

Case Study – Nottinghamshire LEA

Developments in using the P scales across an LEA

Nottinghamshire Local Education Authority has long maintained a strong commitment to the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, wherever possible. A recent County OFSTED inspection report commented 'There is widespread commitment from schools and other partners to the LEA's strategy for SEN and inclusion and pride in what has been achieved in the County to date.' The LEA's approach to inclusion is based on the principle of making provision for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools and fully recognises the need to increase capabilities of mainstream schools. The proportion of pupils in special schools at 0.6% is very low compared to the national average of 1.1%.

The authority initially identified raising the achievement of pupils with complex needs as a key target in its Education Development Plan in 2000. Consistency of assessment was also key to supporting the County approach to Inclusive Funding. An inclusion project was established through Standards Funding in September 2000. Improving the achievement of pupils working below Level 1 and in the early stages of the National Curriculum was identified as one of four key areas of focus. An opportunity was offered to mainstream schools across the County to be part of this project. A number of families (clusters) of schools and some individual schools expressed an interest in taking part. It was decided, after considering various approaches, to adopt the Lancashire PIVATS assessment and target setting, alongside the P scales, as this had been successfully used by mainstream schools supported by Outreach staff across the County. At this time three special schools were also part of a national P scales project.

An initial training session was offered to a school that was attended by **all** their staff. It was considered important to give information to the actual staff who would be carrying out the assessment i.e. teachers with teaching assistants rather than the SENCOs, who would have an in depth knowledge of the pupils. This was also seen to be more inclusive and as an opportunity to develop the skills and confidence of all staff in the area of special needs. Initially cover was provided for members of staff to carry out an initial assessment supported by a member of the Inclusion Project. It was considered important to not only carry out the assessment and set future targets but also value the benefits of the discussion that took place, sharing appropriate strategies etc.

Training was also offered through the County Opportunities for Training Directory to provide training for those who had not accessed the project. Additional access to training was provided through the Authority's Assessment Forum.

During this time a group of teachers from the county's special schools, in liaison with the Advisory and Inspection Service, was also meeting to moderate pieces of writing using the P scales. This information was collated and a document provided for all schools to access.

In addition to this a collaborative working party including members of the Advisory and Inspection Service, the Education Psychology Service and the Inclusion Support Service developed a county policy on assessing the performance of pupils with learning difficulties, working below level 1 of the National Curriculum. This was circulated to all schools in the county by the AIS in January 2002 alongside information relating to the P scales in all Foundation subjects.

The Inclusion Project came to an end in April 2002. The continuation of this work was now incorporated in the newly established Inclusion Support Service Business Plan. A small team, the Countywide Development Team, part of the Inclusion Support Service, managed future training. They attended the launch of the revised PIVATS in Lancashire in November 2002.

Training was then provided for all members of Nottinghamshire's Inclusion Support Service. Each teacher supports the development in a number of identified families of schools. This training was provided for the majority of primary schools and some secondary schools. The expectation was that all schools would be able to provide assessment data for pupils who were at School Action Plus. In 2002 the designated teachers collected data for the county database where possible. Where it had been difficult to collect data, additional training was targeted. Further opportunity was offered through the Literacy and Numeracy Wave 3 training in collaboration with the Advisory and Inspection Service.

Where training was provided for family SENCOs, the expectation was that they would cascade this to their SENCOs at family meetings, usually held termly. To allow all staff in school to be targeted the family Inclusive Funding delegated training budget could be accessed.

In 2003 one of the targets identified in the Development Plan was for families of schools to begin to moderate the P scales, initially in the area of writing. Samples of work were collected from both mainstream and special schools. These samples of work were then moderated by groups of teachers at each of three SENCO conferences held across the county. Teachers took away a portfolio of levelled work that could be added to in their own schools and also shared with their families in a moderation meeting.

Currently opportunities for moderation are being offered through the county Training Opportunities Directory delivered to all schools. It is hoped that by moderating work more effectively, better information about achievement will contribute to consistency of evidence for Inclusive Funding.

Assessment data is currently being collected on pupils supported by the Inclusion Support Service who receive additional SEN funding under LEA arrangements. This will enable the LEA to track pupil progress including value added.

Our aim is now to encourage more mainstream secondary schools to become knowledgeable in the use of P scales and PIVATS for assessment.

Performance indicators for 2004 -5 in the ISS business plan:

- 85% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools to have received training in using P scales and PIVATS
- 90% of pupils supported by the ISS to demonstrate adequate progress measured by National Curriculum/P levels/PIVATS levels as appropriate
- All pupils known to the ISS working outside the National Curriculum to have P scale documentation (this target currently 95% achieved)
- 50% of Annual Reviews at year 9 to record P scales when appropriate
- Training to be delivered in this academic year to other agencies including Connexions
- Training and information about P scales and PIVATS to be provided for parents and pupils

Further information is available from Nottinghamshire Inclusion Support Service;
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