



# Interchange

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*Developments in Inclusive Schooling*



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ISSN 0969-613X

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# Developments in Inclusive Schooling

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## Introduction

This report provides a summary of the ‘Review of Developments in Inclusive Schooling’, commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department.

The aims of the review are to:

- Report research on significant developments related to inclusive schools or inclusive schooling;
- Summarize emerging issues and trends;
- Identify areas which could benefit from further research.

While it is recognized that processes of educational and social inclusion extend beyond schooling, the focus of this review is on inclusive schooling and school age children specifically.

The scope of the review is to provide an overview of key findings and issues from beyond Scotland (but which may have relevance to the development of inclusive schooling in Scotland). We draw on documentation and research evidence from across the UK, Europe, North America and Australia.

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## Inclusive Schooling: Definitions and concepts

Both internationally and within Scotland, there is support for the development of inclusive schooling. Such developments can be linked to concerns about social exclusion and social justice within education systems specifically and in society at large. Evidence across the UK indicates an overall raising of living standards, yet concentrations of social deprivation. Within education systems, there has been an increase in overall levels of educational attainment; yet the *relative* attainment and under-achievement of individual pupils and groups of pupils, particularly linked to socio-economic status, gender and ‘race’, requires attention. Investigating and seeking to understand the processes and outcomes of social and economic disadvantage and discrimination within schooling is central to developing inclusive schooling, through which all schools meet the needs of all their pupils.

However, there is no single agreed definition of inclusive schooling. It is a concept which is growing in prominence, and is therefore continuing to develop. As a term, inclusive schooling has been most closely associated with Special Educational Needs (SEN). In this context, inclusive schooling relates to the inclusion in mainstream schools of pupils designated as having special educational needs.

Within the SEN literature, some key components of inclusive schooling include:

- a recognition of individual needs;
- a recognition of individual achievement;
- an appreciation of diversity (as normal and positive rather than as deficit and problematic);
- the physical location of pupils in schools;
- the educational experience of pupils;
- the emotional well being and social interaction of pupils.

This focus on individual needs has been further developed in ‘inclusive schooling for all’, which aims to positively recognize diversity and develop *all* children. This approach is linked to human rights and a recognition of the multiple and inter-connected needs of children. There are concerns, however, that an all-encompassing definition of pupils’ needs may undermine an awareness of particular forms of disadvantage, discrimination and the specific needs of certain groups.

While all children have formal/statutory equality of *access* to schooling (e.g. in their right to attend school), evidence indicates that inequalities in *participation* within schooling (e.g. in classroom practices, curriculum coverage and assessment) and inequalities in the *outcomes* of schooling (e.g. attainment and leaver destinations) persist. Such inequalities can also be linked to inequalities of *circumstances* within society, e.g. socio-economic circumstances, ‘race’ and gender.

The connections between inclusive schooling and social inclusion are important. In particular:

- There are concerns about linkages between school exclusion and the tendency to be socially excluded.
- Many advocates of inclusive schooling perceive it as being a component of wider social inclusion.

There has been considerable debate about the balance between ‘school effects’ and wider social and economic inequalities on pupils’ performance in school. Research continues to indicate that social disadvantage impacts significantly on educational outcomes. Research indicates also that *schools can and do make a difference*. Drawing on research evidence from real schools in international contexts, this review explores issues and strategies associated with inclusive schooling.

While there have been previous attempts to remedy social and educational disadvantage, there is a strong argument that we need now to build on existing good practices and to look for new solutions, involving both whole-school policies and targeted initiatives for particular groups of pupils.

## Special educational needs

Inclusive schooling is contested in relation to pupils designated as having special education needs (SEN) or impairments, particularly for the small minority of children with severe and complex needs whose education some consider to be more appropriately organized in specialist schools. There are strongly held views for and against inclusion.

Legislative changes over the past 20 years in the majority of countries within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have promoted greater inclusion of pupils with SEN into mainstream schools. Strong impetus to the idea of inclusive education was provided by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca in 1994 stating that the development of schools with an inclusive orientation is the most effective and efficient means of improving the entire education system.

- In the 1970's and 1980's, policy-makers aimed to 'integrate' pupils with SEN into mainstream schools.
- In the 1990's the policy was the 'inclusion' of *all* pupils into mainstream schools and the notion of 'inclusive schools for all'.
- 'Integration' could involve the physical placement of a pupil into a mainstream school, but not their wider social and educational 'inclusion'.
- The earlier term 'integration' has been taken to imply that the child adapts to the school, whereas the term 'inclusion' implies that the school should adapt to meet the needs of all children.

