LEABHARLANN CHOLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH | TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY DUBLIN
Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin

Copyright statement

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

Liability statement

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

Access Agreement

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

Dyslexia in Primary School: An evaluation of the effectiveness of three models of special provision for pupils who have been assessed as having dyslexia

by:

Thérèse McPhillips

TRINITY COLLEGE
05 JUL 2007
LIBRARY DUBLIN
THESIS
8090

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to:
The Department of Education, Trinity College, Dublin October 2006

DECLARATION

This thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university. The study documented herein is entirely my own work.

I agree that the Library may lend or copy the thesis upon request, with the consent of the Librarian. This permission covers only single copies made for study purposes, subject to normal conditions of acknowledgement.

Signed: _____ Date: 1st March 2007

SUMMARY

A number of recent initiatives in Ireland have begun to develop services for pupils who experience learning difficulties. However, reservations and uncertainty continue to surround the topic of dyslexia. Teachers are often unsure how to support the student with dyslexia in the classroom. Parents of children who have been assessed as having dyslexia will make every effort to be an advocate for the child in order to gain extra support. This extra support may take place in the child's mainstream school from the learning support or resource teacher, or in a special setting such as enrolment in a reading unit or in a reading school.

This study sets out to examine and evaluate special provision for pupils with dyslexia in these three different settings. The study asks how effective is the special education support to the student with difficulties arising from dyslexia. The research focuses on the teaching and learning context for pupils with dyslexia, the support teacher, the mainstream teacher, and the experience of the student, which is always central. The main participants in the study were teachers and tutors supporting pupils with dyslexia, and the parents of these children. The survey methods employed included questionnaires, focus group discussions, interviews and quantitative data on pupils' reading attainment. Six case-study schools were also examined.

In the context of the current trend towards more inclusive provision of support for pupils with learning difficulties, the present study questions if this is the most effective use of resources. The study identifies organizational factors and also systemic factors which affect the provision of extra support in each of the different settings. The case-study schools provide an insight into how schools are reorganizing the provision of special support to all pupils. Pupils in reading units, however, were outside this re-organization. The existence of a reading unit in a school may not mean more whole-school support for dyslexia.

A distinctly medical–categorical model of disability is evident among the participants in this study. Support for the dyslexic learner continues to be provided in a separate and parallel system of special support .The present identification and assessment process relies on an exclusionary and discrepancy-based diagnosis of dyslexia. The concept of a 'discrepancy' between intelligence and reading attainment in identifying dyslexia is found to be a barrier in developing the competence of teachers in identifying dyslexia. The instruction methods and approaches used by teachers and their view of the effectiveness of each method points towards an imbalance in the current practice of literacy teaching.

Teachers' understanding of dyslexia has a direct influence on the teaching approaches and methods used. Throughout the study the central issue of literacy teaching, and reading instruction is examined in each of the different teaching settings. The main methods employed focus on reading accuracy and fluency. All of the teachers supporting the child with dyslexia have a dominant

emphasis on teaching phonic skills. The skills of word knowledge, fluency, comprehension and writing do not receive equal balance. Teachers do not prioritise writing skills as an integral part of the teaching approaches used. Research has concluded that effective literacy instruction is a balance between high quality reading and writing experiences and explicit instruction in basic literacy skills (Pressley et al., 1996). The study includes the views of tutors who provide tuition in weekly workshops organised by the Dyslexia Association of Ireland. These findings point to a similarity in the teaching methods and literacy skills taught.

The study shows that there are positive factors associated with placement in a special setting and evidence that these factors are also associated with progress in reading. The views of both the parents and the pupils are clearly in favour of the special placement. There is evidence that academic and social benefits of the special setting persist into second level. Inadequate links between special and mainstream schools are frequently identified. The point of transition between special and mainstream creates particular difficulty for pupils and parents.

The study concludes that transferring the successful elements to mainstream would require radical changes in the system. The role of the learning support/resource teacher as it is presently organized is not capable of providing appropriate and adequate support for children with dyslexia. There are issues such as the duration and length of instruction time and constraints around ongoing collaboration which need to be urgently addressed. However a more insuperable barrier appeared to be the dominant 'school code', or perspective on disability and inclusion (Emmanuelson, 2003). Recent changes in policy (DES, SPED 24/03) have meant that this support role needs to be more consultative and less separate to mainstream. This has implications for teacher education, both at pre-service and in-service level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study arose from my position as Principal of a reading school, St. Oliver Plunkett School, Monkstown, from 1998-2006. Throughout that time I was constantly aware of the pupils' achievements in literacy and other skills during their placement with us. I observed the pupils grow in self confidence and self belief as they mastered the literacy skills they needed to continue learning. I wondered how, and why, the teaching and learning experience in this special setting was so evidently successful. This was the beginning of my search to identify the key factors that make the difference. I was particularly interested in the approaches and methods employed by teachers working in special settings, and believed that these could be transferred more widely. My hope in undertaking this study is that the knowledge gained will be of benefit to a greater number of teachers who support pupils with difficulties arising from dyslexia.

My first debt of gratitude therefore is due to the teachers, staff, pupils and parents in St Oliver Plunkett School, Monkstown, for their continuing support. In particular, I am indebted to Fr. Con Dowling for his keen interest and constant encouragement.

I extend thanks to the Principals and teachers in all the schools I visited throughout the course of this work. I learned so much from these visits, and enjoyed the many opportunities to observe their work with the pupils, and to discuss issues of common concern with them. I am indebted to the parents and pupils in the many schools that participated for their openness and co-operation with the study. It was important for me to include the voices of parents and children and I am grateful for this cooperation.

This work benefited greatly from the guidance provided by my supervisor Dr Michael Shevlin. His ongoing encouragement, and the many helpful comments and insights, were very much appreciated.

Thanks are also due to a number of organisations and institutions. The Department of Education and Science allowed me one year's study leave which enabled me to do my field work. I am grateful to the members of the Board of Management of St. Oliver Plunkett School for their support in allowing me to take up this opportunity. A bursary from the Irish Primary Principals' Network at the outset of the study was a significant encouragement. I am also grateful to the director of the Blackrock Education Centre, Dr. Seamus Cannon, members of the Management Committee and the staff of the centre who supported the study in many ways. The facilities of the Blackrock Education Centre were made available for the printing, photocopying, postage and distribution of the questionnaires to the schools, and to the tutors, for which I am most grateful. Thanks are also due to the director of the Education Centres in Dublin West, Wexford, and Clare. These centres facilitated teacher and parent focus group discussions. I am also indebted to the Regional Committee of the Irish Learning Support Association who put me in contact with a large number of support teachers.

I am particularly grateful to Anne Hughes, the director of the Dyslexia Association of Ireland, Alan Sayles, educational consultant, and Mary Ball, education psychologist who made it possible to include the network of tutors in the workshops around the country.

I owe special thanks to Dr. Jacinta Prunty who sustained and supported me throughout this study. Study visits to Cambridge University and the University of London were facilitated by Jacinta. I am especially grateful for her statistical knowledge and practical advice and direction during the analysis of the data. I am grateful to Dr Sean Devitt who read and commented on first drafts of chapters and challenged my thinking in discussion. My thanks also to Dr. Máirin Kenny for her support during the final structuring of the report. Her attention to detail was a positive challenge, and her helpful comments and advice sustained me in the final write-up.

This study would not have been possible without the consistent interest and active support of my family. My parents Joe and Agnes Prunty were, as always, staunchly behind me. My husband Michael, whose patience and tolerance of this study, over such a long period, sustained me throughout. My children, Emma, Paul, David and Mark have each supported me in their own way, and I am very grateful for their patience and understanding. This study is dedicated to them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 6

Literacy and reading standards in Irish schools 6
Historical background: English reading in Irish primary schools 7
National Assessment of reading 9

International frameworks for literacy 11
Toward a definition of reading literacy 11
International studies in reading literacy 12

The Reading Process 14
Models of the reading process 14
Development of the reading process 18
Difficulties in reading development 20

Effective literacy teaching 21
Towards a model of literacy teaching 22
Effective literacy teaching 23

Approaches to teaching reading 28
Elements of Reading Instruction 29

Preventing Reading difficulties 31
Successful early interventions 31
Effects of the intervention programmes 33
Preventing reading difficulties: Linking assessment and teaching 36

What is dyslexia? 39
Historical development in definition and description: 39
Concept of intelligence in the definition of dyslexia 43
A working definition of dyslexia 45
Separating reading disability from dyslexia: a multi dimensional model 46
Phonological processing 46

Provision for Dyslexia: Ireland and selected states 48
Criteria for special provision for dyslexia in Ireland 49
Current Provision in selected states 50

Special Education 52
Inclusion of pupils with special educational needs 53
Barriers to the whole school approach 57
Developments in the role of the Learning Support/Resource Teacher 59

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY 64

The Research context: Changes in provision for pupils with special educational needs 64

Description of the special settings 66
Main Participants 68

Teacher and tutor participants 69
Schools and teachers 69
DAI tutors 71

Pupil participants 72
Quantitative data collection to identify progress in reading 73

Parent participants 76

Qualitative data Collection *76*

Reliability and validity of research methods used *88*
Research Ethics 92

Overview of the Methodology *93*

CHAPTER 4: DATA FINDINGS 94

Introduction *94*
Outline of Chapter 94

SECTION 4.1 TEACHERS AND TUTORS 96
Findings from Teachers' Questionnaires 96
Professional profiles of teacher respondents 96
Teachers' understanding of dyslexia 99

Teachers' identifications of pupils' main reading difficulties *100*
Main underlying reasons for the pupils' difficulty 106
Teaching approaches and methods used 109

Teachers' views on the effectiveness of teaching approaches *112*
Literacy programmes 117
Areas of concern 118

Findings from tutors' questionnaires *121*
Tutors' views on students main difficulties 123
Reasons for the students' difficulty 125
Main literacy skills taught 125
Main issues of concern to tutors 129

Findings from Teacher Focus Groups *131*

SECTION 4.2: CASE STUDIES, VOICES OF PUPILS, PROGRESS IN READING 138

Voices of the pupils *184*
Favourite subject 186
Progress in school 186
Literacy Programmes and learning strategies 187
Disadvantages of special support 189
Advantages of extra support 190

Pupils' progress in reading *191*
Summary of section 201

SECTION 4.3: PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES 202

Questionnaires *202*
Parents' view of children's main difficulties 204
Parents views on the special education placement 206
Conclusion 209

Parent Focus Groups *210*
Parents of children attending Reading Units 213
Summary 214

Parent Interviews *214*
Special placement: advantages 215
Special placement: disadvantages 218
Support in mainstream 222
Overview of themes addressed by parents. 224

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS **228**

Teaching approaches and literacy skills ***228***
Commentary on current practice 240

Issues which make a difference to the effectiveness of special support ***242***
Building self esteem 242
Teacher expectations 244
Parental involvement 247
Teacher qualifications and experience 251

Dyslexia in Ireland: key issues ***254***
Teachers' understanding of dyslexia 254
Organisation of support 257
Identification of dyslexia 259

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS **266**

Teaching literacy skills: teachers' understanding of literacy ***266***

A continuum of provision? ***267***

Teacher education ***268***

Relationship between special and mainstream ***268***

Is there a specialist approach? ***270***

Closing comment: the way forward ***271***

BIBLIOGRAPHY **272**

APPENDICES **287**

Appendix 1: Assessment Tests mentioned by participant teachers and tutors ***287***

Appendix 2: Literacy programmes mentioned by participant teachers and tutors ***288***

Appendix3: Consultation instruments for parents and pupils ***290***
3a: parent consent form for pupil involvement 290
3b: Questions for pupils' discussion group 290
3c: Parents: questionnaire 290

3d: parents: telephone interview ***292***

Appendix 4: Consultation instruments: teachers and tutors ***293***
4a: Questionnaire for teachers 293
4b: Questions for teachers' focus groups 295

Appendix 5: Location of reading schools and units and DAI workshops ***296***
5a: Location of Reading schools and reading units, 2003-05 296
5b: Location of Dyslexia Association of Ireland workshops, 2003-05 297

FIGURES AND TABLES

Fig. 2.1: Interactionist model of reading processes 17
Fig 3.1: Reading tests used by Learning Support Teachers 75
Fig 4.1: Teachers' experience in present position: group profiles 96
Fig 4.2: Teachers' overall teaching experience, group profiles 97
Fig 4.3: Reading Accuracy: level of difficulty 101
Fig 4.4: Reading comprehension: level of difficulty 102
Fig 4.5: Reading fluency: level of difficulty 102
Fig 4.6: Spelling: level of difficulty 103
Fig 4.7: Mathematics: level of difficulty 104
Fig 4.8: Reading attention and concentration: level of difficulty 104
Fig 4.9: Oral language skills: level of difficulty 105
Fig 4.10: Handwriting: level of difficulty 106
Fig 4.11: Teachers' identifications of main underlying reason for pupils' difficulty 107
Fig 4.12: Literacy skills taught 108
Fig 4.13 (a-c): Group profiles of main teaching methods and approaches used daily in mainstream settings, ranked by number of teachers using them 110
Fig 4.14 a and b: Group profiles of main teaching methods and approaches used daily in special schools and units, ranked by number of teachers using them 111
Fig 4.15: Hearing individual reading 113
Fig 4.16: Spelling practice 113
Fig 4.17: Onset and Rime 113
Fig 4.18: Phonics 114
Fig 4.19: High Frequency words 114
Fig 4.20: Teaching Word Families 114
Fig 4.21: Silent Reading 115
Fig 4.22: Teacher reading to the child or the class 115
Fig 4.23: Paired Reading 115
Fig 4.24: Written comprehension 116
Fig 4.25: Cloze procedure 116
Fig 4.26: Dictation 116
Fig 4.27: Joined Handwriting 117
Fig 4.28: Story Writing skills 117
Fig 4.29: Teachers' concerns, by numbers of teachers (n=72) registering each 118
Fig 4.30: Teachers in mainstream settings: concerns 119
Fig 4.31: Teachers in special settings: concerns 119
Fig 4.32: Geographical location of DAI Tutor respondents (n=79) 121
Fig 4.33: Teaching positions of tutors (n=79) 122
Fig 4.34: Tutors' further qualifications (n=34) 122
Fig 4.35: Teaching experience of tutors (n=79) 122
Fig 4.36: Length of time tutoring with DAI. (n=79) 123
Fig 4.37: Tutors' views on students' difficulties with reading skills 123
Fig 4.38: Tutors' views on students' difficulties with other skills (n=79) 124
Fig 4.39: Tutors' reasons for the students' difficulty (n=79) 125
Fig 4.40: Teaching methods/approaches used by tutors, by numbers using them (n=79) 125
Fig 4.41: Phonic skills 126
Fig 4.42: High frequency words 126
Fig 4.43: Word families 127
Fig 4.44: Onset and rime 127
Fig 4.45: Hearing individual reading 127
Fig 4.46: Cloze procedure 128
Fig 4.47: Written comprehension 128
Fig 4.48: Most frequently used literacy programmes (each tutor listed two) 128
Fig 4.49: Each tutor's most used assessment test (n=79) 129

Fig 4.50: Pupils' Favourite Subjects 186
Fig 4.51: Reading tests used by the learning support teachers 195
Fig 4.52: Average scores in Word recognition, Reading Comprehension and Spelling 2004-2005 195
Fig 4.53: Pupils' intellectual ability 197
Fig 4.54: Pupils' WORD rankings for basic reading, spelling and comprehension at point of entry to special provision 198
Fig 4.55: Mean percentile rank in pupils' point-of-entry reading, spelling and comprehension scores according to type of provision 198
Fig 4.56: Parents' identifications of children's reading difficulties 204
Fig 4.57: Parents' identifications of children's writing difficulties 204
Fig 4.58: Parents' identifications of children's mathematics difficulties 205
Fig 4.59: Parents' learning about their children 205
Fig 4.60: Parents' expectations on hearing the diagnosis 206
Fig 4.61: Parents' views on the outcomes of special placement for their child 206
Fig 4.62: Specific advantages of the special placement 207
Fig 4.63: Disadvantages of special placement 208
Fig 4.64: Parents' suggestions for improved services for children with dyslexia (n=63) 208
Fig 4.65: Parents' views on the benefits of special placement 215
Fig 4.66: Parents views of the disadvantages of special placement 218
Fig 4.67: Parents views on pupils' transition to mainstream 219
Fig 4.68: Parents' suggestions for improvement (a) at school level, and (b) at system level 221
Fig 4.69: Guidance and support: whom to contact 223
Fig 4.70: Parents educational expectations for their children 223
Fig 4.71: Students' enjoyment of reading 224

Table 2.1: Alternative models of support for learning for children with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia) 56
Table 3.1: Teacher and tutor recruitment and questionnaire response levels, by setting 72
Table 3.2: Pupil Participants in Study 73
Table 3.3: Pupil Participants for whom reading data was collected 73
Table 3.4: Parent participation 76
Table 3.5: Details of focus groups with parents 76
Table 3.6: Instruments used in data collection, and dates of operation 77
Table 4.1: Frequency of types of definitions of dyslexia reported by teachers, by group 99
Table 4.2: Most frequently used general and specialist literacy programmes 118
Table 4.3: Case study school locations 139
Table 4.4: Case study school enrolments and staffing 139
Table 4.5: Case study pupils and supports they receive 139
Table 4.6: Micra T and NARA test results 139
Table 4.7: Class teacher deployment and teaching supports 154
Table 4.8: Pupils attending specialist services 169
Table 4.9: Description of discussion groups 185
Table 4.10: Pupils receiving learning support: numbers in each class level 193
Table 4.11: Allocation of learning support hours 194
Table 4.12: Placement, numbers, gender and average ages of pupils in special provision 196
Table 4.13: Pupil participants: intelligence levels and placement 197
Table 4.14: Pupils' progress in reading over two year placement in special provision: Pre-intervention (2003) and Post-intervention (2005) mean scores 200
Table 4.15: Child's present placement 202
Table 4.16: Special setting in which child is enrolled 202
Table 4.17: Parent survey data: school-going children receiving extra support 203

ABBREVIATIONS

ADD/HD	Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder
BPS	British Psychological Society
DAI	Dyslexia Association of Ireland
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment (UK)
DPRT	Drumcondra Primary Reading Test
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Need Act
IATSE	Irish Association for Teachers in Special Education
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act
IEA	International Evaluation of Achievement
IEP	Individual Education Plan
INTO	Irish National Teachers Organisation
MICRA T	Mary Immaculate College Reading Achievement Test
NARA	Neale Analysis of Reading Ability
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NFER	National Foundation Educational Research (UK)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PR	Percentile Rank
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SERC	Special Education Review Committee
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SPED	Special Education Circular (DES communications to schools)
SPHE	Social Personal Health Education
SS	Standard Score
TFD	Task Force on Dyslexia
WISC	Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children
WORD	Weschler Objective Reading Dimension

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Special education in Ireland has undergone dramatic changes in the past ten years and it continues to be in a state of transition. One of the most significant developments in special education in Ireland since 1990 was the publication of the Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) (1993). The recommendations set out in this report provided a basis for the future development of special education in Ireland. The ten years following the SERC Report was a time of wide ranging changes and developments in the whole area of special educational needs. Recent legislation has influenced the provision of support to students with special educational needs. High profile court cases taken by parents of children with disabilities resulted in the provision of education for pupils with severe and profound disabilities (O'Donohue case, 1993) and more recently, the provision of appropriate education (Sinnott case, 2000/01). As the right to education has extended to all persons, there is now an increasing concern about equality and inclusion issues.

The worldwide movement towards inclusion of pupils with special educational needs has had an influence on developments in educational provision in Ireland. The principles enshrined in recent Irish legislation, such as the Education Act (1998) and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) reflect an inclusive approach to special educational needs. The EPSEN Act 2004 recommends that the education of pupils with special educational needs takes place in an inclusive environment. The present system of special provision for these pupils has developed along parallel and separate systems of support. However in recent years, many children with special needs who would have previously been placed in a special class or special school are now included in mainstream. Although the EPSEN Act recommends placement in mainstream, in reality, the conditions for an inclusive environment may vary. In many instances withdrawing pupils from class has been the dominant method of providing this extra support. This has implications for the vision of an inclusive education, and how the child is perceived to be a pupil *with difficulties* as opposed to being a pupil *in difficulty*.

A number of initiatives have begun to develop the services for pupils with learning difficulties and special educational needs. Each of these initiatives has to some extent had an effect on the teaching and learning situation for the child with dyslexia. First of all, the implementation of a revised Primary School Curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), 1999a) and the in - service support which accompanied the implementation of the revised curriculum, was a positive initiative for all pupils. The revised curriculum endorsed the principle of ensuring the development of each child's full potential. For some pupils this implies extra support to achieve that potential. With this in mind, in 2000, the Department of Education and Science (DES) published the Learning Support Guidelines for primary schools. This document offers advice on the development of in- school structures to support children with learning difficulties.

Despite the positive developments mentioned so far, in every classroom and school, a significant number of children experience difficulty in learning to read. For these children, reading becomes a source of anxiety and frustration to themselves and their parents. This frustrating and unexpected problem in learning to read may be due to dyslexia. Pupils who have been assessed as having a learning difficulty arising from dyslexia, may be enrolled in a reading unit[1] or reading school for a period of up to two years. These pupils would be at the severe end of the *continuum* of need. Alternatively, pupils may receive extra support in mainstream from the learning support/resource teacher. This study will examine how each teaching situation is appropriate to the needs of the individual student and his/her parents. The question is asked how does each setting differ in terms of the teaching and learning context and is there any difference in the learning outcomes. To date, there has been no systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning situation in each of the special settings for pupils with dyslexia. This study contributes to this area.

Significant concerns are sometimes raised by teachers or parents concerning a child's learning needs. The needs of children are met most effectively where parents, teachers and psychologist work collaboratively. In an attempt to address this issue, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) was established in 1999, as a statutory agency with its aim to support the personal, social and educational development of all children having particular regard to children with special educational needs. This is a welcome development, despite being inadequately resourced in its present form. Teachers who are supporting pupils with special educational needs also need ongoing professional development and training. The recent development of the Special Education Support Service (SESS) has begun to address the professional needs of teachers who support pupils with a diversity of needs. The SESS was set up in 2003 to provide dedicated and ongoing support and professional development for all teachers with particular emphasis on topics related to special educational needs. The SESS is also a means of teachers accessing information on special education in Ireland and internationally. All teachers, not only support teachers, need an understanding of the educational implications for pupils with dyslexia.

