Providing Education for Pupils with Severe and Profound Handicap

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Children with special needs are the most vulnerable children in our society. The constitutional imperative on Government to provide for free primary education applies equally to those children with special needs. The extension of educational provision to children with severe and profound handicap began in the 1980s and is indeed welcome. Regrettably, however, it is still the situation today that many children with severe and profound mental handicap do not have access to an appropriate provision.

The number of primary school teachers involved in the education of pupils with severe and profound handicap has more than doubled since the publication of the report on "The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland" in 1983. This increase has created new challenges for the teaching profession particularly in the areas of curriculum development, working with multi-disciplinary teams, deployment of staff and incareer development. The Central Executive Committee of the INTO appointed a committee to examine the above issues and prepare a report which would widen participation in and give clearer focus to, the debate on the severe and profound areas.

The Committee members were:

Maurice Kearney, CEC
Mary Lally, CEC
Brian Hynes, CEC
Emir Duffy, St. Paul's Special School, Montonette, Cork
Paul O'Mahony, St. Michael's House, Ballymun, Dublin
Janet Foley, Cregg House, Sligo
John Carr, Assistant General Secretary
Deirbhile Nic Craith, Executive Officer

Emir Duffy prepared the initial drafts of the report.

Ruth Warren was responsible for the typesetting and layout of the report.

The organisation gratefully acknowledges the contribution of Mr. John Carr, Assistant General Secretary, who has responsibility for guiding the development of INTO educational policy and has been active on behalf of the INTO in promoting the education of children with special needs.
Deirbhile Nic Craith co-ordinated and directed the work of the Committee and was responsible for the compilation of the report and much of the editing. The publication of this document is a further contribution from the INTO to the ongoing discourse on educational issues.

Senator Joe O'Toole
General Secretary
March 1996
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Introduction

The Department of Education became involved in educational provision for children with severe and profound mental handicap following the publication of the report entitled “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland”, in 1983. Prior to the publication of this report, many children with severe and profound handicap had availed of day care and residential services provided under the auspices of the Health Services. The report, often referred to as “The Blue Report”, was prepared by a working party established in 1980 by the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health and Social Welfare. Its terms of reference were as follows:

(1) To examine the educational and training needs of children with severe and profound mental handicap.

(2) To consider the nature of the personnel necessary to meet these needs.

(3) To make appropriate representations to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health and Social Welfare.

The report estimated the number of children of school going age in the category of severe and profound mental handicap to be approximately two thousand. Subsequent to the publication of this report, the Department of Education decided to establish a pilot scheme of classes for children with severe and profound handicap. Ten teaching positions were established in March 1986 and a further ten were sanctioned in 1987. A ratio of one teacher to twelve pupils was recommended and it was envisaged that the teacher would be additional to the staff already involved with the children on a day to day basis, i.e. a ratio of 15 adults to 50 children (see page 39). The teacher was placed on the staff of the nearest school in the area for pupils with moderate mental handicap. The centres for these initial twenty sanctioned appointments were distributed throughout the country and are outlined in Appendix 1.

Some of the teachers were deployed to teach the classes in a school for moderately mentally handicapped, others taught in Day Development Centres (DDC), or in the Special Care Units nearest to the school. Decisions
were made by management in each individual school as to what particular educational arrangement best suited the needs of the children within the unit or the school. The children in the class were to be included on a separate roll. No allowances or grants were payable to the school or unit by the Department of Education. The teacher's salary was paid by the Department of Education, and the conditions of service of the teachers of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap were the same as other teachers in the special national school.

In 1992, a case was taken to the High Court by Marie O Donoghue, on behalf of her son Paul, under Section 42 of the Constitution. It was claimed that Paul, because of his profound degree of mental handicap, was discriminated against by the Department of Education and deprived of his constitutional right to free primary education. The Department approved the appointment of an additional teacher to St. Paul's School, Cope Foundation, for September 1992, specifically for Paul and eleven other children.

The judgment delivered by Justice O'Hanlon on 27 May 1993, declared that the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education, in failing to provide free primary education for the claimant, had deprived him of his rights under Article 42 of the Constitution. The judgment declared that it was not sufficient for the Ministers to grant as a matter of grace and concession, educational benefits to which the claimant was entitled as a right. The judgment also stated that the work-load undertaken by a single teacher providing education for twelve children with severe or profound handicap far exceeded the work-load deemed appropriate for a teacher in the ordinary primary school. The Government has decided to appeal the judgement of the court with a view to seeking clarification on a number of issues raised. This hearing is due to take place in 1996.

The "Report of the Special Education Review Committee" (1993) confirmed that there were 207 pupils with severe or profound mental handicap, from an estimated total of 2000, being taught by 17 teachers on the staffs of 16 schools in pilot schemes, recognised by the Department of Education. The Review Committee estimated that there were between 1000 and 1500 children with severe and profound mental handicap who were not being taught by officially recognised teachers.

The Review Committee, whose terms of reference are outlined in Appendix 2, felt that the variety of organisational models in operation was a valid response to the variety of circumstances prevailing among schools and centres and the wide ranging differences which existed among the pupils in their learning.
abilities and attention spans. It recommended the following provision in respect of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap:

(a) The Department of Education in association with the Department of Health, should extend the education service at present being provided on a limited pilot basis only, to all children and young people with severe or profound mental handicap.

(b) The pupil teacher appointment ratio for pupils with severe or profound mental handicap should be 6:1.

(c) As pre-conditions for the appointment of teacher, Special Needs Assistants and other care staff should be appointed for each group of such pupils at a ratio of 1:3, and a full range of other support services should be made available to them as required.

(d) All staff involved with these pupils should be given an appropriate basic training which should be regularly updated in accordance with their needs and with developments in the field.

(e) An education and training programme should be drawn up for each individual pupil and implemented and reviewed on a regular basis.

(f) The Department of Education should request the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, in co-operation with experienced institutes and organisations, to establish a curriculum development project for pupils with severe or profound mental handicap; account should be taken of the work of existing pilot projects, including those which have established linkages between centres caring for those pupils of mainstream schools.

(g) Parents of pupils with severe or profound mental handicap should be assisted in implementing in their homes, the education and training programmes which are being provided for their children in schools and care centres.

The reduction of the pupil-teacher ratio from 12:1 to 6:1, and further extension of educational provision was implemented in the school year 1994-95, leading to the appointment of a total of 37 teachers. The allocation of these teachers is outlined in Appendix 3. A Special Needs Assistant has been allocated with each teacher.
The sanction and appointment of special needs assistants, funded by the Department of Education, has created new challenges and opportunities for the organisation of the special classes/units, particularly in circumstances where childcare workers with similar responsibilities are employed under the auspices of the Department of Health. In a number of cases, these appointments have not yet been made.

The INTO Congress of 1995 called for comprehensive inservice training to be provided as a matter of priority by the Department of Education for the newly appointed teachers of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap. A number of the new teachers appointed to the classes/units for children with severe and profound handicap have little or no experience in special education. The Department in conjunction with the Special Education Department in St. Patrick's College of Education has since organised induction courses for the teachers concerned, and there is a commitment to organising inservice programmes for the teachers concerned.

The development and extension of education provision for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap is very welcome. However, it raises many issues which need to be addressed in the context of providing comprehensive educational provision by recognised qualified teachers in multi disciplinary settings. Issues such as the appointment and deployment of teachers, the appointment of special needs assistants, inservice for teachers and special needs assistants, the provision of appropriate space, relationships between teachers and their colleagues in the school, relationships between the teachers and other professional and non-professional staff, liaison between school principals and care personnel, the location of classes/units, the involvement of parents and the development of curricular programmes appropriate to the needs of the pupils are addressed in subsequent chapters of this report.
1.1. The Definition of Severe and Profound Handicap

The question of accurate diagnosis and assessment of children with severe and profound handicap has been presenting problems for psychologists and other professionals for quite some time. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended that the assessment of intellectual level should be based on all information available, including clinical evidence, adaptive behaviour and psychometric testing (9th revision of the International Classification of Diseases by the WHO). This view was endorsed in the report on “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland” (1983).

The definitions of the degrees of mental handicap are generally expressed in terms of Intelligence Quotient (IQ), behavioural competence and/or need for special services. The WHO classifies the population with mental handicap on a quadripartite basis into mild, moderate, severe and profound. Using I.Q. as a measure, the grades are identified as follows:

Mild: 2.0 to 3.3 standard deviations below the mean i.e. I.Q. 50 - 70
Moderate: 3.3 to 4.3 standard deviations below the mean i.e. I.Q. 35 - 49
Severe: 4.3 to 5.3 standard deviations below the mean i.e. I.Q. 20 - 34
Profound: More than 5.3 standard deviations below the mean i.e below 20

The Special Education Review Committee (1993) also used the WHO classification for defining severe and profound handicap.

A child with severe and profound handicap can often be identified quite early in life. The developmental delay is very marked and the additional disabilities often so severe that the handicap is evident from infancy. There is a number of children, however, who do not present immediately with obvious disabilities or who, through illnesses such as Reye’s Syndrome or Meningitis, or through injury, may develop a severe or profound mental handicap. Individual personalities and the range of behaviour and learning abilities vary greatly among children with severe and profound mental handicap although they also have characteristics in common as outlined by the Special Education Review Committee (1993), for example:

1
Significant delay in reaching developmental milestones.
- Very serious defects in language development.
- Dependence on others to satisfy basic needs, e.g. feeding.
- Inability to live without support and supervision at any stage of life.

Many pupils with severe and profound mental handicap will often have additional disabilities such as epilepsy, physical impairment, emotional disturbance, hyperactivity or autistic tendencies. These other disabilities will often have serious implications for the education provision of individual pupils. It is important to note, however, that these children made considerable educational progress during the implementation of the pilot project. It is vital, therefore, to acknowledge that this group of children have the same needs and rights as all other children and that their potential for progress must be open-ended.

1.2. Initial Assessment

Initial assessments are carried out in order to evaluate children’s needs and to indicate the most appropriate educational provision. Psychometric testing, such as the use of Griffiths Mental Development Scales or Vineland Social Maturity Scales are mainly used to assess children’s suitability for educational placement. These tests enable the appropriate agencies to place the child within their services. It is important that the child’s parents are consulted at all stages of the assessment procedure.

It is usually the psychologist who recommends placement for a child. Placement within integrated settings continues to be a high priority for many psychologists who are anxious to give the children access to the social benefits such settings can offer. All referral agencies need to be familiar with all the services available so that recommendations for placement can be made along a continuum, in recognition of the fact that children with severe and profound handicap can function at different levels in the different curricular areas. This may mean spending time in more than just one educational setting.

Assessment and referral procedures differ in the various Health Board areas. A child is generally referred for assessment by one of the following professionals: the paediatrician or family doctor, public health nurse, speech therapist or social worker. Parents are informed of the psychologist’s recommendations as to the most appropriate services available to meet the child’s needs.

New Admissions Teams rarely involve teachers, however, in their placement
procedures. An educational input into all initial assessments would be very beneficial for the child in determining the type and level of provision which might be offered and would also be of benefit to the other members of the assessment team. The class teacher is usually best able to assess the impact that will ensue from the placement of a particular child on the class routine and what adaptations will have to be made to meet the new pupil's needs. Furthermore, the information gained by a skillful psychologist during testing sessions can be of great value to a teacher. Psychometric tests, which are used to assess children's suitability for placement, could also be utilised by teachers as diagnostic instruments. The knowledge of the test score is not as important to the teacher as a simple explanation of the successful and failed items, which go to make up the score. It is essential that results are readily available and are discussed with the teachers concerned either individually or at case conferences. It is recognised that there are many psychologists who may be justifiably reluctant to discuss test items with other personnel, as they may be open to misinterpretation by those untrained in the use of the assessment procedures. However, children with severe and profound mental handicap are unlikely to perform accurately to the level of their ability in a testing situation when unfamiliar personnel are conducting such tests. Facilitating familiar personnel, including teachers and parents, to share in the assessment process and to assist in implementing the test items with the child could maximise the accuracy of their final score. The manner in which the children react to an unfamiliar situation may also be of interest to the teacher, in providing a holistic view of the child in different areas.

The placement of a child has implications for residential provision, transport facilities and parental involvement. Inappropriate placement of children in special units/classes may cause problems which may be difficult to remediate at a later stage. Prior to placement principals and teachers need to familiarise themselves with their prospective pupils' environment, and have discussion with parents/guardians, nurses and/or preschool teachers who have already been involved with these children, in order to ensure that the children are appropriately placed.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) principals and class teachers be directly involved in the referral procedure of children with severe and profound handicap to special classes/units;

(ii) teachers be consulted during the initial and subsequent assessment processes of such pupils in order to ensure appropriate placement;
results of all tests and copies of reports be readily available to and discussed with the class teachers and principal teachers concerned;

parents be consulted at all stages of the assessment and referral procedures;

all referral agencies be familiar with all services available and recommendations for placement be made along a continuum in order to cater for the differing abilities of pupils;

familiar personnel, including teachers and parents, share in the assessment process and assist in implementing the test items with the child in order to maximise the accuracy of his/her score;

a continuum of formal links between various educational settings including preschools, Day Development Centres (DDC), special schools, and mainstream schools be encouraged, resourced and facilitated.

1.3. Continuous Assessment

Assessment does not cease once a child has been placed in a particular special education location. Data needs to be collected and analysed on a continuous basis in order to measure progress and as part of the ongoing review concerning the suitability of the child’s placement.

While pupils with severe and profound handicap may remain on a particular programme for a period of time, however, analysis may show that individual pupils require fewer prompts to help them attempt aspects of the programme, perhaps progressing from full physical prompt to verbal prompt. This achievement must be regarded as progression and should be suitably recorded on the pupil’s profile. Progression is success for these children.

Teachers adopt methods of continuous assessment during the process of devising educational objectives for each child in consultation with the multi-disciplinary team. The type of assessment varies of necessity and includes record cards, checklists, interim reports, term reports and video recording. Certain activities lend themselves to particular types of assessment, e.g., progress in gross motor activity such as rolling over, can best be seen by video recording the activity as each step is achieved.

The assessment procedures in use in the learning environment need to be designed with a view to facilitating all personnel in recording progress quickly and easily. The ongoing assessments used in the classroom, should be
established as the basis for testing by psychologists and other relevant professionals, as they may provide insights about the child for the relevant areas of concern. Records and samples of work should be carefully maintained and regularly referred to, particularly during annual review, and when making recommendations concerning placement options.

The role of teachers in continuous assessment has been clearly supported in the *Report of the Special Education Review Committee (1993)*. The Report states that the diagnostic assessment leading to the identification of a pupil's strengths and weaknesses has always been the prerogative of teachers. The Report therefore recommends that "pupils presenting with educational difficulties should be assessed in the first instance by teachers". The report also recommends that "provision should be made for pre-service and inservice training for more teachers in ordinary primary, post-primary and special schools, in the administration and interpretation of a wide variety of non restricted tests".

The continuous assessment, evaluation, and reformulation of classroom objectives, should be co-ordinated by the teacher and form a major part of the team approach to the education of these pupils with severe and profound mental handicap.

