

Aberdeenshire Accessibility Strategy

Responses from Parents/School Boards

May 2005

As part of Aberdeenshire Council's Accessibility Strategy 2003-2005, a representative sample of Aberdeenshire's schools was chosen to assess the current educational provision for pupils with additional support needs.

Six secondary schools and fourteen primary schools were chosen according to the following criteria:

- Size
- Location
- Whether or not there was a SFL base (primary only)

All four special schools were audited.

In line with HMIE (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education), the following terms are used when quantifying responses:

- Almost all >90
- Most >75
- The majority >50
- Less than half >15
- Few >0

Responses from Parents/School Boards - Primary

Access to school communication

- In almost all schools there was a wide range of general communication for parents (oral, written, notice board...)
- In almost all schools there was good use of home/school diaries, including pictorial diaries, especially in relation to children with additional support needs, which the child could make up him/herself
- Almost all schools operated an open door policy greatly appreciated by parents
- In some schools, escorts formed a valuable link in the chain of communication
- In almost all schools there was a well-established reward scheme, both at school and class level – stickers, certificates, well-done wall, gold coins, well-done weekly trophy
- In most schools parents had the opportunity see their child's IEP, but only a few schools provided the opportunity for parents to make any input to it
- In the majority of schools parents knew how to access alternative arrangements if they required special access to the school building or to communication

Ideas for improving communication

- Circulate report cards earlier in the session than June
- Arrange meetings at a time convenient to both parent and school
- Disseminate reports before meetings
- Encourage parents to set up a parent support group
- Encourage that support group to organise monthly 'coffee morning' support groups
- Initiate the use of email between home and school
- Initiate the use of an instant messenger programme to allow communication amongst both staff and pupils

- Initiate a school website, and ensure that it is regularly updated
- Initiate an Aberdeenshire website with links to a range of sites; more info about what support was available in schools

Access to the curriculum

- Most parents felt that staff had the necessary background information to meet the needs of their child; however, a few parents were concerned that non-teaching staff might not always have adequate access to pupil information.
A few parents were concerned that important information regarding their child's needs was not always passed on to a new or supply teacher.
A few parents were concerned that some members of staff might not fully understand a pupil's needs.
- In almost all schools parents reported that their child had access to the full curriculum.
- In almost all schools parents reported that their child had access to the specialist equipment that they required.
- In almost all schools pupils with additional support needs were included in school clubs and trips.
- In almost all schools parents reported that their child would know who to go to if he/she had a problem.

Ideas for improving access to the curriculum

- Encourage and identify a role for parents in supporting staff to support pupils
- Address the needs of pupils across the whole spectrum of ability, including primary and secondary, working together to provide an appropriate continuous curriculum
- Purchase more specialist software, particularly to meet the needs of the dyslexic child

Responses from Parents/School Boards - Secondary

Access to school communication

- In almost all schools there was a good range of general communication for parents
- In almost all schools, staff were very helpful when contact was made but it was occasionally difficult to contact Guidance/SFL teachers
- In some schools, escorts formed a valuable link in the chain of communication
- In almost all schools, reward schemes were well developed
- Less than half parents had input to their child's IEP

Ideas for improving communication

- Encourage a parent support group to be set up
- Encourage that support group to arrange monthly "coffee morning" support sessions
- Initiate ways of reporting more frequently, allowing problems to be identified earlier
- Initiate the use of email as a means of communication between home and school
- Initiate a school website and ensure it is regularly updated
- Initiate an Aberdeenshire website with links to a range of sites, including more information about the support available in schools

Access to the curriculum

- The majority of parents felt that staff had the necessary background information to meet the needs of their child; however, a few parents were concerned that non-teaching staff might not always have adequate access to pupil information. A few parents were concerned that important information regarding their child's needs was not always passed on to a new teacher.

A few parents were concerned that some members of staff might not fully understand a pupil's needs.

A few parents reported that some members of SMT may not have level of awareness of additional support needs issues required of them as managers.

- Almost all parents reported that they were satisfied with their child's curriculum
- Almost all parents reported that their child had access to any necessary specialist equipment
- A few parents reported that staff might be anxious about taking their child on school trips because of limited awareness of how to meet the child's specific needs
- A few parents felt that school clubs did not cater for all pupils

Ideas for improving access to the curriculum

- Address the needs of pupils across the whole spectrum of ability, including primary and secondary working together to provide an appropriate continuous curriculum
- Address the need for extra curricular groups, including summer clubs, which can meet the needs of pupils with ASN
- Address the issue of transfer where a child is moving to another school: it is important that teachers are prepared for a pupil with additional support needs coming into class, but there may still be a period of adjustment when support is needed once the pupil is in the class
- Identify ways of promoting friendships for pupils who live some distance from school
- Encourage and identify a role for parents in supporting staff to support pupils

Responses from Parents/School Boards – Special Schools

Access to school communication

- In almost all schools there was a wide range of general communication for parents (oral, written, notice board, mobile phone within classroom...)
- Almost all schools provided opportunities for parents/families to come into school on an informal basis to get to know staff and school e.g. quiz nights
- In almost all schools there was good use of home/school diaries, including pictorial diaries, especially in relation to children with additional support needs, which the child could make up him/herself
- Almost all schools operated an open door policy greatly appreciated by parents
- Almost all schools supported parents in forming a support group
- In some schools, escorts formed a valuable link in the chain of communication
- In almost all schools there was a well-established reward scheme, both at school and class level – stickers, certificates, well-done wall, gold coins, well-done weekly trophy
- In most schools parents had the opportunity see their child's IEP, but only a few schools provided the opportunity for parents to make any input to it
- In almost all schools parents knew how to access alternative arrangements if they required special access to the school building or to communication

Ideas for improving communication

- Arrange meetings at a time convenient to both parent and school
- Disseminate reports before meetings
- Initiate the use of email between home and school, where appropriate

- Initiate/continue to develop a school website, and ensure that it is regularly updated
- Authority to initiate an Aberdeenshire website with links to a range of sites; more info about what support is available in schools
- Where there is an identified need for a particular group of parents to have access to a support group, support parents to set one up, if not already in place

Access to the curriculum

- Most parents felt that staff had the necessary background information to meet the needs of their child
- In almost all schools parents reported that their child had access to an appropriate curriculum
- In almost all schools parents reported that their child had access to the specialist equipment that they required
- In almost all schools all pupils had the opportunity to participate in a range of school trips
- Almost all schools provided a range of activities for pupils e.g. trampolining, horse riding...
- In almost all schools parents reported that their child would know who to go to if he/she had a problem.

Ideas for improving access to the curriculum

- Identify and encourage a role for parents in supporting staff to support pupils