There is an ambiguity or even suspicion around the topic of dyslexia. Teachers are uncertain as to how to support the student with dyslexia in the classroom, and believe there is a need for an individualised approach and specialist teaching for the dyslexic learner. In our present system in Ireland, there are difficulties arising from the identification and assessment of dyslexia, and consequent outcomes for the student and his family. There is no standard screening process for dyslexia. Unrecognised difficulties in reading and writing may become embedded as the child reaches the senior classes in primary school with consequent difficulties when he/she transfers to second level. Parents of children who have been assessed as having dyslexia are concerned that their child receive an appropriate education and that literacy difficulties do not hinder their progress

[1] Note: the term 'reading unit' is used in preference to 'reading class' by the teachers, parents and pupils who attend. This term will be used throughout the study.

in school. Parents generally have high educational expectations for their child and will make every effort to be an advocate for the child in gaining appropriate support as needed. The teacher's understanding of the educational implications of dyslexia will influence the teaching methods and approaches used.

The Task Force on Dyslexia (TFD) (2002) was set up to review the current range of educational provision and support services available to children with specific reading disabilities in Ireland and also to

> *Assess the adequacy of current educational provision and support services, having regard to the range of special needs which can arise and the need to address such needs either in integrated settings or by way of special dedicated provision* (TFD, 2002, p. 3)

The TFD recommended a *continuum* of provision of support for pupils according to the severity of need. The minister promised to match the continuum of severity of need arising from dyslexia, with a range of provision that would be flexible and responsive to the needs of parents, teachers and students alike. This echoed the earlier recommendations of the SERC report that also suggested a continuum of provision. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) (2003) has again underlined the commitment to a range or 'continuum' of provision as required.

The TFD however, could not comment on provision for pupils with dyslexia:

> *No comparative information was available on the effects of special education provision on the achievement and general development of students with specific learning difficulties arising from dyslexia who attend special schools or special classes, or who receive resource teaching support.* (TFD, 2002, p. 41).

It is one of the recommendations of the Task Force that:

> *The Department of Education and Science should commission a study to compare the relative effectiveness and appropriateness to the needs of individual students and their parents of the three models of special education provision that are in place for primary level students with specific learning difficulties including those arising from dyslexia- resource teaching support, enrolment in a special class and enrolment in a special school.* (p. 111)

The contribution of this research is to address this issue.

The present study asks how effective is the special education support to the student with difficulties arising from dyslexia. Current provision for these pupils is provided in three different ways: support in mainstream from a learning support/resource teacher, enrolment in a special reading unit, or enrolment in a reading school.

Support which is provided in a reading unit or reading school takes place in a special setting, in many cases at a distance from the child's own school. Parents and children may see the transfer from mainstream to special setting and back again, as a disadvantage of the extra support.

Mainstream schools have begun to re - organise extra support for pupils with special educational needs within the school, according to resources available. This study will look at the structural and systemic issues that impact on this special provision in the context of a whole school policy of

inclusion. The question is asked how does the current policy impact on the special school or reading unit, and how does the special setting contribute to the overall system of provision.

Pupils who are underachieving in literacy may receive extra support from the learning support/ resource teacher. The learning support/resource teacher in mainstream has a central role in the whole school provision for pupils with dyslexia. H/she is in a pivotal position to enhance the teaching of literacy throughout the whole school. From the perspective of the student with difficulties arising from dyslexia, the present study will examine how extra support in reading and literacy is organised and how effective is this extra support. It appears there may be barriers to collaboration and communication between teachers who are supporting the child with dyslexia. This study will examine the outcomes in terms of progress in literacy, and sustained benefit to students and parents.

This study focuses on the teaching and learning context for the pupils with dyslexia, the support teacher, mainstream teacher and the central experience of the student. The methods and teaching approaches used by support teachers and specialist teachers will depend to a large extent on the teacher's understanding of dyslexia and how he/she understands the development of the reading process. There has been no agreement in the research literature on a single definition of dyslexia and this has caused problems for teachers, parents and schools. For example, difficulties may be attributed to short term or working memory, to a discrepancy between cognitive ability and reading ability. The notion of a discrepancy measure in the identification and assessment of dyslexia is in itself controversial.

The study will discover the main literacy skills taught by teachers in the different teaching settings. There may be a difference between the skills taught in the special setting and the mainstream setting. One would expect teachers in the special setting to have more specialised knowledge and skills. Many of the specialist literacy intervention programmes have a large emphasis on teaching phonics skills. Other programmes emphasise phonological awareness. The importance of phonological awareness has been identified as an essential element in successful reading. Indeed many researchers believe a phonological deficit to be at the heart of dyslexia. However writing and spelling skills are also important for the student particularly on transfer from special support to mainstream. Developing pupils' skill in writing is an essential component of an integrated approach to literacy instruction. This is important for all pupils but especially for the pupil with dyslexia. The study will examine how reading and writing is integrated for the student in each of the teaching situations. The literacy instruction model used by teachers will be compared with an integrated model of reading instruction as recommended in the international literature. The tutors in the Dyslexia Association of Ireland (DAI) may be using a different range of teaching approaches and methods. The study will find out the dominant literacy skills taught by the private tutors in the workshops organised by the DAI.

The teachers' understanding of literacy and the reading process will determine the methods used and the priority given to reading accuracy, reading comprehension and writing skills. There may also be other factors which make a difference to the success of the extra support, and the case study schools will provide an opportunity for this to be observed. It is possible that the teaching approaches and methods used by teachers in the special settings could be transferred to mainstream. What is the most effective combination of elements of the literacy instruction provided in each of the teaching situations? Is there any evidence of long term benefits to the special support in the parallel systems of mainstream and special setting for the pupil with a difficulty arising from dyslexia? This study will attempt to answer these questions.

The report of the study is presented in six chapters. Chapter Two introduces the reader to the wider context of the study and reviews the relevant literature in the field. This chapter also outlines the background to the identification of dyslexia and considers the main issues which have dominated the debate on the subject. Chapter Three describes the methods of investigation and the instruments used in the collection of data. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the study to ascertain the outcomes and the effectiveness of three models of special support. An in depth study of six schools gave an opportunity to explore in detail how extra support for the child with dyslexia is organised. Survey methods of data collection included questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Quantitative data on pupils' progress in reading attainment during the period 2003-2005 was also recorded and analysed. Six case study schools were selected to examine in detail the special provision for pupils with dyslexia in each type of situation. Triangulation of methods was an objective of the mixed methodology used in the study.

Chapter Four introduces the findings from the main body of the study. This chapter is in three sections. The first section presents the findings from the teachers and tutors who participated through questionnaires and focus group discussions. The second section contains the case study schools. This section also focuses on the voices of the pupils in group discussions with the researcher presents their progress in reading over two years. The third section contains the findings from the parents' questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. In Chapter Five the main findings of the study are discussed and analysed. The key issues and the significant findings are discussed. Chapter Six is the concluding chapter and this chapter summarises the main conclusions and makes recommendations for further research.

Conclusion

In the past ten years there is no doubt that there have been dramatic changes in special education in Ireland. However, for one group of students who have difficulties arising from dyslexia there are unresolved issues surrounding provision of extra support. This study hopes to contribute to an increased understanding of the educational implications of dyslexia from the perspective of teachers, parents and pupils.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature will introduce the reader to the context of the study and the main areas of research in the field which are relevant to the main body of the study. The review begins by looking at the assessment of reading in the international and Irish contexts. The changing/ developing concept of literacy has an impact on the identification of a group of students who may have difficulty developing literacy skills.

Reading is fundamental to being literate so the current models of reading and the development of the reading process are examined in this review. It was apparent to the author that some children do not develop literacy skills easily and this raises many questions. Methods and instructional strategies are discussed and the essential elements of evidence–based effective teaching strategies are highlighted.

The present study focuses on the support provided to students who have been assessed as having dyslexia. The review of research in the area of dyslexia highlights the key issues of phonological processing for pupils and the difficulties surrounding the use of a discrepancy definition of dyslexia. In Ireland, primary school pupils may receive extra support because of dyslexia in mainstream school from their class teacher or from the learning support or resource teacher. Alternatively they may receive special educational support in a reading unit or a reading school. The existence of special provision for dyslexic pupils separate to and parallel to mainstream has its advantages and disadvantages. It must be viewed in the current context of the movement towards the inclusion of pupils with a diversity of special educational needs in mainstream. Current research in this area has identified organisational factors and also systemic factors affecting the provision of this extra support. Crucial questions about the continuing existence of a categorical model of special need and the practice of withdrawing pupils from class for extra support are raised in this review.

Literacy and reading standards in Irish schools

This section reviews the historical background to English reading instruction in Irish primary schools. Standards of reading from the 1960s through to the 1980s and the definitions of reading literacy at that time are considered. International assessments of literacy among students are also reviewed. The author wished to examine the background to the development of reading assessment in the context of the changing definition of literacy. Several recent international studies of reading and related skills are considered and their implications discussed.

Historical background: English reading in Irish primary schools

Payment by Results 1872-1899

An investigation into the national school system by the Royal Commission in 1872 was critical of the low attainment levels of literacy among primary school pupils. A total of 77% of school children were what was termed 'Book 3 standard', which meant they were at a standard which corresponds to the first two classes[2] in primary school. Today this would be equivalent to First Class (Ireland) or Key Stage 1 in the UK system. 'Key Stage' refers to the national system of assessment in the UK which monitors what children should be able to do at ages seven, 11, 14 and 16 years. At Key Stage 1 (age seven years), children can understand the vocabulary of reading and writing, can match words and letters by sight and identify some words by sight. This is an early stage in the development of reading. Children could recognise words but not read fluently.

In 1872, it was reported by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education that almost half of the children were at an even lower standard (Coolahan, 1977). Consequently a system of payment by results was introduced to remedy the situation. Reading, writing, spelling and grammar were treated as separate components of English and a specified fee was set for pupils who would pass in each component subject. A prescribed textbook was used for the year and pupils were examined on the mechanical aspects of the reading task. Comprehension of reading did not receive much attention. This led to a considerable improvement in the standard of reading attainment, but there were many criticisms by inspectors and teachers. The stress was on mechanical literacy, which was assessed by a rigid and limited oral examination (Coolahan, 1977). If a student could recite his[3] passage by rote, teacher's payment was secure, even if the student did not understand the content he had read. A large proportion of teachers were not formally trained. Textbooks used were mostly political or religious texts. Although the standard of reading in the school and the instruction methods used seems to have been unsatisfactory as reported by teachers and even inspectors, the percentage of the population who could neither read or write declined from 33% in 1871 to 14% in 1901 (Coolahan, 1977, p. 16). The examination in reading and the effect of 'payment by results' for teachers dictated what was taught in schools and how it was taught. (Kellaghan, 2001).

English reading in Irish schools in the nineteenth century

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Belmore Commission (1898) heralded a new change in direction in teaching reading. Comprehension of text and understanding the meaning of words was now emphasised. This was in direct contrast to the previous approach of teaching the segregated skills of reading, writing, spelling and grammar. Inspectors assessed reading standards

[2] The term class is used here as distinct from standard or grade, as it is common usage in the Irish school system.

[3] He/his: The masculine form is used to reflect the historic document

for the whole school. Books were reported to be more varied and 'child centred'. Teachers were encouraged to stimulate the child's interest in reading. Payment by results was abolished. The 'curriculum' changed from the set 'class book' on which all children previously progressed together. The individual pupil's attainment was not reported. Attainment in reading during this period was reported by the inspectors to be an improvement on the previous system. However the government interest at the time was measuring illiteracy in the population. Government reports did not measure the levels of pupils' literacy. Literacy in schools was documented by a general report of the schools inspector. These reports provided evidence of improved literacy among pupils (Coolahan, 1977). It was likely that this enlightened approach to teaching reading removed the pressures associated with the previous Payment by Results scheme. Unfortunately this child centred approach did not continue.

Literacy in the Free State (1922-1937)

As society changes, literacy changes in response. In 1922 education policy reflected the emergence of the new Irish state. Regeneration of the Irish language became one of the priorities for education and this had a negative effect on instruction in English reading.

A system of national schooling was established and the Irish language became the priority language of teaching and instruction. This meant that teachers spent a large portion of the school day teaching Irish. Instruction in the infant classes (ages 4-5) was entirely through the Irish language. Standards in English reading attainment were frequently criticised by teachers (Kellaghan, 2001). Instruction in English reading took place in a traditional manner and class textbooks had a 'national' tone (Coolahan, 1977). No objective or empirical reports on reading attainment or standards of achievement were undertaken until the 1960s. Standards in reading were assessed by Department of Education Inspectors visiting schools and issuing reports. Sixth Class pupils had to undergo the 'Primary Certificate Examination' in English, Irish and Mathematics. This exam became compulsory in 1943 and it was discontinued in 1967.

Evaluating standards in reading in primary schools in Ireland

Studies in the 1960s (McNamara, 1966; Kelly & McGee, 1967) compared the reading attainment of Irish pupils whose mother tongue was English with that of English pupils, and found that Irish pupils in Fifth Class were 17 months behind their English counterparts. Irish pupils whose first language was Irish were found to be 30 months behind. This is not surprising. English school children spent twice as much time studying English as their Irish counterparts. The second study (Kelly & McGee, 1967) found an even larger difference of approximately 26 months of reading age between Irish children and children from England and Wales. The importance attached to teaching the Irish language and the proportion of time spent on teaching Irish was a major factor in depressing performance in English reading (McNamara, 1966). The teaching methods used were

directly influenced by the compulsory testing of English reading and writing at the end of the primary school cycle. During this period, the Primary Certificate Examination was compulsory. In 1971 a new Primary School Curriculum *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (Department of Education, 1971) was introduced. This marked a positive change in the teaching approaches for all subjects, and a more child centred approach to teaching literacy to all pupils.

National Assessment of reading

The Department of Education carried out the first national surveys of reading attainment in primary schools in Ireland in 1972, the second in 1980. The purpose of the surveys was to enable national comparisons to be made between primary pupils in the Republic of Ireland with those in Northern Ireland and England, and to establish base line data for future surveys (Mulrooney, 1985). The two surveys focused on ten-year-old pupils in Fourth and Fifth Class. The results indicate that between 1972 and 1980 the reading standards of Irish ten year olds improved by about eight months. Irish pupils were gradually closing the gap in reading achievement so that by 1980 pupils in Fourth and Fifth Classes were about a year and a half behind their English counterparts (Mulrooney, 1985).

Since then, national surveys of reading literacy have been conducted at regular intervals. Although standards improved significantly between 1972 and 1980, they have not changed significantly since then despite improvements in the teacher pupil ratio, access to learning support and the provision of library services to schools (Cosgrove, Kellaghan, Forde & Morgan, 2000). These surveys assessed understanding of *narrative, expository and document texts,* mainly using multiple-choice items. National surveys of this type do not assess pupils' phonological abilities or word recognition skills.

In the 1998 survey it was found that girls' mean achievement scores were significantly higher than boys' on a range of text types and that boys were more strongly represented at the lower achievement levels. Boys and girls whose parents held a medical card had a mean score that was one standard deviation lower than that of students whose parents did not have medical cards (Shiel, 2005). Possession of a medical card was regarded as a broad index of low household income.

The data from the survey suggests underlying concerns among teachers about students' literacy levels. Teachers rated the reading proficiency of one in ten students as 'weak' or 'inadequate', and an equal number as reading two years below their class level. Teachers judged the proportion of students with very serious difficulties to be about 2-3% but more significantly, they judged that a larger number (12.4%) would require support with the daily demands of reading. The most recent survey of reading among Fifth Class pupils (Eivers, Shiel & Shortt, 2004) reported no significant change in reading standards. It appears that reading standards have not changed dramatically over time.

Reading assessment in the UK: Surveys of reading attainment have been conducted in the UK since 1948. After the war years, as the education system recovered, the average scores rose slightly,

but scores remained unchanged from 1952 to 1979 (Brooks, 1998). In the 1970s OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) and the National Foundation Educational Research (NFER) conducted surveys involving students aged 11 and 15/16 years between 1947 and 1979. Other surveys of students in England and Wales (NFER, 1991, 1995) showed little change in reading standards since 1987. The introduction of a national curriculum (1990) was adduced as a reason for low standards in achievement. There was considered to be less time for literacy instruction due to the broad nature of the curriculum (Brooks, 1996). This was also a time when there was a shortage of trained primary teachers in England. The NFER *Reading Ability Series* tests were used in these national assessments. However, because of sampling difficulties in 1993, the results for pupils age 14 years did not provide reliable evidence on the trend at that age between then and 1996 (Brooks, 1998). National assessments of reading literacy also provided information about the variables associated with reading achievement. Pupils' achievement levels are not determined by the school alone. National and international studies show an association between gender and reading achievement (Cosgrove et al., 2000,) and between socio economic status and reading (DES, 2005b). It is clear that gender differences in reading emerge at an early age and persist into second level schooling (Shiel, 2005). Large gender differences in favour of girls are also evident in the highest scoring countries in international studies (OECD, 2000). Socioeconomic status has been consistently associated with reading achievement

Factors relating to reading performance

Teacher experience: Long-term studies of the effects of teacher characteristics on pupils show the influence of teacher qualifications and experience on pupils' achievement. Pupil achievement is linked to teacher qualifications (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1997). There is considerable agreement that the teacher's role is central to the effectiveness of schools and the competence of the instruction. The Irish experience has also replicated this finding (Eivers, Sheil, Perkins & Cosgrove, 2005). The more experienced teachers are generally assigned to senior classes, while junior classes are generally assigned the least experienced teachers (Eivers et al., 2005). This may not be such a wise decision.

Teaching approaches: The teaching practices and approaches used have been shown to lead to improvement in reading achievement (Taylor, Pressley, Pearson, 2002) Small group instruction in junior classes and teachers using a range of word recognition strategies were found to lead to improved reading.

Home background factors: Factors such as socio- economic status, parents' literacy level and parents' support for the child's reading also have an effect on standards of reading attainment. Children from disadvantaged families tend to start school with poorer academic ability than their more advantaged peers (Kellaghan, 1977; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Early disadvantages affect the child's enduring experiences within formal schooling, because such disadvantages tend

to be both persistent and cumulative (Government of Ireland, 1995, p. 16). In Ireland a range of programmes have begun to address the issue of educational disadvantage e.g. *Early Start* (DES, 1994), *Giving Children an Even Break* (DES, 2001), *Breaking the Cycle* (DES, 2001), *Home School Community Liaison Scheme* (DES, 2001), *School Completion Program* (DES, 2003). These programmes do not specify targets linked to reading achievement specifically, but one would expect reading attainment to improve over time for the pupils and the families targeted by the intervention programs. However this is not always the case (Ryan, 1999; Archer & Shortt, 2003; Weir, Mills & Ryan, 2002). Recent reports recommend a stronger focus on literacy in schools (Eivers et al., 2004). As the definition of literacy has changed and become broader, this has influenced the curriculum, instruction and assessments associated with literacy. The idea of a *'balanced literacy instruction approach'* (Morrow, 1999) advocates an integrated language arts approach to literacy instruction in school. A balanced view of reading instruction enables teachers to base instruction on the needs of individual students rather than using a single approach or a particular focus. This has implications for pedagogy and will be discussed later. Successful implementation of balanced reading instruction requires continuing professional development of teachers and professional preparation at pre- service stage.

International frameworks for literacy

Definitions of literacy have changed over the years. International studies of reading literacy have defined reading literacy according to various levels of interaction between individual competency and social demands. Reading is usually included as a component in the definition of literacy, as reading is fundamental to being literate. But literacy is a broader concept than reading. Literacy is described as the

> *ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers and for enjoyment* (Campbell et al., 2001, p. 3)

Literacy is more than the ability to read and write. Current definitions show that literacy:

- involves different abilities: reading, writing, oral language, viewing;
- being literate involves constructing meaning, reflection, expressing thought;
- these abilities can be applied in different contexts, subject areas or different communities.

Toward a definition of reading literacy

A narrow definition of literacy emphasises literacy as the ability to read, write and de-code print. From a government perspective in Ireland, in the nineteenth century, learning to read was judged as fundamental to being literate. Later definitions of literacy have enhanced the concept of literacy by linking oral language, reading and writing to a capacity to reflect and make decisions in the wider community (Healy Eames, 1999). Reading literacy has been defined as *'using printed and written*

information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to achieve one's knowledge and potential' (OECD, 1995). This is a broader definition than that used in standardised tests currently used to assess reading in Ireland. The narrow range of skills tested in MICRA T test (Ireland) has been criticised because of its narrow definition of literacy, which reduces literacy to a limited set of isolated skills unrelated to the learner's interest (Healy Eames, 2005). Literacy performance can be classified according to various levels of interaction between individual competency and social demands (Martin & Morgan 1994; Morgan, Hickey and Kellaghan, 1997). This will be discussed in a later section.

International studies in reading literacy

As a member of the European Union and the OECD Ireland now participates in international assessments of reading literacy. In a wider context Ireland's standard of reading literacy can be compared in an international context.

The International Evaluation of Achievement (IEA) Reading Literacy Study assessed the achievement of 9 and 14 year olds in 32 countries in 1991. In this study, reading literacy was defined as *'the ability to use and understand those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual'* (Elley, 1992). Students were presented with narrative texts, expository texts and document texts. The narrative domain consisted of text in which the writer's aim was to tell a story; text in the expository domain was designed to explain, describe or convey information and the documents domain presented structured information in the form of charts, tables, maps, graphs. The outcomes showed that Ireland ranked twelfth out of 28 countries. Gender differences were relatively greater in Ireland than most other countries, especially at the lower levels of achievement. There were indications that many more Irish boys than girls have 'serious literacy problems' (Morgan et al., 1997). However for pupils at age 14 years, Ireland's mean score was not significantly different from the mean scores of nine other countries or from the international country average (Elley, 1992).