Many governments are also committed to parental choice, meaning ideally that parents of pupils with learning difficulties are able to choose mainstream or special provision. The maintenance of the two separate systems means that it is more difficult to shift resources away from special provision and there may be less imperative for mainstream schools to adapt. There is the dilemma of how to allocate additional resources to individuals and to schools equitably, according to criteria of need.

Commentators are divided as to whether the human right to be educated in the mainstream school is paramount or whether a more individualized approach is appropriate for a few children. Despite widespread commitment to educating pupils with learning disabilities in mainstream schools, in most western countries there remain a small number of pupils whose needs are difficult to meet in mainstream education, and who are educated in special schools.

- There is a question as to whether mainstream schools are able to meet the needs of those pupils with profound and multiple difficulties.
- The recent rise in the number of pupils excluded from schools on the grounds of their behaviour highlights a growing problem for inclusive schooling.

Although evaluation of outcomes of different provision is extremely difficult (and the results of studies inconclusive), the absence of strong evidence for the superiority of segregated schooling gives encouragement to policies which include a wider diversity of needs and impairments in mainstream schools.

Approaches which promote inclusion of pupils with SEN include:

- dedicated and monitored local authority policies;
- inter-school collaboration through ‘clusters’;
- inter-service collaboration;
- individual school policies.

In what ways does your school aim to respond to student diversity and special educational needs? What policies and practices are in place and are further developments required?

Monitoring the effectiveness of provision is important for evaluating the success of inclusive schooling. The emphasis must be on enabling schools to respond to the diversity of pupils rather than on the individual placement of pupils designated as having disabilities in mainstream schools.

## Race and ethnicity

An understanding of ethnic diversity and anti-racism are widely seen as essential components of inclusive schooling. This is true regardless of whether minority ethnic groups are a significant part of a school’s population.

Language teaching is a vital part of inclusive education in multi-ethnic societies. Ensuring access to the majority language must be done in an inclusive manner:

- Language education must not devalue community languages nor lead to the separation of minority pupils from mainstream classes and the curriculum;
- Bilingualism is a rich resource *not* a barrier to achievement;
- Where bilingual pupils are placed long-term in different teaching groups (in low streams, tracks, bands or sets) this will limit their access to the curriculum, have a de-motivating effect, and result in lower attainments.

The curriculum is another area where ethnic diversity should have a significant impact. Research suggests that:

- ‘Permeation’ does not work. Unless all subject areas are expected to demonstrate a clear commitment to change, the claim that awareness will permeate the whole curriculum is a fallacy;
- Multicultural and anti-racist content can be central to a ‘good’ education in every curriculum area;

- Anti-oppressive education is always unfinished. Schools have constantly to review their approaches as new pupils join and there are changes in local, national and global conditions relating to ethnic identity and racism.

The interactions between teachers and pupils are frequently shaped by assumptions about 'race' and ethnicity. In particular, teachers' expectations about behaviour, motivation and ability can unwittingly reflect racial stereotypes.

These processes can contribute to the higher rate of exclusion experienced by African-Caribbean pupils. Research shows that Black pupils are often disproportionately placed in low ranked teaching groups (where forms of internal selection are practised). The beliefs and attitudes of white teachers and pupils may also have negative effects for South Asian pupils. They may be separated from the mainstream by inappropriate language provision; they may be passed over in the classroom; and they are frequently victims of racist harassment by peers.

Racial harassment is a problem in many schools. Research indicates that teachers can fail to recognize victimization or even take disproportionate action against victimized pupils when they defend themselves. Minority ethnic pupils (and their white peers) view schools' failure to act against racist victimization as a sign of the low priority accorded such matters. Simply ignoring racism not only fails to counter it but can encourage further racism.

Research shows the benefits of building good links with *all* the communities served by a school. Producing written material in a range of community languages is a basic first step. Meaningful involvement cannot take place where teachers and parents cannot communicate directly: in some cases the employment of adult translators and community aides may be required (the use of pupils as translators is not appropriate).

How inclusive of minority ethnic pupils is your school? What sources of evidence do you gather and whose responsibility is it to co-ordinate action?