As the progress of all children referred to special education should be continuously assessed, cases could arise where pupils are referred from classes for pupils with moderate mental handicap to special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap. The reverse could also apply. In order to ensure full discussion of the needs of the pupils concerned, teachers, in both the class for pupils with moderate mental handicap and the class for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap should be involved in the referral procedure as members of multi-disciplinary teams. Referrals should not take place without case conferences to determine the suitability of the proposed change of placement. Parents/guardians are also an integral part of this process. Where special classes/units are on the same campus as the school for pupils with moderate mental handicap, partial and/or temporary placement should be possible and the structures in such facilities should be flexible enough to provide for such eventualities.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) *teachers be involved in continuous assessment of their pupils, and consulted in all cases of the referral of pupils into and out of special classes/units;*
(ii) parents/guardians be invited to be involved in discussions and case conferences concerning the review of the placement of children with severe and profound mental handicap;

(iii) continuous assessment which is applied at classroom level be the basis for any further testing by professionals and records and samples of work be carefully maintained and regularly referred to when making recommendations concerning placement options;

(iv) equipment such as audio visual aids necessary for continuous assessment of pupils be provided to all teachers by the Department of Education.

1.4. Parental Involvement

The report “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland”, (1983) recommended that “programmes of parent education should be associated with all Developmental Education Centres, and parents and other members of the child’s family should be involved fully in the education and training programmes. Where appropriate, professionals, including teachers, should work with the families at home.”³ The Special Education Review Committee Report (1993) re-emphasised this need by stating that “parents of pupils with severe or profound mental handicap should be assisted in implementing in their homes the education and training programmes which are being provided for their children in schools and care centres.”⁴

The report on “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland” (1983), showed that the parents and families of children with severe and profound handicap were rarely involved in the education/training process. This is regrettable as the parents/guardians are the most important educational influence on all children and are regarded in the Constitution as the primary educators of their child. This is especially so in the case of children with severe and profound handicap. The working party which prepared the 1983 report considered it of the utmost importance that the family be as involved as possible in the planning of an educational programme and that systems be evolved for the exchange of information about a child’s development between the family and the professionals of the multidisciplinary team. Parental involvement begins at the initial assessment and referral stages and continues as children progress, through their participation in case conferences, reviews of placements and continuous assessment procedures. In some situations parents or families may not be in a position to be directly involved in supporting their child’s educational process due to
particular circumstances including personal, social and educational disadvantage. In these cases additional support, counselling and learning opportunities may need to be established for these families.

Children attending day centres spend most of their leisure time with their families. In a residential setting it is still essential for them to maintain their bonds with their parents and siblings. It is important for the teacher to keep in close contact with the child’s parents and afford them the opportunity of becoming involved in all stages of the planning process and in the implementation of their child’s individual programmes. Parents should be consulted and their wishes taken into account when deciding on the aims of their children’s programmes. Some parents may like to be facilitated by coming into school to work with their child and learn new techniques and strategies of management. They should be encouraged to do so under the direction and guidance of the teacher. Others may wish to continue the programmes at home. Where they do not wish to do so they should be kept informed of any progress and of all the child’s activities during the week.

Home-school communication is essential if schools are to be effective. The children who attend special classes/units will have no method of transferring information between school and home so it is the responsibility of the teacher to set up an effective communication system. No single form of liaison will suit all purposes or situations. In addition to telephone calls, parent/teacher meetings, circulars, newsletters and notices, there is a need for regular two way communication for incidental information. A home/school notebook in which parents and professionals can write messages and which can be sent to and from home with the child is the most usual means for regular two-way exchange of information.

Parents can become involved in the administration of the school by becoming representatives on the Board of Management. A parent or legal guardian is eligible for election to the Board of Management of the school where his/her child is enrolled. The parents of children attending the special class/unit are therefore, eligible to be elected to the Board of Management of the school for pupils with moderate mental handicap to which the special class/unit is affiliated.

There is also provision for parental representation on the National Parents’ Council as two seats are reserved for representatives of parents of children with disabilities.

Parents of pupils with severe and profound handicap have become quite
involved in their child's education, and usually develop close relationships with the teachers and other personnel working in the special class/unit. Teachers of this group of children will, therefore, require particular communication skills in how to use non-directive counselling to support the parents. One of the recommendations in the report on "The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland" (1993), suggests that counselling and support services should be further developed for parents and families of children with severe and profound handicap. Most parents desire professional counselling services in order to assist them in coping with the difficulties they encounter concerning their child with severe disabilities and in dealing with the ongoing pressures on family relationships. Some children with severe and profound handicaps will unfortunately die in the course of their school life, sometimes of degenerative disorders. Teachers also need to be prepared for their own reactions to the variety of distressing situations that can arise. They will need to be clearly aware of the roles and responsibility of the members of the multi-disciplinary team or agencies while ensuring at all times the parents' right to privacy and confidentiality.

Home visiting does not generally form an intrinsic part of the class teacher's role and may not be the most effective use of the class teacher's time. The provision of a home visiting service may be much better served by the social worker member of the multi-disciplinary team and/or through the appointment of a Home-School-Community Liaison Teacher. The possibility of using outreach programmes as a method of providing an educational service for those children who are too distant from educational provision or who are unable to attend a school or centre regularly due to illness may indicate the need to develop a programme of home visiting by peripatetic teachers in the future.

The co-ordination of services and the integration of therapy, care and education with regular liaison with parents to keep them fully informed can be extremely complex and should be properly structured. School and home are the two major focal points in any child's life and it is important that both work closely together.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) each school or centre establish an effective communication structure between the school/centre and the home;
(ii) home-school liaison teachers be appointed in all schools which have special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap;

(iii) outreach educational programmes be provided for children who are unable to attend special schools/centres on a regular basis;

(iv) inservice training be available to teachers to enable them develop non directive counselling skills.
Chapter 2

The Learning Environment

2.1. Introduction

The learning environment should facilitate the holistic development of the pupil with particular emphasis on acquisition of living skills in appropriate settings. The type of learning environment will vary depending on whether the class is operating in a Day Development Centre/Special Care Unit or school classroom or in a combination of these. A great deal of the practical living skills will be taught in appropriate areas within these units, e.g. dressing skills in the bedroom and toileting in toilet areas. The report on "The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland" (1983)\(^1\) recommended that any centre offering a formal educational programme, for a specified time each day to all children in space specially allocated for that purpose, should be redesignated a Developmental Education Centre.

The INTO carried out a survey in 1995 among all teachers of pupils with severe and profound handicap with a view to informing the organisation of the difficulties which are currently being encountered. The teaching and learning environments in which the teachers worked were not always satisfactory. Details of the survey results are outlined in Appendix 4.

It is essential that the teachers have a designated educational space in the Day Development Centres/Special Care Units to enable them carry out certain educational programmes. The frustration felt by teachers through not having an appropriate designated room/space is best illustrated through the following comments by practising teachers:

"I feel that in order that both care staff and educational staff can carry out their independent roles, separate rooms should be available e.g a main room off it for individual work for the teacher—as a separate classroom."

"I need a partition in my classroom to help stop the children from being distracted".

"As I have no room, no personal space, I have difficulty asserting my authority."

"I find it very difficult to operate as a teacher without a specific classroom."
The environment should be structured in such a manner as to stimulate and excite the curiosity of the children and entice them into action. It should provide them with a large number of inviting activities which are being changed and rotated according to needs. Not alone must the environment provide for the various levels of mental ability, it must also be one that provides new experiences and encourages creativity.

The actual structure of the learning environment is very important when it comes to the day-to-day instruction of children with severe and profound handicap. Special classes vary enormously in the amount of space they have available, and the number of children who must share it. Space is one of the greatest assets, especially for those children who also have physical handicap. They will need to be positioned in various pieces of equipment, e.g. standing frames or special chairs, which take up a great deal of space. The learning environment, therefore, needs to be structured so that various activities can be carried out with a minimum of disruption.

An essential part of the environment should be accessibility both in to and out of the learning environment. Interaction with other classes/groups in the school/unit, access to multi-purpose areas and access to outdoor areas for recreation follow on from this 'Open Door' policy.

Integration with the other pupils of the school can be very difficult, even within the same school building. Special classes are often sited away from the centre of the school, with corridors, steps, doors and other obstructions between the special class and the rest of the school. Moving non-ambulant children from one area to another within the school means that the use of shared school facilities demands a low pupil staff ratio as well as a high degree of determination on the part of the staff. This can create a logistical problem on a day-to-day basis as not many schools are wheelchair accessible. Children based in the special class need to have equal opportunities with the other pupils in the school to use the available facilities both on and off campus e.g swimming pool, hall and playground. Access to specialist teachers should also be available to them. The children in the special class/unit should have regular opportunities to use multi-sensory apparatus, such as jacuzzi, water bed, fibre optics or snoezelen. Participation in general school activities such as school assembly and concerts can give great encouragement to the pupils and contributes to the enhancement of their self-esteem.

Parental involvement in the learning environment needs to be encouraged. Parents could be invited to participate in particular classroom activities and outings, and to take an active role in their child's education at the discretion of
the teacher. Siblings could also be invited to visit the environment, which can help provide them with a positive image of their brother or sister and how they learn. Where appropriate, arrangements could be made for the children in special classes/units to visit their siblings in their respective classes/schools.

Children in the special class need to be given maximum opportunities to explore their immediate safe environment. However, many of these children will have restricted mobility, with many not being independently mobile at all. Some children may be semiambulant with adult assistance, while others, though capable of walking independently, will need strict supervision as they will have no sense of danger.

Movement of the pupils, both inside and outside the classroom is, therefore, a major undertaking, as most of them need to be pushed, guided, steered or held. Walking aids or mobility chairs are required when moving even a short distance, in addition to an adequate number of adults to supervise and help in the operation. Furniture needs to be placed to allow for maximum independent movement of wheelchairs and to enable pupils to operate in an obstruction free environment.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) all schools, Day Development Centres and Special Care Units which have special classes/units be made wheelchair accessible as a matter of form;

(ii) appropriate designated roomsospace be provided for all teachers of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap;

(iii) easily accessible, appropriate rooms with adequate space be designated for toileting, self-care, relaxation and group activities;

(iv) all schools/centres be facilitated to integrate pupils with severe and profound handicap into main school activities.

2.2. Furniture

Children with severe disabilities have a variety of physical needs which must be taken into account when designing, purchasing and fitting furniture in special class units. Many children with profound handicaps cannot sit without additional support. They require specialist seating for comfort and safety enabling them to feel secure enough to concentrate on the task in hand,
rather than on maintaining their balance. It is not considered desirable, from a therapeutic or from an educational point of view, that a child should remain sitting in the same chair all day. Positioning is a major consideration and frequent changes of position may form part of the normal classroom routine. Teachers will need guidance and training in the use of specialised furniture and in lifting techniques, in order to protect them against unnecessary injury.

Children will need different chairs for mobility and classroom work. Wheelchairs are often unsuitable in the learning environment as they tend to be inflexible and incompatible with school tables. Although they can be fitted with trays, these are not suitable for all activities. A range of chairs and height adjustable tables, some with special features such as cut-out pieces which fit around the children, are necessary to provide the correct seating arrangement for each pupil.

Some children are unable to tolerate a sitting position for lengthy periods. These pupils may require prone-boards, wedges, mats, side-lying boards or vibro boards so they can attend to activities whilst lying on their back, front or side. Use of equipment like this will require considerably more space than normal classroom equipment. The special classroom environment therefore must be larger, in order to accommodate this equipment and to allow space for work, movement and storage. The importance of adequate suitable storage space cannot be underestimated.

Washing facilities are essential for self-care training as well as practical living skills, e.g washing up and drying dishes. Sinks should be provided at the correct height for pupils, and with enough space underneath to cater for wheelchair bound pupils. Sinks and washing up facilities are also used by adults in the learning environment for washing and for the preparation of food. It will be necessary therefore, to have access to two sink units in each classroom unit, one at the correct ergonomic height for staff in order to avoid back strain.

Suitable toilet training facilities need to be located adjacent to the learning environment, as toileting will be a major part of the children's independence and self-care training. A variety of toileting arrangements, such as ordinary toilets, commodes and potties need to be provided. Adequate changing facilities such as hoists are needed for those children who are physically disabled. Provision is also needed for the safe and hygienic disposal of soiled nappies from the learning environment.

A variety of floor coverings are required to facilitate various classroom
activities. A linoleum floor will be suitable for use during sand and water play and is more hygienic in toilet areas. Carpet or floor tiles would be suitable for relaxation and free play. A uniform floor covering would be too restrictive in a special class/unit.

Cupboards and shelf units, where equipment is on display and readily accessible to the pupils, are necessary. However, a storage area for those pieces of equipment which require strict adult supervision, e.g. wobble boards and trampettes, is also required. It is essential that an accessible and efficient facility be provided for the ongoing repair and maintenance of furniture and equipment. It is unacceptable that children with such severe disabilities should have to wait weeks or even months in some cases, to have wheelchairs fixed or to have basic equipment, required on a daily basis, repaired.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) training be offered to all teachers and special needs assistants in the use of specialised furniture and in lifting techniques in order to protect them against unnecessary injury;

(ii) adjustable seating and supports be provided for all pupils according to their needs;

(iii) washing facilities be provided in or adjacent to all classes/units, with sinks at correct heights for both pupils and staff to aid ease of access and to avoid back strain;

(iv) a variety of toileting facilities be provided adjacent to the learning environment to enable all children to participate in appropriate toileting programmes;

(v) a variety of suitable floor coverings be provided appropriate to the type of activity being performed in each particular area;

(vi) adequate, suitable and accessible storage space be provided in all classes/units.

2.3. Equipment

In addition to special furniture, the special class/unit needs particular learning equipment in which the element of difficulty is reduced and where there is isolation of the quality to be taught. Several firms produce equipment
which, although resembling standard equipment, may vary in size or intensity of various attributes, to make them suitable for use with children with sensory and physical handicaps. The rewards offered by the use of the equipment and the actions demanded to gain the rewards, must be appropriate to the degree of handicap. Equipment to stimulate and refine the senses, to develop fine motor control and to encourage free play and hand/eye coordination is needed as part of the normal classroom equipment. The initial expense of providing such equipment is very significant and the vulnerability of equipment with these pupils often requires periodic repair and replacement. Grants should be substantial enough to enable the principal or class teacher to purchase sufficient essential equipment to implement classroom programmes effectively.

Micro-electronic equipment which can be operated by the pupil with a minimal amount of movement, can be very rewarding. Many battery operated toys can easily be adapted for use by computer switch. Some classes now have access to computers which increase the range and variety of experiences available to their pupils. A selection of switches and a touch screen will enable pupils in the special class to gain maximum benefit from the computer.

Electrical equipment such as tape recorders for music lessons and microwaves for reheating of food, are also essential in special classes/units.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) substantial initial set up grants be made available by the Department of Education to the special class/units for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap for the purchase of essential equipment;

(ii) grants be paid by the Department of Education on an agreed periodic basis for the replacement and the repair of equipment in such units;

(iii) easily assessable facilities for the immediate repair or replacement of basic essentials such as wheelchair parts and other equipment be introduced immediately at no cost to the individual pupil or school.

2.4. Transport

There are many challenges in providing appropriate transport services for children with severe and profound handicaps. These pupils require much more than an available seat on existing transport services. In order for them to avail of the transport many will need special ramps or hoists to enter the
minibus, wheelchair clamps to hold the wheelchair in place during the journey and special harnesses to hold non-ambulant or hyper-active children safely in their seats. It is often necessary to adapt vehicles to accommodate children with serious physical handicaps. Most of the existing transport provision servicing the pupils' catchment areas may not be suitable to these adaptations and therefore, it may be necessary to organise alternative transport facilities.