International Adult Literacy Study: In order to better understand the relationships between education, skills, economic success and social outcomes at the level of the individual and of the nation, this study was conducted in 24 countries between 1994 and 1998. Reading literacy was defined as the *'ability to understand and employ information in daily activities, at home, at work, and in the community to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential'* (OECD, 2000). This is a more functional notion of reading literacy than IEA study mentioned above. Adults were assessed in three domains: prose literacy; document literacy; quantitative literacy. The average literacy level of Irish adults is the same or higher than the level of adults in eight European countries and lower than the level in six other European countries. It was noted that

although basic literacy has been established in Ireland, the transition to higher levels of literacy has been less successful.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA): The PISA study focuses on three assessment domains: reading literacy, mathematical literacy, and scientific literacy. PISA was administered in 28 OECD countries and 4 non-OECD countries in 2000. Further studies assessed mathematical literacy in 2003. Assessment of science literacy will take place in 2006. Its purpose is to address the question of how well young people are equipped for future participation in society through assessment of key skills (Shiel, Cosgrove, Sofroniou & Kelly, 2001). The main focus in 2000 was on measuring students' proficiency in reading literacy. Reading literacy in PISA is defined as the '*capacity to understand, use, and reflect on written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential and to participate in society'. (OECD, 2000)*

This is a broader concept of literacy. This definition goes beyond students learning to read, to students reading to learn, and emphasises students' future use of reading. Ireland ranked fifth among a group of seven countries with mean scores higher than the OECD country average. However, three years later Ireland's mean scores had dropped and although comparatively high in 2000 and 2003, Ireland's overall performance was poorer in 2003. In 2003, 2.7% failed to demonstrate the most basic skills assessed and 8.3% scored at the most basic test level (level 1).

The IEA Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS): This is an ongoing study, which focuses on reading achievement of nine and ten year olds. The first assessment was conducted in 2001. Six countries that had participated in the previous IEA study are taking part (England, Scotland, France, Germany, Australia and New Zealand).

It is significant to note that the definition of reading literacy used in this study takes the view that reading is a constructive and interactive process. This corresponds with the PISA definition of reading literacy. The PIRLS assessment focuses on reading comprehension, the purpose of reading, and attitudes and behaviours associated with reading This definition addresses how students read, and accounts for the home and school factors which influence performance.

Summary

There are some conclusions apparent from these international studies. It appears that reading standards do not change significantly over time. Reading standards in Irish schools are at the international average when compared with standards in other developed countries. The use of a broader definition of literacy in the later studies such as PISA, IEA and PIRLS emphasises students' future use of reading which goes beyond the basic skills of learning to read and write. The definition of literacy used in these studies focuses on the relationship between the individual and society. In relation to Ireland's performance, it is a matter of concern that there are a significant number of students with serious reading difficulties. This highlights the need to address low achievement by implementing school wide and individual programmes. Gender differences are

apparent at the lowest levels in reading with males more strongly represented and this seems to persist into second level. Males are also more likely to be identified with reading difficulties. More research is needed into the other factors associated with underachievement in reading. The association between socioeconomic status and reading literacy is confirmed. The national and international studies do not give any information on the proportion of students with dyslexia in different countries or on the variables associated with dyslexia. In fact many students with dyslexic learning difficulties may be excluded from participating in national assessment tests if they are in receipt of special education services.

The Reading Process

It was indicated in the previous section that reading is fundamental to being literate. Reading entails more than just recognising words. Reading involves constructing meaning and reflection. Teachers and educators involved in the instruction of reading need an understanding of the reading process and a comprehensive grasp of the components of that process. This section will discuss the reading process and review some of the predominant theoretical models of reading.

Models of the reading process

Reading is a holistic activity and in order to engage in the reading process the reader must use a range of cognitive and learning skills (Reid, 1998). Various theories of reading and models of the reading process have been put forward to explain the process of reading. Reading has been described as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' whereby reading fluency develops by increasing the use of contextual clues and the minimal use of visual cues (Goodman, 1967; Smith 1971). Other models of reading have suggested the reading process involves the processing of information from visual, phonological and semantic cues (Gough, 1972; La Berge Samuels, 1974). Later models suggest that reading involves the interaction of contextual, comprehension, visual and phonological information (Adams, 1998; Rummelhart, 1998). Each model gives a unique perspective on reading. Reading has been described as both a perceptual process and a cognitive process (Rummelhart, 1998).

The interactive model of reading has recently become more dominant and can be seen to have influenced the policy and practice underlying the UK National Literacy Strategy (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1998a).

Information processing models: Information processing models of reading such as put forward by Gough (1972) and La Berge Samuels (1974) represent a detailed letter-by-letter or 'bottom up' approach to understanding reading. In the Gough model, reading consists of a sequentially ordered set of transformations. All input from print is transformed from sensory information into higher level encoding or meaning. The grapheme (written word) is first registered and transformed from

letter representation to phoneme representation, then to lexical representation and finally to deep structural representation. In this model reading is explained as letter-by-letter and word-by-word analysis. In a similar model, La Berge Samuels (1974) described three separate systems, which hold the representation of the input string. These systems are the *visual memory system,* the *phonological memory system* and the *semantic memory system.* All of this information feeds into the process, which determines the reader's meaning and understanding of the text. These individual processes or 'flow charts' are described separately and take account of the perceptual processes involved in reading. However, these early models of reading do not explain how these processes interact together. La Berge suggested that for the fluent reader, decoding becomes automatic and the reader's attention can be directed to comprehending the text, whereas in beginning reading, attention is switched from decoding to comprehension, as only one task can be done at a time. The earlier models and theories of the reading process (Fries, 1952) focused on reading as mainly a process of word identification and how to read words accurately. Later theories (Goodman, 1967; Smith, 1971; Chall, 1983) emphasised reading as both a perceptual and a cognitive activity. 'Interactive' models of reading (Rumelhart, 1998; Adams, 1998) are an attempt to bring together the two sides of the debate.

Interactive model of reading: An interactive model of reading proposes to describe and explain how both the perceptual processes and the cognitive processes involved in reading interact. The notion of different processing systems, which interact during the activity of reading, is an attempt to describe how the mind processes many different cues and clues during the reading task. The print on the page constitutes the basic perceptual data of reading. From this perspective, Adams (1998) outlined four processes, which interact with and cooperate with one another to deliver information to the reader. The four processes are the *context processor*, *meaning processor*, *orthographic processor* and *phonological processor.* These processes are illustrated in more detail later but briefly may be explained as follows: Within each of the 'processors', knowledge is represented and interrelated with other knowledge from the other 'processors' in the model. For the reader as the letters in a word are recognised this activates the spelling patterns, pronunciation and meaning within which they are compatible. Then the context processor constructs a coherent interpretation or message. Meaningful experiences with words are important to the usage of words, the interpretation of words and the reader's developing vocabulary. In this model, skilful readers access the spelling, sound, meaning and context of a familiar word almost automatically. Speed and fluency are necessary for this process to be effective. This model of reading is an interactionist model. Each of these systems accepts information from the other. The most important system in this model (Adams, 1998) is the orthographic processor, which receives information directly from the printed page. In skilful reading, the mind '*works interactively and in parallel with as many cues and clues as it can recognise as relevant'* (Adams, 1998, p. 845).

The question of how the different processes interact is also addressed by Rummelhart (1998). A *'message centre'* is envisaged where hypotheses are measured, evaluated and a new connection is made. This model (Rumelhart, 1998) proposes hypotheses or knowledge sources at five different levels. It is a means of representing a set of interacting processes or knowledge sources.

- *Feature level knowledge:* At a basic level of processing, the reader extracts the critical features of the word/ letters/print.
- *Letter level knowledge:* Using previous knowledge of letters, the reader hypothesises and evaluates that letter knowledge against the new information. The reader takes into account the probabilities of letters in the language.
- *Letter- cluster knowledge:* The letter level knowledge is scanned for a hypothesis regarding the likelihood of letter sequences or units of sound in the language
- *Lexical level knowledge:* Using information from letter knowledge and letter clusters, the reader scans the text for letter sequences, which form lexical items. The convergent information is strengthened.
- *Syntactic knowledge:* The most probable interpretation from the reader's syntactic knowledge is considered as input. For example a reader may assign a lexical category to a particular word, the most likely possibility entered first.
- *Semantic level knowledge:* This is the ability to look for semantic level correlates to evaluate the plausibility of the hypothesis. This gives the reader text based information on which comprehension depends.

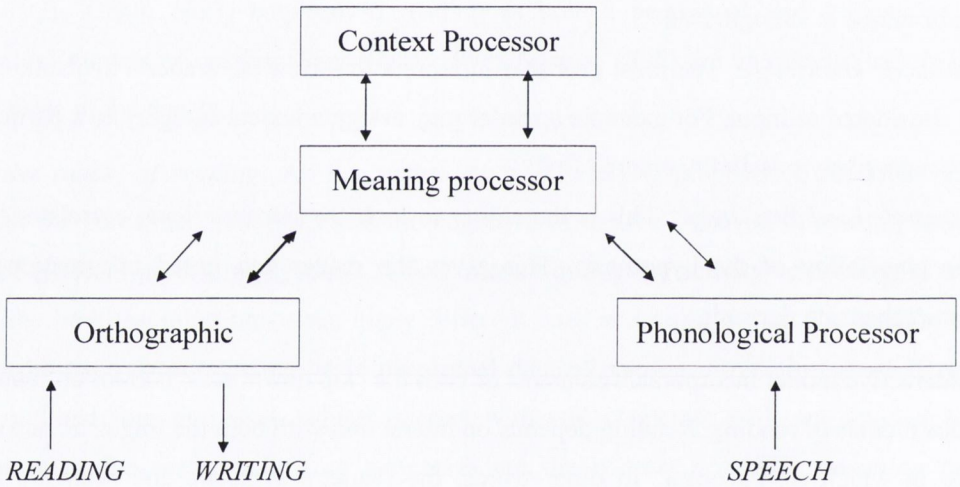
This interactive model incorporates elements of both the 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches of previous models of reading. Reading depends on interaction with both the linguistic and conceptual context in which words occur. In other words, the reader's syntactic and semantic knowledge interact with the lower level letter knowledge and letter cluster knowledge. Each hypothesis can be generated at any level. The interactionist model of reading as outlined gives an overview of the reading task from the perspective of the 'normal' reader. However, for the individual reader, there may be specific difficulties present with any of the sub processes involved in reading.

Multi layered model: A multi-layered model of the reading process (Devitt, 1996) shows how incoming data from text is checked against stored data in the reader's head. Various sub processes are involved in the processing of the text in order to understand the text and create an effective synthesis with other knowledge. This model has some of the elements of other information processing models, and also demonstrates the connections between the higher and lower level sub-processes required for alphabetic systems. The lower sub-processes involve word recognition and local propositions, the higher sub- processes link the propositional information with schemata and prior knowledge (Devitt, 1996). Information received from the text at a lower level is matched with

information stored in the mind. Three different types of processing provide another layer to this model: visual, cognitive and metacognitive (Miller, 1988).

Sub processes of reading: The sub processes in reading may be grouped into lower level processes i.e. word recognition, orthographic processing, phonological decoding; and higher level processes i.e. integrating new information with prior knowledge, or reconstructing text (Devitt, 1986) Other models of reading have emphasised the idea of reading as a cognitive process (Adams, 1998), or a process of constructing meaning from text (Goodman, 1998; Smith, 1993). This puts emphasis on inference and prediction in reading. An interactive model of reading serves as a useful tool for understanding the sub processes, which may present specific difficulties for children who are struggling with reading. The model outlined by Adams (1998) shows the interrelatedness of the 4 different processes involved.

Fig. 2.1: Interactionist model of reading processes



(Adams, 1998, p. 844)

- The *orthographic processor* sequences the letters in a word. It receives information on the letters and words on the printed page. The fluent reader and the beginning reader visually process nearly every letter and word of text as they read (Patterson & Cotheart, 1987; Adams, 1990).
- The *phonological processor* matches the letters to the letter sounds. This provides 'back up' support to the reader and to the orthographic processor. This gives speed and ease of recognition to the reader.
- The *meaning processor* relates to the reader's knowledge of the word meaning. Meaningful experiences with words increase the reader's word usage and vocabulary. Structural analysis of words, morphemic analysis of words increases ability to interpret new words.
- The *context processor* gives an overview of the meaning of the text. The context processor selects the appropriate meaning of a word in a given context.

This is a reciprocal and interactive model of the reading process. This model highlights an interaction between context, meaning, orthography (print) and phonology (speech). In other words the more practice in reading the child has, the more skilled he will become in developing reading sub skills. This has been referred to as the Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986). Viewing the process from a more global or holistic approach, Goodman (1998) believes that reading is 'goal oriented', a process whereby the reader seeks meaning from text by using the grapho-phonic, syntactic and semantic information contained in the text. These 'cue-systems' allow for inference during reading. The reader has to make predictions or 'guess' as to the meaning of the words. Other theorists emphasise reading as the construction of meaning between reader, text and teacher (Ruddell & Unrau, 1998) or as hypothesis testing or interaction with language (Ruddell & Rudell, 1998).

Interactive compensatory model

An interactive compensatory model (Reid, 1998) attempts to show how readers draw on both the 'top down' or concept driven and 'bottom up' or data driven reading models. This model acknowledges that both processes work, and readers do not necessarily begin at either the graphic or contextual level (Stanovich, 1988). The reader may rely more heavily on some levels of processing than on others. For example the good reader may rely more on visual details than the poor reader who relies more on context.

Development of the reading process

Linguistic, visual and auditory skills are all essential in learning to read. The development of these specific reading skills or sub skills is an integral part of the phases of reading development. Ehri (1995) outlined four phases of reading development as follows:

1. The *Pre- alphabetic phase* implies the child is relying on visual cues to remember a word. Letter-sound connections are not involved at this stage. Connections are made between salient visual features or 'cues' and their pronunciation or semantic representation. The child may identify the word using context and no alphabet (e.g. McDonalds restaurant). In an earlier model of reading development, the pre alphabetic phase corresponds to the *Logographic phase* as outlined by Frith (1985; see below).

2. At the *Partial Alphabetic* phase, the reader can make partial alphabetic connections between some of the letters. First and last letters may be remembered; this is a 'phonetic cue reading' stage. The beginning reader recognises some letter patterns, and letter combinations.

3. At the *Full alphabetic phase* readers may use some sight word knowledge and can begin to decode words. They may also read words by analogy to known sight words.

4. At the final *Consolidated alphabetic phase,* readers can transform graphemes into phonemes and can retain sight words. Larger units of grapho-phonemic knowledge can be stored. A decoding strategy is now part of a wider knowledge of the reader's alphabetic system.

Such a framework highlights the essential sub skills involved in the reading process. A previous model of the reading process as outlined by Frith (1984) shows similarities among the stages of reading development although the terminology differs. Frith (1985) divides the development of reading into three stages: Logographic, Alphabetic, and Orthographic

The young child begins at the *logographic stage* by relying on the visual patterns of words for recognition. As this becomes inadequate, he moves on to the development of *alphabetic* skills. Not all children will be able to detect the letter sound association in words and automatically 'pick up' the alphabetic code. They need explicit and direct instruction in letter knowledge and early focus on phonological knowledge. Finally a level of grapho-phonemic knowledge is reached at the *orthographic stage* and the reader can apply the range of skills built up at each stage. About 75% of children will learn to read by the use of any method (Lieberman & Shankweiler, 1991).

However, the remainder will need further explicit instruction in two areas:

- *Alphabetic principle* (alphabetic code): learning the letter names and developing letter - sound association skills necessary for reading, and
- *Phonological and phonemic awareness:* ability to isolate individual sounds, to manipulate speech sounds, to blend sounds.

Each of the models outlined above provide insights into the developmental process of reading. While there may appear to be some points of overlap for example *'pre- alphabetic'* stage (Ehri, 1995) *and 'logographic'* stage (Frith, 1985), each model contributes to the overall understanding of the developmental process.

Summary

In conclusion it can be seen from the dominant theoretical models of reading that the reading process involves more than a set of specific skills which can be taught in a linear way. The involvement of the reader and the interaction of the reader with the text contribute to the ease, speed and fluency of reading. There is agreement that reading involves the construction of meaning and the reader's previous knowledge, vocabulary and experience also contribute to the task. This underlines the important role of oral language development as an integral part of literacy teaching. While the phonological, orthographic and visual skills involved in reading must not be overlooked and must be present for successful reading, it is evident that these skills are not sufficient in themselves. It could be stated that these skills *enable* reading but successful reading is *more* than the sum of these skills.

Difficulties in reading development

Differences, Discrepancies, Difficulties: Having examined the current models of reading and the development of the reading process, it will be apparent that for some children the development of reading does not proceed as outlined above. There are individual differences among children, in their rates of learning, learning style, or even motivation. Some children experience difficulties in word recognition, in phonological awareness or in decoding unknown words. There may be a discrepancy between a child's reading comprehension and his accuracy in reading. The main difficulties which pupils experience with reading are centred on the following sub–processes: perceptual difficulties; phonological awareness or memory difficulties.

Perceptual difficulties: Auditory perception is the ability to recognise or interpret what is heard (Lerner, 2003). Auditory perception skills include phonological awareness, auditory discrimination skills, auditory sequencing and auditory blending. Many readers have auditory, linguistic and phonological difficulties (Lyon, 1998; Stahl & Murray, 1994). The difficulty for some children is not in hearing accurately, but rather in recognising or interpreting what is heard. If a child is unable to reflect about the sound elements of the English language and perceive the sounds within words the alphabetic system will remain a mystery (Torgeson, 1998).

Knowledge of letter shapes and the visual identity of these letters is an important skill for the beginning reader (Adams, 1990). The basic concepts of print and the visual representation of print may present a difficulty for some children (Clay, 1985). Visual recognition of letters and transposing these letters into their phonological correspondences may be a problem for some readers. For several children basic knowledge about print develops more slowly and this delays their development of reading.

Phonological awareness: *'Phonological awareness reflects the strength of a child's ability to represent linguistic information at the phonological level'* (Hester & Hodson, 2004, p. 115). A necessary ability for learning to read in the English language is the ability to recognise that the words are composed of individual sounds within the words. Phonological awareness refers to the child's ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words. The smallest unit of sound is a *phoneme*. Different languages use different phonemes. In English, the word *cat* contains three phonemes: *k-a-t*. The beginning reader needs to know that the words *cat* and *hat* differ in a single phoneme. The link between phonological awareness and early reading success has been established (Bradley & Bryant 1989). Children with phonological difficulties often cannot recognise words that rhyme (e.g. *right, fight, night*) and alliteration in words (*cat* and *cap*). As a result, these children cannot understand or use the alphabetic principle needed for learning phonics and decoding words (Lerner, 2003). Readers need some minimal level of spelling to sound knowledge in order to decode words independently (Stanovich, 1986a).

Memory difficulties: Some children with dyslexia or dyslexic-type reading difficulties may have difficulty in remembering or retaining information. They may also have difficulty recalling information. This could be due to short- term memory problems or a naming difficulty (Reid, 1998). The role of memory is central to information processing theories of cognition. Information is transferred from the senses to the short term or 'working memory' and from there to long-term memory. The processing and interactionist models of reading suggest that the reader must hold certain information in short term memory while 'processing' it or 'interacting' with it and then it is stored in long term memory. For some readers retrieval from long- term memory may pose a difficulty. Successful reading requires rapid and fluent recognition of words. Examples of automatic recall include remembering words when speaking, remembering proper syntactic form when reading and remembering words by sight when reading (Lerner, 2003). Some readers develop automatisation skills more gradually due to the slower speed of processing information.

Motivation: The development of vocabulary facilitates reading comprehension so it is not surprising that the more a practice a reader has reading, and the greater language experience he has, the greater his progress in reading. Likewise, the reverse is also true. This has been called the 'Matthew effect' (Stanovich, 1986b). Good readers read more, weak readers read less. Where one of the reading sub skills develops more slowly or with great difficulty, the reader is less motivated to develop that particular skill and so makes less progress.

Summary

In summary, individual differences among children account for variations in the development of skill in reading. There may be a discrepancy or a difficulty in the development of the various sub - skills which contribute to the reading process among individual readers. These difficulties may be due to perceptual difficulties, either visual or auditory, or to difficulties in phonological awareness and the awareness of the sound structure in words. As we now know, fluent reading requires rapid and fluent recognition of words. However for some children, memory difficulties may impede the rapid recall of information and so delay their development of reading. Loss of confidence can be observed among readers who experience difficulty acquiring skill in reading. This can lead to avoidance of the activity associated with the failure, and further lack of practice. This process is cyclical: failure results in poor self esteem and low motivation to read, resulting in further failure.

Effective literacy teaching

In order to provide effective reading instruction for beginning readers, teachers and educators must have in mind a model of literacy, which integrates all the necessary elements. This section will discuss the elements of effective literacy teaching and review a selection of the recommended approaches to the teaching of reading. Successful intervention programmes will be discussed in order to discern the elements of a balanced approach to literacy.

Towards a model of literacy teaching

There are a wide variety of effective models of literacy teaching evident in the literature, many with common and similar components. The framework may vary according to its purpose or context, but there are recurring similar components in each English speaking country. The elements of effective literacy teaching are broadly similar across a range of programmes in the UK and USA. Pinnell and Fountas (1998) identified eight key principles of literacy learning. They state that children need to:

- *Understand the purposes of literacy so they can fully appreciate and enjoy literacy in their lives*
- *Hear written language so they can learn its structure and take in new information and ideas*
- *Become aware of the sounds of language, to enjoy those sounds, and to use this knowledge as a tool in becoming literate.*
- *Have many experiences working with written symbols so they can learn how to look at letters and use this information to read and write.*
- *Explore words and learn how words work, so they can use this information effectively and efficiently in reading and writing.*
- *Learn the conventions of print and how books work so they can use this knowledge as readers and writers.*
- *Read and write continuous text so they can use and expand their knowledge about letters, sounds, words, and language.*
- *Develop flexibility and fluency to enhance comprehension and enjoyment of reading and writing* (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998, p. 3).

These main literacy principles are expressed as children's needs, and are centred on the 'why' of literacy teaching. Initiatives in England (Department for Education and Employment, 1998a) and the USA National Institute for Child Health and Development (NICHD) (2000) in recent years, has focussed attention on effective teaching of literacy to children. This is in response to concern that low levels of literacy among young people are costly in terms of economic and social outcomes (Hall & Harding, 2003). In order to examine what 'effective' literacy teaching means, this section will review some of the models and literacy frameworks designed to show the methods and approaches of effective literacy teaching.

