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## **Evaluation of the impact of the DFE investment in initiatives designed to improve teacher workforce skills in relation to SEN and disabilities - 1st interim report**

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### **Introduction**

This is the 1<sup>st</sup> Interim Report of a longitudinal study to evaluate the impact of investment by the Department for Education (DfE) to improve teacher workforce skills in relation to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The evaluation started in December 2008 and this report covers work carried out over the period January 2009 – July 2010. The evaluation continues until March 2011.

The two main developments are the Training Toolkit developed by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) for students in initial teacher training and the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) developed by the National Strategies for teachers in practice. Each comprises the development of materials and has a planned national dissemination strategy with phased implementation. The TDA Toolkit was made available to providers of primary undergraduate courses in initial teacher training (ITT) in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Phase 1 (2008-09), followed by materials in 2009-10 for providers of secondary undergraduate courses and providers of the PGCE primary/secondary. Phase 1 of the IDP (2008-09) comprised two sets of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) materials focusing on speech, language and communication needs and on dyslexia respectively. Materials for supporting pupils with autism spectrum disorders (2009-10) and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (2010-11) then followed and were disseminated in Phases 2 and 3.

In addition there are further initiatives within the programme designed ultimately to improve the achievement and well-being of pupils with SEND, including the Stammering Information Programme and extended placements for trainee teachers in special schools or specialist provision in mainstream schools. Together these initiatives add up to an innovative and

challenging programme of work which represents a comprehensive attempt to enhance the knowledge, skills, and confidence of the teacher workforce nationally, through both initial teacher training and the CPD of teachers. The strategy of developing the IDP as both a SEND and school improvement issue has the potential to avoid its marginalization as 'only' about pupils with SEND, to bring school leaders into the initiative and also to embed SEND as central to whole school development.

This report presents some of the research carried out during the first two years of the project. Not all work is reported here, especially where we are seeking to compare developments over time and need later comparative data. The research continues and a final report will be produced at the end of the study in March 2011.

## **Main findings**

- The dissemination of the initiatives for both initial teacher training and Continuing Professional Development for teachers has grown over the 18 months to July 2010, with increased awareness and take up by schools.
- The TDA Training Toolkit on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has been well received by higher education institute providers of undergraduate initial teacher training who value its contribution and are incorporating it into their undergraduate programmes.
- The extended placements for trainee teachers in specialist settings are offering important benefits for both staff and trainees, with over 9 out of 10 participating trainees rating them good or excellent in terms of preparing them for teaching pupils with SEND.
- The cluster meetings for SEND tutors in ITT were highly valued as forums for sharing ideas and learning from colleagues.
- The regional hubs were highly regarded by local authority (LA) leads for the Inclusion Development Programme (IDP) as an effective support for dissemination.
- The National Strategies' role in disseminating the IDP was welcomed by LA leads, supporting the alignment of the IDP as both a school improvement and SEND issue.
- The Pathfinders' effectiveness was limited by their starting at a similar time to non-Pathfinders.
- Initially the engagement with the IDP was stronger at LA than school level, as expected, reflecting the stage in the dissemination strategy.
- There was a high level of engagement of both head teachers and SENCOs at LA events. This indicated that the strategic objective of bringing together both SEND/inclusion and school development/improvement was being achieved, supporting a whole school approach to teaching pupils with SEND.
- By 2010 dissemination was more established in schools with many examples of effective practice.
- There was wide variation in implementation at both LA and school levels reflecting the voluntary nature of take-up and a sense of local ownership of the national initiative.
- Problems were identified following feedback from teachers/education professionals with the Phase 1 materials for speech, language and communication needs and for dyslexia, but these are being addressed by a review and revision process. The Phase 2 materials (autism spectrum) were generally viewed more favourably although here too there were accessibility difficulties resulting from IT incompatibility in many schools.

## Methods

The evaluation comprises a combined methods approach in order to address the various strands of the initiative. The main methods being used are interviews and questionnaires, both postal and on-line, to investigate, i) initiatives for initial teacher training (ITT) and ii) initiatives for the continuing professional development of qualified teachers.

### *Initial Teacher Training*

- Interviews were held with 30 of 40 providers of primary undergraduate initial teacher training (ITT) in 2009.
- In 2010 this was replicated with 37 of 40 primary undergraduate ITT providers and five of nine secondary undergraduate ITT providers.
- On-line surveys were conducted with ITT students, providing data from 306 students (2009), 459 (2010).