## Gender

While overall levels of educational attainment have been rising in recent years, in general boys' performance has not increased at the same rate. This has raised questions about boys' relative under-achievement. However, it should be noted that not all boys are under-achieving (nor are all girls high attaining), and that the combined influences of gender, social class and ethnicity require attention. Furthermore, there remain gender differences in subject choice. Improvements in girls' attainment also does not necessarily result in gender equality in post-school transitions, either in further and higher education subject choices or in employment opportunities.

Consideration of gender and education cannot focus simply on outcomes (e.g. boys' attainment) but must address processes also within schooling (e.g. in classroom practices and interactions). There are problems also with



approaches to gender which focus specifically on behaviour (e.g. boys' aggression and/or girls' lack of assertiveness) rather than including also consideration of curriculum reform, involving what is taught, how it is taught and the materials used.

Research about the dominant construction of masculinity indicates that the behaviour adopted by some boys is at odds with engaging in schooling. There are concerns about suggestions that boys may be encouraged to become more engaged in the curriculum and schooling through the use of more 'masculine' reading material and/ or homework clubs in football stadiums. Such approaches may emphasize a particular form of masculinity which marginalises girls and some boys.

Through inclusive schools and classrooms, gender reform research indicates the need for teachers and pupils to develop:

- Knowledge of gender issues, e.g. through critical literacy work and gender workshops;
- Positive social relationships, including anti-sexist and anti-homophobic whole-school policies and curriculum approaches (e.g. personal, social and health education, and sex and relationships education).

Two important forms of gender work include:

- *Gender-specific* projects or programmes aimed specifically at boys or girls as groups. These will tend to be small-scale and intimate, involving discussion and debate. They might deal with 'sensitive' subjects and where gender-specific environments are judged to be more productive. Questions about the gender of the teacher co-ordinating such projects needs to be considered carefully.
- *Gender-relevant* programmes involve both girls and boys and often adopt a thematic approach; e.g. a whole school behaviour strategy could highlight gender aspects of different behaviours and bullying.

In developing inclusive schooling, there is a need to consider both policies and practices within schooling and to consider linkages with parents/carers, families, communities and other agencies.

## Parental and community involvement

Parental involvement can contribute to developing inclusive schooling and to raising pupils' achievements. Although partnership between homes and schools is advocated, developing such a partnership in practice can be difficult. It is not always clear what impact parents are allowed to make upon the workings and practices of schools.

Inclusive schools need to recognize their role in promoting inclusive and equitable gender processes. In what ways could your school further develop policies and practices relating to gender?



Research indicates that, in most cases, the parent who is most involved in a child's schooling is the mother. There is a need to consider ways to involve other family members and carers. It is important also to recognize the demands on parents/ carers' time, particularly with an increase in the number of lone parent households and current policy initiatives encouraging parents/ carers to enter into employment, while also being expected to become more involved in their child's education.

Developing home-school and school-community relations is a medium to long term programme and goals have to be set with that awareness. Although existing evaluations of initiatives are often localized and small scale; there is a range of current developments to note:

- Improving teacher-parent communication, e.g. through parent-teacher-pupil consultations, newsletters, email and telephone contact and class meetings;
- Parental involvement in the curriculum, including home-curriculum schemes whereby parents work with their children on particular tasks;
- Parent accreditation of courses involving parents in educational activities carried out with children;
- Home-school agreements/ compacts setting out the responsibilities of parents, teachers and pupils. However, these have received some criticism for being largely bureaucratic exercises unable to impose good working relationships where these do not pre-exist;
- Encouraging improved contacts between school board members and other parents;
- Family support centres bringing together education, social and health professionals to provide an integrated service for families on one site;
- Special education practices where parental involvement can provide a model for mainstream practice, e.g. home-school liaison and parents' groups negotiating with the local authority and other local services.

Research has shown that parents are often the recipients of a one-way information flow rather than two way communication, and that parents have views on academic and particularly welfare issues which they are often hesitant to voice in school. Has your school tried to develop dialogue with parents, perhaps on a particular issue? What were the results? How can these beginnings be built

## School-linked inter-agency collaborations

It is increasingly recognized that, if schooling is to become more 'inclusive', schools must further develop new ways of working with other agencies. Such developments emphasise that a pupil's educational achievement cannot easily be separated from their personal, social, emotional and physical development and well being. Therefore, collaboration is required as existing services and supports can be highly fragmented. Inter-agency collaboration for inclusive schooling should aim to benefit also linkages between schools, pupils, families and local communities, and to promote social inclusion.