A *'framework for teaching reading'* was developed by the Early Reading Research project in the UK (Solity, Deavers, Kerfoot, Crane & Cannon, 2000) and showed that children's achievement in reading can be improved by appropriate instruction. The framework addressed the following areas and includes the 'what' to teach as well as the 'how' to teach. This framework addressed several aspects of teaching reading and did not focus exclusively on a single literacy skill. The framework addressed the essential elements in literacy teaching as follows:

- *Frequency and duration of teaching*

- *Sub skills:* phonological: synthesis, segmentation, phonic, and sight vocabulary skills
- *Teaching approaches:* reading to children; listening to children read; teaching children to spell; teaching children to write
- *Assessment of children's learning:* regular assessment of children's learning; regular feedback on their progress

The central role of the teacher and the strategies used to teach reading effectively are the most important focus of this study. The results of this study and others (Solity et al., 2000) suggest that the key to ensuring that children make progress is

> *what and how they are taught, rather than the availability of additional resources, parental support or one to one teaching (*Solity et al., 2000, p. 124)

Effective literacy teaching

As can be seen from the Early Reading Research framework, many of the elements are replicated in other models of effective literacy teaching such as the USA National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000), the UK National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998a), and the New Zealand National Literacy Strategy (Limbrick, 2005). The question of what is an effective teacher of literacy and what characteristics can be observed has been the subject of wide ranging research. A systematic review of 80 studies published , on effective literacy teaching, (Hall & Harding, 2003) indicated that effective teachers of literacy have a wide and varied repertoire of teaching practices and approaches and they use a collection of methods that represent a balance between the direct teaching of skills and more holistic approaches. The key findings of this study reported that effective teachers of literacy:

- balance direct skills teaching and more authentic contextually grounded literacy activities;
- integrate literacy approaches and link literacy with other curriculum areas;
- ensure pupil engagement, on task behaviour and pupil self regulation;
- use a teaching style that involves differentiated instruction;
- link with parents and the wider community.

The focus in this research is on the teacher of literacy, who is the key person in the effectiveness of the programme, the curriculum and the instruction methods. An effective teacher can even make up for the shortcomings of some literacy programmes. It was suggested that the teachers' teaching strategies were of greater importance than even the teaching methods used. This has great implications for the training and professional development of all primary teachers. Although the majority of the studies reviewed in this report were of USA origin, it is likely that similar results would be seen in a mainstream context in English speaking countries such as New Zealand, Australia or the UK.

The role of the teacher in effective literacy teaching

The role of the teacher in effective reading instruction is vital. An International Reading Association position statement (1999) suggests that there is no single method or combination of methods that can successfully teach children to read. According to some researchers (Duffy and Hoffman, 1999) effective teachers assess the student and analyse the situation before deciding what method or material to use. They believe in ongoing evaluation, and in thoughtfully adapting to the students and the situation. Snow, Burns & Griffin (1998) stated that the

> *critical importance of the teacher in the prevention of reading difficulties must be recognised, and efforts should be made to provide all teachers with adequate knowledge about reading and the knowledge and skill to teach reading* (Snow et al., 1998, p. 9)

A wide range of studies has examined teacher effectiveness as an important issue in the progress of students. The input of the teacher is seen as the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of classroom instruction in literacy. (Adams, 1990). In the USA First Grade Studies (Adams, 1990) different approaches to instruction were examined for teacher effectiveness. No single approach out- performed another in terms of outcome. In programmes and methods, which targeted the reading of words, decoding and letter sound relationships among the pupils improved, but comprehension and vocabulary knowledge were not improved to the same degree. In other programmes, which targeted comprehension and meaning of texts, the reverse was true.

Effective teaching strategies

In the UK, Wray, Medwell, Poulson & Fox (2001) looked at factors determining the effective teaching of literacy. Literacy was defined as a unitary process with two complementary aspects, reading and writing. Wray et al. found that there are several techniques linked with pupil progress in reading and writing. A clear structure and extensive modelling characterised effective teachers' lessons. When asked what a pupil needed to learn when beginning reading, effective teachers emphasised reading as an enjoyable activity whereas teachers in a validation group were more likely to focus on the mechanics of reading. The study found the following additional characteristics among effective teachers of literacy:

- Emphasis on meaning when teaching literacy;
- Explicit teaching of skills;
- Brisk pace of lesson;
- Review of work in each lesson;
- Systematic presentation of specific skills;
- Teacher uses modelling extensively.

These specific techniques encompass the teaching approaches recommended by the UK National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998b).

This emphasis on teaching strategies and holistic teaching of literacy is also found in successful early intervention programs such as *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 1985) *Success for All* (Slavin, 1994) and *Early Intervention in Reading* (Wasik & Slavin, 1994). It reiterates the three main areas of literacy learning as suggested by Moss & Reason (1991): *Meaning, Phonics,* and *Fluency.*

It is accepted that there are several components, which are associated with effective teaching of beginning reading. Solity et al., (2000) make the point emphasising that pupil's progress is largely dependent on the teaching strategies and approaches used rather than providing extra resources or personnel. In the USA, Taylor et al., (2002) identified further factors, which are also associated with improvement in literacy in disadvantaged schools, as follows:

- Engagement of pupils, keeping pupils on task;
- Grouping for instruction (Pressley, 1996, found teachers who were nominated as effective, used a combination of whole class, group and individual teaching);
- Coaching of reading strategies (involves explaining to pupils how and when to use a strategy not just 'telling' answer to pupils (cf. Reading Recovery);
- Responding to pupils' needs; flexible teaching to address pupils' ongoing needs;
- Coverage of a range of word recognition strategies;
- Use of higher order comprehension questions;
- Monitoring of pupil achievement;
- High expectations for pupils.

The case for 'balanced reading instruction'

The perspective of literacy instruction, which has now emerged as result of the 'whole language' versus 'phonics' debate is a *balanced* approach (Pressley, 2006). A balanced approach includes selecting best theories and using learning strategies, which are based on these theories, in order to match the learning styles of children. Combinations of methods and approaches are considered most effective when adapted to a particular child at a particular time (Davis & Florian, 2004). These professional decisions and judgements are at the core of effective literacy teaching. This style of teaching has been described as '*principled eclecticism'* (Stahl, 1997). Pressley (2006) called this a balanced approach to literacy. The distinguishing characteristics of the best teachers who apply this balanced teaching are:

- Masterful classroom management;
- High density of instruction and activity;
- Reading, writing and other instruction is well integrated;
- Good balancing of whole language and explicit skills instruction;
- High expectation that students would learn;
- Extensive use of scaffolding;

- Consistent encouragement and self-regulation. (Pressley, 2006, p. 254)

Metacognition and literacy

Metacognition can be described as 'understanding and controlling one's own thinking' (Westwood, 1997, p. 41). Metacognitive skills are promoted by the teaching process which focuses on 'learning to learn' rather than the content or subject matter. Metacognition has an important role in learning and can help to develop thinking skills, and develops an awareness of the learning process. Many of the problems presented by learners with dyslexic type difficulties relate to the lack of ability to use efficient strategies when faced with a learning task (Westwood, 1997). The teacher has an instrumental role in assessing metacognitive awareness and supporting its development (Peer and Reid, 2001)

The use of metacognitive strategies can help to develop reading comprehension and expressive writing skills. Good readers provide an example of metacognitive awareness in reading in the following ways:

> *Good readers usually:*
> *Generate questions while they read;*
> - *Monitor and resolve comprehension problems;*
> - *Utilise mental images as they read;*
> - *Re read as necessary;*
> - *self correct if an error has been made when reading.*
>
> (Wray, 1994, p. 156)

Direct instruction in metacognitive strategies such as teacher modelling, verbal cues and corrective feedback also helps students to monitor their own learning.

Teacher modelling

Teacher modelling is a strategy suggested as beneficial in developing children's ability to monitor their own reading and writing. Teachers using this approach model the mental process (what they think as they read or write) rather than simply procedures (what they do) (Duffy, 1988). In this way the teacher transfers metacognitive control of the tasks from the teacher to the student. This process can be observed in shared reading.

Approaches to teaching writing through using *writing frames* and *scaffolding* the writing also uses similar strategies to those outlined above (Wray and Lewis, 1997). *Shared writing* is an equally effective strategy and provides opportunities for teachers to develop learning strategies which students can apply in different situations. Shared writing as a teaching strategy enables teachers to:

> *work with the whole class, to model, explore and discuss the decisions writers make when they are writing*
>
> *make links between reading and writing explicit*

demonstrate how writers use language for particular effects

remove temporarily some of burden of spelling, handwriting to enable children to focus on how composition works

focus on particular aspects of writing process e.g. planning, composing, revising editing

scaffold children in the use of appropriate language to discuss what writers do and think

(Wray, 2001, p. 309)

Prompting procedures, Think-Alouds, Study Skills

Teaching students to use appropriate cognitive strategies can help to improve aspects of performance such as reading comprehension and writing comprehension. Instruction in self checking and self interrogation while completing as task gives students skills to generalise across tasks. This is particularly effective for students with learning problems (Westwood, 1997). Students who can recognise whether they are doing well, or having difficulty understanding something, are learning to monitor their own efforts.

Prompting procedures may be used by the teacher helps to develop reading comprehension. Pupils (8-10 year olds) were explicitly taught to ask themselves questions as they read (Miller, 1985). These pupils were better able to identify inconsistencies and errors in texts than other children who were directly told to look for these inconsistencies. Training pupils to 'think aloud' while reading has also been shown to improve reading comprehension (Silven & Vauras, 1992).

The approaches identified as beneficial to developing metacognitive skills among learners are all helpful teaching activities in their own right. The teaching of literacy skills to low ability students or to students with learning problems would benefit from the wider use of these approaches.

Summary

The frameworks or models of reading instruction outlined above, focus on similar elements such as the frequency and duration of the teaching, the sub skills to be taught, the teaching approaches and assessment of children's learning. These components are also evident in successful early intervention programmes such as Reading Recovery and Success for All. The most recent approach to literacy teaching is described as a 'balanced' approach. This view enables teachers to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of individual students. Effective teachers balance their teaching by focusing both on skills and literature. An integrated model of literacy is essential for teachers who provide reading instruction for beginning readers. The teaching approaches used must be focused on the needs of the readers. Instruction is more likely to be effective if it is seen as an enjoyable activity. There is wide agreement that the role of the teacher is central in the effective teaching of literacy.

Instruction in metacognitive skills is an important component in the learning process. Students can be trained in specific skills which will support the student in monitoring his own learning.

Approaches to teaching reading

This section will review the major elements of reading instruction which have dominated approaches to the teaching of reading. There is current agreement on the most important components of effective methods of reading instruction. Large scale studies have highlighted phonemic and phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development and reading comprehension as essential components in the teaching of reading.

There is considerable debate in the literature on reading, as to the most effective methods of teaching children to read. As far back as 1862 the process of learning to read concentrated the attention of those who controlled the education of the young. John Sinclair (1862), in his response to a school manager for a request for a list of books to be used in elementary schools advised that

> *One general principle to be kept in view is, the necessity of teaching the child that every word is the representative of an idea- the sign of something signified. With this view, even from the first lesson of joining two letters, the child should be taught to give the meaning, either by a synonym, an example, or definition, or by pointing to the object... it is a frequent fault in early class books that there is no regular progression at all, no rule observed as to the introduction of new words, nor as to the kind of words to be introduced.* (Sinclair, 1862, p. 15)

From this advice, the purpose of reading is to elicit meaning from text, that every word signifies a concept or 'idea'. Over the decades, reading instruction has moved from methods which emphasised look and say methods, to phonics and spelling approaches and even to whole language and meaning approaches. Huey (1908) favoured a phonics approach although at this time, the names of letters were taught and spelling words preceded pronouncing them.

During the reading debates also known as the 'great debate' in the 1960s (Chall, 1967), discussion centred around whether reading involved a whole language approach or involved the instruction of specific skills. Goodman (1976) advocated a 'top down' whole language approach where readers anticipate the meaning of the text without needing to use the syntactic and graphic clues. This whole language approach means pupils learn to read by reading, by being read to and immersed in a language rich, print- rich environment. On the other hand, a 'bottom up' approach implies that readers need to learn individual letters in words and to pay attention to the sequence of letters and patterns in words (Adams, 1994). This view stresses the importance of phonics in reading. Stanovich (1980) is of the view that readers use information from both levels, they need to use both approaches because relying on one or other view is limiting. According to the 'interactive compensatory model' (Stanovich, 1980), readers will use context to compensate for poor decoding skills. The two central skills involved in the reading process are alphabetic knowledge and using that knowledge to read and spell. Reading and writing are complex processes acquired over time in unique ways by individual children.

Elements of Reading Instruction

A national survey of all research relating to teaching children reading was carried out in the USA (NICHD, 2000). The National Reading Panel has been assessing the most effective methods of teaching reading since 1997. The report highlights five key reading- related abilities:

- *Phonemic awareness* (awareness of individual sounds in spoken words);
- *Phonics* (knowledge of sounds for letters and common letter patterns and the ability to apply that knowledge to read unfamiliar words);
- *Fluency* (ease and speed of reading);
- *Vocabulary* (knowledge of meanings of individual words);
- *Reading Comprehension* (understanding what has been read or heard).

Only those studies that had empirical evidence as to their effectiveness were included in the review of the National Reading Panel. On the basis of this wide ranging research, the Panel (2000) summarised what should be taught in effective reading programmes as follows:

- Direct instruction in phonemic awareness;
- Explicit phonics instruction;
- Guided repeated oral reading;
- Direct and indirect vocabulary instruction;
- Comprehension strategies instruction.

Similar components have been recommended in other studies, such as the National Literacy Strategy, (DfEE, 1998), or Early Reading Research, (Solity et al., 2000). All contain instruction in the following skills to promote phonemic and phonological awareness:

Phonological awareness: One of the major findings in reading research in the past 20 years has been that the facility in processing the phonology features of language is strongly related to the acquisition of beginning reading skills (Lieberman, 1987). Phonological processing is defined as the use of phonological information (the sounds of one's language in processing oral and written language). Phonological awareness is the awareness of the sound structure of a language.

Phonemic awareness: Phonemic awareness, on the other hand, is the ability to recognise that sounds are made up of individual speech sounds referred to as phonemes (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1999). For example there are three 3 speech sounds in hat = *h –a- t,* and 4 in chat = *ch – a- t.* The phonemes are not letters, they are sounds. Phonological and phonemic awareness are considered to be precursors to phonics and are needed to learn phonics (Morrow, 1993). Phonological awareness means identifying and manipulating large parts of spoken language i.e. whole words, syllables, initial sounds, onset and rimes. Research by Bradley & Bryant (1985) showed that early phonological awareness skills are a predictor of reading success in beginning readers.

Phonics instruction: Phonics is the most well known word study strategy. Phonics is the connection between symbols and sounds. The use of phonics requires children to learn letter sounds and combinations of letter sounds (phonemes) associated with their corresponding letter symbols (graphemes). There are 26 letters in the English alphabet, but at least 44 different sounds in English. Sound symbol correspondence is not always consistent in English. There are irregularities and exceptions to rules. Therefore readers need to learn by sight, but they also need strategies for 'sounding out' unknown words. Concerns about over-reliance on phonics include:

- There are many exceptions to the 'rules' of English spelling (inconsistent spelling pattern);
- Different dialects may affect the sounds of words ;
- The phonics approach does not suit all types of learners. If a child is weak in auditory discrimination, phonics may be unsuccessful as a reading strategy. He is best taught to his strengths, which could be a visual approach.

The phonics approach is just one strategy in the overall picture of literacy development. There are several approaches to phonics instruction (NRP, 2000) such as Analogy phonics, Synthetic phonics, Analytic phonics, Embedded phonics, and Phonics through spelling. The approaches are different according to what element of a word is analysed and how combinations of the phonemes are represented. The most successful approach is considered to be **Synthetic phonics.** Children are taught to blend phonemes in order to construct words (Lerner, 2003). Synthesis or blending of sounds is an essential early reading skill. A similar recommendation was part of the Early Reading Research in England (Solity et al., 2000). Teaching phonics should be considered as one part of a comprehensive program in learning to read (NRP, 2000). Research has shown that children who learn the sound symbol system of English read better than children who have not mastered this skill (Chall, 1967; NRP, 2000). Direct instruction in phonics has been associated with preventing reading failure in young children (Snow, Burns et al., 1998).

'Sight words' Sight Vocabulary: The term 'sight' to describe words indicates that the sight of the word activates the word in memory. Sight-reading is described as a 'fast acting process' The development of a sight vocabulary is essential for fluency in reading. The best way to recognise words is through instant recognition that does not need time to apply strategies.

'High frequency' words: 'High frequency' words are words that are found frequently in reading materials that need to be learned for quick recall. They are words that do not carry meaning, but hold sentences together. They may be difficult to decode as they have irregular spelling patterns. These words need to be learned and recalled from sight as they are most frequently used. They are often taught in a systematic and direct manner. According to Adams (1990) the following 13 words make up 25% of the words children find in early literacy texts: *a, and, for, he, in, is, it, of, that, the, to, was, you*. These words should be first on the list (priority) to learn (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996)

Summary

Reading and writing are complex processes acquired over time in unique ways by individual children. The emphasis in reading instruction has moved over time from a whole language approach to specific skill instruction. The current interactive view of reading emphasises the need to use both approaches in an integrated or balanced way. There is agreement regarding the need for direct instruction in certain skills, such as phonological and phonemic awareness, phonic skills, vocabulary instruction (including high frequency words) and comprehension strategies.

The importance of vocabulary development and language enrichment must not be ignored in this 'holistic' approach. No single element in the instructional approach to reading is more important than any other.

Preventing Reading difficulties

Successful early interventions

The process of learning to read does not develop easily for all children. Some may be at risk of developing reading difficulties and for these high risk children early intervention programmes aim to prevent later difficulties with reading. The first part of this section will review examples of successful early intervention programmes such as *Reading Recovery* and *Success for All.* Closer analysis of these programmes shows that linking assessment and teaching is a key factor in the success of these programmes. The importance of formative assessment procedures is reviewed.

Effective teachers of reading understand that different students require different methods at different times. No single method or approach has ever proved to be the perfect method (Adams, 1990). The most effective interventions for teaching reading are those, which have a more comprehensive instructional approach (Reason, 2003). A wide ranging 'scoping study' on teaching strategies and approaches for pupils with special educational needs (Davis & Florian, 2004) concluded that there is a need for explicit, comprehensive and integrated teaching of different aspects of reading and that reading should be linked to spelling and writing. From a whole school perspective early intervention for pupils with reading difficulties is widely recommended. Many children from 'at risk' populations could be successful if early intervention were available (Hiebert & Taylor, 1994). These early intervention programmes have been found to prevent children from falling behind their peers and from experiencing failure (Slavin & Madden, 1989; Stanovich, 1986). Three of these early literacy intervention programmes are reviewed below:

- Reading Recovery
- Success for All
- Accelerated learning programmes

Reading Recovery: Reading Recovery is a most effective early literacy intervention programme for struggling readers developed by Marie Clay in New Zealand (1985). It is designed for the lowest twenty percent of students in first grade who are under - achieving in literacy. The tuition creates authentic literacy experiences that are collaborative and active between teacher and child. Each session includes specific skill instruction as needed. Reading Recovery features the following elements: brief instruction period of 12-20 weeks; a clear focus on teaching strategies; reading and writing taught in the same process; and in- depth in - service for Reading Recovery teachers.

This is an integrated literacy model and philosophy of reading instruction. The instructional approach supports learning principles of the reading process rather than preplanned sequences of skills (Clay, 1985; Vygotsky, 1986). Features which contribute to its effectiveness are: the activities are structured during the tuition, focusing on re reading familiar text, reading new text, writing, word study and word building activities to build up learning strategies. There is close monitoring of what the child needs to know, and this focuses the teaching sessions. Writing and spelling activities are interlinked with reading, speaking and listening. There is intensive, one to one daily structured tuition for as long as is necessary for the child to catch up with his class level.

Success for All: Slavin & Madden's (2003) programme is for at risk students who are disadvantaged in literacy. It was developed to give instruction in preschool, kindergarten and primary grades, and to give one to one instruction if needed. The belief is that reading failure is fundamentally preventable. The main principles are *prevention of reading problems,* and *providing immediate intervention and help when needed.*

This approach to a beginning reading programme is based on literacy, which states that children need to learn in meaningful contexts and need systematic presentation of word attack skills. There are three parts to *Success For All:* an innovative curriculum and instruction in reading; tutorial support; and regrouping for (additional) reading instruction so that students are receiving support that is appropriate. The programme includes one to one tutoring in 20-minute sessions; daily 90 minute reading periods and classroom instruction that links whole language and structured phonics instruction. There is a family support team is in each school. The home school link is important to the success of early intervention. A major benefit of this programme is more effective classroom instruction. *Success For All* is considered to be a school wide reform programme and is recommended for schools with large numbers of low achieving pupils (DES, 2000).

Accelerated Learning programmes: A sample of three of these programmes will be reviewed: Enable Plus (Bowen & Yeomans, 2002); Interactive Reading Programme (Moss & Reason, 1998) and Literacy Acceleration (Lingard 1997).

Enable Plus: This is a small group literacy intervention programme, which aims to improve the reading skills of children at risk of failure (Bowen & Yeomans, 2002). It is provided additional to

the normal literacy programme provided in class. The programme is delivered by withdrawal teaching. The programme does not emphasise any one aspect of the reading process. The aim of the teaching is to integrate meaning, phonics and word recognition. Building self-esteem is a central part of the training. Features of the programme were the importance of direct instruction techniques, the influence of self-esteem on learning, and successful methods of hearing pupils read.

Interactive Reading Programme: This programme was piloted in UK in 1998. It was less expensive than Reading Recovery, yet designed to give slower readers the 'boost' they need. This was a programme consisting of ten weeks of small group teaching for year one children. Interactive group work was a significant feature of the programme for these pupils making slower progress in literacy (Moss & Reason, 1998). The programme consisted of shared activities that involved the children in responding together to the teacher, listening to each other, taking turns and reading and writing as a group under the direction of the teacher. This was a small-scale study of 16 children, divided into groups of 4. This model of accelerated learning was a small study without comparative data to evaluate its effectiveness, but the results of the study showed pupils made accelerated progress in reading.

