



Special Educational Needs Provision in Brent: The Case for Future Change

Consultation Document

**Brent Council
Education, Arts & Libraries Department**

May 2004

1. Purpose of this document

The purpose of this paper is to consult on the Council's vision for developments in Brent's special educational needs provision over the next ten years. It aims to open up the debate on how children's special educational needs can best be met in Brent in the future. The fundamental aim is to ensure that every child in Brent has the best opportunity to fulfil their educational potential and play a full and positive role in society.

The paper is organised as follows

- The current position
- The case for change
- Vision for the future
- Timescale and implementation
- Key questions
- Consultation response form

This paper is being sent to

- headteachers of Brent schools
- chairs of governors of Brent schools
- trade unions
- Primary Care Trust
- Social Services

This will be the first stage in consultation which will lead to more detailed proposals being drawn up. These proposals will be subject to extensive consultation which will include parents and neighbouring authorities.

2. The current position

There are currently five special schools in Brent, as set out below

	Designation	Age Range
Grove Park	Complex physical and medical needs	2-19
Hay Lane	Severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties	2-18
Manor	Moderate/severe learning difficulties and autism	5-11
Vernon House	Emotional and behavioural difficulties	5-11
Woodfield	Moderate learning difficulties and autism	11-16

In addition to special school provision there are eight additionally resourced provisions for SEN within mainstream schools.

School	Description
College Green Nursery	Inclusive provision and outreach service for deaf and hearing impaired children
Evan Davies Nursery	1. Provision for pupils with developmental delay.
	2. On-site provision and outreach service for nursery age pupils with autism.
	3. Outreach service for primary age pupils with autism.
	4. Portage service.
Kensal Rise Primary School	Provision for nursery and infant children with speech and language impairment
Kingsbury Green Primary School	Provision for primary age pupils with hearing impairment
Mora Primary School	Provision for nursery and primary age pupils with visual impairment and outreach service for all age pupils.
Oakington Manor Primary School	Provision for primary age pupils with speech and language impairment
Kingsbury High School	Provision for secondary age pupils with hearing or visual impairment
Preston Manor High School	Provision for secondary age pupils with speech and language impairment.

There are approximately 200 Brent pupils placed out of the Borough in day or residential special schools.

3. The case for change

All five special schools in Brent offer a high standard of education. However, there is a strong case for changing the current organisation of special schools in Brent, due to the following factors:

- i) The complexity of the needs of pupils attending special schools has increased. There are more pupils with profound and multiple difficulties requiring specialist provision, and a significant increase over the past few years of pupils with autism, often with associated learning difficulties and challenging behaviour.
- ii) The special educational needs of more pupils, particular those with physical/medical difficulties and moderate learning difficulties, are increasingly being met in mainstream schools.
- iii) A significant number of Brent pupils are educated in special schools out of the Borough. With the current pattern of provision, the length of journey times for students to and from their school on the Authority's transport can be too long.

The end result is a shortage of specialist provision in Brent for some categories of need, such as pupils with autism, whilst there are surplus places in some special schools.

There are implications for additionally resourced mainstream provision as well as special school provision. Although there is a good range of provision, there are some gaps. Currently there is no designated mainstream provision for pupils with physical and medical needs or for pupils on the autistic spectrum who have mainstream curriculum needs.

Action needs to be taken both in the short term and the long term to ensure provision in the Borough reflects the changing profile of Brent pupils with SEN.

In developing proposals, we have taken account of the local and national context. The LEA Ofsted report of 2003 found Brent's performance in all aspects of SEN to be satisfactory but identified that there needed to be a clearer role for special schools within Brent's SEN strategy and that there is potential for greater collaboration between special schools and mainstream schools. This was reinforced by a recent Best Value review of SEN in Brent which also recommended the creation of separate primary and secondary special school provision to bring this in line with mainstream school organisation.

Nationally, the recently published government strategy 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' has set out the national expectations on developing effective mainstream inclusion and encouraging early intervention. It also sets out a clear role for special schools in supporting an inclusion strategy, working in partnership with mainstream schools. The recent Children Bill has emphasised the need for greater integration of services across education, health and social services in particular, to more effectively meet the holistic needs of children and young people.

4. Brent's vision for meeting special educational needs

Brent endorses the philosophy of inclusion which is embedded in national initiatives and legislation. We intend to build on existing good inclusive practice in schools and place a strong emphasis on early, effective intervention. Close collaboration between schools, parents and a range of support services is essential in order to identify and meet the needs of children most effectively. We need to ensure flexible provision which is tailored to individual needs alongside high expectations and a common entitlement to take part in the full range of school activities.