### *Local Authorities and Schools*

- A sample of 30 LAs was selected to reflect a cross section of all LAs. Interviews were held with Inclusion Development Programme leads in 28 of the LAs in 2009 (10 were regional hub leaders, seven were Pathfinder LA leads and 11 were leads from other LAs).
- In 2010 leads from all 30 LAs were interviewed (10, 8 and 12 respectively).
- Interviews were held with the following school staff in 2009 (2010) respectively: SENCOs: 24 (21); head teachers/senior leaders 17 (11); experienced teachers 22 (12); and newly qualified teachers (NQTs) 18 (14).
- On-line surveys of NQTs provided data from 156 (2009) and 139 (2010) NQTs.

## Detailed findings

### *Initial teacher training*

#### *The Training Toolkit on SEND*

- By 2010 almost all ITT tutors had incorporated selected material from the Toolkit into their teaching materials for SEND.
- Among those tutors familiar with the Toolkit, 9 out of 10 or more found it 'effective' or 'very effective' in enhancing a range of trainees' knowledge, skills and understanding around SEND.
- 9 out of 10 tutors found most aspects of the *format* of the Toolkit 'useful' or 'very useful'. The DVDs, the memory stick and the ability to tailor the Toolkit for personal use were particularly valued.
- Trainees rated the teaching on SEND they had received as significantly more effective and felt more prepared to teach pupils with SEND if their course had incorporated the Toolkit

### *The electronic network for SEND tutors*

- The electronic network for SEN tutors, hosted on the teacher training resource bank (TTRB), was rarely recognised and there appear to be few if any active users.

### *The extended placements in specialist settings*

- In 2010, three quarters of courses had taken up the offer of the extended placements in specialist provision, an increase from two thirds in 2009.
- 9 out of 10 or more of those trainees who had undertaken a placement rated the effectiveness of different elements 'effective' or 'very effective'.
- Positive views about the extended placement in special schools or mainstream resources or units reflected three themes: helping to equip students with important skills and knowledge; enabling tutors to enhance their own knowledge and awareness around SEND; and that they were valued by colleagues in special schools.
- A third of tutors believed there was particular value in placements in special schools arguing that the special school sector had been sidelined in ITT for too long.
- Trainees who had undertaken a placement were more likely to consider a career in a special school or mainstream school with a specialist unit or resource base.
- They also rated the teaching of SEND on their course more highly and felt better prepared to teach pupils with SEND than those who had not had a placement

## ***The Inclusion Development Programme***

### *Role of National Strategies and development of materials*

- The role of the National Strategies in the IDP was seen as supporting the alignment of SEND and school improvement work at LA level and as adding 'clout' to the initiative in terms of engaging schools.
- There were a number of teething problems in the dissemination of the IDP including a substantial time gap between the launch of IDP and the availability of materials. These resulted in criticisms of 'lateness' and consequent difficulties for LAs and schools to include Phase 1 (SLCN and dyslexia) in their school development/improvement planning for 2008-09.
- Most early criticisms concerned accessibility, as familiarity with content was at an early stage. Views about the Phase 2 materials (autism spectrum) were more positive although there were again accessibility difficulties resulting from a mismatch between the more advanced technology used and the IT system in many schools.
- These early concerns were addressed, including through revisions (refreshment) of the materials, and by 2010 teething problems had largely been resolved.

### *Role of the SEN regional hubs*

- The hub IDP strand meetings were a strength of the national dissemination model.
- The key benefits of the IDP strand regional hub meetings highlighted by IDP strand leads were the impetus they gave to the initiative, the opportunity to focus on the IDP, to meet with others from outside their own LA, to share resources and ideas (including via hub websites), to share ways of disseminating the materials to schools, to share experiences, and to provide a forum for educational professionals to learn from each other.

### *Role of the Pathfinders*

- The Pathfinders provided limited benefits as a means of modelling dissemination to schools from which other LAs could learn. This was mainly because the Pathfinders had not been implemented far enough in advance of roll-out in other LAs.
- IDP leads in Pathfinder LAs valued the involvement of staff from I CAN and Dyslexia Action because of their knowledge of the IDP materials and of SLCN or dyslexia respectively.
- By 2010, only two of eight IDP leads from Pathfinder LAs reported a sustained impact on IDP dissemination arising from the Pathfinder - one Model 1 (cascade) dyslexia Pathfinder and one Model 2 (buddy system) SLCN Pathfinder.

### *Role of hub IDP strand lead*

- The system of each regional hub having one of the constituent LA leads as a hub lead was beneficial to the dissemination.