Literacy Acceleration: This is a strategy, which involves giving daily help in small literacy groups for part of each week to low achieving students (Lingard, 1997). It involves daily intensive individual support to students through observing students reading and writing. The main focus is on bringing the students together in small groups and adapting the curriculum to meet their specific need. A 50 minute English lesson is given every day, consisting of meaningful reading and writing activities. Effective teaching strategies are combined to provide individual support for students. Substantial gains were reported from a study of secondary level students in Cornwall.

Effects of the intervention programmes

The intervention programmes selected contain many elements of successful early intervention. It is important to recognise and support those children with persistent literacy problems through a combination of cognitive measures and the monitoring of carefully planned additional tuition (Vellutino, Sipay, Small, Pratt, Chen & Denckla, 1996).

Reading Recovery (RR)[4] would appear to be the 'Rolls Royce' of early interventions (Moss & Reason, 1998) in terms of thoroughness and the evaluations reported. The positive effects of RR have been reported to be consistent throughout the child's primary education (Slavin, 1987). Some studies have questioned the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing several intervention programmes (Pinnell et al., 1994). It was reported that the one to one tutorial element is necessary but not sufficient to account for RR's success. RR teachers working one to one had better results

[4] For readability, in this comparative discussion Reading Recovery will be referred to by its initials, RR, and Success for all by its initials, SFA.

than those who worked in groups (Pinnell et al., 1994). The results also indicated that extensive training for RR teachers made a difference. Other groups of teachers who had received limited training did not achieve the results of RR teachers. It was significant that the RR teachers had a network of support that is ongoing. This study concluded that individual instruction; instructional emphasis and teacher professional development are all factors in the success of the RR tutorial programme.

The question of the long-term effectiveness of RR was challenged by Wade & Moore (1998). This was a follow up study of children between 10-12 years of age who had had RR when they were 6 years old, to determine whether or not they had remained level with their classmates in literacy in the intervening years. This group was compared with other members of the class who had not been in RR because they were not shown as the lowest achievers in their age group. Overall the ex-RR group performed significantly better than the comparison group. They proved to be better capable of learning and had developed a wider range of skills. On average, the ex-RR pupils were found to write longer and more accurately than their counterparts (Moore & Wade, 1984). It is also significant that these children maintained their gains throughout their primary school education. Other research pointed out that long term progress is dependent on the quality of general educational provision and some students may need additional 'boosts' (Sylva & Hurry, 1997). The main criticism of RR is the expense involved in training teachers and providing ongoing professional support and evaluation of the program. An evaluation of five different early intervention programs (Wasik & Slavin, 1993) confirms earlier findings that RR students out-performed all students on almost all measures. Studies in the UK (DfEE, 1997) also reported positive effects of the programme and substantial reasons to believe that RR is effective (DfEE, 1997a).

Success For All (SFA) is intended to be part of a school wide restructuring programme where there are a large number of under achieving pupils. A number of elements contribute to its effectiveness; regular monitoring of pupils achievement; 90 minutes per day is allocated to English and 20 minutes one to one tutoring for pupils with more serious reading difficulties. The main difference between SFA and RR is that in SFA the tutoring model is completely integrated with the instruction in the classroom. SFA also extends to individual 'reading tutors' for pupils and recommends involving parents in the child's reading. In a study comparing five different models of one to one tutoring programs (Wasik & Slavin, 1993) it was the programs with the most comprehensive models of reading and therefore the most complete instructional interventions that had the largest impact. It was also found that tutoring per se is not sufficient. The approach in SFA is focussed on stories and children's literature, for example the use of 'big books' and 'shared stories'. Support staff are trained to work with teachers to allow for 'regrouping' into smaller classes for reading, based on the children's reading levels. The coaching strategies used by the

tutors appear to contribute to the programme's effectiveness. The structure of the tuition sessions which links the reading and writing activities and which specifically focus on the individual needs of the learner, also contribute to the success of RR. The training of experienced teachers in the programmes of RR and SFA was most effective compared to the other programmes.

Other tutoring programmes and small group literacy interventions were found to be successful (Hiebert and Taylor, 1994), but it is unclear what type of teaching approach is promoted. The most critical ingredient seems to be the teachers' high expectations for the children and a conscious commitment by teachers to prevent further literacy difficulties among the lower achieving group.

It is interesting to note that the *Guidelines for Learning Support in Ireland* (DES, 2000) were influenced by the approach and methods outlined in SFA. However the full benefits of the SFA programme could not hope to be achieved given the limited duration of instruction time for pupils receiving learning support in Ireland (Eivers et al., 2004). It is significant that the duration of instruction time in each of these successful interventions is far greater than the average time allocated per child in learning support or resource teaching in Ireland

Literacy acceleration programmes

Each of the intervention programmes above, although different in many aspects, have more similarities than differences in terms of essential elements. The most significant elements of these successful literacy interventions are as follows:

Teachers' beliefs: The teachers' belief that reading failure can be prevented and that all pupils can make progress in reading and writing is a crucial element in the success of each of these intervention programmes. There is an expectation that pupils can make progress, either one to one in a tutorial group, or as part of a small 'interactive' group. The focus is on keeping the child with reading problems as far as possible, out of 'special education'.

Individual and group support: Small group teaching, however, is not always sufficient. Attention must also be given to those pupils who require further one to one support. Whereas RR is a one-to-one tutorial intervention, SFA and each of the accelerated options provide small group support, and additional one to support when it is needed.

Model of reading: In the RR programme, reading is viewed as a psycholinguistic process in which the reader constructs meaning from print (Clay, 1985). This model of reading is a significant feature and impacts on the effectiveness of the tuition. There are three principles to this model of reading which is unique to RR. First, reading is considered a strategic process that takes place in the child's mind. The meaning is derived from the interaction of the reader's background and the print. Second, reading and writing are inter-connected. Third, children learn to read by reading. The main difference between RR and other interventions is the integrated theory of reading, which

underpins the instruction. It has been shown that the interventions that had the largest impact were the programmes with the most comprehensive models of reading (Wasik & Slavin, 1993).

Meaningful reading and writing activities: Reading and writing in context as part of the instruction lesson, is a common feature of all of the successful interventions. The teaching of reading sub- skills is part of the instruction. Systematic phonological teaching is part of the instruction session in each of the interventions. However there is no systematic phonics teaching in RR tuition sessions, although it is an integral part of SFA and the accelerated learning programmes.

Coaching of reading strategies: This is an essential element of RR tuition. Pupils are taught strategies to apply to unknown words, and the focus is on what they need to know so they are not just working on isolated phonics skills.

Training of teachers: The teachers involved in RR receive in depth professional training for one year. Following the training, a support network for teachers is provided. This has been criticised as expensive, but evaluations of RR would suggest this is cost effective in the long term. Training is also provided for teachers in the SFA programme and to a lesser extent in each of the other interventions. A recent study (Savage & Carless, 2005) which trained Learning Support Assistants during a single morning in which the class teacher also attended the training sessions, showed that brief and focussed training could improve key reading skills among at risk children in Year 1. Other research confirms the fact that teaching assistants can deliver effective phonic literacy interventions after initial training (O'Shaughnessy & Swanson, 2000). It would appear that the quality of the teacher training has an influence on the effectiveness of the intervention.

Duration of instruction time: Each of the successful interventions allocates a significant amount of time to the literacy instruction. In SFA this is 90 minutes per day for small group teaching and additional 20 minutes for the pupils with severe reading difficulties. RR provides 30 minutes of tutoring per day until the student is at the level of his classmates. Decisions to 'discontinue tutoring' or to transfer a child out of the programme are taken very carefully with extensive consultation with his class teacher.

Monitoring of achievement: Close monitoring of the pupil's progress, and adjusting the teaching to the needs of the learner, are features of each intervention. Each student reads to an adult every day as part of the tuition session in each of the selected interventions reviewed.

Preventing reading difficulties: Linking assessment and teaching

The previous section examined early literacy interventions as a method of preventing reading difficulties. This section will review certain teaching approaches, which will enhance the potential of the reading instruction. These are *formative assessment, miscue analysis and running records.*

Formative assessment: There is wide acceptance of the view that there is a dynamic interaction between assessment and teaching (Reid, 1999; Westwood, 1997; Clay, 1993b). The essence of '*formative*' or ongoing assessment is noticing details of literate behaviour, imagining what they mean from the child's perspective, knowing what the child knows and can do and knowing how to arrange for that knowledge and competence to be displayed engaged and extended. This requires a 'sensitive observer' (Clay, 1993b) or 'kid watcher' (Goodman, 1978) a teacher who is present in the classroom, focused and receptive to noticing the children's literate behaviours (Rodgers, 2002). Vygotsky (1975) defined the '*Zone of proximal development'* as behaviours beyond the child's autonomous functioning, but within reach if assistance is provided. Children learn to perform tasks appropriately by interacting with more competent and responsive others who provide hints and prompts on an 'as needed' basis. According to Vygotsky, intellectual skills are developed in interaction with others. This concept underlies the impact of teacher interaction in the reading process. What a child can do with support now, he can be taught to do independently without that support. With support and assistance, he makes progress and this helps to extend his learning. This support has also been described as 'scaffolding' (Reid, 1998).

Significance of formative assessment: Schools and teachers use two different types of assessment to inform their teaching: formative assessment which provides information for planning instruction, and summative assessment for reporting children's progress over time and for reporting to other teachers and parents (Sheil & Murphy, 2000). It is recognised that formative assessment (of which miscue analysis and reading records are examples), promotes better teaching by giving information, which teachers can use to inform the next steps of learning. Research has shown that formative assessment directs teacher attention to

> *what needs to be taught and pupil attention to what needs to be learned i.e. it is integrated into the teaching and learning. It is characterised by attending to the learner's understandings, learning strategies and dispositions to learn, and it engages with the way the learner interprets the assessment tasks set and the criteria for their success...makes the criteria for success explicit to learners.* (Hall, 2001, p. 40)

Formative and summative assessment is not mutually exclusive. *Formative* assessment refers to assessment of *how* the pupils are learning, whereas *summative* assessment refers to *what* has been learned. Regular monitoring of pupil achievement and feedback to the individual pupil regarding the quality of work ensures a strong focus on developing the child's reading ability. There is a clear relationship between the increased use of formative assessment and achievement gains (Black & Williams, 1998; Fuch & Fuchs, 1986). Teachers in Ireland are regularly involved in summative assessment (Shiel et al., 2004; DES 2005a) but a recent report suggested that *'assessment was isolated from teaching and learning and was not seen as an integral part of the teaching process'* (DES, 2005, p. 20). It is suggested that the value of formative assessment has not been sufficiently highlighted in Ireland (Shiel et al., 2004, p. 168). Using assessment information formatively gives direct information to the class teacher on the child's developing skills.

The Drumcondra English Profiles (2000) are an assessment instrument, which can provide formative and summative assessment information on pupils reading progress. The Drumcondra English Profiles are sets of indicators based on content objectives in the revised English curriculum (NCCA, 1999). Indicator sets for Oral language, Reading, and Writing for each class level is outlined. They can provide information to summarise pupils' achievement at year-end but they also give 'formative' information on ongoing learning. Formative assessment practices may be unfamiliar to teachers (Shiel & Murphy, 1998; DES, 2005a). Formative assessment does not have to be standardised (Hall, 2001), the purpose of the assessment is to promote learning and not just to collect information. This has implications for teacher pre service education (Burke, 2000b). Large areas of classroom teaching are subject to teacher decision, discretion and autonomy (Burke, 2000b, p. 20). The central role of the teacher in decision making at all levels in the child's learning is evident. Teacher preparation is critical in determining the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of education in schools.

Miscue analysis: Clay noted that early readers do not attend to all the information in a text. Clay (1985) and Goodman (1969) have long recognised the value of error analysis as a means of assessing the student's strategies in learning to read. These 'errors' in reading are not errors per se, but the child's attempt at applying strategies to unknown words. Contingent instruction during oral reading can support the struggling reader to apply their letter sound knowledge in context (Clay, 1993a). Goodman has labelled this *'miscue analysis'* (1969) because every error, or miscue uses some set of cues and ignores others. Analysis of the errors and the changing pattern of errors over time reflect the child's reading development.

According to Clay (1993a) struggling readers are less likely shift their processing strategies without direct support in the context where strategic action is necessary. Focusing on the strengths the student has, lets us build on what the student can do, and focus on extending that processing system. This is one reason why isolated phonic instruction has failed to result in improved performance. Students may build this knowledge base in phonics, but they fail to use it in the context of reading texts. Schwarz (1997) refers to the students *'response history'* as a pattern of cues used, noticed or neglected. This knowledge helps the teachers decide the type of errors that might be most productive for future teaching.

Running record: A 'running record' is a detailed analysis of the readers 'miscues' or attempts to apply strategies to comprehend text. It is possible to get useful data on the child's reading pattern by observing the reading 'errors' and noting the type of error. Errors may be *omissions, additions, substitutions, repetitions, reversals, hesitations, or self corrections* (Reid, 1999; p. 47). Listening to students read text that is partially familiar provides a variety of teaching opportunities. A diagnostic reading record of the child's reading progress was designed by Clay (1985). This is an oral observation of the child's reading and goes beyond listening to the child read. It is a means of

analysing how the child uses different cueing systems (grapho-phonic, syntactic and semantic) as they read a text aloud. This is an easily documented descriptive assessment of the strategies the child uses.

While *miscue analysis* and *running records* have been selected as examples of formative assessment, teachers may also use other means of ongoing assessment such as: Cloze procedure, Observational records, Portfolios, Reading profiles, Scales, Checklists, Log books, Reading indicators, Self and peer assessment (Hall, 2000) in their repertoire of ongoing formative assessment of pupils' reading progress. Portfolios and reading and writing conferences are considered by Cahillane, McGovern & Hall (2005) to provide the best opportunities for obtaining the kind of information that will facilitate dialogue between the teacher and pupil.

Summary

Linking assessment and teaching has been shown to be a key element of the success of early intervention programmes such as Reading Recovery. Interaction between teacher and pupil has been highlighted as an essential component in each of the early intervention programmes. Specific teaching approaches will also help to prevent reading difficulties. It is recognised that the use of formative assessment is an important strategy in the assessment of learning and techniques such as miscue analysis and the use of running records are particularly effective in reading instruction.

What is dyslexia?

Despite the knowledge and information available on the use of the most effective reading instruction approaches, it appears that for some children reading does not develop normally. Since the 1960s there has been controversy about whether there exists a group of 'normal' children who have intrinsic cognitive difficulties that prevent them acquiring literacy skills 'normally'. Such children have been described as 'dyslexic'. The definition and explanation of dyslexia have long been problematic. This section will examine the historical development of the concept of dyslexia and some of the main issues and paradoxes surrounding identification. A causal modelling framework is presented to clarify these issues. The current provision for pupils with dyslexia in Ireland is reviewed in terms of a continuum of inclusion. Current provision for dyslexia in the United States, Northern Ireland and England and Wales is also reviewed in this section.

Historical development in definition and description:

'Word blindness': The early development of knowledge about dyslexia came initially from the medical profession. A German physician, Kussmaul (1877) described the condition of an adult who had lost the ability to read as '*word blindness*'. The term '*dyslexia*' was first used by a German ophthalmologist, Berlin, in 1887 to describe what would nowadays be called 'acquired dyslexia' i.e. significant reading difficulties due to neurological impairments. In 1895 Hinshelwood, a Scottish eye surgeon reported in *The Lancet* about the topic of word blindness and visual memory

in adults. Around the same time, 1896, two other medical practitioners Kerr and Pringle Morgan, described various children and each used the word '*congenital word blindness*' to describe the condition of developmental dyslexia. These two doctors are credited with being the discoverers of dyslexia in children (Pumfrey & Reason, 1989, p. 9). Medical investigations and research into 'word blindness' concentrated on the aetiology of the disorder and looked for abnormalities in the child who was failing to read.

Reading 'backwardness': In England the concept of '*backwardness*' in learning to read was identified by Cyril Burt, the first educational psychologist appointed to the Department of Education. Another educational psychologist Schonell (1942) described the classical 'remedial' child who 'could do better' based on the assumption that there are certain kinds of learning difficulty which can be overcome by appropriate educational methods. In America dyslexia was perceived as a problem of linguistic development at this time.

'Twisted symbols': Samuel Orton, a psychiatrist and early investigator of reading and language difficulties in the United States, described what he called '*strephosymbolia*' or twisted symbols, the reversal of letters and words as a result of failure to establish cerebral dominance in the left hemisphere, the location of the area of language (Orton, 1937). The Orton society was founded in 1949 and has provided facilities and developed programmes for students and guidelines for teachers with great support. This idea of reading difficulties as result of visual and perceptual difficulties led to further studies. Orton hypothesised that for some children reading difficulties were the symptom of a failure of one of the cerebral hemispheres to become the dominant control centre for speech, language and motor functions (Orton, 1925, 1937).

Debates about terminology of dyslexia

A variety of labels are used in the research literature to identify dyslexia. The research literature is divided between those searching for causal factors associated with dyslexia and those who are interested in identification and description of the condition. This has led to many inconsistencies in the definition of dyslexia. There is no agreed definition although there has been considerable research among the related disciplines of medicine, clinical and educational psychology, pedagogy, sociology and language. During the 1970s and 1980s reservations were expressed about the use of the term dyslexia (Pumfrey & Reason, 1998) because of its 'within child' focus more than a focus on intervention and instruction. The term 'specific learning difficulties' was adopted in the UK in preference to 'dyslexia'. Similarly in USA the term 'specific learning disability' or specific learning disabilities was used (see the definition of dyslexia in the USA Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1997). In psychological research and psycho- medical research the term dyslexia continued to be used. Compromise phrases such as 'specific learning difficulties' (e.g. dyslexia) continue to be used by education policy documents in the USA, UK and Ireland. Pumfrey & Reason list 11 different definitions of reading difficulties (1998, p. 14). Adams (1969)

listed 32 different definitions. The recurrent elements of these definitions are: phonological delay or deficit; temporal processing; skill automatisation; visual processing; syndrome; intelligence and cognitive profiles; subtypes; learning opportunities and social context; emotional factors (Reason, 2002, p. 192)

How specific are the difficulties experienced by the child with dyslexia? Is there a clear-cut population of learners who experience difficulties, which are unique to this group? At the heart of this question is the use of a discrepancy criterion of identification. A discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement may be evident in one or more areas e.g. oral expression, written expression, and basic reading skill or numeracy skill.

Specific developmental dyslexia

During the 1970s in the USA, the identification of dyslexia was operationalised in terms of academic discrepancy. Critchley (1968) believed that 'specific developmental dyslexia' was more complex than 'specific reading retardation' and involved fundamental cognitive disabilities of 'constitutional origin'. This exclusionary definition of 'specific developmental dyslexia' was encompassed into World Health neurology definition and also later accepted by the Orton Society. According to Pumfrey (1991), specific developmental dyslexia was characterised as a disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and socio cultural opportunity.

This definition of the World Health Neurology Federation, which was widely accepted, had a large influence on subsequent research and study of dyslexia. This definition of dyslexia highlights an exclusionary definition and gives a central role to that of average intelligence. This was carried over into legislation of United States Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) passed in 1975. More recently the term 'specific learning disability' in the United States includes dyslexia. The definition which has been adopted by a majority of states is the legal definition enshrined in the Individuals with USA Disabilities Education Act 1997 (IDEA):

> *The term specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations. Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual hearing or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance or of environmental cultural or economic disadvantage.* (IDEA, 1997).

Discrepancy factors and exclusionary factors: The inclusion of discrepancy criteria is one of the key components of IDEA definition, the difference or gap between a student's potential to achieve and his academic performance. In order to operationalise the definition, criteria for identification are used in each state (USA). The majority of states have adopted a discrepancy criterion as part of their identification process. A child may have a specific learning disability based on a discrepancy

between intellectual ability and his academic achievement in one or more areas. However studies have shown that many states were not satisfied with IDEA wording or inclusiveness (Mercer, 1985, 1990). Current trends indicated that discrepancy factors and exclusionary factors are basic to defining learning disabilities in all states. This practice has been criticised (Siegel, 1989; Stanovich, 1991). Exclusionary factors in defining dyslexia tell us what dyslexia is not but do not describe the condition. Exclusionary definitions of dyslexia are in evidence today and remain dominant in USA, Ireland, England, and Northern Ireland.

Discrepancy criteria: Criticism of the use of discrepancy criteria centres on the argument that there is no difference between 'dyslexic' readers and other 'poor readers' on measures of reading, spelling, phonological processing and memory skills. Studies have looked at the cognitive profile of poor readers with low reading achievement but no discrepancy (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and compared it with that of the dyslexic reader. Definition based on discrepancy has been useful for objective evidence of dyslexia at a behavioural level but raises questions as to why children with a lower IQ score are not identified as dyslexic. The unexpectedness of a child's difficulty has led to dyslexia being called the 'middle class disease'. With a low IQ score it can be difficult to show an even lower reading test score. There appears to be a bias against identifying dyslexia in the less able child. It is argued that other measures such as listening comprehension are better predictors of reading achievement (Stanovich, 1991; Snowling & Thomson, 1991). Other indicators of discrepancy could be more useful such as the difference between oral and written language (Reid, 1996) or discrepancies between curricular areas, and inconsistencies between non-word reading skills compared to word reading (Snowling, 2000). Reid & Weedon (1997) showed discrepancy between reading and listening comprehension to be an effective predictor of dyslexia.

A changing definition: a shift in focus

The focus of definition of dyslexia has shifted in the 1990s to include a neuro-developmental explanation of the disorder. The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) has expanded the concept and refers to the neurological basis of dyslexia as a complex neurological condition which is constitutional in origin. The symptoms may affect many areas of learning and may also be described as a specific difficulty in reading, spelling and written language. The BDA definition also refers to difficulties in numeracy, notational skills and motor function.

The field of genetics and neurobiology has begun to inform understanding of this reading disability. Magnetic resonance imaging and post mortem studies of brain tissue have shown the differences in the brains of individuals with dyslexia (Galaburda & Rosen, 2001). The magnocellular system in the brain has been shown to be abnormal in individuals with dyslexia. (Livingstone et al., 1991; Lovegrove, 1994). The impairment of the cerebellum was proposed by Nicolson & Fawcett (1990) as the underlying cause of dyslexia. In the USA Shaywitz (2003) has researched evidence of physiological brain dysfunction in dyslexic readers while reading. There is

also large evidence of genetic factors, which determine familial incidence of dyslexia (Shaywitz, 2003; Colorado Twin Studies, 1982, reported in De Fries, 1991).