Internationally, an established and growing form of inter-agency collaboration is for health promotion in schools, which has recently developed into the notion of the healthy school. Healthy schools recognize a close relationship between educational and health goals.

Health-related activities can be linked to school improvement and social inclusiveness, through:

- a whole-school approach;
- multi-agency working;
- involvement of pupils in planning and delivery;
- partnerships with parents/ carers;
- multi-disciplinary approaches.

Evaluations of healthy schools indicate positive benefits for the development of health promotion activities and healthier behaviours within schools. However, developing partnership working can pose considerable challenges. There is a need for support, resources and the continuing professional development of *all* staff involved.

In moves to incorporate a wider range of agencies, initiatives such as full-service schools have developed in the USA, involving the co-location of health, social and educational services in schools (plus other services as locally appropriate). The use of inter-disciplinary teams seems to be particularly important. However, working practices and organizational culture within schools and other agencies are often deep-rooted and achieving change is not straightforward. Research has indicated problems if one agency dominates. Teachers can resist changes and what is perceived as interference from other agencies. The other professionals can find it difficult to adjust to working in a school. While teachers' involvement provides valuable information for all the professionals and contributes to improvements for teachers and pupils; the direct involvement of teachers raises questions about job role, workload and professional development.

Nevertheless, such collaborations appear to be worthwhile and have contributed to improved outcomes in terms of programme specific goals (e.g. physical, emotional and mental health) and more generally school-related behaviour and outcomes, including attendance and achievement. However, in order to impact on educational processes and outcomes:

- School-linked collaboration should involve inter-agency services *and* have an educational component, ideally linked to curriculum.
- Successful collaborations both remove barriers to learning and provide support to enable learning.

There are various approaches to collaboration. In France, for example, collaborations focusing on citizenship and culture have developed; in Sweden, collaboration is linked to an emphasis on pupil's learning and holistic

development; in England, the National Healthy School Standard emphasises pupil involvement in health-promotion and linked curricular developments to raise achievements; and in Scotland, New Community Schools aim to raise attainment, tackle social disadvantage and promote social inclusion.

Different practices may be appropriate in different circumstance, reflecting local purposes and needs. This requires careful consideration of what inter-agency collaboration should be developed and why, e.g. targeted services for ‘at risk’ children’, meeting the needs of all children through more inclusive service provision and/ or extending the scope and nature of schooling to enable a more holistic development of children, families and communities.

To what extent is your school already involved in school-linked inter-agency collaborations? What further developments could be supported to address local needs linked to social and educational inclusion?

## School effectiveness and school improvement

There is debate about whether schools can and should be both effective *and* inclusive, particularly with a current emphasis on promoting inclusion and raising attainment.

School effectiveness research (SER) seeks to disentangle the complex links between the ‘dowry’ (the mix of prior attainments, and personal and family attributes) which any pupil brings to school, from those of the individual school attended in influencing later educational attainment, progress and development. Key features of SER include:

- Promoting student progress is seen as a fundamental purpose of all schools. SER focuses on how effective a school is in promoting pupil progress and other educational outcomes.
- SER explores differences in the impact of one school in comparison with another, in terms of specific measures of pupils’ educational outcomes.
- A focus on pupils’ social and affective as well as cognitive outcomes is necessary to obtain a rounded picture of effectiveness. Such a range of outcomes is particularly relevant for the promotion of inclusive schools.

Inclusive schooling requires performance monitoring systems which are fair to schools serving the most disadvantaged communities and receiving higher proportions of pupils at risk of under-achievement. Better ways of identifying and recognising the progress and achievements of these groups are required without lowering expectations. SER provides models for performance feedback, including analysis of schools’ impacts on pupil progress (e.g. by using value-added indicators). SER seeks also to examine equity issues by studying the progress of different groups of pupils.

It is important to monitor the progress of different groups (e.g. by gender, ethnicity, or by measures of socio-economic status) to see whether schools are equally effective in promoting the achievement of all pupils. What data does your school collect and analyse?

A number of common features of effective schools and effective teaching characteristics have been identified:

- SER suggests that leadership within schools are important for effectiveness and improvement in schools serving socio-economically disadvantaged areas;

- In these contexts, the features of ‘structured teaching’ have been identified as particularly relevant to promoting pupils’ cognitive attainment in basic skills;
- Curriculum coverage in literacy and numeracy has also been shown to be important;
- Promoting and maintaining high expectations of all pupils is a feature of both effective and inclusive education;
- A positive and consistent school culture fosters effectiveness and is also essential for the creation of inclusive schools.

