

Writing an inclusion policy

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Developing a school inclusion policy

Policies are vital to identify and consolidate thinking regarding appropriate provision for pupils. However they are often viewed as an end, when they should be seen as a process; always evolving in response to changes. When developing an Inclusion Policy, it is necessary to ensure the involvement of all participants such as pupils, parents, school staff, governors and external agencies. How this is completed varies from setting to setting but may include, awareness raising, formal discussion and the completion of questionnaires by stakeholders. It is not possible to be too rigid when offering advice regarding writing any policy as all schools have different needs – but the information below is intended to provide a framework to attach information to.

Some schools produce a joint SEN and inclusion policy, other decide to keep all policies separate. Whatever arrangement is selected depends upon the individual school needs, but must always accurately reflect practice rather than intentions. The gap between professed policy and observed practice is one that Ofsted highlights in reports and perhaps rightly so. Sections included below represent those that may be considered essential but settings with specific needs may include other aspects in addition.

Definition of educational inclusion

This will require a definition of inclusion acceptable to all stakeholders and should take into account their views and aspirations. CSIE defines inclusion in education as involving the processes of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, cultures, curricula and communities of local schools.

Statement of principle

This will need to explain the fundamental aims of the school regarding inclusion and how these aims were arrived at. It may also highlight the schools mission statement and explain how this will be translated from theory to practice.

Legal Framework section

Mention needs to be made of relevant laws and guidelines. These may include:

- DfEE Circular 10/99 Social Inclusion: Pupil Support
- DfEE Action programme for SEN 1998b
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The DfES SEN Code of Practice 2001,
- DfES Inclusive Schooling: Children with SEN 2001,
- DfES Including All Children in the Literacy Hour and Daily Maths Lesson 2002.

Devices to monitor/support inclusion

Describe the audit used to identify action e.g.:

- The Index of Inclusion: Developing learning and participation in school (CSIE) 0117 328 4007 www.inclusion.org.uk
- The Inclusion Quality Mark, 0161 926 4170 www.publicsectormatters.com
- North Lincolnshire Policy and Strategy for Inclusion 01724 297183
- Standards for Inclusion: Success for Everyone. Birmingham City Council www.bgfl.org/services/inclus/standard.htm

School policies that are also relevant

These may include:

- SEN policy,
- Behaviour policy including exclusion and truancy procedures,
- Anti-bullying policy,

- Admission including information on part time/shared placement,
- Attendance policy,
- Equal Opportunities Policy/Ethnic minorities,
- Gifted and talented policy,
- School Access plan,
- Risk management guidelines,
- Physical restraint policy,
- School development plan,
- LEA Inclusion policies.

Names and profiles of those with specific involvement in developing inclusive practices

Include details of those who lead the inclusion process within school. These may include; Head teacher, SMT, SENCo, Heads of Departments, designated Governors, parents, pupils, health and social services representatives. Describe support mechanisms such as teaching assistants and how they are devolved to support specific needs.

In-school action to support inclusion

This will need to describe how planning and differentiation is undertaken and monitored throughout the school in order to ensure that it takes into account different learning styles. Include information on any flexible timetables, e-learning and out-of-school opportunities.

Action to obtain pupils views

This section will detail how the school ascertain pupils' views and actively involves them in decision-making regarding action that has a direct impact upon them. This may include information on how pupils' views are recorded on IEPs, the use of Circle Time, Pupil Councils etc.

Pastoral support and life skills

This needs to describe whole school pastoral practices undertaken to support pupils and the named staff that pupils can refer to in order to register concerns. Include here any Peer Support programmes and detail how this information is communicated to pupils. This section may also include information on increasing emotional awareness and development, in order to promote equality and social inclusion. Refer to how PSHE and Citizenship are implemented in order to reduce prejudice and isolation and how their influence is monitored.

Staff recruitment and professional development

Describe the efforts made to ensure the staffing of the school reflects the diversity of pupils. Information on staff skills and access to courses/inset training to increase school's ability to address a diversity of pupils needs should be made clear, along with school action to complete quality marks to improve outcomes all.

Management of inclusion policy

This may result from annual application of a school self-review device in order to identify areas requiring further action and to measure improvements. It will identify how the audit is used to ensure inclusion issues continue to have a high profile and describe how actions to result in further improvements are targeted through the school's development plan.

Partnership with parents/carers

Include arrangements on how staff and parents/carers work together to support all pupils and how involvement is recorded and measured at all stages of the education planning process. Identify school communication such as prospectus, reports, newsletters and websites and its availability in formats accessible to those with a diversity of communication needs. Detail meetings that take place and catalogue measures taken to allow easy access.

Links with other schools

This section may include liaison with local special/mainstream schools in order to pool resources, expertise and share pupil placement. It may include links with provision that is

able to provide extension classes for able pupils or provide specific activities that appeal to those who are have threats to success that may be easier to overcome in a different setting.

Links with external agencies

This section needs to detail contacts/names of LEA support services and advisers and also list external agencies such as Social Services and Health.

Access to the Environment

Description of school environment and details, or referral to, school access plan resulting from an access audit and aims to increase accessibility for all in the school community, particularly those with specific needs such as restricted mobility or sensory impairments.

Access to the curriculum

Referral to entitlement to broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to needs. Details on action to reduce threats to participation in all school activities including out of school learning.

Access to information

Information on the adaptation of text to increase access e.g. the use of ICT, Braille and software. Details on training of staff to promote effective differentiation of class based materials and organisation and management of time to allow staff liaison and the production of appropriate materials/formats.

Financial arrangements.

Indications on how school funds are allocated with particular reference to allocated/devolved funds for special and additional needs and how this is monitored for its impact upon inclusion. Details on how this is related to parents/carers.

Evaluating the success of the Inclusion Policy

Details on the way governors and senior management staff analyse data on inclusion. This could include measurement of exclusions, truancy, gaining pupils/parents views and how this is used to plan provision Information on how this information is reported to parents.

Further sources of information

Bristol LEA have a useful proforma on their website that can be found at www.bristol-lea.org.uk/cyp/inclusion_policies.htm or if you want a more detailed policy, consider the CD ROM from North Lincolnshire LEA that contains an exemplar school inclusion policy and a school self-review audit.

Finally a book that is an easy read, with practical information on developing an inclusive school presented in text supported by a CD ROM – definitely to be recommended is *Closing the Inclusion Gap* by Rita Chemais £16 from David Fulton Publishers

Hope you find this helpful in developing your own school Inclusion Policy.

Carol Smart. Dec 03

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