Concept of intelligence in the definition of dyslexia

The use of IQ attainment discrepancy has been central to the identification of those with dyslexia as a distinct group different to poor readers and remains one of the key issues in relation to the concept of dyslexia. The argument is that dyslexic children have an average or above average potential and are experiencing 'unexpected difficulties' in the area of literacy acquisition (Reason and Frederickson, 1996). The differences and similarities between dyslexic and poor readers based on IQ alone are not clear. The Isle of Wight study by Tizzard (1972) concluded that *'reading retardation'* (dyslexia) should be differentiated from *'backwardness in reading'* on the basis of a discrepancy between intelligence and reading behaviour. There has been a lot of criticism of the use of ability – achievement discrepancy. In this author's view, these criticisms are valid for the following reasons:

- The notion that intelligence is central to the definition of learning difficulties assumes the learning difficulty is based in the individual, (notion of brain neuro-damage). This has led to widespread use of 'exclusionary criteria' (Keogh, 1990).
- The notion of discrepancy between aptitude and achievement means individuals do not function at a level consistent with their potential (Keogh, 1990).
- It is difficult to demonstrate cognitive differences among poor readers of differing IQs (Stanovich, 1988). The research questions the existence of a distinct group of poor readers who are 'dyslexic' and a distinct group of poor readers.
- Children with low IQ scores may be good mechanical readers ('hyperlexic') but their verbal IQ scores are 'artificially depressed' due to the sub scores in the IQ test, which is at the heart of their difficulties (Siegel, 1996).
- Discrepancy between ability in reading comprehension and listening comprehension may be a better measure of reading difficulties than measurement of intelligence (Durrell, 1969; Stanovich, 1988; Hoover & Gough, 1990).
- There are questions as to whether the IQ score measures a discrepancy in verbal or performance abilities, or both (Stanovich, 1986b). Intelligence test scores rely on acquired knowledge, which is influenced by reading. This has been referred to as the *'Matthew effect'* (Stanovich, 1986b) whereby those who read well, read more, their vocabulary improves, reading comprehension improves and test scores improve.
- An ability achievement discrepancy is less likely to be appropriate in the first two years of primary education as there is less 'expected achievement' to compare with intellectual ability. However the earlier the intervention the more effective it will be (Clay, 1975; Fletcher, 1998).

- Reading and reading disability are part of a continuum (Stanovich, 1988). The cut-off point between the reading disabled and the non-reading disabled is arbitrary.

There are huge difficulties with the notion of intelligence and learning difficulties (Swanson, 1990) due to the lack of an adequate conceptual definition of intelligence. According to Siegel (1990), it is time to abandon the IQ test. Time and money would be better spent on training people to give specific tests of achievement and to provide remediation based on a detailed knowledge of the child's actual academic skills. Swanson, (1990) is critical of the operationalising of the concept of intelligence. Current tests of intelligence (operational domain) are not theory based (conceptual domain), they do not emanate from a theory of intelligence and cognition (Swanson & Keogh, 1990).

Alternatives to a discrepancy approach

An alternative framework for identification and assessment of dyslexia has been put forward by Reid (1998), based on identifying the child's difficulties, discrepancies and differences.

IQ sub score patterns can reveal underlying patterns of difficulty and strength particular to specific learning difficulties (Reid, 1984, 1998). Certain sub tests in the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) (1994) are believed to indicate dyslexia (Doyle, 2002). These sub tests are *Arithmetic, Coding,* Information and *Digit span;* hence the acronym 'Acid' test for dyslexia.

Phonological processing skills have been identified as a core set of skills essential to accurate reading development. (Torgeson & Wagner, 1998; Shaywitz, 2002). Phonological processing skills are not related to intellectual ability. Shaywitz describes phonological difficulties for the dyslexic student as an isolated core deficit in a *'sea of strengths'*(p. 57) Strengths include verbal reasoning, abstract knowledge, and general information. Current research has highlighted the importance of phonological skills in identifying dyslexia. Phonological processing difficulties are considered to be independent of IQ.

A causal modelling framework

As is evident from this discussion, arriving at an agreed definition and description of dyslexia is problematic. A causal modelling framework was proposed by Frith (1999) to describe dyslexia at three levels: the biological level, cognitive level and behavioural level. The advantage of this model is that different causal models of dyslexia can be examined using the framework, without conflicting with each other. This model also allows for environmental influences, which interact at any or all of the three levels. For example, at the *biological* level, hypotheses would include genetic causes, such as magnocellular abnormality, left hemisphere disconnection or physiological brain dysfunction. At a *cognitive* level, explanations for dyslexia would include difficulties with information processing, or phonological processing. At the *behavioural* level, reading and spelling tests, non-word reading tests, poor phoneme awareness and poor naming speed would be evident.

Each level of the framework interacts with another. For example, a phonological processing deficit at the *cognitive* level may also be described and explained at the *behavioural* level by poor reading and spelling ability. A magnocellular abnormality at the *biological* level, may lead to slow processing at the *cognitive* level, also leading to poor speech development at the *behavioural* level.

An advantage of the framework is that even if the behavioural signs of dyslexia improve and the child begins to read, the underlying problem will still persist; therefore an understanding at a single level is not sufficient. Environment determines the remediation and compensation that helps the learner to overcome difficulties. This has implications for assessment, teaching, remediation and compensatory approaches to intervention. Pumfrey (1998) stated that the existence and labelling of a condition should have (a) distinct aetiology (b) identifying characteristics (c) prognosis (d) response to interventions. This model attempts to define this umbrella concept of dyslexia.

A working definition of dyslexia

The British Psychological Society (BPS) (1999) considered a number of possible areas within which hypotheses or explanations for dyslexia could be formulated, that could be considered within this framework. The explanations stressed different aspects in a causal modelling framework.

The core hypothesis of a phonological deficit has provided the main focus for the BPS (1998) and also the hypothesis of dyslexia as a 'syndrome' i.e. a constellation of difficulties also affecting areas other than reading and spelling. This approach looked for positive indicators of dyslexia (rather than exclusionary criteria) and acknowledged that dyslexia could occur in children representing a wide range of cognitive ability. There was considerable support (83%) for a working definition that separated description from causal explanations. The BPS proposed the following working definition of dyslexia as follows:

> *Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty.* (BPS, 1999. p. 12)

The definition focuses on literacy learning at the 'word level' and implies that the problem is severe and persistent, despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching.

Many of the areas considered by the psychologists in this report (BPS, 1999) may be considered at more than one level in the framework. At the cognitive level, a phonological delay or deficit, slow temporal processing or poor visual processing may also be explained at the behavioural level. These difficulties are influenced by and can be compensated by positive interaction at the environmental level (effective literacy intervention). However, the working definition is descriptive with no explanatory elements.

Separating reading disability from dyslexia: a multi dimensional model

The BPS report (1999) stated that dyslexia could not be identified on the basis of discrepancy between intelligence and reading ability. Dyslexia can only be defined at the *'word level'* (BPS, 1999). There has been a shift in emphasis from causality to assessment and intervention. Recent studies into reading development have tended to look at a multi dimensional model of reading disability (Shaywitz, 1992). This is a change from the 'categorical' model of defining different types of reading disability. The notion of a 'continuum' gives an understanding of children's differences in reading skills at different points along a continuum. It is an arbitrary point that distinguishes 'normal reading' from 'reading disabilities'. Children at each side of the 'cut off point' have very similar abilities and needs. Shaywitz maintains that the same factors -- biological, cognitive and instructional/behavioural -- are assumed to influence difference in reading skills at all points along the continuum.

Categorical definitions of reading disability do not take into account the fact that the difficulty may vary between children and even amongst children with the same reading attainment level. The notion that reading disabilities exist along a continuum from mild to severe presents a different view of dyslexia and one that has gained currency in educational practice in some countries. The description of dyslexia put forward by the TFD (2002) recognised that the difficulties presented by students with dyslexia range along a continuum from mild to severe, therefore there is a need for a continuum of interventions and other services.

Phonological processing

Current research in the area of phonological processing and the acquisition of language has led to the theory that phonological processing is central to acquiring literacy (Frith, 1981; Ellis, 1989; Goswami & Bryant, 1999). Research into the development of phonological awareness in young readers gives some insights into what has 'gone wrong' with the dyslexic reader. In a positive way early intervention in the training of phonological skills could prevent literacy difficulties. A common explanation for dyslexia is that it stems from an underlying phonological deficit (Snowling, 2000; Shaywitz, 2003). The processing of speech sounds has been identified as a critical link between spoken and written language (Bradley & Bryant, 1983). Other research showed the importance of a link between phonological knowledge and letter sound association in the development of reading skills. Central to the early reader is the ability to segment a stream of speech and to manipulate speech sounds. A key stage in the development of reading is the acquisition of an alphabetic strategy and *we can trace the evolution of this skill from implicit phonological awareness to spelling and thence to reading itself'* (Ellis, 1991, p. 80).

What is a phonological deficit?

The reading process has been described as a model of interconnecting processors, which interact with each other as the reader encounters print. Speed and fluency are needed to access the spelling, the sounds, the meaning and the context of a familiar word. In this model (Adams, 1998) the *phonological processor* provides a back up for the other systems involved in reading. The phonological processor accepts information or speech and translates this into word recognition. An insensitivity to the sounds of speech, or a difficulty relating speech sounds to letters and spellings is considered to be a central difficulty for those with dyslexic type reading difficulties (Stanovich, 1986; Frith, 1995). Phonological ability is considered to be independent of general cognitive ability (Shaywitz, 2003; Stanovich, 1991). The letters of an alphabetic script represent the phonemes of the language. Other writing systems (e.g., Japanese) do not use the small units of speech sounds as a basis for written symbols but use whole syllables. Languages with such a system would be more dyslexia friendly than English.

The reader in the English language has to convert the print on a page into a linguistic code, the phonetic code that contains the distinctive sound elements of the English language. A reader may have difficulty in a number of specific areas during this process. The specific skills involve the identification of phonemes, manipulation of phonemes and segmentation and blending of phonemes. The process of co-articulation means the individual phonemes in a word are blended together and spoken language appears seamless (Bishop, 1999). This makes it more difficult for the child to segment the separate sounds of spoken words. Beginning readers need to appreciate the segmental nature of sounds in words and the underlying sound structure of words. The phonological deficit hypothesis describes a weakness in *phonology* at the lowest level of the language system, and this interferes with the decoding ability of the reader. The main difficulty for the dyslexic child seems to be how speech sounds are perceived, coded, and produced. The other abilities necessary for comprehension, i.e. vocabulary, syntax, discourse and reasoning are all intact (Shaywitz, 2003). The *phonological representations* hypotheses (Hatcher & Snowling, 2002) suggest that children create phonological representations by mapping the speech they hear, onto the speech they produce and vice versa. For the dyslexic child these representations may be 'coarse grained', perhaps coding rhyme size units, whereas the representations of normal readers are coded at the level of the individual speech sound or phoneme. As a result the dyslexic child has difficulty in establishing the connections between the letter strings of printed words, and the phonemic sequences of spoken words.

A phonological representations hypothesis suggests that the inherited tendency in dyslexia may be slowness in establishing mappings between phonology and orthography (Hatcher & Snowling, 2002). The readers experience, general ability and working memory will interact with phonological knowledge during the decoding process (Hester & Hodson, 2004).

Summary

For the past hundred years the search has continued for a comprehensive definition of dyslexia that would satisfy each of the disciplines that have contributed to the current knowledge. Defining dyslexia at a single level of explanation, biological, cognitive or behavioural, will always lead to paradoxes (Frith, 1999). A causal modelling framework such as proposed by Frith gives a fuller understanding of the concept by linking the levels together. The working definition proposed by educational psychologists (BPS, 1999) focuses directly on the extent, severity and persistence of difficulties with reading and spelling. This notion of a continuum of difficulty leads to the current shift in interest away from causes to assessment and intervention.

In developing a framework for assessment and understanding of dyslexia, Reid (1998, 2002) suggests that assessment should be dynamic; understanding is (currently) scientific, intervention should be educational, differences are personal (Reid 2002). In this context, we now turn to an examination of the current provision for students with dyslexia in Ireland.

Provision for Dyslexia: Ireland and selected states

Since 1963 the DES has sanctioned learning support posts in schools to address the needs of pupils with difficulties in acquiring literacy skills. A range of supports for pupils with specific learning disabilities (including dyslexia) was introduced in 1975. This includes special schools (also known as reading schools) and special classes (reading units). In 1998 further support was sanctioned in the form of individual resource teaching for children with special educational needs arising from disabilities who are integrated into mainstream schools (DES, SPED 8/99) A subsequent review of current practice led to a change from individual allocation of support to a general allocation model of support (DES, SPED 02/05). To summarise, at present, support for pupils with dyslexia in Ireland is provided for in three different ways: learning support or resource teaching; enrolment in a special reading unit; enrolment in a special reading school. The underlying concept of dyslexia in current practice is that of a categorical quasi – medical model as outlined by the SERC report (1993). This committee adopted the term 'specific learning disability' in preference to 'dyslexia' and defined SLD as follows:

> *Impairments in specific areas such as reading, writing and arithmetical notation, the primary cause of which is not attributable to assessed ability being below the average range, to defective sight or hearing, to emotional factors, to a physical condition or to any extrinsic adverse circumstances.* (SERC, 1993, p. 86).

This is an example of an exclusionary definition of dyslexia as outlined above. There are implications of this approach at the identification stage, and also in the location and organisation of support teaching. At a systemic level, dyslexia in Ireland appears to be viewed as a within-child disability, which requires 'specialist support' from the resource or learning support teacher. The identification of dyslexia follows a comprehensive psycho-educational assessment which includes

assessment of cognitive ability and attainment in reading and spelling. Children, who are identified according to this definition, are eligible for special support or placement in a reading unit or reading school. Central to this view is the discrepancy notion of dyslexia as discussed above. The organisation of this support system is based on the notions of segregation, integration and inclusion (Diniz and Reed, 2001).

Criteria for special provision for dyslexia in Ireland

The SERC report (1993) set criteria for identifying pupils with specific learning disability (dyslexia) whose learning difficulties are so severe that special provision is necessary. These are: (a) assessment by an educational psychologist on a standardised intelligence test should place general intellectual ability in the average or above average range, and (b) performance in basic literacy skills should be at a very low level. In practice this is the the second percentile on standardised reading attainment tests.

Task Force on Dyslexia

The TFD was set up in 2000 in response to the concern about provision of support for pupils with dyslexia. Its Report (TFD, 2002) builds on recommendations of the previous study on remedial education in Ireland (Sheil & Morgan, 1998) and procedures outlined in Guidelines on Learning Support (DES, 2000). Following the TFD report, a four-phase model for identification of learning difficulties arising from dyslexia was proposed. In short, there are four phases to this model:

- Initial identification of a learning difference (3-5 years of age);
- Identification of a possible learning difficulty arising from dyslexia (5-7 years);
- Identification of dyslexia and analysis of learning needs (age 7-12) ;
- Annual review of learning needs (age 12years +).

These four phases represent a continuum. The Report acknowledged that there is a continuum of need among pupils and this must be matched by a continuum of appropriate provision. It is envisaged that the formal identification of dyslexia should occur only after the pupil has had at least one year's appropriate learning support and such intervention has been documented and evaluated (TFD, 2002, p. 63). The report described dyslexia as follows:

> *Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling and/or writing, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities and educational experiences. Dyslexia can be described at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically characterised by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be present.* (TFD, 2002, p. 31).

The Report has areas in common with education systems in other countries, such as: pupil's ability must be in average range or above; there must be a discrepancy between ability and attainment; and there should be a staged process of assessment.

The report has been welcomed and described as more than a policy document or guide to practice (Reid, 2003). The concept of individualisation of special support was considered by the Task Force to be a '*legal requirement*' and an '*educational imperative*' (2002, p. xv).

Definitions of dyslexia used in other educational systems and the procedures used to identify students with dyslexia who may have special educational needs will now be examined. Provision in the USA, Northern Ireland, and England & Wales will be addressed and some similarities outlined.

Current Provision in selected states

USA

In the USA the term 'specific learning disability' includes dyslexia. Most States have adopted the legal definition (IDEA, 1997):

> *the term specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations. Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.* (IDEA Act 1997, Section 602(26), p. 13)

Under this Act, assessment involves a multi disciplinary team, which collects and reviews assessment information and results in order to identify whether a disability is present. If the team identifies a disability, a second meeting is called to develop an individualised educational plan for the child. Parents, class teacher and other professionals, where relevant, are involved at this stage. A program of intervention is prepared which is designed to meet the child's needs. The concept of '*least restrictive environment*' determines the most appropriate placement for the child. This could be the resource room, regular classroom, special unit or special school. The most common placement is the resource room or the regular classroom.

Northern Ireland

Under Article 3 of the *Education (NI) Order* (1996), the Education and Library Boards are responsible for identifying, assessing and making statements of special educational needs for children living within their area. The *Special Needs Code of Practice* (2001) sets out a five-stage approach to assessment and identification of special educational need.

1. The process begins with the class teacher who identifies the child with a learning problem and differentiates the schoolwork to help the child overcome his difficulties.

2. At school level, the child's name may be put on the Special Education Needs Register and an education plan is prepared for the child.
3. Outside help may be sought at stage three, where considered necessary.
4. A formal statutory assessment may take place and a statement of special needs is drawn up. If a statement of special needs is prepared, proposals in the statement are implemented.
5. The statement may recommend special placement, in a special school, special unit or named mainstream school.

There has been variation between the five NI Education and Library Boards regarding the criteria that are applied in identifying dyslexia and in accessing special educational support. Following the publication of the report of the TFD, a working group of educational psychologists, under the direction of a regional strategy group for special education, issued a report to 'operationalise' this definition of dyslexia. They produced the following definition:

> *Dyslexia is best described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, spell or write, which persist despite appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties are not typical of performance in most other cognitive and academic areas* (Department of Education NI, 2006, p. 1).

This working definition requires that there is evidence of significant difficulties in literacy and that these difficulties are unexpected and persistent.

England and Wales

The *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (UK) was issued in 1994. The code has a definition of dyslexia that is currently similar to that used in Northern Ireland and also a staged assessment process. The Local Education Authorities (LEAs) seek clear evidence of the existence of the child's learning difficulty. The difficulties must be seen to be discrepancy- based, severe and persistent and there must be recorded evidence of a significant difficulty. The LEA seeks statutory assessment where the child's difficulties have not responded to measures taken by the school and external specialist. If the school cannot provide the support required, special education provision may be recommended. Similar to Northern Ireland, and recently in the Republic of Ireland (Education Act 1998, section 29), parents have the right to appeal the decisions regarding their child's learning needs. The updated Code of Practice (DfES 2001) has defined learning difficulties as impairments in 4 different areas of need. The areas of need are: Communication and Interaction; Cognition and Learning; Behaviour and Emotional and Social Development; Sensory and/or Physical Development. This is a move towards a more inclusive framework for identification of pupils' special educational needs.

Summary

There are some similarities in the criteria used regarding the identification and assessment procedures for dyslexia in each country. There is also some similarity in the types of provision for pupils with dyslexia in each of these countries. The definitions of dyslexia state that ability must be

in the average range or above. Early identification is recommended in each of the countries examined. There is a move towards a gradual or staged process of identification and assessment in England, Northern Ireland and the United States. This notion of a continuum of need implies that there should be a continuum of provision according to the severity of need. The concept of the least restrictive environment implies that one size does not fit all and that a range of supports are required to cater for the individual needs of dyslexic learners. Mainstream support is often provided. A multi disciplinary approach to the identification and assessment of needs is perceived as good practice in each of the countries. In Ireland, the DES (2002) has also recommended a staged process of assessment, and a whole school approach to the provision of support for pupils with special educational needs. Effective provision for students with learning difficulties including dyslexia is also dependent on the existence of adequate in school resources for early identification of pupils' needs. Catering for the diversity of pupils' needs in an inclusive school setting has shifted the focus away from the specific category of dyslexia and towards a whole school approach to providing extra support. This will be addressed in the next section.

Special Education

This section reviews the literature on some of the main concepts in special education. The question of special approaches or expertise for pupils with dyslexia is discussed. The move towards inclusion is considered and its implications for the present organisation of support for pupils with reading difficulties. The barriers to whole school provision for dyslexia are also considered and also the role of the support teacher in this changing context.

Is there specialist education pedagogy for students who are identified as dyslexic? Do pupils with specific reading difficulties need teachers with specialist techniques and teaching approaches?

There is a trend in the literature away from categories of special educational need since the Warnock Report (1978). Warnock proposed a new system to replace the categorisation of special educational needs. The notion of a 'continuum of need' conveys the idea of a spread of children's special needs in contrast to discrete categories of disability. As Warnock stated:

> *The purpose of education for all children is the same, the goals are the same, but the help that individual children will need in progressing towards them will be different* (Warnock, 1978, p. 5).

The SEN Code of Practice (DfEE, 1994) set out a model of how schools should respond to individual pupil's special educational needs. This was described as a model to *'assess and provide for the individual'* (Peacey, 2005). Since then, there has been a move towards more inclusive education policies in all schools.

Inclusion of pupils with special educational needs

In the *Convention on rights of the child* (1989) and the *Salamanca Statement* (1994) the UN has declared the right of all children to equal education within the mainstream system. The concept of inclusion is now a central theme in education policies in UK (DfEE 1997a, DfES, 2002) and Ireland (Education Act 1998, EPSEN Act 2004). Catering for the diversity of pupils' needs has meant a shift toward whole school processes accommodating the individual needs of all. The debate on effective inclusion in mainstream classes and whether or not there is a SEN pedagogy continues (Peacey, 2005; Norwich & Lewis, 2001). There are others who consider greater integration and inclusion of students to be socially just in a civil rights sense, but argue that it places ideology above research (Kavale & Mostert, 2004). Just as there is a continuum of pupils' needs, so there is also a need for a range of inclusive settings.

The problems in implementing inclusion have been well documented (see for instance, Weddell, 2005; Lewis & Norwich, 1999; Hargreaves, 2001; Dyson, 1991). There is a noticeable trend in the literature away from categories of special educational need and specialist teaching approaches, and an emphasis on the teaching- learning context for the student (Weddell, 2005; Kavale 2004; Hart, 1992). The focus is on the learner, the teacher and the task (curriculum). The concept of personalisation instead of individualisation has been presented as a way of including all children within the school community (Peacey, 2005). In this context, 'personalisation' means giving the student a defined role with the community of learning in class, while 'individualisation' is about the student doing something in place of what others are doing (Peacey, 2005, p. 4).