Additional staffing is also necessary to ensure the safe transportation of these pupils. It is considered unwise and probably dangerous to have the driver of the vehicle solely responsible for the behaviour and safe conduct of these children. Escort duty on transport cannot be provided by classroom assistants, if it requires them to absent themselves from the classroom for periods of time both morning and evening. Some funding is available to Boards of Management from the Department of Education, to facilitate the employment of escorts on school transport services for special schools. The funds available, however, are not sufficient to provide a comprehensive service of escorts on all transport facilities serving special schools. The report on “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland” (1983)\(^2\) recommended that a comprehensive system of transport should be established for all children with disabilities attending Development Education Centres on a day basis and that there should be a coordination between agencies at local level in order to provide the most efficient service possible and to apportion costs. It was considered advantageous that any system of transport operating to schools and to Development Education Centres should be sufficiently flexible to allow for the use of vehicles and escort personnel in connection with out of school and leisure activities. Additional funding will be required to implement such recommendations fully. Grants are not available at present to enable bus companies to provide harnesses and/or other necessary supports on their transport vehicles.

Recognition however, must be given to the current providers of transport facilities to special schools for their continuing efforts to provide a safe and comprehensive service.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) substantial additional resources be made available by the Department of Education to fund escort provision on special school transport;

(ii) funding be made available by the Department of Education to transport authorities for the provision of hoists, harnesses, wheelchair clamps and
other necessary equipment on transport facilities which are used in transporting pupils with physical disabilities;

(iii) transport systems operating to schools and Day Development Centres be sufficiently flexible to allow for the use of vehicles and escort personnel in connection with out of school and leisure activities.
The Working Party who prepared the report on the "The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland" (1983) listed the following major curricular areas which are necessary to meet the learning needs of children with severe and profound mental handicap:

(a) Basic Skills
   (i) Self-help skills, such as dressing, feeding, washing, toileting.
   (ii) Gross and fine motor skills.
   (iii) Sensory awareness.
   (iv) Simple household tasks and daily living skills, such as cookery.

(b) Expressive Skills
   (i) Communication skills, both receptive and expressive, natural gestures, cues, simple language, sign language where appropriate.
   (ii) Music and Movement.
   (iii) Dramatic Activities.
   (iv) Physical Education.

(c) Leisure Skills
   (i) Play with toys and with other children and adults.
   (ii) Participation in simple games, both organised and in the form of free play.
   (iii) Horse Riding, swimming and other activities, depending on local facilities.

These broad curricular areas were used by the pilot scheme teachers to develop individualised programmes for use in the special class/unit. As there was no set curriculum many teachers developed their own programmes in isolation. There was little or no structured interaction between units for the exchange or development of curricula.
The curriculum can be understood as the sum of all the educational activities occurring in the special class/unit. The idea of what constitutes an educational activity has to be interpreted very broadly when considering a curriculum for children with severe and profound mental handicap. It can incorporate any activity in every situation in which these children are placed. The children’s experiences should be regarded as a continuous sequence of related events by those who teach and care for them. Particular significance is attached to the many activities which make up their day by various personnel in their different roles. Teachers, carers and therapists will all have some input into every activity although each person will give a different emphasis to each element.

As with all pupils it is necessary to decide on the educational aims for children with severe and profound handicap before any curriculum planning can take place. Overall aims must regard each child as a unique individual member of society with the same rights, aspirations and needs as other children and try to develop each child’s potential. The curriculum should reflect specific individualised learning programmes as well as other more generalised experiences which raise levels of awareness in a broader sense.

Ware (1994) states that children with severe and profound learning difficulties are “notoriously poor consumers of curriculum”. These pupils do not readily acquire a body of knowledge hence we should view progress less in those terms and more in terms of the needs of the pupil being taught. Once the teacher has prioritised those needs he/she can structure learning situations to meet those needs. The teacher will have to make decisions about what elements of the curriculum have priority over others for a particular pupil. Then the teacher will have to structure learning situations which will make the acquisition of that priority need both realistic and attainable. Many of the broad curricular areas which are available to every child regardless of handicap can be available to children with severe and profound handicap through these individualised learning experiences.²

Ouvry (1987)³ suggests four areas of development which should be catered for in each child’s individualised programmes to ensure a balanced core curriculum. These areas are physical, perceptual, intellectual and personal/social development. She relates each of these four developmental areas to six areas of the core curriculum:

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Movement

Physical
Perceptual Motor
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Each of the core curriculum areas can be related to specific individualised teaching programmes that occur in the special class/unit. The following are some of the possible therapeutic and educational programmes that can be related to the six different core curriculum areas as outlined by Ouvry.

**MOVEMENT**
- Gross Motor
- Body Image
- Physiotherapy
- Conductive Education
- Relaxation
- Ball Skills
- Motor Activities
- Swimming
- Horse Riding
- Passive Exercises

**PERCEPTUAL MOTOR**
- Fine Motor
- Hand/Eye Co-ordination
- Sand/Water Play
- Art
- Craft Skills
- Play Programmes

**SENSORY AWARENESS**
- Visual Discrimination including visual tracking
- Auditory Discrimination including music
- Olfactory Discrimination
- Gustatory Discrimination
- Sensory Motor Activities
- Tactile Discrimination
- Sensory Compensatory Activities
It is beyond the scope of this report to give precise details of the individual curricular programmes. “The Special Education Review Committee Report” (1993) stated that “the Department of Education should request the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, in cooperation with experienced institutes and organisations, to establish a curriculum development project for pupils with severe or profound mental handicap; account should be taken of the work of existing pilot projects, including those which have established linkages between centres caring for these pupils and mainstream schools”. It should be regarded as a matter of priority that this recommendation of the “Special Education Review Committee Report” which is reiterated in the White Paper on Education (1995), be implemented without further delay.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) the Special Education Review Committee Report (1993) recommendation for the establishment of a curriculum development project which would include the involvement of practising teachers be implemented immediately;

(ii) structures be established to encourage ongoing interaction between teachers working with pupils with severe and profound handicap in special classes/units to facilitate sharing of curriculum initiatives and development;

(iii) curricular programmes, whether initiated in Ireland or adapted from abroad, reflect indigenous Irish culture.
4.1. Introduction
Most special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap function within a multi-disciplinary setting where professionals other than teachers give their expertise to enhance the educational opportunities of the children. Each professional has a role within the team and while the teacher has particular responsibility for education within this setting, all are involved in the educational process with the children. Some professionals such as nurses and special needs assistants (child care workers) may work with the teacher on a daily basis, and other professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, and speech and language therapists work with the pupils on a consultative basis. The role of the school principal and teaching staff is crucial in ensuring a comprehensive educational service for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap.

4.2. The Teaching Profession

4.2.1. The Principal Teacher
The principal teacher of the school to which special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap are attached has overall responsibility for the coordination and delivery of the educational services for these pupils. This involves a considerable increase in responsibility as the group of pupils have significant additional needs in the areas of educational, medical and care provision. The addition of special classes/units to schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap has, therefore, greatly increased the work-load of the principals concerned.

The principal is responsible for allocating teaching staff and special needs assistants to the special classes/units and also for organising replacements in the event of the teacher being absent. The principal has responsibility for designating suitable teaching areas for the special classes/units and, for organising the provision of appropriate specialised equipment and resources, both functional and educational. This is done in conjunction with the head of unit when the teacher is located in the Day Development Centre.
In addition to their normal duties, principal teachers in schools with special classes/units are actively involved at all levels of the multi disciplinary team, from the time of initial assessment, to the delivery of the service and to the review of provision. This involves dealing with all the members of the team both individually or as a group at case conferences. Since many of the pupils in these special class/units will have medical conditions there will be increased involvement with the Department of Health and their services as well as the Department of Education.

Additional time will also be required to liaise with parents who will need information, support and assistance throughout their child's school career. As both the pupils and parents are new to the educational system, considerable additional input and time will be needed to inform, consult, win confidence and involve the parents in the process. Expectations and perceptions will need careful and dedicated handling in dealing with issues such as Boards of Management, Parent Councils, support groups, fundraising activities and post school placements. The principal will also have a central role in coordinating any integrative process occurring with the special class pupils and the other pupils in the school. She/he must also encourage, facilitate and support any involvement with other local schools or educational establishments. The organisation of volunteer and community involvement in the special class/units and the coordination of the work of Fás workers will also create considerable additional work and responsibilities. The arrangement of the school transport requirements and the coordination and organisation of out of school activities such as swimming and horse riding is also a responsibility of the principal teacher.

When the special class/unit is located on a separate site to the main school for pupils with moderate mental handicap, the principal has additional responsibilities. Not alone are there additional travel times and costs involved but the principal must coordinate time tables and holiday arrangements of two different staff groups. It is also possible that the outreach centre may involve a different clinical team to the main school and may also operate under a different management agency. The principal has to assist in the integration of the teachers and special needs assistants into two separate staff groups, and to develop a close working relationship with the head of unit. During the temporary absence of staff they have to arrange for their replacement which may be difficult to do at a distance. The establishment of supply panels of substitute teachers attached to special schools is essential and would have major benefits for the wider educational service.
It is extremely difficult for teaching principals to carry out all their responsibilities effectively and efficiently, without experiencing high levels of personal strain and stress. The Report on “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland” (1983) recommended that “where a number of teachers are assigned to a particular unit, one or more of them should be appointed to posts of responsibility in the care unit, and such post holders would be responsible for the coordination of the educational programme on a day to day basis”. It is unreasonable to expect principals to have full responsibility for teaching a class in addition to their administrative and executive functions. Support services, such as caretaking and secretarial assistance are essential requirements in special schools. The management responsibilities and the administrative work involved in keeping records of progress and achievements, increases according to the number of professionals who are engaged in a child’s education.

The proposal to extend the educational service for pupils with severe and profound handicap during the summer vacation period as outlined in the judgement in Paul O’Donoghue’s case has huge implications for principals, both for their responsibility for overseeing the educational provision and their entitlement to their holiday period after an academic year. This issue is addressed further in Chapter 5.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) the Department of Education establish a system of allocating posts of responsibility in special schools to enable principal teachers to delegate responsibilities to teachers in the special classes/units;

(ii) all special schools with special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap, be provided with adequate secretarial and caretaking assistance as a matter of course;

(iii) where special classes/units are located on a different campus to the main school, principal teachers are allocated an annual expense allowance to facilitate their travel to the class/units to support the staff teaching in the class/units;

(iv) administrative principals be appointed as a matter of course in all special schools with special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap;
(v) consideration also be given to the appointment of non teaching vice-principals in larger special schools;

(vi) supply panels of substitute teachers be established for special schools.

4.2.2. The Role of the Teacher

The teacher is the main team member responsible for the delivery of the educational programme in special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap. The teacher will have an indepth knowledge of the educational philosophy regarding special needs, and will be responsible for integrating the different areas of the curriculum and for coordinating the work of the other disciplines.

The role of the teacher in the special class/unit differs from that of most mainstream class teachers, in that they work as part of a multi-disciplinary team. An understanding of team work is essential, as are skills in facilitating different approaches to teaching the various aspects of the curriculum. The teacher will have a broad view of the educational objectives and how these objectives will then form the basis of the individual programmes for each individual.

The teacher will have a knowledge of group dynamics and class management techniques. The organisation of time within special classes/units is dependent on many factors such as the timetable of the unit and of the school as a whole and available facilities i.e. availability of support staff and transport arrangements. The teacher has responsibility for organising a timetable which is determined to some extent by these events. The teacher will involve the permanent classroom staff in the planning and organisation of the learning environment as well as in the implementation of individual programmes. The teacher will also ensure that there is an overall balance between individual and group sessions in the learning environment and that the groups are structured for maximising each pupil’s participation in the activity.

The school and class structures should allow for a consistent relationship with the child with severe or profound handicap. The teacher ensures that all aspects of presentation of activities are clearly stated so that everyone involved can apply the same techniques consistently to ensure the greatest opportunity for learning. However, the teacher must guard against the routine of the class structure dictating the needs of the pupil rather than reflecting their needs and stage of development. Pupils’ experiences of structured school routines have been shown to be beneficial when they are placed, as adults, in Activation Centres and Vocational Training Centres.
Specialist teachers such as Physical Education teachers, Drama teachers, Swimming Instructors and Home Economics teachers all bring their own particular area of expertise to bear on the education of these pupils. They are often best equipped to structure and grade the particular skill areas they deal with into a learning programme suitable to the needs of these pupils, in consultation with the class/unit teacher and appropriate multi-disciplinary team members. Specialist teachers can often have the greatest opportunity for promoting linkages within the services, integrating pupils from the special class/unit with a peer group in the school for pupils with moderate mental handicap for particular subjects. These opportunities should be recognised and developed.

The role of the teacher in aspects of the care programme needs further clarification within each special class/unit. Some teachers are involved in feeding and toileting programmes as part of their curricular programmes. Some teachers engage in systematic toileting and feeding programmes, while others never engage in such activities (See Appendix 4). However, it appears that confusion exists within some centres as to the role of teachers in these aspects of the care programme, as evident from the following comments by teachers:

"There were many 'teething' problems, but all were resolved with full cooperation from both sides – they resolved around the difficulties in establishing the 'educational' aspect into the caring field where the children were under nursing care for the whole day."

"Role differentiation and where roles overlap need to be clearly outlined to both care/nursing staff and teachers."

"Biggest difficulty in working in the unit is trying to establish a clear working distinction between educational and caring needs. There is a lot of 'overlapping', but a distinction is still necessary."

"We should not have to change nappies."

It is the view of the INTO that ongoing routine care, including toileting, washing and feeding is not part of the teacher's prescribed role and would not be an optimum use of his/her expertise, training and experience. However, the curriculum programme prepared by the teacher would facilitate the development and evaluation of toileting, feeding and self-care programmes.
The teacher, in conjunction with the principal is also primarily responsible for establishing the prevailing educational philosophy and ethos of the special class/unit. As there are a large number of people involved it is vital to ensure that everyone works as part of a team, with a high degree of planning and agreed goals. This involves a considerable level of organisation and cooperation, with two way communication being continually facilitated. The special class/unit teacher should endeavour to encourage exchange of ideas and expertise and to share specialised equipment and resources as required with the school. Other teachers should be encouraged to visit the class or unit and be shown the programme and activities in progress as part of the process of enriching their own experience.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) the special class teacher endeavours to encourage exchange of ideas and expertise and to share specialised equipment and resources as required with the school;

(ii) other staff members be encouraged to visit the special class/unit to enrich their own experience;

(iii) teachers within their team have professional discretion and responsibility for planning, implementation and review of the educational programme;

(iv) teachers not be compelled to engage in care programmes such as toileting, washing and feeding and that any involvement be solely on a voluntary basis or as part of their own curricular programmes;

(v) medical needs continue to be the responsibility of the nursing staff and that medication, not generally be administered by teachers (see page 118 of INTO members’ Handbook 1995);

(vi) the teacher be considered an accepted member of staff in the DDC with the option of attending staff meetings both in the DDC and in the school;

(vii) the teacher receive professional direction and support from his/her school principal.
4.2.3. Teacher Appointment and Deployment

All appointments as teachers in special classes/units are made by the Board of Management of the school according to the normal procedures for appointment of assistant teachers in national schools. These appointment procedures are outlined in "Constitution of Boards of Management of National Schools and Rules and Procedure". Persons who have completed successfully a course of training in a recognised college of education, are eligible for recognition as assistant teachers in special schools, (Rule 77 of the Rules for National Schools).