We believe that the special educational needs of all children below statutory school age can be met in carefully planned and resourced inclusive provision, integrating education and childcare and providing access to a wide range of facilities and services, including health services.

It is envisaged that an increasing proportion of school-aged pupils will have their needs met at an appropriately resourced mainstream schools. In particular, it is proposed that the needs of pupils with physical disabilities and/or complex medical needs can be effectively met in suitably resourced designated provision in mainstream schools. There would also need to be designated primary and secondary provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum with mainstream curriculum needs. Pupil Referral Unit provision in the secondary sector will need to be extended so that the needs of most pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who are unlikely to return to mainstream education, can be met within the Borough.

There will be a strong and continuing role for special schools. Special schools in Brent will continue to provide full-time specialist placement for primary and secondary aged pupils with the most complex needs. This will include pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autism and behaviour, emotional and social needs. In addition to providing full-time education for some pupils, special schools may offer part-time or temporary placements working closely with mainstream schools. There will need to be some changes to the organisation and designation of special schools in Brent. It is

envisaged that there would be separate primary and secondary special schools, rather than all age provision.

We believe that greater collaboration between mainstream schools and special schools is crucial to ensuring the best possible provision for pupils with special educational needs. Special schools and mainstream schools can work together for mutual benefit and a greater movement of staff between special and mainstream schools will help to develop staff skills and expertise.

In the longer term, we believe that consideration should be given to co-locating special schools with mainstream schools. This would need to be linked to the Building Schools for the Future programme and the extended schools programme, enabling a range of community services to be available on site.

5. Timescale and implementation

This initial consultation on the future vision will run for six weeks. The deadline for responses is Wednesday 30th June.

The results of the consultation will inform more detailed work on options for change. This will be subject to full consultation later in 2004 with schools, governors, parents of children in Brent special schools, neighbouring authorities, trade unions, primary care trust and other relevant agencies.

We fully recognise the necessity to implement change at a manageable pace, ensuring that the necessary work in term of specialist support, resources, facilities and training are all in place well in advance. Some changes will be able to be carried out quickly. Changes to the organisation of special schools will take longer and will be brought in over a 2-3 year period. Consideration of co-location of special schools and mainstream schools is a longer term issue over the next 10 years linked to school building developments.

6. Some key questions

Would changes be in line with national initiatives and legislation?

Our vision is in line with national developments proposed in the government SEN strategy 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' and the recent Children Bill. It is also consistent with the current policy and developing practice in Brent.

Would there be changes to current special school provision in Brent?

Yes – under these proposals, Brent would retain special schools for pupils with complex learning and behavioural needs,

organised into discrete primary and secondary provision. The needs of pupils with physical and/or medical needs would be met in appropriately resourced mainstream provision.

There is so much pressure on mainstream schools to perform well in league tables. Won't they see pupils with SEN as an obstacle to academic success?

The needs of most pupils with SEN are already met in mainstream schools. The Council will be working closely with individual schools to ensure that the right levels of support, expertise and resources are in place internally before any changes are made to the current system. The objective is to ensure that all children in our schools achieve their full potential.

Would the Council's proposals result in SEN staff redundancies?

No – we do not foresee any SEN or mainstream school staff redundancies as a result of these proposals. We value the wealth of SEN experience and skills of existing staff, and intend expanding on this base.

Following consultation, changes could lead to new career development opportunities or co-working arrangements for teachers with SEN expertise. Where appropriate, training will be offered to staff in both special and mainstream schools to reflect any changes.

Is this a cost cutting exercise?

No – the clear aim is to improve and strengthen Brent's SEN provision. The proposals will lead to a greater range of local provision being available. This will require a significant investment of resources.

Give Us Your Views

We value your feedback on the proposals outlined in this document. Your views will be taken in to account in developing more detailed options for change, which will be subject to further extensive consultation.

Name:.....

Position:.....

Contact address:

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Email:

1. Do you agree that there is a case for change to the current organisation of SEN provision in Brent?

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2. Based on your own personal/professional experience, what do you think are the most essential elements in the borough's current SEN provision that you think should be preserved if changes were to be made in the future?

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3. What elements of current SEN provision do you think are in need of improvement?

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4. Are there comments you would like to make about the Council's overall vision for future SEN provision in Brent?

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