### *Role of IDP lead in each LA*

- The requirement for each LA to have a lead person responsible for the delivery of the IDP has facilitated dissemination.
- The lack of funding allocated to free time to undertake the role, however, is a significant limitation.
- The degree of alignment between SEN/inclusion and school improvement varies at strategic planning level and in operational delivery to schools.
- Dissemination models to schools varied across five main dimensions (approach, level, pitch, school phase and IDP module). Within each dimension, there were also a range of options. LAs varied in the options selected. This meant that each LA created a 'pick and mix' model.
- All the IDP leads reported positive learning from Phase 1 and almost all made changes for dissemination and delivery in Phase 2.

## **Impact**

### *Early*

- By May/June 2009, many of the IDP leads in our sample were reporting high numbers of schools having attended an event about the IDP but relatively low numbers of schools that had actively engaged with the IDP in the sense of using it within the school.
- Most LAs in the sample involved both the head teachers and SENCOs in information and training about the IDP, which supported the IDP as both a SEND and whole school improvement initiative.
- The IDP had an impact on the CPD offer around SEND; in some cases, this included a refocusing of CPD support on Wave 1 from Wave 3.
- The main barriers to a quick impact on school-level CPD were the timing of the Phase 1 roll out, which was too late to be included in schools' planned 2008-09 CPD programme, and the presentation of the materials themselves, which were perceived as not working as a training package that could be picked up and used straight away in schools.
- In schools that had used the IDP during 2008-09, overall, teachers in each school shifted up one category of the 'focusing, developing, establishing, enhancing' continuum, relative to where they had been prior to the IDP training.

### *By 2010*

- Impact was becoming evident in schools which had developed their practice as a result of the IDP.
- Impact was enhanced where the IDP was embedded in the LA's regular CPD programme
- In these schools, impacts were reported at the levels of teacher confidence and increased empathy with pupils' barriers to learning; increased thinking about and reflection on current practice; increased understanding of the SEND domain (dyslexia and/or SLCN); specific changes in teaching practice and/or in the learning environment; and increased confidence about being able to talk to parents of pupils with dyslexia or SLCN.
- It was clear from the interviews with teachers that impact was greatest when the CPD had used active learning techniques – opportunities to discuss, reflect, plan, try out and review were key to subsequent impact on practice.
- The most successful area of impact was the raising of awareness of the importance of SEND in mainstream classroom teaching.
- Factors affecting the implementation of the IDP include:
  - CPD
    - “ ~~A~~ Relation to the school's development/improvement plan
    - “ ~~A~~ Nature and level of LA support
    - “ ~~A~~ Nature and level of support from other services e.g. speech and language therapists
      - Accessibility of the IDP materials
      - Quality of the CPD delivered to the school
      - Extent of CPD follow through, review and monitoring of practice
  - Inclusion
    - School climate around inclusion
    - Individual teachers' views/ beliefs about inclusive education in general and more specifically about Wave 1 inclusive teaching in mainstream classes.

- School context
  - Level of support for implementation of IDP, including specialist staff
  - Staff factors, e.g. turnover

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations arising from the first year of the evaluation were made direct to the DfE, TDA, National Strategies and other key stakeholders in spring 2010. The following interim recommendations take into account that process and the fact that the research has another six months to run. It is also recognized that this is a period of change in terms of organisational structures and budgetary constraints, with implications both for what might be funded and by whom (e.g. nationally or locally). The following recommendations take account of these issues:

- The Toolkit should be made available to relevant new members of HEI teaching staff.
- Consideration should be given to updating as necessary the Toolkit materials, to keep them current, for example the materials on legal aspects of SEND education and inclusion.
- Consideration should be given to making extra provision of the Toolkit, particularly the memory stick and DVDs.
- Consideration should be given to the continuation of the regional cluster meetings in relation to SEND, ITT and CPD.
- Consideration should be given to the future of ITT extended placements in specialist settings.
- Consideration should be given to interactive models of IDP dissemination longer term.
- Consideration should be given to the LA role as a facilitator for sharing learning and good practice among professionals, including through high quality CPD such as the IDP resources for teachers of pupils with SEN.
- Consideration should be given to extending the induction CPD for NQTs by extending beyond the NQT year in order to better support teaching of pupils with special educational needs within mainstream schools. Induction CPD for NQTs should include a focus on Wave 1 inclusive quality first teaching extending beyond the NQT year.

### **Additional Information**

The full report can be accessed at [www.education.gov.uk/research](http://www.education.gov.uk/research)  
Further information about this research can be obtained from  
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This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.