Persons who had completed a recognised course of training in Northern Ireland or Great Britain and who had experience or qualifications in special education, were eligible for appointment as assistant teachers in certain categories of special schools i.e. schools for pupils with mental handicap, hearing impairment or emotional disturbance until September 1992. Since September 1992, however, all teachers being appointed for the first time in special education must be fully recognised national school teachers, therefore, it is necessary for Northern Irish or British trained teachers to hold the Cáilíocht sa Ghaeilge which is a written and oral examination in Irish, in addition to their teaching qualifications. Newly appointed teachers are placed on one year's probation. In calculating the probationary period for primary teachers trained in Northern Ireland or abroad, this year is reduced by six months if a probationary period of at least one year has been completed outside the state. On appointment, teachers from Northern Ireland will be given incremental credit for all previous recognised service in Northern Ireland. The Minister for Education has recently announced that teachers from Northern Ireland, and the European Union will be eligible for appointment in all national schools without holding the Irish qualification. However, it will be necessary to obtain the Irish qualification within two years of appointment. (See Appendix 5 for details.)

Persons who have qualified with the Association of Montessori Internationale (AMI) Benincasa Diploma, the three year course which includes the special education diploma are also eligible for appointment to certain categories of special schools i.e. schools for pupils with mental handicap, hearing impairment, and emotional disturbance. Qualifications from other Montessori colleges are not recognised for appointment, nor are they recognised for further allowances under the current structure of qualification allowances.

The teachers in the special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap are regarded as ordinary assistant teachers for the purposes of appointment, seniority, retention and panel rights. Therefore deployment to
a special class/unit for pupils with severe and profound handicap does not affect the seniority of serving teachers. They maintain their position of seniority on the staff of the attached school. Seniority has traditionally been important in determining a teacher’s right to a promotional post and also in deciding the order in which assistant teachers are made redundant in a school where the enrolment figures have declined sufficiently. When an appointment of an assistant teacher is made to a school, such a teacher ranks last in order of seniority. It is the responsibility of the principal teacher to deploy teachers to each class. Some teachers, on their initial appointments are deployed to teach the special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap. This does not preclude them from being deployed to teach other classes in the school. All advertisements for new posts in these schools must be for teachers of pupils with moderate/severe/profound handicap.

The retention of teachers in the special classes/units is dependent on the normal appointment and retention schedule for the school as a whole to which the special class/units is attached. If the numbers fall below the required retention figures for the last assistant teacher on the main school roll, the special class teacher may be placed on the panel if they have been appointed last in order of seniority. This would not affect the retention of the particular class. However, a teacher from the main school may be requested to accept deployment to teach the special class. This has implications for the attachment of special class units for pupils with severe and profound handicap to special schools and in particular to mainstream schools as proposed by the Department of Education.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) staffs in schools be consulted formally and the approval of members sought before a Board of Management decides whether or not to accept a class for pupils with severe and profound handicap in their school;

(ii) all schools have a deployment policy which facilitates the movement of all teachers between the various classes for pupils with mental handicap;

(iii) all advertisements for posts in schools with special classes/units be for teachers of pupils with moderate/severe/profound handicap.

4.2.4. Preservice Provision

Teacher education begins with the preservice courses provided in the Colleges of Education. The inclusion of modules in special education in all courses of preservice education are not, at present, mandatory. The report on "The
Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland” (1983) stated that “all teachers during their basic training should be acquainted with the methodology, theory and practice of teaching children with mental handicap, including severe and profound mental handicap.”

Whereas an introductory module on special education should be compulsory for all students, an optional specialisation module could be offered where interested students could also opt to engage in teaching practice in special schools and classes. Guest speakers, such as teachers in special classes, could also be invited to address the students. Practising teachers are the most suitable people to describe exactly the type of curriculum, methodology and ethos of education which prevail in the special classes and to relate how rewarding the position can be.

There is a general increase in the number of special classes catering for pupils with particular types of disabilities in mainstream schools. Student teachers should be given a module on classroom organisation and management, with specific reference to special classes, as they experience challenges quite distinct from the other classes. A broad perspective on the type of curriculum that is followed in a special class/unit would be useful, as it is quite distinct from the general literacy and numeracy based curricula with which the students are familiar in the context of teaching in mainstream classes. Videos showing the practicalities of the various situations which arise in special classes/units, and the individualised nature of instruction, could be utilised where it is not feasible to organise visits of large groups of students to special classes/units.

A positive attitude towards special education should be fostered, as frequently in the past, it was seen as having less status than primary education. The ‘specialist’ aspect of special education should be recognised and the sector seen as having an enhanced area of provision for its pupils.

The INTO recommends:

(i) all teachers become acquainted with the methodology, theory and practice of teaching children with mental handicap, including severe and profound mental handicap, during their preservice training;

(ii) student teachers with an interest in special education be facilitated in organising teaching practice in special schools;

(iii) the specialist aspect of special education be recognised and acknowledged and the sector be seen as providing an enhanced educational services for its pupils.
4.2.5. Orientation Programme

The report on "The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland" (1983) recommended that "formal induction training should be provided for all teachers who are about to take up duty with severe and profoundly mentally handicapped children." An induction course should not be regarded as sufficient in career training for personnel dealing with pupils with severe and profound handicaps. Teacher in career development should be regarded as a continuum in which induction has a role along with preservice and inservice education. To fulfill the need for orientation programmes for teachers newly deployed to teach these classes and to ignore the need for adjustment to other areas of teacher education would be detrimental to the professional development of all teachers who wish to work with pupils with severe and profound handicap.

An orientation programme should be offered to all teachers prior to taking up their appointments or during their first year in special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap. An orientation programme should be designed so as to acquaint the teachers with the knowledge and skills which are distinctly pertinent to the education of pupils with severe and profound handicap. Such an orientation programme would be valuable for all newly appointed teachers, particularly for those with no prior experience in special education.

When new teachers were appointed in 1986 and 1987 to the new special classes/units, two separate courses were organised for them by the Education Department in St. Mary’s College of Education, Marino. These courses took place from the 7th–11th April and again from the 1st–5th of December 1986. Those giving the courses were either professionals who were working as part of a multi-disciplinary team in a Day Development Centre or Special Care Unit, or people who were involved in the drawing up of the report on "The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland" (1983). Teachers appointed after 1987 and deployed to teach in special classes for pupils with severe and profound handicap were offered no orientation programme. Following the appointment of an additional 37 teachers in 1994–95, St. Patrick’s College of Education was requested by the Department of Education to organise an orientation programme for the teachers concerned. An initial course for twenty six serving teachers was held in St. Patrick’s College from 25-29 September 1995, and was followed by a second module on 30 November and 1 December 1995. The second course took place between 11–15 March 1996 to be followed by a second module on the 10–11 June. An outline of the programme content is given in Appendix 6. The course content was organised and delivered by Dr. Jean Ware from
Cardiff University in conjunction with the Special Education Department in St. Patrick's College and experienced practising Irish teachers. Two practical modules were given by experienced teachers working in classes for severe and profoundly handicapped children. The course helped the teachers to assert and refine their existing skills for prioritising pupils' needs and gave them a greater understanding of their specific contribution towards the education of their pupils. It was structured in such a manner to give the teachers confidence in their own abilities to develop the resources they require to meet their pupils' diverse needs.

Experience has shown that there is a high turnover of staff in the special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap. At the orientation course held in September 1995, there was only one teacher who had attended the initial induction course in 1986 and was still teaching in a special class for children with severe and profound handicap. If such a high level of turnover of personnel were to continue there would be a need for periodic orientation programmes to be held.

Teachers of pupils in classes for pupils with moderate mental handicap should be invited to attend induction and inservice courses in the education of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap, when such courses are organised on a more regular basis. Many teachers in schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap have pupils in their classes who are within the severely handicapped range. Movement and redeployment within the school as well as falling numbers may require teachers currently teaching classes of pupils with moderate mental handicap to transfer to a special class/unit for pupils with severe and profound handicap. It would also be advantageous for resource teachers and home/school liaison teachers working in the area of mental handicap to attend these courses.

Orientation programmes for teachers taking up positions with pupils with severe and profound handicap, could incorporate both lecture and workshop sessions. Lectures should include what constitutes education for these children, administration, communication, teamwork and insights into the work of other disciplines and what they can contribute to the classroom. The practical workshop sessions could cover techniques and therapies which would be of use in the special class/unit but would not have been covered in pre-service education. Workshops should, where possible, incorporate personnel who not only have particular interests and expertise in the appropriate areas, but who also have worked with individuals in this category of disabilities. Examples of appropriate topics are outlined in Appendix 7.
The INTO recommends that:

(i) suitable orientation programmes be organised annually for all new teachers of pupils with severe and profound handicap;

(ii) orientation programmes also be offered to Principal Teachers when special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap are first established in the school.

4.2.6. Incareer Development

Teachers in special education have the option of applying for a Diploma Course in Special Education organised by St. Patrick’s College in Drumcondra. The course takes place during the academic year from October to May. The teachers are replaced in their classrooms by temporary teachers and continue to receive full salary. Teachers in the special classes/units are generally deployed to teach a class of pupils with moderate mental handicap prior to being accepted on the course. The modification of this course to suit the special needs of the teachers of pupils with severe and profound handicap was first mooted in one of the recommendations of the report on “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland” (1983). This need for expansion and modification has not yet occurred principally due to a lack of resources.

The diploma course does not, at present, address the needs of pupils with severe and profound handicap. The content of the present course focuses mainly on the mild range of learning difficulties. To cater for a broader range of learning difficulties would require additional resources and personnel. Practising teachers should be at the core of the design and delivery of inservice provision to their colleagues. Core modules on special education should be offered to all teachers engaged in special education followed by elective modules in the various specialist areas. The option of organising a Diploma in Special Education in regional centres needs to be addressed too as not all teachers in special education are in a position to transfer to Dublin for a year to attend the course. The travel/rent subsistence allowance for those teachers attending courses should also be reinstated.

The professional development of the teacher must continue to grow in order to meet the ever changing needs of the children in the special classes. Courses in staff management, time management, counselling skills and motivation skills would prove invaluable to the teachers of pupils with severe and profound handicap. The range of management and counselling skills needed by the special class teacher is greater than the requirements of mainstream
teachers, due to, among other reasons, the additional number of personnel involved in the child’s education. There should be an option available to enable teachers of children with severe and profound handicap to attend relevant courses or conferences run by other groups or associations, for example, the Irish Sensory Integration Association or the Irish Music Therapy Association. Courses attended by teachers during holiday periods should be recognised for personal leave days. It may also be appropriate for teachers to attend courses with other members of the multi-disciplinary team as opportunities arise. Co-operative training with other disciplines would help to promote better understanding and improved working relationships on the multi-disciplinary team.

Incentives, including increased allowances, should be available for teachers in special education to encourage them to obtain additional qualifications. Additional qualifications such as Diplomas in Educational Administration, and Diplomas in Montessori Education should be recognised as enhancing the professionalism of the teacher.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) a greater number of additional qualifications in the areas of educational theory and management be recognised for allowances;

(ii) the current Diploma course in Special Education be expanded to include core modules of relevance to all disciplines and specialist modules to cater for the different sectors within special education;

(iii) teachers also be facilitated in attending courses with other members of the multi-disciplinary team.

4.2.7. Home-School-Community Liaison

The establishment of posts of liaison teachers are not dependent on the normal staffing and retention schedule but is determined by an assessment of the needs of the school by the Department of Education. A significant number of pupils attending special schools come from areas of designated educational disadvantage. Had they been attending the local school, they would have access to such a home-school-community liaison service.

The home-school-community liaison teacher should be designated to work with pupils with severe or profound mental handicap and their families in a similar manner to the already existing service in disadvantaged areas. In addition, the home-school-community liaison teacher could develop links
with families before the child starts formal schooling. The liaison teacher could visit the homes of these pupils in an advisory capacity to help the continuation of programmes already in use with the child in the special class/unit. They could assist the class teacher in raising awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist the development of relevant skills.

The significant number of children who are unable to attend school due to repeated illness, hospitalisation or distance from school could be included in an outreach programme under the auspices of a visiting teacher service. The service should facilitate the families in obtaining knowledge and skills which the class teacher may not be in a position to bring to the home situation. This type of service would maximise the active participation of parents and families in the pupil's learning process. It would promote an active system of cooperation between home and school to the advantage of both. The visiting teacher/home-school liaison service could be seen as being complementary to the Department of Health home links programme.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) the Department of Education establish home-school-community liaison schemes and/or a local visiting teachers' service for special schools and for children with severe and profound mental handicap;

(ii) the appointment of home-school-community liaison teachers be sanctioned in all special schools with special classes/units attached to them.

4.3. Professional Support

The report on “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland” (1983) recommended that each group of approximately 50 children with severe and profound handicap would require the services of 15 staff: five registered nurses for mentally handicapped, one occupation therapist, four adults experienced in dealing with these children, one general trained nurse, two childcare assistants and two junior trainees. Teachers became members of the team when the recommendation to offer educational programmes to these children was implemented.

The pupils in special classes/units will require a great deal of support from other professionals throughout the period of their school attendance as they have a variety of medical, physical, therapeutic and care needs. All members of the team will be involved in the adaptation and implementation of specific
parts of the curriculum and will assist in remediating particular areas of difficulty. Members of the multidisciplinary team will also advise on the various aspects of behaviour encountered in the classroom. Individual personnel may have, within their professional brief, areas which are of particular interest to them and for which they have received additional inservice training. This may enhance the contribution that those particular professionals are able to give to the children with whom they are involved.

4.3.1. Special Needs Assistants

The ratio of special needs assistants to pupils is greater than the ratio between the pupils and any other member of the multidisciplinary team. Their presence in the classroom reflects the degree of dependence of the pupils.

The duties and responsibilities of special needs assistants are assigned by the principal and are carried out under the supervision of a class teacher. A list of the types of duties of special needs assistants can be found on page 114 of the INTO Members' Handbook (1995).

The special needs assistants in the special class/unit are sensitive to each child's individual needs and find ways of meeting these needs while preserving the child's dignity. Special needs assistants carry out the educational activities with each individual child, under the direction of the teacher. They may be requested to take responsibility for implementing particular areas in which they have a particular interest or talent, for example, music, art or craft.

Special needs assistants who have received appropriate training can contribute enormously to the educational programmes by working towards the same goals and by sharing expertise and techniques with the teacher. They become involved as part of the team in monitoring the child's progress and in helping to revise objectives once certain goals have been achieved.

It is preferable that the same team personnel remain in the classroom for more than one academic year. The continuity of classroom personnel helps the pupil to form relationships and offers emotional security to the children. Many special classes/units involve voluntary assistants in their work. Volunteers require ongoing effort and work on the part of a staff member to train and support them in order for them to be in a position to contribute to the work in the classroom. A commitment to regular attendance and to engaging in the learning process is essential if contributions from volunteers are to be valuable.
Special needs assistants should have appropriate qualifications in the area of child care and special needs. The career structure of special needs assistants should also be addressed. At present a Pass in the Group Certificate examination is required in order to be appointed as a special needs assistant. Courses to enable people who are interested in working in the care of children with disabilities should be available and accredited. Certified qualifications should then become a pre-requisite for appointment to positions as special needs assistants.

The current ratio for special needs assistants in the special classes as recommended by the "Report of the Special Education Review Committee" (1993) report is one special needs assistant for every three pupils with severe and profound handicap. This ratio has not yet been implemented.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) the Department of Education extend the present special needs assistant allocation for schools with moderately mentally handicapped which include special classes/units, in line with the recommendations in the Report of the Special Education Review Committee Report (1993);

(ii) the Department of Education develop a proper career structure for special needs assistants to include access to in-career development courses;

(iii) appropriate training and qualifications be available to personnel who wish to work as Special Needs Assistants, and become a prerequisite to appointment.