Differentiation of instruction

Differentiation of instruction is a method used in special education as a means of matching the learning to the individual pupil's abilities. Differentiation describes the process by which '*curriculum objectives, teaching methods, assessment methods, resources and learning activities are planned to cater for the needs of individual pupils* (NCCA, 1991). Differentiation has been associated with differences in children, differences that justify different teaching or adapting of the curriculum. In practice this involves adapting the instruction, modifying instructional materials or modifying the task. Caution is urged against merely simplifying work sheets (Bearne, 1996). Differentiation involves the re thinking of teaching approaches, applying different grouping strategies in the classroom and the optimum use of whatever resources and support may be available (Sebba & Ainscow, 1996). However the idea that differentiation is an essential feature of 'good practice' has been criticised as being itself part of the problem and a limitation of the curriculum opportunities provided for children (Hart, 1992). Individual difficulties can be viewed as a problem for the curriculum rather than for the child. '*By changing the task for everyone, the teacher can make it possible to alleviate difficulties while creating an experience which all can share'* (Hart, 1992, p. 137). This shifts the focus from children's abilities and characteristics to the

characteristics of the curriculum, and the teacher's professional interaction with the child's learning.

Mutual support strategies for pupils learning to read

Qui docet, discit (He who teaches, learns) (Comenius, 17th century Czech scholar and teacher)

There is a substantive body of research on cooperative learning, which shows that working with a partner promotes positive attitudes to learning and higher achievement. (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Other strategies of differentiation mentioned in the literature are peer tutoring and cross age tutoring. A range of peer support strategies have been shown to give effective support to pupils and teachers, particularly when traditional support structures of family and community are absent. Pupils' emotional and social functioning is interlinked with academic progress. There is evidence that those who receive personal attention from a peer tutor can develop greater confidence, greater motivation to work and improved attitude to work (Rogers, 1983; Centre for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA), 1998). Also children can show increased self-esteem (Charlton & David, 1997). The benefits for the tutor are equally impressive. The tutoring experience can help boost a child's self esteem, to feel useful, appreciated and productive. Peer support covers a range of areas including bereavement, bullying, reading, spelling, and maths. Cross age tutoring, and cross age reading/writing is another example of peer support and has been shown to greatly increase students' enjoyment and attitude to reading (Leland & Fitzpatrick, 1994). Cross age tutoring consists of matching older and younger students in a reading or writing programme. The older students learn specific strategies to use when reading to a younger child, and they are trained in how to work with kindergarten children. The objective is to increase enjoyment and enthusiasm for reading and writing for both partners. All of these 'differentiated' teaching approaches have been shown to be effective at classroom level, and can be integrated at class level for all pupils.

Special education pedagogy

In the current policy context, the discussion has moved to how to develop a pedagogy that is inclusive of all learners. The evidence suggests there is no specific special educational needs 'pedagogy'. The principles of good teaching are the same for all pupils. What works with most pupils would work with all pupils (Norwich & Lewis, 2001). A recent overview (Davis & Florian, 2004) of teaching strategies and approaches for pupils with special educational needs and a report on the theoretical bases of these strategies, found that the teaching approaches and strategies identified during this review were not sufficiently differentiated from those which are used to teach all children to justify a distinctive SEN pedagogy. This does not diminish the importance of special education knowledge but highlights it as an essential component . The report also reviewed the specialist knowledge required in teaching these pupils. For children with specific learning difficulties according to the research reviewed, there is little evidence of the need for distinctive teaching approaches although responding to individual difference is crucial.. The review found that

there is evidence that a multi method approach is 'promising', a '*combination of strategies produces more powerful effects than a single strategy solution'* (Davis & Florian, 2004, pp 4-6).

The notion of a 'continuum' of teaching approaches is useful in that, although there may not be 'distinctive' pedagogies for pupils with dyslexia, some dyslexic learners require more teaching adaptations than others. These students need more practice than others, 'over-learning', they also need more structure, detail and continuous assessment of their learning. Regarding teaching pupils with dyslexia, Norwich (1999) referred to a common curriculum and pedagogy as follows:

> *Specialist approaches have much in common with teaching literacy to any pupil, though there is a tendency to bottom –up approaches (e.g. synthetic phonics). Other differences include the degree of detail, structure, continuous assessment, record keeping and over-learning* (Lewis & Norwich, 1999, p. 39).

Whole school provision for dyslexia

The traditional approach to special education has been criticised in the literature as segregationist. The need for 'special' schools and 'expert' teachers has been questioned (Dessent, 1987; Dyson, 1989, 1991). The 'segregate or cure' assumption is closely linked to a 'within child' model of special educational needs. Provision for all pupils should be in the ordinary school (Dessent, 1989). This view recommends positive discrimination for pupils with special needs in order to compensate for obstacles in their learning. A whole school approach to remedial support is suggested. The individualised nature of special education has been criticised in favour of a curriculum view of educational difficulties (Ainscow, 1994). The problem could be 'reframed' and a change of perspective from a 'technical rational' model to a 'reflective enquiry' approach by teachers is suggested. Teacher development is central to this process. An example of teacher professional development to address this issue was central to the UNESCO study (1994). The 'special needs task' facing each school was reconstructed to a whole 'school improvement' process. This involved encouraging all the members to find ways of creating conditions that would facilitate and support the learning of all pupils (not just those with SEN). Others have stressed that the problem of appropriate provision can be reframed as one that depends on the wider political context and political agenda of a school just as much as the 'technical skills' of the teacher (Wearmouth, 2004). For example, the organisation of support for pupils with dyslexia can be distinguished as a system based on *segregation, integration*, or *inclusion* (McGregor, 1998). The *segregationist* model is the traditional system offering individual support to children with dyslexia. Parents tend to value this most. The *integrationist* model presumes that support is offered within the school, either withdrawal by the learning support/ resource teacher or as advice to class teacher. The assumption is that the problem is 'within child'. The '*inclusive'* model is based on a system of providing support to individuals, classes and teachers, in a holistic way, a partnership with pupils, staff and parents. It is hypothesised that if model three were widely adopted it would lead to a transformation

in children's attainments (McGregor, 1998). The table below outlines the features of three alternative models of support for children with specific learning difficulties.

Table 2.1: Alternative models of support for learning for children with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia)

Adapted from McGregor (1998), reproduced in Diniz and Reed (2001, p. 32)

Features of provision	***Segregationist (traditional)***	***Integrationist (transitional)***	***Inclusive (transformational)***
Support teaching (location)	Centre, Units, or private/ voluntary	Limited classroom based; withdrawal	Mainly classroom based
Support teaching (organisation)	One to one or small group with similar difficulties	One to one or small group with similar difficulties	Mainly in group / class with/ without similar difficulties
Roles for support staff	Direct teaching separate to class. May develop metacognitive strategies for individuals and small groups	Provision of advice/ materials to class teacher and parents for individual children. May develop meta-cognitive strategies for individuals and small groups	Partnership working with class teacher to support children in 5-14 curriculum Use of peer- tutoring, co-operative learning strategies
Assessment procedures	Referral by psychologist or specialists; children may be rejected on grounds of limited intellectual ability	Mainly undertaken by special education staff; teachers refer to special education; some referrals to psychological service; parents involved	Undertaken jointly by class teacher and specialist teacher. Parents/class teacher and schools centrally involved. Children partners in own learning. All children work together to achieve targets. Staged process used for persistent difficulties including referral to psychological service
Features of diagnosis	Usually child aged 8+ Gap of 2 years between Chronological age and Reading Age and I.Q.	Usually child aged 8+ Gap of 2 years between C.A. and R.A. and I.Q. Wider range of children supported with literacy and other difficulties	Emphasis on early identification of difficulties at or before 5 years. Support for children with any literacy difficulties. Assumption that all children in mainstream education can and should be literate (unless major cognitive/ physical difficulties)
Curricular emphasis	Focuses on child's basic language difficulties. Little or no opportunity to relate the work to general 5-14 class language work	Focus on child's basic language difficulties. May be different programme from the rest of the class	Children's specific difficulties and programmes to address these are integrated with overall class work. Emphasis on multi sensory methods for all children

Each type of support may be described as existing on a continuum of segregation, or integration or inclusiveness. McGregor (1998) maintains that if the model described as inclusive were to be adopted, this would lead to a transformation in children's attainments. A number of significant changes would need to take place in schools before this inclusive model would be a reality in the schools examined above, such as ongoing teacher professional development and specific training in inclusive or differentiated teaching practices which benefit all pupils. This model takes the focus away from the 'specialness' of dyslexia teaching and is a move towards the inclusion of the wide range of pupils with diversity of needs who need support. In Ireland, current provision for students with dyslexia is firmly rooted in the segregationist model outlined above. Pupils receive extra support for dyslexia in mainstream from the learning support or resource teacher, or in a special placement in a reading unit attached to a mainstream school. A third option for students is enrolment in a special reading school for a period of up to two years.

Barriers to the whole school approach

School code as a structural constraint

As each country in Europe attempts to make its regular schools more 'inclusive' in line with government and European policy, to cope with a wider diversity of pupils, the role of support teacher is in a constant state of transition (Emmanuelson, 2001). One of the dilemmas is the balance between supporting the individual pupils with special educational needs, and/or supporting the mainstream class teacher. The role of support teacher is central to the organisation and delivery of support to pupils with additional needs. Emmanuelson outlined how the role of the support teacher can be viewed in two different perspectives: *categorical* or *relational*. In all schools, there is a dominant '*school code*' and this determines how the support teacher operates. The role the support teacher adopts therefore, may be either *reactive managerial*, or *proactive reform guiding*. The role description of support teacher generally includes collaboration as an important part of the work (e.g. DES, 2000). However in a survey of 4 countries, Emmanuelson (2001) found that the main work of the support teacher reflects a '*categorical perspective*' understanding of special needs. Pupils are identified as pupils *with difficulties* rather than pupils *in difficulties*. The support teacher's role is therefore one of '*reactive manager*' as the dominant school code is a structural constraint to more inclusive practice.

There are other differing perspectives on the role of the support teacher. The current policy view of management of special educational needs in England has been described as 'technicist'. This presupposes that a learning difficulty can be seen as a technical problem that can be fixed by application of the necessary tool, a 'one size fits all' idea of learning difficulties; it is suggested that a more inclusive view is that of the 'reflective practitioner' (Wearmouth, 2004). This presumes that effective teaching can be reframed to incorporate ongoing reflection and analysis in order to

address individual needs. The process of reflection and reframing requires ongoing professional development, at a whole school level. The limitations of current levels of professional development among support teachers in Ireland are well documented (Lynch, 1995; Costello, 1997). As recently as 2001, a study identified the major concerns of resource teachers to be funding, training and professional development, and access to other professionals such as educational psychologists as key areas of concern for them (McCarthy, 2001). The research evidence has shown that quality in education is determined by the calibre of teachers who provide it (Burke, 2004).

The traditional 'segregationist' model of support is now being challenged by a more inclusive approach to supporting a wide diversity of pupils. The support teacher is seen as being 'in the vanguard' of the move towards more inclusive support (Emmanuelson, 2001). However the support teacher's role is influenced by the dominant 'school code'. Some support teachers may find themselves in a 'scapegoat role' of being responsible for inclusion in their school. The status given to the support teacher within the school community reflects the value of the support role and underlies the school code. Issues such as not enough time for collaboration with colleagues, too large a caseload of pupils, or a lack of clarity about the role limits the effectiveness of the support teacher's role. Other factors continue to hamper support teaching. There are 'territorial boundaries' perceived by mainstream teachers and questions of ownership of pupils with special educational needs (Bearn & Smith, 1998). The role of the support teacher has been shown to be defined by local tradition and practice (Emmanuelson, 2001; Lynch, 1995).

A more radical view is taken by Dyson (1998) who debates the paradoxes of the role of the special education teacher. The very existence of special needs teachers diverts resources away from the mainstream. The paradox is how can the special needs teachers, as agents of the whole school approach, bring about organisational and professional development from within their 'resourcing role'. The role is inherently paradoxical. The situation requires a complete re thinking of special needs and the support teacher's role. Dyson calls not for additional resources to enhance the child's functioning, but for a *reconstruction of mainstream provision, and in particular of the mainstream curriculum* (Dyson, 1991, p. 57). A 'pro-active reform-guiding' role for all teachers would be necessary in this context, as special needs teachers cannot themselves reconstruct the curriculum.

Collaboration/consultation/communication issues

Collaboration with colleagues is an important part of the role of support teacher (DES, 2000). The greatest proportion of the support teachers' time is taken up with individual support for pupils. Consequently, less time is given to supporting, communication and planning with colleagues. There was evidence of collaborative planning and teaching between the learning support teacher, the resource teacher and the mainstream class teacher in only two fifths of classrooms. (DES, 2005a, p. 16). The process of collaboration involves people *'with diverse areas of expertise as they work together to find creative solutions to mutually defined problems'* (Lerner, 2003, p. 164). This

underlines the need for collaboration to be addressed at a whole school level. Successful collaboration requires the following:

> *mutual goals; voluntary participation; equality among participants; shared responsibility for participation and decision making; shared responsibility for outcomes; shared resources.* (Lerner, 2003, p. 164)

In order to accomplish these goals, Lerner (2003, p. 167) identified two kinds of competencies, which the learning support teacher needed to have (a) competencies in professional knowledge and skills (having the proficiencies necessary for testing and teaching, and (b) competencies in human relationships (the art of working with people).

Withdrawal support

Withdrawal of pupils for individual or group instruction is the main means of support used by the majority of support teachers. Despite criticism of the withdrawal system of support (Shiel, Morgan Larney, 1998; Dyson, 1991, Mc Carthy, 2001) teachers continue to prefer to withdraw pupils from class for individual or small group support (90% of resource teachers prefer to withdraw pupils individually or in groups, Costello, 1997). In Scotland, a study examined the practices of learning support (primary and secondary) teachers and their perceptions of their role. The survey indicated that inclusion in mainstream with some withdrawal tuition was the most common provision for children with specific learning difficulties. A total of 91% of these teachers practice withdrawal teaching at primary level, 76% at second level. When asked to rank aspects of their role from most important to least important, 55% of primary teachers ranked withdrawal teaching as first or second priority in their support role. (Duffield, Brown & Riddell, 1995). Teachers perceived there are limitations to in- class support and withdrawing pupils with special needs is often more effective (Bearn & Smith, 1998). The issue of 'territorial boundaries' and sharing classes with support teachers was strongly held in this study. In the past five years other models of support have gained in practice (DES, 2000; Day, 2005). These instructional models are collaborative, and include co teaching, consultancy, teaming, peer and class tutoring. There are many variations on the co teaching model, such as parallel teaching, station teaching, alternative teaching design, supportive learning, consultant model, teaming model, peer tutoring.

Class and support teachers in Ireland are currently challenged to work together more closely since the DES (2003) has recently allocated resources directly to schools in a 'general allocation' model. This is a major change from the previous model of allocation of resources to individual pupils according to need (DES, 1999). This section will conclude with a review of the role of the support teacher in the Irish situation and the implications of these changes.

Developments in the role of the Learning Support/Resource Teacher

In this section the role of the Learning Support Teacher and Resource Teacher will be examined from its original concept in 1997 to its present form in the changing context of the DES guidelines

and recommendations. Every school is now required to have a school policy on learning support. The Education Act 1998 Section 9 states that the functions of a school must '*ensure that the educational needs of students including those with disability or special needs are identified and provided for*'. The NCCA curriculum guidelines for English language (1999c) recommend the early identification and remediation of reading difficulties.

> *It is essential that children with language and reading difficulties are identified as early as possible and given the necessary remedial support* (NCCA, 1999c, p. 20).

If a child in Junior or Senior Infants is having difficulty in developing phonological awareness, this is a good predictor that reading difficulties may follow. Bradley and Bryant (1983) linked early phonological awareness with later success in reading. The curriculum guidelines for English recommend that when a child with reading difficulties has been identified, '*an appropriate program of remedial intervention should be put in place*' (NCCA, 1999, p. 20).

The role of the Learning support teacher is outlined in detail in the DES Guidelines (DES, 2000).

> *The principal aim of learning support is to organise the teaching and learning process in order to enable pupils with learning difficulties to achieve adequate levels of proficiency in literacy and numeracy before leaving primary school.* (DES, 2000, p. 15).

The key tasks in defining this role are *collaboration* and *consultation* with all the partners involved, i.e. the class teachers, principal, parents, students and outside agencies. In the context of the whole school policy on learning support the Learning support teacher will contribute to school policy development; assist in whole school early intervention/ prevention; advise staff on the selection, use and interpretation of standardised tests; and consult with class teachers on the selection of pupils for diagnostic assessment. This approach reiterates the recommendation in the Guidelines on Remedial Education (DES, 1998), which urged a team approach with the 'remedial teacher' in a consultative role. While these collaborative and consultative activities are essential to the whole school policy on Learning Support, the main focus of the learning support teacher's work will be on providing *supplementary teaching* to pupils. This supplementary teaching may be provided either by withdrawing the child for learning support or by different shared teaching approaches.

Screening

For most schools, screening is the first stage in identifying children with special educational needs. This will be followed by diagnostic assessment by the learning support teacher and where necessary, further assessment by external agents such as an educational psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist or clinical psychologist. The screening measures used will help to identify children who are underachieving and who may need learning support in literacy and /or mathematics. It will also identify children who may have a specific or a general learning difficulty. Children who are achieving very highly but who may need greater differentiation of the curriculum will be noted. The information provided by the screening tests assists teachers in communicating progress to parents. The areas of progress most widely tested in schools are reading attainment and

mathematics. Examples of summative assessment tests used are standardised reading attainment tests such as the Drumcondra Primary Reading Tests (DPRT) (Educational Research Centre, 1997) and the Micra-T (Wall and Burke, 1991) reading tests. Screening tests are generally administered every year. The Learning support guidelines recommend a cut off score of the tenth percentile for pupils eligible to receive learning support. This is applied in order to prioritise those children scoring in the bottom ten percent of their peers.

Diagnostic assessment

Once low achievement or a learning problem has been identified following screening procedures, the class teacher will consult with the learning support teacher regarding which children require further testing. Parents will also be consulted. In order to explore the child's learning strengths and needs, the learning support teacher will carry out individual diagnostic assessment tests. The range of diagnostic tests used will depend on the child's age and level of development. At the early reading or emergent literacy stage the following areas may be assessed: print awareness, phonemic awareness, knowledge of letter sounds, letter identification, word recognition, visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, comprehension of words and sentences, spelling (approximate), writing and development of fine motor skills. For older pupils diagnostic assessment may focus on reading accuracy, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, reading fluency, sight words and writing and spelling skills.

A staged process of assessment

The TFD report (2002) addressed the identification of learning difficulties arising from dyslexia. This report recommended a 'phased process of assessment' for the identification of learning difficulties arising from dyslexia. It proposed a four-phase model of assessment as follows:

- Phase 1 initial identification of a learning difference (ages 3-5);
- Phase 2 identification of a possible learning difficulty arising from dyslexia (age 5-7);
- Phase 3 formal identification of dyslexia and analysis of needs (age 7-12);
- Annual review of learning needs (age 12+).

The phases of this assessment model may be viewed alongside the procedures outlined in the Learning support Guidelines (DES, 2000). Each phase of the model is viewed as lying along a continuum. The suggested age ranges are approximate. There is a broad based correspondence across Phase 1 and 2 of this model of assessment and the emergent literacy stage. Phases 3 and 4 of the Task Force model of assessment corresponded broadly with the next stages of development as a child progressed beyond early literacy.

Special education support teams

The traditional roles of Learning Support and Resource teacher are undergoing development and change as schools begin to organise more inclusive practices for pupils with special educational

needs. Special Educational Teaching (SET) has been recommended by DES as an approach to organise instruction for pupils with high incidence disabilities (DES SPED 24/03). The system of individual allocation of resources to individual pupils (DES SPED 08/02) was perceived to be a restriction to schools in organising support in a coherent way. Resources were allocated to individual pupils according to the severity of need. This was a barrier to effective planning and management of special education support from year to year. In order to allow schools to be more flexible with resources allocated to special education needs, the DES now supports school management in the development of

> *special education support teams that draw on the skills of all the specialist teachers (visiting teachers, learning support, resource teachers, resource teachers for Travellers, language teachers for non nationals), without making artificial distinctions between them.* (DES SPED 24/03)

Do schools make a difference?

How the schooling is organised for the pupil with special needs has a substantial effect upon the student, his self-perception and his progress. Schools which are effective in promoting the progress of one group, are generally also effective for other groups. Research into effective schools links certain factors with student progress and success. Stoll et al., (1988) identified the following key characteristics associated with effective schools:

- Purposeful leadership of staff by head teacher, and involvement of Deputy Head;
- Involvement of all teachers;
- Consistency of teaching approach, structured teaching sessions, well organised;
- Intellectually challenging teaching (higher order thinking encouraged);
- Work centred environment -busy purposeful class room;
- Limited focus within sessions;
- Maximum communication between pupil and teacher;
- Record keeping;
- Parental involvement;
- Positive climate (rewards, praise).

In the Irish context, the guidelines on Learning Support (2000) have endorsed some of the above elements and also included elements of the successful early intervention programme *Success for All* (Slavin & Madden, 2003). However, this programme also included a strong focus on additional elements which are noticeably absent from the Irish context. These additional elements are:

- Provision of adequate in career development of teachers (3 days in service training for first three years of the programme)
- Input of a literacy coordinator, this is recommended to support teachers implementing the programme
- 90 minutes per day for group instruction in reading;

- extra 20 minutes per day for pupils with severe reading difficulties
- assessment of pupils every eight weeks

For a school wide restructuring programme to be effective, adequate resources must be provided at structural level with appropriate professional development of teachers.

Gap between policy and practice

The role of the support teacher is pivotal in any proposed change in a whole school approach to additional support. This applies not only to Ireland but to all educational systems which have previously undergone wide ranging changes. There appears to be a gap between the role of the support teachers as envisaged by policy makers and the actual reality of the role (Crowther, Dyson & Millward, 2001). Insufficient time to perform the duties associated with the role and inadequate qualifications is one explanation. Another is the expectations of a support role that is operationalised as a 'managerial' role and the capacity of the individual to fulfil this aspect of the role. (Emanuelson, 2001).