SER findings are best used to stimulate reflection and can assist the development of school improvement initiatives for inclusive schooling, e.g.:

- There are important connections at the pupil level between academic achievement, motivation, behaviour, attendance and self-esteem. There are strong arguments, therefore, for addressing these links in school improvement initiatives which seek to promote inclusion.
- Focussing on pupils’ experiences and views of school and promoting the involvement of pupils and parents are important both for school improvement projects and initiatives to promote social inclusion.

SER suggests that effective schools can be particularly important for disadvantaged groups. However, while effective (and inclusive) schools can play an important part in helping to improve the future life chances of disadvantaged pupils, it is important to stress that SER does not suggest that schools can by themselves fully overcome the powerful impact of social inequalities in society. The arguments for schools serving disadvantaged intakes to receive extra support remain strong.

## Strategies for inclusive schooling

Within the overall movement to ‘inclusive schools’, different approaches and goals have been adopted, making an overall evaluation of all strategies problematic. Localised developments may also not be applicable or replicable at a national level or even in other localities. For a minority of pupils with severe and complex special needs, support in a specialist setting may be more appropriate to meeting their needs. Hence, the synthesis presented below is indicative not exhaustive of all potential strategies. The list is not intended to be seen as a ‘quick fix’ recipe for success. Nevertheless, the evidence reviewed suggests these strategies may benefit the development of inclusive schooling.

Key strategies for developing inclusive schooling include:

- *The development of monitoring and evaluation* at all levels of the education system.

- *Inclusive leadership* throughout the school, promoting inclusive principles and practices, and developing shared vision and commitment.
- *An inclusive whole school ethos and culture* which focuses on equity issues and challenges discrimination and disadvantage.
- *High expectations of all pupils* should be encouraged. Underachievement is unacceptable. An emphasis on pupil achievements rather than a deficit view of pupils as ‘problems’ or having ‘problems’ is vital.
- *Valuing pupil perspectives, listening to pupils and involving them* in developing inclusive schooling.
- *Clear and consistent whole school policies* are required, including an emphasis on early intervention, a preventative focus, and consistent on issues of harassment, behaviour and attendance.
- *Promotion of inclusive learning and teaching strategies*, reflecting an appropriate inclusive and non-discriminatory curricula across all subject areas, including anti-racist and anti-sexist approaches.
- *Inclusive classroom structures and practices* involve mixed ability teaching. Research suggests processes of setting and streaming institutionalise inequality and, while some pupils may improve their attainment, others will not. Relative levels of attainment and disadvantage will not be adequately addressed. Research has indicated also the need to develop formative approaches to assessment.
- *Provision of additional supports for pupils and staff* as necessary and appropriate, including academic, pastoral, health and social supports.
- *Recognition and respect for community languages* in classrooms, across the school and in communications with parents and the wider community.
- *Staff collaboration and teamwork* should be encouraged for inclusive schooling practices.
- *Positive action to promote good social relationships* throughout the school. Within the curriculum, the inclusion of personal, social and health education and sex and relationships education requires attention.
- *Inclusive communication* requires attention to the types and purposes of communication throughout the school and with parents, communities and other agencies.
- *Inclusive parental involvement* requires two-way communication between school staff and parents/ carers, rather than one-way information given by the school to parents.
- *Inter-school collaboration* can support the development of socially and educationally inclusive practices.

- *Inter-agency collaboration* should attempt to tackle barriers to pupils learning and to offer supports which will help to facilitate educational (and other) development.
- *Inclusive community involvement* recognises that a school can be a community resource offering support; and that communities can offer support to the school.
- *Provision of adequate financial and other resources* is necessary to the development and sustainability of inclusive schooling.
- *Continuing professional development* is important for all staff involved.

Including pupils and pursuing equality is not simply about providing children with access to school. It requires consideration of inclusive and equitable processes and outcomes throughout inclusive education. These are important and timely developments which must be considered alongside wider social and economic policies, e.g. tackling child poverty, promoting social inclusion and reducing social exclusion.

### Further Reading

Campbell, C., Gillborn, D., Lunt, I., Sammons, P., Vincent, C., Warren, S. & Whitty, G. (2001) *Developing Inclusive Schooling: Perspectives, policies and practices*. University of London, Institute of Education.



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ISSN 0969-613X