4.3.2. Physiotherapists

Physiotherapy programmes seek, as far as is possible to correct any deformities or dysfunctions which result from the actual physical impairment of the child. They also aim to prevent the development of any further deformity, for example contracture, or loss of function which would impede the pupil's ability to participate in educational and other activities.

The physiotherapist may advise on correct handling methods, specific to each individual child, which can be implemented in the special class/unit to prevent discomfort to the pupils while lifting them and moving them during the day. They can show the beneficial patterns of movement for pupils with little or no voluntary movement and also train staff in methods of maintaining mobility to help implement the self-care, dressing and feeding programmes.
The physiotherapist can advise on appropriate positions for individual children to maximise their participation in different daily activities in the special class/unit. They also demonstrate methods of encouraging the development of voluntary motor control and the use of normal movement patterns in the gross motor area of the curriculum. The physiotherapist may organise specific therapeutic activities and individual physiotherapy programmes which can be incorporated into the class routine and carried out by other members of staff under his/her guidance. Physiotherapists can also advise teachers and other team members on correct lifting and moving techniques which will help to minimise the risk of back injury to all the team members.

4.3.3. Occupational Therapists

The Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland have a special interest group for those occupational therapists working in or with an interest in the field of mental handicap. They have published a pamphlet which explains the areas they feel their expertise can be best utilised with people with a mental handicap. Some of those areas are of obvious benefit to pupils with severe and profound mental handicap whereas other areas would apply to pupils functioning at a higher level than the children in special classes/units.

The pupils with severe and profound handicap may require a variety of positions during the day in the special class/unit. The occupational therapist can advise staff in how to assist pupils in the areas of seating and proper positioning for function. The occupational therapist can advise on wheelchairs, activity chairs and commodes in addition to advising on the modification of existing classroom furniture to suit the needs of the individual pupils. This may take the form of strapping, adjustments of table heights and adjustments of chair heights for use at table top activities including computer work. The occupational therapist can advise on access in the school, class or unit, home and in transportation. Occupational therapists can also advise on aids for self-care programmes, safety issues and microtechnology.

4.3.4. Psychologists

The Psychological Society of Ireland considers that the primary role of the psychological service is to provide a detailed description of the ideal educational environment which a pupil with special needs requires and to recommend the resources which are necessary in order to provide such an environment. The psychologist generally has no prior relationship with children presenting for initial assessment and maintains an objective relationship with the child throughout the testing and evaluation period.
The results obtained from the testing procedures are usually detailed and discussed with the multi-disciplinary team designated to deal with the particular child. A diagnostic evaluation of the pupil's strengths and weaknesses by the psychologists provides the teacher with insights into how best to structure the educational programme for this particular pupil. Particular aspects of the tests may have specific relevance to the different disciplines represented by the team.

The psychologist also advises on possible behaviour modification techniques, reward systems and positive behaviour arrangement strategies. They also have a prominent role in the counselling and training of parents and in developing linkage projects with other agencies. The psychologist has a pivotal role in the ongoing evaluation of existing programmes and in devising new ones. The psychologist may find some of the assessments of progress in use in the class/unit of benefit in a further evaluation of the child's ability. One of the recommendations of the "Report of the Special Education Review Committee" (1993) was that where feasible and appropriate, a formal assessment should be carried out in a setting familiar to the pupils being assessed.12 The learning environment can facilitate the work of the psychologist by putting such a setting at their disposal for assessment reviews.

4.3.5 Social Workers

Social workers by the very nature of their professional brief spend much of their time working as outreach members of the multi-disciplinary team away from the special class/unit. They can often be more intimately involved with the pupil and family than other members of the multi-disciplinary team. The social worker is involved in visiting the homes and advising the family, not only on benefits and entitlements but also on possible strategies for dealing with situations that may arise concerning the child with severe and profound handicap. The social worker builds up a long standing cooperative relationship with the family having been involved with them for a considerable period prior to the child's entering any service and becoming involved with other professionals.

The social worker may be the first person to become aware of problems occurring within the home and may be the professional that the family first turns to for advice to remediate any situation. Social workers have an important role in informing the rest of the multi-disciplinary team of possible difficulties the family may be experiencing at home and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of pupils and their behaviour in different situations.
The social worker helps to coordinate the delivery of programmes in both the home and the special class/unit. This is especially useful for those families who find it difficult to visit the special class/unit because of work or family commitments or because they live at some distance from the centre providing the services for their child. This means that the expertise of all the professionals involved in the multi-disciplinary team is utilised for the benefit of the family. The social worker's involvement with the multi-disciplinary team enhances the team's knowledge of the individual pupils and how that pupil interacts with his/her family in the home situation. The social worker helps the team then to provide the support that the family will need to sustain them in their role as carers and educators.

4.3.6. Speech and Language Therapists

"Communication Needs"—a discussion document on needs and services for people with a mental handicap in Ireland which was published by the Special Interest Group of Speech Therapists in Mental Handicap (1989) states quite clearly what they experience as their role in the multi-disciplinary team. They perceive their role as more than the clinical and administrative duties which any speech therapist does for an individual client. This would encompass the assessment, diagnosis, onward referral, direct and indirect intervention and all the tasks associated with that intervention on an individual, client/professional basis. They perceive their role in relation to pupils with a mental handicap as varying according to “the needs of the client, the setting in which those needs are met and the model of service delivery adopted by the speech therapist's employer.”

Many of the pupils attending a special class/unit may never achieve adequate communication skills. The speech therapist can help to establish a responsive and accepting communication environment through the education of others. The speech and language therapist works very closely with others on the multi-disciplinary team to develop programmes for pupils with severe and profound handicap who have great difficulty in acquiring new skills. The parent, teacher, nurse or care staff who spend more time with the child will be in a better position to provide a much more intensive input than the speech and language therapist who is not usually available on a daily basis. The speech and language therapist can ensure that they have the communication teaching skills relevant to the needs of the child enabling those skills to be focused and reinforced constantly.

In addition to the communication aspect of their work the speech and language therapists can also contribute to the oral and sensorial education of the pupils, for example oral motor work which includes exercises for the lips.
and tongue to improve control. They improve the self care aspects of a child’s life by giving advice on feeding programmes and methods of desensitising oral areas or avoiding particular difficulties such as tongue thrusting.

4.3.7. Nurses

In Special Care Units and in Day Development Centres (DDC) the nursing personnel are also part of the multi-disciplinary team. The nurses working in the units may have different qualifications reflecting a different orientation in their initial training. The distribution of nursing qualifications in 1980 as outlined in “The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland” (1983) was as follows:14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Full Time</th>
<th>Part Time</th>
<th>With Preschool Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RNMH</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGN</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Nurse</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatric Nurse</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Nurse</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The training of Registered General Nurses is not specifically in the area of mental handicap. An Bord Altranais (1983) has published a syllabus for an 18 month training programme for post basic training for nurses in the area of mental handicap. Psychiatric nurses may be required to work with individuals with mental handicap who suffer from psychiatric disorders in addition to their degree of mental handicap. The training of the Registered Nurses for Mentally Handicapped (RNMH) particularly equips them for work in the care and instruction of individuals with mental handicap.

The nursing staff provide insights into medical conditions and how educational programmes are affected by certain aspects of those medical conditions. They watch for signs of toxicity or side effects of medication as well as requesting medications/treatment for particular problems from the medical staff. The nurse observes, assesses and records any changes in the pupil’s condition and reports them to the rest of the team. In addition to being responsible for ensuring that the child is as healthy as possible, the nurses participate in special class programmes, for example, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, self care, dressing skills and practical living skills. Many of the children attending special classes/units may have physical impairments which require nursing care on a continuous basis e.g. naso-gastric feeding,
suctioning, intra-muscular drugs and postural drainage.

Qualified medical personnel should be responsible for the administration of routine medication to pupils. Nurses, therefore, are considered as integral members of the team. It is unacceptable and regrettable that there are no nursing staff to address the medical needs of the children in some special classes/units which are not attached to day care or residential units.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) the Department of Health retain the responsibility for organising and ensuring access to all ancillary services required by children with severe and profound handicap such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy, regardless of where the child is located;

(ii) the Department of Health allocate nursing staff to all special schools and classes where pupils require regular medical assistance.
5.1. Co-ordination of Services

The organisation and administration of educational provision for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap poses considerable challenges. Special classes.units for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap are generally attached to special schools for pupils with moderate handicap. The classes.units are either located in the same school building as the main school, on the same campus but in a different building, or on a different campus some distance from the main school. Some classes are based in Day Development Centres/Special Care Units or in local centres attached to Day Development Centres. Until the mid 1980s, all provision for pupils with severe and profound handicap was provided under the auspices of the Department of Health in the day care or residential centres. When educational provision was being extended to pupils with severe and profound mental handicap, special classes.units were established under the auspices of the Boards of Management of schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap. The Board of Management of the school to which the special class/unit is attached has the ultimate responsibility for the administration of the special class/unit. The principal, therefore, has responsibility for the day to day administration of the service.

As many of these children have multidisabilities the health authorities share a role in the administration of education services to pupils with severe and profound mental handicap. Both the Department of Health and the Department of Education have their own infrastructure for administrative purposes and there is no arrangement made for the provision of a coordinated service for these children. Cooperation sometimes occurs at local level between the principal teacher or inspector and representatives of the Health Boards. The lack of an overall coordinating agency between the two Departments can mean discrepancies in the services being offered to these children throughout the country, dependent as they are on local goodwill and cooperation. The White Paper on Education “Charting our Education Future” (1995)\(^1\) proposes that the Regional Education Boards, when established, will be responsible for the co-ordination of services for pupils with special needs at regional level.

Representatives of the Department of Health may not support what they
regard as the appropriation of their source of funding by the Department of Education for its own purposes and vice versa. A proportion of the annual budget of the Department of Health is quantified for use in education although the Department of Health will not give figures for this annual expenditure. The Report on *"The Education and Training of Severely and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped Children in Ireland"* (1983) recommended that the “Department of Health and the Health Boards should be responsible for the funding of capital and other running costs of the care units, and no change is envisaged in the present arrangements for recruitment and remuneration of staff and other teachers.” The Department of Education was responsible “merely for the remuneration of teachers” and the payment of the annual capitation grants for pupils to the school or agency.

The Department of Education is responsible for the payment of the teachers’ salaries, the salaries of special needs assistants who have been allocated to the special classes/units, for the payment of a capitation grant per child per annum, which in the school year 1995/96 is £341 and for the provision of school transport. The Inspectorate also operates under the auspices of the Department of Education. A coherent policy on funding which clarifies the responsibility of each Department in terms of providing resources for the educational requirements of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap is urgently required in order to ensure the most efficient service possible for these children.

The complex nature of disabilities with which children with severe and profound mental handicap present requires a multi-disciplinary intervention. Treating the different disabilities in isolation is probably the least effective approach to the education of these pupils. A team approach to developing a curriculum and teaching programme presents a challenge to personnel working with these children and to the management team concerned. The principal teacher and the unit head must work in close cooperation on the administration of the special class/unit in matters as wide ranging as time tabling, location, Individual Programme Planning meetings (IPP), formal case conferences, funding, access to services, transport provision, staff development and training and staff deployment. The administrative workload of the principal teacher is, therefore, greatly increased by the extension of their school’s educational provision to include a class/unit for pupils with severe and profound handicap.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) the Department of Health retain the responsibility for organising and
ensuring access to all ancillary services required by children with severe and profound handicap such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy, regardless of where the child is located;

(ii) the Regional Education Boards, when established, allocate substantial funds for the provision of special needs education and assume responsibility for the coordination of services for pupils with special needs at regional level;

(iii) a coherent policy on funding which clarifies the responsibility of each Department in terms of providing resources for the educational requirements of pupils with severe and profound handicap be agreed and put in place in order to ensure the most efficient service possible for these children.

5.2. The Role of the Principal

In many cases, the principal teacher is responsible for more than one class unit for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap. Classes/units may be located up to a few miles away from the main Day Development Centre or school. The additional workload involved is not sufficiently recognised by the Department of Education at present. It is extremely difficult for teaching principals to coordinate and administer the work of the special class/unit in addition to his/her teaching responsibilities. The points rating system, which is currently under review, is used in order to determine the level of principals’ allowances, and the allocation of posts of responsibilities. This system can discriminate unfairly against special schools in general, and in particular against small special schools which include special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap. The responsibilities of principals and of teachers involved in middle management in special schools are quite significant. In order to be in a position where they can carry out their responsibilities effectively, it is essential that all principals in special schools, in particular those in schools with special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap attached to them, are administrative principals.

The principal teacher is directly responsible, amongst other duties and subject to the authority of the Board of Management, for:

- The coordination and effective supervision of the teachers' work.
- The organisation of the school.
- The keeping of records of attendance.
- The promotion of pupils.
- Supervision—including organised effective supervision throughout
the school day.
* Encouraging and facilitating cooperation with parents.
* Regular reviews of pupils' progress.
* Ensuring liaison between class teachers and teachers in special groups/classes.

The INTO recommends that:

(i) *administrative principals be appointed as a matter of course in all special schools with severe and profound handicap;*

(ii) *the Department of Education establish a system of allocating posts of responsibility in special schools to enable principal teachers to delegate responsibilities to teachers in the special classes/units.*

5.3. **Reporting Procedures**

Liaison between the principal and the teacher(s) in the special classes/units and between the principal and other personnel involved in the educational process of pupils with severe and profound handicap must be structured in such a way as to facilitate the carrying out of the responsibilities outlined above. The location in which the teachers and the special needs assistants are placed also has significant implications for reporting procedures. When the special class/unit is located in the main school, reporting procedures are similar to those between the principal and all the teaching and non teaching staff. Particular difficulties are created where the special classes/units are located in a day care or residential centre, which may or may not have the same patron as the school and may be on a different campus. Agreed procedures for liaison and reporting must reflect the responsibilities of both the principal and the teachers and the administrative structures of the special classes/units.

A strong commitment to the provision of an appropriate educational service to these pupils must be underpinned by:

* Mutual respect among the professionals involved.
* A committed, positive, cooperative relationship between the principal and the head of unit.
* The provision of a suitable room/teaching space for the teacher.
* Carefully planned time tabling.
* Suitable incareer development—induction and inservice.
* Carefully planned curriculum.
* Ongoing consultation and shared planning among all staff.
• Mutual flexibility.
• The development of positive and constructive relationships/links between special schools and DDCs.
• Collaborative involvement with parents.
• Suitable transport provision.
• Clear supportive management policy and structures from the patron body.
• Clear supportive guidelines from the Departments of Education and Health.
• Significant additional allowances to acknowledge the considerable additional responsibility involved for principal teachers.

