children best. Many years ago, early language intervention involved speech-language pathologists "treating" a child in a therapy room with little or no parent involvement. In the early 1970's, research began to reveal that the involvement of parents in their child's early intervention was critical and that the earlier parents were involved, the better the outcome for the child. Research also showed that children learned best in their natural environments, where they were motivated to communicate with the important people in their lives. This required a significant change to the way speech therapy was offered to young children.

So, in 1975, Ayala HanenManolson, a speech-language pathologist in Montreal, Canada, developed an innovative programme for groups of parents whose children had significant language delays. This programme did something novel: instead of giving the children speech therapy once a week, Ms Manolson gathered their parents in a group for a series of sessions and taught them how they could assume a primary role in helping their children develop improved communication skills.

The success of this programme, which eventually became *It Takes Two To Talk - The Hanen Program for Parents of Children with Language Delays*, led to the establishment of The Hanen Centre and paved the way for the development of seven other Hanen Programmes; four for parents and three for early childhood educators.

Appendix R

Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in an interview today. The purpose of the interview is to gather information from your perspective about how children with special educational needs are included in the mainstream primary school and in particular this school.

The researcher conducting this interview is working to a code of ethics stipulated by the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin, which requires that the researcher protects the anonymity of individuals participating and safeguard data for the duration of the study, after which original data will be destroyed. A copy of this code will be given to you prior to your participation in the interview at your request.

In order to take part in the interview we need your consent on the form below.

Should you have any questions after the interview please feel free to contact my supervisor:

Paula Flynn, School of Education, Trinity College Dublin
Phone number - 01 8961579
Email - Paula.M.Flynn@ tcd.ie

| | | Yes | No |
|---|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | I have been fully informed as to the nature of the research | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | I understand that no names (individual or school) will be used in the final report | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | My participation in this interview is voluntary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix S

Useful Websites

Department of Education and Science (DES), website:
<http://www.education.ie>

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), website:
<http://www.ncse.ie>

National Council for Special Education (NCSE), website:
<http://www.ncse.ie>

National Disability Authority (NDA), website:
<http://www.nda.ie>

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), information:
<http://www.education.ie>

National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). Website:
<http://www.newb.ie>

Scoilnet (official education portal of the Department of Education and Science (DES)), website:
<http://www.scoilnet.ie>

Special Education Support Service, website:
<http://www.sess.ie>