A reporting model that is sometimes proposed is that which applies to clinicians working in a school/Day Development Centre. They report professionally to their Department Head/Medical Director; however, while in the school/Day Development Centre they would work under the general guidance of the principal/head of unit in matters of time-tableing, location, consultation with staff and interaction with parents. This model, when based on mutual respect and a coordinated approach generally works well. It is important to note, however, that clinicians are never perceived as front line staff. They generally work occasional sessions during any given day/week. It is, therefore, relatively easy to organise and time-table their activities to avoid particular situations, e.g. repetitive toileting, cleaning, and the routine basic personal care needs of the children. The perception of the status of the teacher is significantly different from that accorded to a clinician. There is at times an ambivalent attitude towards teachers within voluntary agencies and health boards even in long established special schools. Teachers are generally perceived as neither fitting neatly into the professional ‘clinical’ role or to the professional front line staff role, where staff work under the guidance and direction of the clinicians - this is often called the team approach. Teachers are independent in that they are employed by a Board of Management and paid by the Department of Education and this may often give rise to resentment and confusion amongst management, senior clinicians and other team members. It is also important to be aware that in many Day Development Centres a system has evolved whereby professional distinctions between RNMHs, qualified child care assistants and ‘non-recognised’ teachers have blurred to the extent that all members of front line staff are expected to actively participate in and take responsibility for all aspects of the child’s programme and activities - educational, care and medical. In such situations many clinicians and managers fully support this approach.
The INTO recommends that:

(i) reporting and liaison procedures between the principal and staff and between the principal and the head of unit reflect the structure of the school and the special classes/units;

(ii) teachers teaching in isolated centres away from the main school campus be compensated for the inconvenience involved.

5.4. The Administration of the Special Classes/Units

Classes/units for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap are, in general, attached to schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap, regardless of the location of the special class/unit. Whereas some schools may only have one special class/unit attached to them, there are some schools which have up to six special classes/units attached to them. Most will have two to three classes/units, and the coordination and administration involved in such situations is enormous, given that the principal teachers are also responsible for all other classes in the school. The development and expansion of educational provision for pupils with severe and profound handicap, therefore, gives rise to a debate about the structure of such provision.

The location in which the teacher is placed has significant implications for the teacher concerned, the principal teacher and the reporting procedures. There would appear to be at least seven possible options for placement of teachers in special classes/units.

1. Location in Special School Building

In this first option, the teachers, the special needs assistants and other care/nursing staff and the special class/unit are located in the main special school building. Reporting procedures between the teacher, other school staff and the principal are therefore similar to those for all other staff in the school. The advantages of such a location are that the teachers have much closer contact with and support from their colleagues and do not feel so isolated in their role. The special class automatically operates the same school year and school day as the rest of the main school and participates in all school activities.

The consequences of this option may mean that the Department of Health is not necessarily involved and therefore other care staff required by the pupils such as nurses may not always be available on a regular basis to administer
medication or to carry out other duties more appropriate to nursing staff. There are significant additional costs involved for the Department of Education in supplying the necessary resources in terms of equipment and personnel required in a classroom where there is no involvement from the Department of Health.

2. Location in a Day Development Centre Building (DDC)

Some special classes for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap are located in Day Development Centres, which may be on the same campus as the school or located a few miles away. Day Development Centres usually have a head of unit, established group leaders who may be RNMH Nurses, qualified child care assistants or Montessori qualified personnel, and a different clinical team to that of the school.

The head of unit often has responsibility to the same organisation to manage the unit, i.e. to the same patron body of the school. The principal has clear responsibility for the planning, implementation and review of the educational service and for the teachers' work. The principal also had clear responsibilities for and to the special needs assistants appointed under the auspices of the Department of Education. In such situations, teachers and other school staff may sometimes feel they have two 'bosses', both the principal and the head of unit. It is essential, therefore, that responsibilities and working relationships are as clearly defined as possible for the teachers and the special needs assistants concerned and that clear channels of communication are established and regularly reviewed.

3. Location in a Local Centre

Some classes/groups are located in a local centre i.e. a location physically separate from (up to 3/4 miles) but organisationally part of the Day Development Centre under the same patron body as the school. The children in the class/centre live locally. Two or three staff are allocated by the Day Development Centre and the school to the local centre and the room(s) may be part of a community centre or spare classrooms in a different school.

This model of service is often strongly supported by management and clinicians as it is perceived to be more community based—it is often referred to as 'integration'. The head of the Day Development Centre and members of the clinical teams visit regularly and liaise with staff. The principal also has a responsibility to visit and liaise with the teaching staff and special needs assistants in such centres. Location in outreach centres, therefore, may present difficulties for the teachers and school staff in terms of isolation and lack of
support from their colleagues and the principal.

4. Location in a Day Development Centre Under a Different Patron to the School

The special class/group may be located in a Day Development Centre which is managed by a separate organisation to that of the special school to which the teacher is attached. This proposal has been actively pursued by Department of Education Inspectors, for example in Dublin and in the West where it was proposed to locate teachers in a number of outreach centres under two different patrons. In both cases, the classes/groups would be additional to the classes/groups which are already within the school patron's organisation.

This scenario becomes even more complicated where there is no relationship whatsoever between the two patron organisations. For such an organisational arrangement to operate efficiently and effectively enormous demands are made on the principal, teacher, child care assistant/special needs assistant and Board of Management.

5. Location in a Local Centre Under the Management of a Separate Organisation

This option is similar to option 3, other than the fact that the local centre is operated by a different management body to the school.

6. Location in a Hospital/Residential Setting

In this case the special class would be located in a hospital or a residential setting which may be either under the same patronage as the special school or a separate organisation. This option would probably be uncommon but may be necessary for a certain minority of pupils whose medical condition is such that it would not be possible for them to travel out to centres or to schools on a regular basis or at all. This option may become more relevant as educational provision is extended to all pupils with severe and profound mental handicap. Alternatively, pupils who cannot attend schools or centres on a regular basis could be accommodated through the services of a visiting teacher who could provide a home tuition service.

7. Separate Schools

One could argue that in situations where there are more than one special class/unit for pupils with severe and profound handicap that it may be appropriate to establish a separate special school with its own administrative principal. There are many advantages to such a proposal in that the workload for principals may be more acceptable. However, there are also some disadvantages.
The advantages of establishing separate and independently managed schools for pupils with severe mental handicap would include the following:

(i) As the education process and procedures are substantially different to other special schools, the schools could be managed and organised specifically to meet the needs of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap.

(ii) The principal and the head of the unit would operate parallel to each other, the principal being responsible for the education programme and the head of unit for the care programme and the medical input.

(iii) Close working relations would be facilitated between all the staff of the school/unit.

(iv) There would be additional posts as principal teachers established.

The disadvantages of separate schools would include the following:

(i) Additional barriers between special education sectors could be created by placing teachers in schools for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap.

(ii) Teachers would not have the same opportunities for mobility as all classes in the school would be for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap.

(iii) Integration for different curricular areas may no longer be facilitated.

(iv) Teachers may no longer have access to the collegiate support of their colleagues in special schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap.

(v) Most schools would be small schools i.e. 2/3 teachers, and therefore, the principals would have teaching duties.

(vi) Teachers from the redeployment panels may be reluctant to accept positions in schools for pupils with severe and profound handicap particularly if they have had no experience in special education.

(vii) Parents may perceive these schools as being the least attractive educational option for their child.
Reports may be formulated to ensure inclusion for these pupils in schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap to meet parental wishes.

Having considered the above issues the INTO would favour the continuation of the current system whereby special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap are allocated to schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap, and particularly support their inclusion within the special school setting. In the case of schools which have a large number of special classes/units, consideration may need to be given to the rationalization of such schools.

Situations could arise where special schools other than schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap may be approached by the Department of Education with a view to establishing special classes for pupils with severe and profound handicap. If such a proposal were to be implemented, consideration would have to be given to the implications for the whole school as any member of staff could be deployed to work in the special class. There would also be implications for the functional integration of the pupils in the special classes into the school programme.

The INTO recommends that:

staffs in schools be consulted formally and the approval of members sought before a Board of Management decides whether or not to accept a class for pupils with severe and profound handicap in their school.

5.5. Summer Programmes

The Department of Education has already sanctioned the extension of the school year within this special education sector. The usual school year operates from the beginning of September to the end of June. The introduction of an all year round educational programme for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap has serious implications for the pupils, their teachers, and the principal teachers. Should a continuous educational programme be offered to pupils with severe and profound handicap, teachers would be required for work during the usual school holidays. If the regular class teachers were to provide this service, they would be entitled to take their holidays at a different time of the year. Alternatively, additional teachers would have to be employed to continue the educational programme throughout the holiday periods, causing difficulties concerning continuity and consistency of approaches, which may in turn lessen the benefits of extending
educational programmes. Alternatively, schools could be allocated additional teachers who would work as a team with groups of children, staggering their holidays throughout the year to enable the school to provide full educational programmes over a twelve month period.

The responsibility of the principal teacher would also be extended over the full twelve months if educational programmes were to continue throughout the year. Flexible organisation of the principal’s duties and responsibilities needs to be well planned and coordinated if principals are to be available to coordinate a summer educational programme.

The appropriateness of extending the educational programme for the children must also be addressed. Children are also entitled to and benefit from their holidays. Many children engage in summer programmes during their holidays. These programmes are usually of a leisure nature, where children engage in activities of interest to them, such as sport, art, music, languages or computers. Summer programmes of a similar nature could also be provided for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap. Such programmes would not necessitate the involvement of school staff. The children would benefit from the provision of an alternative programme, which would be a break from their normal routine, and which would also offer them new challenges. Such programmes might include children from a range of different schools. Parents would continue to be supported during the holiday periods through the provision of alternative programmes for their children.

There may also be a difficulty with confining the proposal to extend educational provision throughout the holiday periods to pupils with severe and profound handicap. There are many other children with special needs who could also claim an entitlement to an extension of educational provision, i.e. children with autism, children who are emotionally disturbed, or other children who have learning disabilities. The introduction of an extension to the normal school year for any group of children with special needs could have serious implications, therefore, for the organisation of all education provision, and would require extensive negotiation and agreement with the INTO and other relevant parties.

The INTO recommends that:

the real needs of the children with severe and profound mental handicap and of their families be taken into account in the planning and delivery of the various services which are provided for them.
5.6. The Inspectorate

The role of the inspectorate of the Department of Education in the education of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap appears to be in an advisory and advocacy capacity. The inspectorate will intercede on behalf of the school with the relevant agency for the provision of services that are required in the classes/units. They are invested with no authority to demand the services required and must rely on the cooperation of the health authorities to obtain them for the classes/units. Inspectors support the work of the school through carrying out general inspections of the work of the school, e.g. méarthairiscí, inspecting and guiding the work of teachers, i.e. preparation, teaching methods, assessment procedures and records, organising inservice courses for teaching staff, suggesting visits to other schools/centres, liaising with the Department of Education and seeking resources and funding for the school. The participation of the inspectorate in the recent induction/orientation programme is welcome and significant.

5.7. Boards of Management

The Board of Management of the school to which the special class/unit is attached is ultimately responsible for the special classes/units. The composition of the Board members may mean that no person on the Board may have direct experience of the special class/unit apart from the principal teacher. If the teachers' representative on the Board was to be one of the special class/unit teachers it might compromise their effective representation of the staff teaching the pupils with moderate handicap and vice versa. This would be especially true if the special class/unit was located on a separate campus to the mainstream school in that the teachers' access to their Board of Management representative would be greatly hindered. In order to ensure that there is some expertise on severe and profound mental handicap on the Board of Management, patron bodies could nominate one of their representatives from this sector, i.e. a person with a knowledge and understanding of the educational needs of children with severe and profound handicap but who is not an employee of the school.

The INTO recommends that:

*patron bodies ensure that one of their nominees to the Board of Management of a school which incorporates special classes/units have a knowledge and understanding of the educational needs of children with severe and profound handicap.*
5.8. Regional Education Boards

The White Paper on Education "Charting our Education Future" (1995)\(^4\) states that legislation will provide that Education Boards will have substantial coordination and support service functions. The INTO envisages that the regional Education Boards will assume responsibility for the following:

(i) co-ordination of school transport;
(ii) provision of escort services on school transport;
(iii) the school psychological service;
(iv) provision of remedial and resource teacher services;
(v) co-ordination of referral procedures;
(vi) planning for special education provision;
(vii) the development of education resource centres;
(viii) co-ordination of inservice provision.

The rationale for establishing education boards includes a need for greater awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of local and regional communities in order to improve the quality, equality, efficiency, relevance and flexibility of delivery of all educational services. Educational provision for pupils with severe and profound handicap can only be enhanced through an affective partnership between the Department of Education, the providers of education, parents and local community interests.
The INTO has welcomed the extension of educational provision to children with severe and profound handicap. This extension has provided new challenges for the teaching profession, many of which have been outlined in this report. Pupils with severe and profound mental handicap require "individual assessment in all areas of functioning and an individualised, structured, step-by-step programme of instruction with regular and detailed review, which is implemented by an interdisciplinary team including a teacher, care workers, therapists and nurses". The team approach, working with interdisciplinary teams, the individualised nature of educational programmes and the nature of each child’s special needs create new challenges for the teaching profession, particularly for those teachers who are appointed and deployed in the special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap.

Special classes for these pupils have been established, in the main, in schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap. Some classes have also been established in Day Development Centres or in Special Care Units which may be located on the same campus as the school or which may be located some distance away. In these cases, even though the special classes, or units as they are sometimes referred to, are administratively part of the school organisation, the teacher and special needs assistant who are members of the school staff also work as members of an interdisciplinary team with the staff of the Day Development Centre/Special Care Unit.

The curricular programme for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap is based on the various needs of the children. Opportunities for the development of basic self-help skills, living skills, gross and fine motor skills and sensory awareness are integral aspects of the teachers' programme. The pupils also develop their expressive skills through communication programmes, music, movement, drama and physical education. They also engage in leisure activities such as play, games, swimming and horse riding as appropriate. It is unfortunate that, to date, no opportunities have been given to the teachers in the special classes/units to share their expertise in the development of curriculum for these pupils. Since the establishment of the pilot projects in the 1980s, the teachers worked in isolation in developing their own programmes. Opportunities to exchange ideas and to develop an appropriate curriculum for pupils with severe and profound handicap are essential in order to assist the teachers in meeting the challenges presented by
The management authorities of schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap have responded to the Department of Education's decision to expand education provision for pupils with severe and profound handicap, through the establishment of special classes/units. The learning environment provided in these classes/units is not always suitable for facilitating the holistic development of the pupils as many existing premises require adaptation. The learning needs of the pupils are so varied that the learning environments must be flexible and spacious enough to cater for the different types of programmes being offered. Additional funding is required to ensure that all learning environments provide appropriate areas for toileting and feeding programmes, play, drama and physical activities, suitable furniture for board and computer activities and facilities for enabling mobility within the school. It is not clear whether it is the Department of Health or the Department of Education which is responsible for providing specialised furniture and equipment which is required by the pupils. It is unacceptable to the INTO, however, that pupils are not provided with the facilities and equipment required for their education.

Due to the variety of special care, medical, therapeutic and educational needs of pupils with severe and profound handicap, an interdisciplinary team approach to their education is required. In addition to a teacher and a special needs assistant, it is usual that the pupils have access to physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers and nurses as required. The dynamics involved in working in such situations are new to many teachers. The organisation of an induction/orientation programme for the teachers during the school year 1995/96, was welcomed and gave the teachers an opportunity to explore the challenges presented by their new responsibilities. The orientation/induction programme is only a start, and a commitment is required from the Department of Education that continuous opportunities for inservice will be provided for the teachers concerned. At present, mainly due to a lack of resources, the Diploma in Special Education in St. Patrick's College of Education does not cater for the needs of the teachers of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap. The INTO has constantly argued that additional specialisation modules should be provided on a variety of categories of disabilities to enable teachers in special schools to cater for the needs of children with secondary or multiple disabilities, including in particular, children with severe and profound handicaps.

Both the Department of Education and the Department of Health have a role in the administration of educational services to pupils with severe and
profound handicap. As both Departments have their own infrastructure for administrative purposes, there is no provision made for the coordination of services. Cooperation and coordination is therefore, dependent on local initiatives between the principal and/or inspector and the health authorities. The INTO expects that, with the establishment of the Regional Education Boards, the planning and delivery of special educational provision will be coordinated more effectively.

The additional responsibilities of the principal teacher in a school with special classes/units must be acknowledged. These responsibilities increase according to the location of the classes/units, i.e. whether on the school building, on the school campus or in a separate location. If educational programmes for pupils with severe and profound handicap were to be extended to include holiday periods, as recommended by the High Court in Paul O'Donoghue's case, there would be further implications for the class teachers concerned and for educational provision as a whole. It is the view of the INTO that both staff and pupils are entitled to holiday periods and that consideration should be given to offering alternative programmes of a more leisure orientated nature during holiday periods. Such programmes need not necessitate the involvement of school staff.

Parents are central to the education of their children, and children with severe and profound handicap are no exception. Their involvement in the assessment, placement and review procedures is important in order to support the social, emotional, personal and cognitive development of their children. The involvement of teachers in these procedures is also vital as they are best placed to assess the impact that will ensue from the placement of a particular child in his/her class. A close working relationship between the teacher and the psychologist enables the child to achieve his/her potential in assessments and allows the teacher to use the process and the results of the assessment for diagnostic purposes.

Given the resources and support, teachers will respond to the challenges presented by children with severe and profound handicap. The teacher has an in-depth knowledge of the educational philosophy regarding special needs and is the main person responsible for the delivery of the educational programme in the special class/unit. This responsibility involves the coordination of the work of other disciplines who are part of the team, the integration of the different aspects of the curriculum and the development of individualised educational programmes for the pupils. Resources, in terms of materials, equipment and personnel are essential requisites in order to fulfil these responsibilities successfully. In addition, the teachers in the special
classes/units require and deserve an orientation programme on the education of pupils with severe and profound handicap, on their first appointment. Continuous incareer development opportunities are also required to enhance the professional development of the teachers concerned. These needs may be addressed through the development of diploma courses which would include modules specialising in the education of pupils with severe and profound handicap.

The INTO fully supports the establishment of special classes/units, in special schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap. The implications of establishing such classes must be discussed with the teaching staff so that difficulties which may arise can be resolved. In order to address a number of issues concerning assessment and referral procedures, the learning environment, staffing requirements, curriculum, incareer development, and the administration and funding of the service the INTO demands that the following recommendations be implemented without delay.

The INTO recommends that:

**Initial Assessment**

1. principals and class teachers be directly involved in the referral procedure of children with severe and profound handicap to special classes/units;

2. teachers be consulted during the initial and subsequent assessment processes of such pupils in order to ensure appropriate placement;

3. results of all tests and copies of reports be readily available to and discussed with the class teachers and principal teachers concerned;

4. parents be consulted at all stages of the assessment and referral procedures;

5. all referral agencies be familiar with all services available and recommendations for placement be made along a continuum in order to cater for the differing abilities of pupils;

6. familiar personnel, including teachers and parents, share in the assessment process and assist in implementing the test items with the child in order to maximise the accuracy of his/her score;

7. a continuum of formal links between various educational settings including preschools, Day Development Centres (DDC), special schools, and mainstream schools be encouraged, resourced and facilitated.
Continuous Assessment
8. teachers be involved in continuous assessment of their pupils, and consulted in all cases of the referral of pupils into and out of special classes/units;

9. parents/guardians be invited to be involved in discussions and case conferences concerning the review of the placement of children with severe and profound mental handicap;

10. continuous assessment which is applied at classroom level be the basis for any further testing by professionals and records and samples of work be carefully maintained and regularly referred to when making recommendations concerning placement options;

11. equipment such as audio visual aids necessary for continuous assessment of pupils be provided to all teachers by the Department of Education.

Parental Involvement
12. each school or centre establish an effective communication structure between the school/centre and the home;

13. home-school liaison teachers be appointed in all schools which have special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap;

14. outreach educational programmes be provided for children who are unable to attend special schools/centres on a regular basis;

15. inservice training be available to teachers to enable them develop non directive counselling skills.

Learning Environment
16. all schools, Day Development Centres and Special Care Units which have special classes/units be made wheelchair accessible as a matter of form;

17. appropriate designated rooms/space be provided for all teachers of pupils with severe and profound mental handicap;

18. easily accessible, appropriate rooms with adequate space be designated for toileting, self-care, relaxation and group activities;

19. all schools/centres be facilitated to integrate pupils with severe and profound handicap into main school activities.
Furniture
20. training be offered to all teachers and special needs assistants in the use of specialised furniture and in lifting techniques in order to protect them against unnecessary injury;

21. adjustable seating and supports be provided for all pupils according to their needs;

22. washing facilities be provided in or adjacent to all classes/units, with sinks at correct heights for both pupils and staff to aid ease of access and to avoid back strain;

23. a variety of toileting facilities be provided adjacent to the learning environment to enable all children to participate in appropriate toileting programmes;

24. a variety of suitable floor coverings be provided appropriate to the type of activity being performed in each particular area; and

25. adequate, suitable and accessible storage space be provided in all classes/units.

Equipment
26. substantial initial set up grants be made available by the Department of Education to the special class/units for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap for the purchase of essential equipment;

27. grants be paid by the Department of Education on an agreed periodic basis for the replacement and the repair of equipment in such units;

28. easily assessable facilities for the immediate repair or replacement of basic essentials such as wheelchair parts and other equipment be introduced immediately at no cost to the individual pupil or school.

Transport
29. substantial additional resources be made available by the Department of Education to fund escort provision on special school transport;

30. funding be made available by the Department of Education to transport authorities for the provision of hoists, harnesses, wheelchair clamps and other necessary equipment on transport facilities which are used in transporting pupils with physical disabilities;
31. transport systems operating to schools and Day Development Centres be sufficiently flexible to allow for the use of vehicles and escort personnel in connection

Curriculum Development and Educational Programmes

32. the Special Education Review Committee Report (1993) recommendation for the establishment of a curriculum development project which would include the involvement of practising teachers be implemented immediately;

33. structures be established to encourage ongoing interaction between teachers working with pupils with severe and profound handicap in special classes/units to facilitate sharing of curriculum initiatives and development;

34. curricular programmes, whether initiated in Ireland or adapted from abroad, reflect indigenous Irish culture.

The Teaching Profession

35. the Department of Education establish a system of allocating posts of responsibility in special schools to enable principal teachers to delegate responsibilities to teachers in the special classes/units;

36. all special schools with special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap, be provided with adequate secretarial and caretaking assistance as a matter of course;

37. where special classes/units are located on a different campus to the main school, principal teachers are allocated an annual expense allowance to facilitate their travel to the class/units to support the staff teaching in the class/units;

38. administrative principals be appointed as a matter of course in all special schools with special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap;

39. consideration also be given to the appointment of non teaching vice-principals in larger special schools;

40. supply panels of substitute teachers be established for special schools.

The Role of the Teacher

41. the special class teacher endeavours to encourage exchange of ideas and expertise and to share specialised equipment and resources as required with the school;
42. other staff members be encouraged to visit the special class/unit to enrich their own experience;

43. teachers within their team have professional discretion and responsibility for planning, implementation and review of the educational programme;

44. teachers not be compelled to engage in care programmes such as toileting, washing and feeding and that any involvement be solely on a voluntary basis or as part of their own curricular programmes;

45. medical needs continue to be the responsibility of the nursing staff and that medication, not generally be administered by teachers (see page 118 of INTO members' Handbook 1995);

46. the teacher be considered an accepted member of staff in the DDC with the option of attending staff meetings both in the DDC and in the school;

47. the teacher receive professional direction and support from his/her school principal.

**Teacher Appointment and Deployment**

48. staffs in schools be consulted formally and the approval of members sought before a Board of Management decides whether or not to accept a class for pupils with severe and profound handicap in their school;

49. all schools have a deployment policy which facilitates the movement of all teachers between the various classes for pupils with mental handicap;

50. all advertisements for posts in schools with special classes/units be for teachers of pupils with moderate/severe/profound handicap.

**Preservice Provision**

51. all teachers become acquainted with the methodology, theory and practice of teaching children with mental handicap, including severe and profound mental handicap, during their preservice training;

52. student teachers with an interest in special education be facilitated in organising teaching practice in special schools;

53. the specialist aspect of special education be recognised and acknowledged and the sector be seen as providing an enhanced educational services for its pupils.
**Orientation Programme**

54. suitable orientation programmes be organised annually for all new teachers of pupils with severe and profound handicap;

55. orientation programmes also be offered to Principal Teachers when special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap are first established in the school.

**Incareer Development**

56. a greater number of additional qualifications in the areas of educational theory and management be recognised for allowances;

57. the current Diploma course in Special Education be expanded to include core modules of relevance to all disciplines and specialist modules to cater for the different sectors within special education;

58. teachers also be facilitated in attending courses with other members of the multi-disciplinary team.

**Home-School-Community Liaison**

59. the Department of Education establish home-school-community liaison schemes and/or a local visiting teachers’ service for special schools and for children with severe and profound mental handicap;

60. the appointment of home-school-community liaison teachers be sanctioned in all special schools with special classes/units attached to them.

**Special Needs Assistants**

61. the Department of Education extend the present special needs assistant allocation for schools with moderately mentally handicapped which include special classes/units, in line with the recommendations in the Report of the Special Education Review Committee Report (1993);

62. the Department of Education develop a proper career structure for special needs assistants to include access to incareer development courses;

63. appropriate training and qualifications be available to personnel who wish to work as Special Needs Assistants, and become a prerequisite to appointment.

**Professional Support**

64. the Department of Health retain the responsibility for organising and ensuring access to all ancillary services required by children with severe and
profound handicap such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy, regardless of where the child is located;

65. the Department of Health allocate nursing staff to all special schools and classes where pupils require regular medical assistance.

Coordination of Services
66. the Department of Health retain the responsibility for organising and ensuring access to all ancillary services required by children with severe and profound handicap such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech and language therapy, regardless of where the child is located;

67. the Regional Education Boards, when established, allocate substantial funds for the provision of special needs education and assume responsibility for the coordination of services for pupils with special needs at regional level;

68. a coherent policy on funding which clarifies the responsibility of each Department in terms of providing resources for the educational requirements of pupils with severe and profound handicap be agreed and put in place in order to ensure the most efficient service possible for these children.

Reporting Procedures
69. reporting and liaison procedures between the principal and staff and between the principal and the head of unit reflect the structure of the school and the special classes/units;

70. teachers teaching in isolated centres away from the main school campus be compensated for the inconvenience involved.

Summer Courses
71. the real needs of the children with severe and profound mental handicap and of their families be taken into account in the planning and delivery of the various services which are provided for them.

Boards of Management
72. patron bodies ensure that one of their nominees to the Board of Management of a school which incorporates special classes/units have a knowledge and understanding of the educational needs of children with severe and profound handicap.
Appendix I

Location of the original 20 special classes/units
for Pupils with Severe/Profound Handicap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>Holy Family Special School, Cootehill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>St. Paul's Special School, Montenotte St. Michael's Special School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montenotte St. Michael's Special School, Grosvenor Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Michael's Special School, Palmerstown St. Vincent's Special School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Navan Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>St. Michael's Special School, Raheny St. Michael's Special School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grosvenor Road St. Michael's Special School, Palmerstown St. Vincent's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special School, Navan Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>St. Joseph’s Special School, Snipe Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>St. Mary’s of The Angels, Beaufort, Killarney St. Michael’s Special</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School, Kilkenny</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>St. Patrick’s Special School, Kilkenny</td>
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<td>Limerick</td>
<td>St. Vincent’s Special School, Lisnagry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>St. Christopher's Special School, Longford</td>
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<td>Mayo</td>
<td>Scoil Naomh Brid, Castlebar St. Nicholas' Special School, Ballina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>St. Mary's Special School, Athlumney, Navan St. Michael’s Special School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>St. Cecilia’s Special School, Cregg House</td>
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<td>Tipperary</td>
<td>St. Anne’s Special School, Roscrea</td>
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<td>Waterford</td>
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<td>St. Mary's Special School, Delvin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>St. Catherine’s Special School, Newcastle</td>
</tr>
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</table>
In 1991, the Special Education Review Committee was established by the then Minister for Education, Mary O’Rourke T.D. The terms of reference for the Special Education Review Committee were as follows:

"To report and make recommendations on the educational provision for children with special needs in respect of;

(a) The identification of children with special needs and their assessment, with a view to determining the educational provision best suited to the needs of each child.

(b) The arrangements which should be put in place in order to provide for the educational requirements of such children, through complete or partial integration in ordinary schools, through special classes in ordinary schools or through special schools or other special arrangements, in accordance with the circumstances, as assessed, of each child.

(c) The range of support services which may be required, and in particular, the future relationship between remedial teachers, visiting teachers, other support teachers and ordinary class teachers.

(d) The linkages which should exist with other Departments of State and services provided under their Aegis".

This committee had its inaugural meeting in September 1991 and held a further 32 meetings before publishing its report in November 1993.
### Allocation of Additional Special Classes for Pupils with Severe/Profound Handicaps during the School Year 1994/95

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Roll No.</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>No. of Exist. Posts</th>
<th>No. of Add. Posts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
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<td>Holy Family Special School Cootehill</td>
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<td>St. Clare's Special School Ennis</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>18763</td>
<td>St. Michael's House Ballymun</td>
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<td>St. Michael's House Raheny</td>
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<td>Kerry</td>
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<td>County</td>
<td>Post Number</td>
<td>School Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>No. of Posts</td>
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<td>Kilkenny</td>
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<td>Athlumley, Navan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tipperary</td>
<td>19615</td>
<td>Scoil Aonghusa, Cashel</td>
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<td>Enniscorthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>19522</td>
<td>St. Catherine's Special School</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Two posts also existed in Lota, Glanmire up to the school year 1994/1995, and were withdrawn in September 1995.
Introduction

Fifty questionnaires were distributed in Spring 1995 to schools which had classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap attached to them. Many of the classes/units were established since September 1994 following the decision by the Department of Education to expand the provision of education service to pupils with severe and profound handicap. A total of 33 questionnaires were returned.

Experience of the Teachers

Almost half of the teachers had less than six months experience in teaching children with severe and profound handicap.

No. of Teachers

23 teachers (70%) were appointed specifically to teach pupils with severe and profound handicap and 10 (30%) were not.

Prior to being deployed to teach in special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap, 19 (58%) of the teachers had been teaching in special
schools and 14 teachers (42%) had been teaching in mainstream education.

Location of Special Classes/Units
Sixteen of the special classes/units (48%), were located in schools for pupils with moderate mental handicap, twelve (38%) were located in day care centres and five (14%) in residential centres.

Of the seventeen special classes/units which are not located in schools, nine are on the same campus, three are within walking distance and the remainder are more than a mile away from the main school. This, of course, creates difficulty for principals who have the overall responsibility for the provision of the educational service within these classes/units, contributes significantly to the isolation of the teacher and inhibits the integration of the pupils into main school activities.

The Classes/Units
Special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap vary in size from 3 pupils to 15 pupils per teacher. The Report of the Special Education Review Committee recommended a pupil teacher ratio of 6:1. It is quite clear, therefore that the recommended PTR is not yet being implemented in all cases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Pupils</th>
<th>No. of Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Twenty five of the teachers (76%) had their own classrooms.
Support Services

One teacher had 10 staff members working with her while 12 teachers either had none or did not reply to the question. The remaining teachers had between 1 staff member and six staff members assisting them in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Staff working with Teachers</th>
<th>No. of Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

About half of the support staff working with teachers in the classrooms were funded by statutory authorities other than the Department of Education. The vast majority of the remainder are social employment employees who are usually transient and untrained creating additional responsibilities for the teachers and principals. The total number of support staff was 58.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Education funded</th>
<th>6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other statutory funded</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Employment scheme</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (including B.O.M.)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Curriculum and Programme

Five teachers (15%) were given job descriptions as distinct from other teachers in the main school. In many cases, existing class teachers assisted the newly appointed teachers in describing their role to them and in offering them guidelines. Other teachers stated that they had been given 'instruction' by the nursing staff. A number of teachers expressed frustration at the lack of
distinction between the educational and caring roles. Some other professional staff such as psychologists and speech and language therapists offered guidelines and assistance to newly appointed teachers. Twenty teachers (61%) had been given guidelines about programmes and fifteen teachers (45%) stated that they had a written curriculum.

The issues of toileting and feeding are complex. Twelve teachers reported being involved in toileting on a systematic basis; 11 teachers engage in toileting in emergencies only and ten teachers are involved in toileting as part of their curricular programme. In the case of feeding, 15 teachers are involved in feeding on a systematic basis, and eleven teachers are not involved in feeding programmes at all, and eight teachers include feeding programmes in the curriculum programmes.

**Relations with Colleagues**

All teachers stated that they had the same teaching times and holidays as their teaching colleagues but that the units often worked additional hours and days throughout the year.

The majority of teachers had daily contact with their teaching colleagues, three had weekly contact and four had contact less often. Isolation may, therefore, be a problem for these teachers.

It is important for the pupils in the special classes/units to meet with the same staff on a regular basis. Therefore, it is positive to note that twenty nine (88%) of the teachers had the same permanent staff working with them each day. The majority of teachers (73%:24 teachers) also had access to regular contact with the parents of their pupils. Those who didn’t, stated that care staff were generally in a position to have more regular contact with parents; a situation which may possibly lead to the exclusion of teachers. As outlined in Chapter 4, and induction/orientation programme has since been offered to the teachers.

**Induction/Inservice**

Given that a number of teachers had no experience of special education prior to taking up their positions in the special classes/units for pupils with severe and profound handicap, it is regrettable that only 8 teachers (24%) received any induction or inservice education in relation to their work. Those who did receive induction felt it was mainly medically orientated, and while this was welcome in itself there was no educational input or guidelines given on
working as part of a multi-disciplinary team. This form of induction was considered insufficient by the teachers.

Additional Resources

Teachers were asked to give their views on the additional resources required by them in order to carry out their duties and responsibilities fully. Additional funding for equipment and more specialised equipment was requested by 12 teachers. Inservice education was also given a high priority by 12 teachers. The responses are a reflection of the variety of settings in which the teachers operated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialised Equipment/Funding for Equipment</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inservice Education</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Childcare/Special Needs Assistants</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Classroom</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to visit other units/exchange ideas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to other professionals</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More space</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional nursing staff</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialised furniture</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum guidelines</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

Childcare/Special Needs Assistants

All teachers but one welcomed the decision of the Department of Education to fund the provision of childcare/special needs assistants. In their comments the teachers stated that training for childcare/special needs assistants would also be welcome. They also expressed frustration with the irregularity and inconsistency surrounding the employment of personnel through Social Employment schemes.

Conclusion

In general, the teachers welcomed the decision of the Department of Education to extend educational provision to pupils with severe and profound handicap. However, many teachers stated that there were a number of issues which had to be resolved as part of the process. Inservice education, on taking
up teaching positions with pupils with severe and profound handicap, is considered essential. The teachers also expressed concern at the lack of guidelines in the area of curriculum and require further clarification concerning their own role as members of a multi-disciplinary team. Such issues could be addressed during inservice.

Teachers found the nursing staff very helpful during the initial stages, but felt that it was inappropriate that their initial orientation was carried out by the nursing staff on an ad-hoc basis rather than through properly structured orientation programmes. Teachers would also have welcomed opportunities to visit other similar centres with a view to sharing ideas and experiences.

Teachers also experienced some difficulty in carrying out their role as educators when they had no classroom space which they could call their own, where they could engage in educational activities with the children. Understanding the roles of the various team members and establishing relationships with other professionals involved with the children, including the head of the unit, also created some difficulties for teachers in the critical stages.

Teachers who worked in units which were separate to the main schools for pupils with moderate handicap felt isolated from their teaching colleagues, and felt they had two bosses, i.e. the principal teacher and the head of the unit. It also appears that there were some feelings of resentment amongst staff who had previously worked with the children and who found it difficult to adapt to the introduction of the teacher. Different working conditions relating to hours and length of school year also created some tensions.

Whereas, in general, the teachers welcomed the extension of educational provision for pupils with severe and profound mental handicap most were critical of the lack of thought and planning that went into the decision to extend the educational service and in preparing the environment. To conclude on a positive note, it was also stated that teaching in the special classes can be a very rewarding and satisfying job.
Appendix 5

New Provisions Governing Northern Ireland and European Teachers

Department of Education Press Release 10 November 1995

The White Paper "Charting our Education Future" stated that the "improved mobility of teachers within the Island of Ireland has a potentially significant contribution to make to promoting enhanced mutual understanding among the traditions on the Island". In line with the undertaking in the White Paper, the Minister for Education, Ms. Niamh Bhreathnach TD, today announced new provisions governing the employment in primary schools of teachers trained in Northern Ireland and the Member states of the European Union.

In future, teachers trained for the primary school system in Northern Ireland and the European Union and who have secured the appropriate recognised teaching qualifications may teach in the Irish primary school system, at full salary, for a two year period pending their successful completion of the Scruiddí Cailúchta sa Ghaeilge. Full recognition as primary teacher will only be granted when the Scruiddí Cailúchta sa Ghaeilge is obtained. This is a considerable advance on the previous situation where primary school teachers who receive their training and qualifications in Northern Ireland or in other EU member states could be employed in Irish primary schools but were classified and paid as untrained substitutes.

In accordance with the EU directive regarding the mutual recognition of qualifications, teachers will have to satisfy the Department of Education that they are recognised by a member State to teach in the primary sector. They will also have to make a firm commitment to the successful completion of the Scruiddí Cailúchta sa Ghaeilge within a two year period. If they do not complete the Scruiddí Cailúchta sa Ghaeilge within two years, their temporary recognition as qualified primary teachers will cease until such time as they successfully complete the Scruiddí Cailúchta sa Ghaeilge. The Minister stated that the requirement to successfully complete the Scruiddí Cailúchta was not intended as a barrier to teacher mobility but rather it reflected the Constitutional position of Irish as the first official language and the integrated nature of the primary school curriculum.

The Minister also announced that the Department of Education will nominate an agency to work in coordination with educational institutions north and south with a view to providing courses in Irish for Northern Ireland and EU
teachers. The aim of these courses will be to enable teachers to prepare for the Scrúdú Cálíochta sa Ghaeilge.

Finally, the Minister will set up a Working Party to examine the standards in Irish set in the Scrúdú Cálíochta sa Ghaeilge and to ensure that they are in line with the standards obtaining in Irish in the Colleges of Education.

The Minister stated that her Department would be publishing the full details of these arrangements shortly.

At the time of publication, further details have not yet been announced.
St Patrick's College, Drumcondra – Part I
Education of pupils with severe/profound mental handicap in context

Clarification of ways of working in existing classes

Why educate? Rights and responsibilities. Aims of education

Feedback on aims exercise

Early development: cognitive, communicative and social
Early development: Relevance to curriculum and pedagogy

Interaction

Observation/Assessment/Recording

Impact of sensory and motor impairment on development
Interaction of impairments

Alternative therapies

Working with other professionals

Display of Codicrafts material and other resources

Resources/Planning for curriculum delivery

Allocation of Tasks for Part 2

Planning individual programme
Part II
Curriculum and pedagogy issues raised by Part I of Course

- An opportunity to mention particular issues which have arisen as a result of trying to carry out the interim tasks/put aspects of the course into practice

- Report back on process of individual assessment and programme planning

- Moving on – Incorporating individual goals into general class activities.

Feedback on observation task – 10 daily observations of one pupil

Getting the most out of using detailed observations in assessment

Resources – sharing ideas

Using observation to enhance teaching – Feedback on paired observations
The following is a guideline list of some topics which would be useful to have covered in an induction course. It should not be regarded as a comprehensive list.

a. What these children can achieve through educational input. Basic reasons for educating this group of children, their rights and needs. The idea of Education versus Care.

b. Disabilities falling within the severe and profound range of mental handicap. Limitations and realistic expectations.

c. Working as part of a multi-disciplinary team. How to co-operate and cope with tension within the team. What a teacher can expect from other disciplines, for example, physiotherapy, occupational therapy etc. When to ask for help and who to involve.

d. Sensorial Education. Compensatory sensorial experiences for those children who cannot acquire the experiences independently. Sensory integration and sensory diet.

e. Curriculum guidelines. Individualised programmes. Age appropriate curricula. Ideas on developing such curricula.

f. Communication. Where to start with the child who shows no inclination to communicate and who appears to have no communication skills. Non verbal methods of communication. Challenging the child communicate, how to structure situations to demand the practice of communication skills. Developing receptive language, raising aural awareness.

g. Administration of classroom programmes and record keeping.

h. Parental counselling, including involvement of parents in their children's goals and programmes. Realistic expectations. Involving siblings.

i. Integration. What possibilities exist for integrating these children. Linkage programmes within the mainstream moderate school. Special class units as a resource.
j. Motivation. How to keep up morale when progress seems very minute. How to motivate staff and children.

k. Medical aspects of handicap. Special health needs for severe and profoundly mentally handicapped pupils.

Possible Workshop Topics

The following are some suggestions for possible workshop sessions but it should not be regarded as a comprehensive list.

1. Lifting techniques, use of hoists. Aids for physical therapy, for example, standing boxes, specialised support chairs, prone boards, walking aids, etc.


3. Relaxation and massage therapy. Therapeutic touch, body massage, metamorphic technique.

4. Using and modifying the principles of conductive education with children who have severe and profound learning difficulties.

5. Incorporating the principles of music therapy and the Kodaly system to make a stimulating programme to encourage vocalisation in the child.

6. Play therapy and the child with severe and profound learning difficulties.

7. Microelectronics workshop, computers, switches, available software communication aids etc.


9. Adaptive art and craft techniques for children with physical impairment. Use of art and craft to promote socialisation and communication.

10. Dealing with grief. Bereavement counselling. Coming to terms with the possibility that a pupil might die and how to deal with that shock should it arise.

Emir Duffy
Helen Guinan
Yvonne O’Malley
Appendix 8  
Special Education Provision in Northern Ireland

Special education provision in Northern Ireland is governed by the Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 185 (SR1985 No. 365) and Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (SI 1986 No. 594 (NI 3), and subsequent amendments which came into effect in 1986. Prior to that children with mental handicap were educated in Northern Ireland by the Health and Social Services.

Pupils in Northern Ireland are no longer classified according to specified categories of handicap. Instead the concept has been introduced of making "special educational provision" to meet "special educational needs" of individual pupils.

Children with severe learning difficulties are assessed when the education and library board becomes aware of them. The referrals are usually made by the clinical medical officers (school doctors) or health visitors and the assessment takes the form of a formal assessment of their special educational needs which includes a psychological assessment, a medical examination, educational advice, advice from the parents and reports from any other professionals who might be involved with the child including speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and social or nursing services as appropriate. The board has a responsibility to assess children with special educational needs from 2 years upwards and can assess children with special educational needs below the age of 2 years with parental approval. In effect, some parents prefer to delay assessment to some extent in the hope that children might make some level of improvement before they attain compulsory school age.

Parents have a right to be consulted and to be fully involved in the formal procedures of assessment at various stages. However, while the law requires that their views are taken into account, it does not give them the right to insist that any particular provision must be made for their children. The duty to determine the appropriate special educational provision that should be made for a child and to arrange for that provision to be made is placed firmly on the Education and Library Board.

Not all children with special educational needs can have their needs met within the ordinary school’s resources. In the case of children who are statemented in order to determine how the special educational needs should be met, their parents are entitled to see the proposed statement and to make
representations to the Educational and Library Board. A statement would specify the special educational provision required based on an assessment of the child's needs. Statements should also be reviewed annually, though reassessments could be carried out anytime.

Children with special educational needs may be catered for in ordinary schools with additional resources, in special classes/units or in special schools. The Education and Library Boards provide education for children with severe learning difficulties between the ages of 3 and 19 years.

There used to be a specialised training course for teachers of children with severe learning difficulties which was based at Muchamore Abbey, Antrim. Some of the teachers in the schools for children with severe learning difficulties were trained on this course or on the specialised course which replaced it at the Ulster Polytechnic in Jordanstown. However, there is no longer a specialised course for students intending to teach children with severe learning difficulties, or indeed, any other special educational need. In initial teacher training students may undertake some modules in special educational needs but there is no longer a complete, specialised course.

Teachers who are recruited to schools for children with severe learning difficulties are now usually teachers from a mainstream school background and training who have had experience with children with special educational needs in mainstream schools and perhaps have worked in remedial departments in those schools. Some teachers would have a DASE in special educational needs.

Schools for children with severe learning difficulties are staffed on a ratio of 1:8, however, class sizes are usually somewhat larger than this because teaching time is used for specialised subjects, special programmes, special units, computers, withdrawal groups, home liaison, etc.

The Department of Education through the Education and Library Boards is responsible for the provision of education to the children. All of the special schools for children with severe learning difficulties are controlled schools and are provided by the Education and Library Boards.

There are multi-disciplinary teams within schools for children with severe learning difficulties which are comprised of not only the teachers and classroom assistants, but also occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and social workers, nurses, etc. The local health and social services trust provides the paramedic, nursing and social services staffing to these schools.
References

Introduction

2. The INTO, although acknowledging the current debate on the use of terminology i.e. the term handicap versus disability, has decided to use the term “pupils with severe and profound mental handicap” throughout the report as has been used in the report of the Special Education Review Committee (1993).


Chapter 1

2. Ibid. Section 1.2.9. p. 35.


Chapter 2

2. Ibid., par. 7.12.

Chapter 3
1. Ibid., par 5.9.
Chapter 4


4. The panel regulations provide a system whereby an assistant teacher in a school, whose post is being suppressed due to declining enrolment numbers on September 30th of the previous year, may be redeployed. This teacher may be transferred to a post in another school and continuity of service maintained. The regulations resulted from an agreement in 1937 between the Catholic Bishops and the INTO. This agreement was incorporated in the Rules for National Schools subsequently and extended to cover teachers in schools under Protestant management. Teachers with confined recognition i.e. teachers who do not hold the Irish qualification, and who have been teaching in the system prior to 1992, and Montessori qualified teachers may be deployed through the Special National Panel. The panel regulations are outlined in the INTO Members' Handbook (1995).


6. Ibid., par. 7.13 (i).

7. In 1988, a survey was carried out by Ms. Terry Callaly who was then working in St. Michael’s House Special School, Ballymun, in which a questionnaire was sent out to twenty special class/units. Out of a total of nineteen replies, ten teachers found their inservice/induction programme insufficient and two teachers had not been appointed at the time the course took place. This survey was conducted little over a year after the induction course had taken place and there had already been a turnover of 10% of teachers working with these children.

9. Ibid., par. 7.9.


13. Special Interest Group of Speech Therapists in Mental Handicap (1989) "Communication Needs".


Chapter 5


3. Ibid.

Chapter 6