There are paradoxes in the policy and practice regarding the role of the support teacher. The special needs teacher's role is based on *'separate individualised provision, yet seeks to influence mainstream teachers in an integrated, large group setting'* (Dyson, 1991, p. 53). This role may be 'categorical' or 'relational', and 'compensatory' or 'proactive/developmental'. Different types of learners vary along a continuum and not all learners with a disability have special educational needs. The conceptual differences lie in the definitions of special education and the notion of disability. A fixed notion of disability exists in the current organisation of schools in Ireland, and a diagnosis-treatment model of teaching and learning does not promote the process of accommodating difference.

Summary

The issue of special support for pupils is underpinned by the conceptual definitions of disability and how this extra support is to be organised. Each type of support may be described as existing on a continuum of segregation, integration or inclusiveness. Support for the pupil with dyslexia must be viewed in the context of whole school support for pupils with a diversity of learning needs. Despite the recent movement towards more inclusive schooling, there are structural and organisational barriers evident to inclusion in all schools. The role of the support teacher as it is currently understood is multifaceted. On the one hand the support teacher provides individual support to pupils who need supplementary teaching, yet at an organisational level, may be the person responsible for inclusive practices in the whole school. There is a gap between the role envisaged by policy makers and the actual reality of the role. These questions need to be addressed by schools in order to clarify the whole school response to managing the additional learning needs of many pupils.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

This study sets out to explore the special educational context and the additional support provided for pupils with dyslexia. There is a common understanding that this provision is 'special' and 'different' to what is provided for these pupils in mainstream classes. But what is it and how effective is it? The study focuses on the teaching strategies and interventions regularly used in each of the special settings. This chapter explains the methods used in carrying out the study, giving special emphasis to the analysis of data. The chapter will describe the methodologies and procedures used in the research study.

The main ***objective*** of the study was to examine the 'special' provision for pupils with dyslexia who were receiving extra support in primary school during the school years 2003-2005. The extra support provided to these pupils may take three different forms:

- enrolment in a special reading unit
- enrolment in a special reading school
- support from Resource or Learning support teacher.

A further type of specialist support is provided outside school by tutors in the DAI. The teaching strategies and interventions used in the weekly workshops were also examined. The study focuses on the teaching and learning context for the student, for the resource or special class or reading teacher, for his parents and for the regular 'base class' teacher in mainstream. In order to explore the different settings and to investigate fully the issues which influence the effectiveness of the placement and issues which in turn are affected by the placement, various methods and procedures were used. Interventions by the class teachers, the teaching approaches and the skills taught will be evaluated. The role of the support teacher, the resource teacher, special class teacher in the context of the special setting will be addressed in the study, and a wide range of variables and issues will be analyzed.

The Research context: Changes in provision for pupils with special educational needs

The DES has an obligation to support pupils with special educational needs since the implementation of the Education Act 1998. A system of resource allocation was introduced in 1999 and revised in 2002. Since 2002, very significant levels of resources have been allocated to schools. Numbers of special needs resource teachers had grown from 78 at the end of 1997 to over 2,000 in 2003. In September 2003 a review of special education resources in schools was undertaken by NEPS in conjunction with DES. The huge increase in the area of resource teaching and the allocation of special needs assistants was investigated. A quarter of schools in their sample were considered to be over resourced, i.e. criteria of entitlement to additional resource support were not adhered to.

A staged approach to assessment, intervention and review was proposed. This is in line with principles of inclusion as outlined in Learning support guidelines (DES, 2002) and other recommendations of the TFD (2002). This however marked the first step in the transition from an *individualised* allocation of resource teaching support for pupils with dyslexia (and other special needs) to a *general* allocation of resources. This change in DES policy created questions and uncertainty for school principals regarding the allocation of extra support to pupils who were identified as dyslexic. Principals had to review all pupils needing extra support, in the context of the needs of the whole school. This change in practice explains the uncertainty surrounding the sanctioned 2.5 resource hours for pupils with dyslexia at the beginning of the school year 2003. In effect, this allocation was no longer an option for school principals.

Even though some pupils had been allocated individual resource teaching, some principals expressed a difficulty in providing in-school support of 2.5 hours per week of individual support to pupils with dyslexia. This can be difficult for school principals to fill as many principals explained to the author by telephone and when returning unused 'parent consent letters'. Some principals hold onto this allocation with the prospect of filling a full time post for resource teaching when further students are assessed and allocated resources. In the meantime a student with dyslexia is eligible for learning support (as he/she is scoring below the 10th percentile on standardised reading test). The researcher was aware that school principals were concerned about withdrawal of resources for children with special needs. Some of the reasons for over supply of resource support were as follows:

- Existence of '*client relationship*' between psychologist and family; the psychologist often recommended extra resources for a student in addition to resources already in place in the school.
- School principals did not have the flexibility to prioritise resources for pupils with special education needs or specific learning disabilities as the extra resources could only be provided by individualising the support by means of psychologist's report
- Psychologists in private practice were not always aware of the DES criteria for provision of special education support and were not familiar with DES circulars SPED 07/03 and 08/03.
- Problem when resource teaching posts cannot be filled by qualified personnel, and lack of in service training. The learning support teacher may be the most qualified person to provide extra support to a student with dyslexia, yet allocation is 2.5 hours of special support by resource teacher.

During 2003 the DES outlined a new 'weighted' system of allocation of resources for pupils with what are termed 'high incidence' special educational needs. An annual allocation of teaching hours/posts was to be made to schools based on a predicted incidence of special educational needs in the school population. This would lessen the need for individual assessments and applications

for resources for individual students. (DES, SPED 24/03). In the school year 2005-06, this general allocation system was introduced. Dyslexia was re-categorised as a 'high incidence' learning difficulty to be supported from within the school's general allocation of extra resources. Children with dyslexia will now be supported by the Learning support or Resource teacher and will not receive an individual allocation of resource teaching hours (DES SPED 24/03).

These changes in the provision of special support have had an effect on all schools; as will be seen below, they also impacted on the process of seeking teacher and school participation in this research process.

Use of terms

The terms 'specific learning disability' and 'specific learning difficulty' both appear in the literature on reading difficulties, and also in policy statements issued by educational systems. In Ireland SERC (1993) used the term 'specific learning disability' and defined this as

> *impairment in specific aspects of reading writing and arithmetical notation, the primary cause of which is not attributable to assessed ability being below the average range, to defective sight or hearing, emotional factors, a physical condition, or to any extrinsic adverse circumstances* (SERC, 1993, p. 86).

In 2000, Dr. Michael Woods, then Minister for Education and Science used the term 'dyslexia' in setting up the TFD. This was the first time the DES used term. The TFD report proposed a broader conceptualisation of dyslexia as follows:

> *Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling and/ or writing, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities and educational experiences. Dyslexia can be described at the neurological, behavioural and cognitive levels. It is typically characterised by inefficient information processing including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be present*
>
> (TFD, 2002, p. 2).
>
> This description of dyslexia will be used by this author throughout the present study.

Description of the special settings

This section will give details of the special support provided for primary school pupils with dyslexia. Special education support in primary school is provided for pupils who have been identified as dyslexic in three different ways: reading schools, reading units and resource teaching support.

The study took place over a period of two school years (September 2003 to June 2005) in a sample of schools where pupils with dyslexia were receiving special provision. Special reading schools, special reading units in mainstream schools, and resource teaching support for pupils with dyslexia in mainstream schools were identified as the contexts for selecting pupils for the longitudinal study.

Each group of participants was chosen for its particular view and perception of the special support provided to pupils. The research study looks at the teaching and learning context of each special setting, and asks how the settings differ in terms of the teaching and learning context for the student, for his parents, for his special class or resource teacher. The study questions the effectiveness of this special education support to the student with dyslexia, in terms of progress in literacy, benefits to the pupil, his teacher and his parents.

The views of each of the participants in this study provided its own unique interpretation of the special support.

Reading Schools: There are four 'special' primary schools in Ireland for students with specific learning difficulties including those arising from dyslexia. These schools are commonly referred to as *'reading schools'* indicating that the pupils' primary difficulty is reading. Three of these schools are in Dublin, one in Cork. Placement is for one or two years; students then return to mainstream. The pupil teacher ratio in these reading schools is 9:1. The DES (1998) set criteria for enrolment:

- General intellectual ability in average range or above
- Obvious discrepancy between intellectual ability and performance on a standardised test of reading ability
- Consideration also given to child's speaking, writing and spelling skills

Reading units have been established in designated mainstream schools around the country where there is a sufficient number of students with such difficulties to form a class. The units comprise a total of twenty three classes (DES, September 2003). The Report of TFD (DES, 2002) indicated 19 units. A list from DES (DES, 2003) named 23 units in 14 schools. Contact was made with all the schools listed as having a reading unit. Reading Units do not exist in all counties of Ireland. (See Map of Ireland in Appendix 5 for location and distribution of classes). Of the 14 schools who have a recognised reading unit, five are in Dublin, two each in Limerick, Clare and Wexford, and one each in Galway, Donegal and Kerry. The pupil teacher ratio was 11:1 (DES SPED 08/99); currently it is 9:1 (September 04). It is expected that children enrolled in a reading unit would also spend part of the day with their peers in a mainstream class. This dual enrolment is in line with DES policy on inclusion. An enhanced capitation grant is payable to schools for children enrolled in reading units. The following are key criteria for enrolment in a reading unit:

- General intellectual ability in average range or above;
- Obvious discrepancy between intellectual ability and performance on a standardised test of reading ability;
- Consideration also given to child's speaking, writing and spelling skills.

These enrolment criteria are broader than criteria for access to resource teaching as outlined in DES SPED 8/99. Progress in other aspects of the curriculum is taken into consideration and also the

child's adaptation to learning in the mainstream class. The second percentile is not specified as a cut-off point, unlike the criteria for resource teaching.

Resource teaching support: Resource teachers were appointed to schools on an ex quota basis to provide additional teaching support to children who have special educational needs arising from disabilities and are fully integrated into mainstream schools (DES, 1999). Resource teaching posts were allocated to schools or clusters of schools where there is a sufficient number of children to warrant a full time post. The criteria for eligibility for resource teaching arising from dyslexia were outlined in DES SPED 08/99; children with dyslexia are eligible for resource teaching if they have been assessed by a psychologist as being of average intelligence or higher; and having a degree of learning disability specific to basic skills in reading writing or mathematics which places them at or below the second percentile on suitable standardised tests.

A resource teacher may have a case load of students with a variety of special needs. Each child with a disability is given a resource support hours weighting in line with the current pupil teacher ratio in special schools and special classes for that disability. A student with dyslexia currently accounts for $1/11^{th}$ of a teaching post (the fraction is based on the 1999 pupil-teacher ratio for special classes) and is normally allocated 2.5 hours of resource teaching support each week.

Main Participants

The research questions were addressed to each of the following participant groups.

Teachers: The main focus of the research was to examine and explore the teaching approaches, methods and interventions used in each of the special settings. Teachers who worked in special reading schools, teachers who worked in special reading units and teachers who provided extra support to pupils with dyslexia / reading difficulties were invited to participate. The views of teachers were elicited by postal questionnaire. Following the questionnaires, 'focus group' discussions with teachers were organised and this gave an opportunity to explore further issues in depth. Individual teachers who were in the schools selected as a case study, were interviewed. Several school Principals were interviewed and in addition, some other teachers in key positions such as special needs coordinator.

Tutors: As the study evolved, it was decided to include teachers who were employed as tutors by the DAI to provide private tuition to pupils with dyslexia. This would give additional information on specialist teaching approaches and interventions. There are thirty five workshops around the country. The coordinator and tutors from each workshop were invited to participate by completing a postal questionnaire. Consultation took place with the director of the association regarding the design of the questionnaire.

Parents whose children were enrolled in a special placement from the beginning of September 2003, were invited to participate. Parents' views and perceptions of the special placement may vary

from that of the schools view, or indeed the child's own understanding of the placement. As partners in their child's education, parents' views and suggestions and their issues of concern made a valuable contribution to the study. Parents of pupils in each of the three cohorts were invited to complete a questionnaire. Following the questionnaire, focus group discussions took place with groups of parents to develop some of the issues discussed in the questionnaire. Parents of past pupils who had moved onto second level school, or were now back in mainstream were also included. These parents participated in individual structured telephone interviews.

Pupils: The reading attainment of pupils during the special placement was recorded. Pupils' attainments in reading accuracy, reading comprehension, spelling and word identification scores on entry to the placement were recorded. Progress was measured after one year, and again after two years in the special setting. Information on the pupils' general ability and his/her reading attainments as assessed by an educational psychologist, was recorded at the beginning of the special placement. Progress in reading was recorded by the special class teacher or support teacher at the end of the first year of special support, and again at the end of the two year placement. The voices of the pupils, their views and perceptions were also heard. Pupils were invited to take part in a class discussion about dyslexia and the special placement. The pupils' perception of progress in literacy and the benefits of specific teaching approaches and strategies were all explored.

Teacher and tutor participants

Schools and teachers

All the reading schools (4), schools with a reading unit (14), and schools with pupils who had sanctioned resource teaching hours on grounds of dyslexia (156) were invited to participate. A sample of six schools was then selected for an in depth case study, comprising two mainstream schools with resource teaching support, two schools with reading units, and two reading schools. The research activities in these schools covered a three month period from April to June 2005.

Reading schools: The total enrolment in the four reading schools is approximately two hundred and fifty pupils. At the planning stage of the study, contact was made with Principals of three reading schools, two in Dublin one in Cork. The researcher, who is principal of a reading school in Dublin had the support of the Board of Management in order to facilitate the study. In total four reading schools were included. Out of an estimated number of 82 new pupils to reading schools, 71 pupils who returned parental consent letters were included.

Reading units: The 14 designated schools with reading units were invited to participate. Some of these schools had reduced the number of units from two to one so 19 classes were now in existence (instead of 23 classes as listed by DES). The new entrants for the school year 2003 were invited to participate. The researcher had estimated approximately five new pupils per class would be

enrolled, but as children remain for a second year not all the new pupils were in the same class. Principals of some of the reading units declined to take part as this study was following so closely behind a previous study carried out by NEPS which had just been completed and had investigated the outcomes and reading attainments of pupils in three models of special education setting (Nugent 2003). They understood that this research would focus on the same pupils and were hesitant to seek parental consent for a second time. The outcomes of reading attainment as reported in the Nugent (2005) study will inform the interpretation and analysis of findings in this study. A total of five schools with a special reading unit took part in the measuring of pupils' reading attainments over the two years. Thirty one (31) pupils from these five schools returned parental consent letters and were included. These pupils were from five separate reading units. As the study evolved it was decided to include a case study approach to a sample of specific schools. A case study process will explore in depth from an interpretive perspective to identify why certain outcomes might happen, more than just finding out what the outcomes are.

Resource teaching support: The third context for the study was those pupils identified as dyslexic and receiving individual resource teaching of 2.5 hours per week in the school (DES SPED 08/99). At the planning stage of the study, contact was made with the DES Special Education Section (April 2003), in order to determine which pupils would receive this individual support of 2.5 hours or more beginning on 1st September of the upcoming school year. A list of schools where resource teaching hours had been sanctioned since April 2003 was compiled. The individual pupils' names were not released. As 2.5 hours was the special support agreed for pupils with dyslexia, it was clear from the list which schools were entitled to resource support for certain pupils. The researcher sought assistance from the regional director of NEPS, in obtaining a sample of pupils in receipt of resource teaching this first year of the study. A total of 61 schools were listed with resource teaching sanctioned for 78 children from September 2003. A further 95 schools with resource teaching support for 78 children were '*considered for sanction by the Department*' pending a letter from each Board of Management certifying the necessity for such resources. A total of 156 schools were contacted and invited to participate in the study. Four schools replied.

Difficulties in accessing the resource teacher sample: During the first term of the school year 2003-04, there was a limited response to the study from all the schools where resource hours had been sanctioned. This was in contrast with a very good response from the reading schools and satisfactory response from the reading units. Investigation revealed that this was substantially due to the particular difficulties faced by school principals at the opening of this school year. The initiation of this study coincided with the DES national review of special needs resources in primary schools in September 2003. The move from a model of individual allocation of resources to one of general allocation of resources was also being operationalised. There was a belief that in the future an enhanced learning support/resource role may be developed to cater for the specific

learning difficulties associated with dyslexia. The future position of dyslexia on a list of disability categories entitled to special education provision raised questions. As regards pupils with dyslexia the DES states:

> *only those pupils who have learning difficulties arising from their disabilities and whose special educational needs cannot be fully met by the class teacher and/or the learning support teacher should be supported by resource teaching or special class placement* (DES, SPED 01/05).

School principals were anxious about withdrawal of special education resources to individual children. The author was informed by NEPS that very few of the pupils who were sanctioned resource hours by NEPS psychologists had actually received these hours.

Throughout the planning stages of the study there was a real sense that it was a time of transition in special education in Ireland and for some partners, a time of uncertainty. This researcher was frequently questioned about the DES's plans regarding the future of special classes, special reading units and special schools. These issues were discussed at length with NEPS psychologists, DES inspectors, principal colleagues around the country and lecturers in the special education department of one college of education.

Overcoming difficulties – Increasing Participation: As the main focus of the study is on the teaching and learning interventions for pupils with dyslexia the researcher decided to address groups of teachers who support pupils with dyslexia in their daily work with a view to including these teachers in the study. Contact was made with two Education Centres – one urban, one regional -- with a view to addressing support teachers who attend monthly meetings for professional support and information.

ILSA facilitate monthly meetings for learning support and resource teachers in the urban education centre. ILSA facilitated the researcher to address the teachers at one of these meetings. The researcher outlined the objectives of the study and invited the teachers to contribute to the research study. Fifty questionnaires were distributed at the meeting; thirty one teachers participated. The researcher attended two of the monthly meetings organised by ILSA in the regional Education Centre, and introduced the teachers to the research study. Teachers were invited to contribute to the study. Thirty questionnaires were distributed; eighteen teachers participated. A small number of mainstream teachers were also in attendance at the meetings both Education Centres, hence the inclusion of 14 mainstream teachers who returned completed questionnaires.

DAI tutors

The DAI provides support for the families and private tuition to the students with dyslexia in Ireland. This support takes place at weekly regular tuition workshops around the country. As the objective of the study is to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching approaches and

interventions, the researcher decided to include data on the specialist teaching approaches, methods and interventions used by the tutors in the weekly workshops.

In December 2004 contact was made with the DAI director. The researcher maintains good relations with the personnel in the dyslexia association through presentations at conferences, talks for parents of students with dyslexia, referral to workshops and membership of the TFD. This rapport and support was important in establishing trust and securing permission to contact the coordinators of the 35 workshops around the country. As this would be the first time data on the teaching approaches and methods used by the tutors would be collected, time was spent with the educational psychologist in the association and with the director in preparing the tutor questionnaire to take account of the model of practice designed by the Association and recommended for all the workshops. The following table shows the number of teachers and tutors from different settings who returned completed questionnaires.

Table 3.1: Teacher and tutor recruitment and questionnaire response levels, by setting

Teacher groups	***Sample Size***	***No. questionnaires***	
		distributed	***completed***
Teachers in Reading schools	24	24	16
Teachers in Reading Units	14	14	7
Mainstream class teachers	*ILSA seminar*	unknown	14
Learning support teachers	*ILSA seminar*	unknown	17
Resource teachers	*ILSA seminar*	unknown	18
Total ILSA setting	120 (estimate)	120 (estimate)	49
TOTAL teachers	158 (est)	158 (est)	72
DAI Tutors	330	280	79
TOTAL tutors	330	280	79

Pupil participants

The study design planned to include the maximum number of pupils from three types of special educational setting with an identified specific learning difficulty of a dyslexic type. Only those pupils entering the specialist provision in September 2003 were to be included in order to track the progress in reading attainment of these pupils over a two year placement. A longitudinal study of reading attainment on entry, after one year's support and finally after two years would be recorded. The table below summarises information on the pupil participants from the different settings. The following chart shows the numbers of pupils who participated in the study. The sample population was all of the new entrants to special provision in September 2003. These were pupils in reading schools, pupils in reading units and those receiving individual resource teaching. The pupils in the reading schools and reading unit were contacted by letter. The principal of each school gave the

pupils the letter to take home. All of the children who returned the letter with parental consent were included in the study.

Table 3.2: Pupil Participants in Study

Pupils	*Population*	*No. contacted*	*Parental consent received*
Reading Schools	82	82	71
Reading Units	56-70 (estimate)	45	31
Resource teaching	78+110 (DES)	188	4
Learning support	100	100	56
Total Special provision			106
TOTAL Mainstream			56

The group of pupils receiving learning support was not homogenous. Some of these pupils who were receiving support because of dyslexia, had not received a psychological assessment. The pupils in the reading units and reading schools, however, had all received an individual psychological assessment.

Quantitative data collection to identify progress in reading

One of the questions addressed by the study is*: Do pupils who are receiving specialist support because of dyslexia make progress during the special placement, and if so, is it possible to measure this progress across the three types of special settings?* This quantitative data is intended to complement the qualitative study of the processes of teaching and learning for the pupils who are receiving special support because of dyslexia.

The table below shows the number of pupils for whom this data was collected, in each of the special settings.

Table 3.3: Pupil Participants for whom reading data was collected

Category	*Number*
Pupils in Reading Schools	71
Pupils in Reading Units	31
Pupils receiving individual resource support	5
Pupils receiving learning support	52
Total	***158***

In September 2003, three groups of pupils receiving special support for dyslexia were invited to participate in the study. Students in special reading schools, special reading units and those receiving individual resource teaching were invited to take part. A total of 71 pupils from four reading schools took part; 31 pupils from five reading units and 56 pupils receiving extra support in five primary schools were also included. As noted above, due to changes in DES policy in special

education it was not possible to obtain a sample group of those receiving individual resource teaching. In spring 2005 a third group of pupils receiving extra support from the Learning support or resource teacher (because of dyslexia) was included in the study.

Parents were informed by letter of the research study and a parent consent letter was returned from all participating pupils. Contact was made with the school Principal in all participating schools. The school Board of management in each case was also informed of the study. There was regular contact between the researcher and each of the teachers of all the participating pupils. All pupils who participated in the study had received parent consent.

Information recorded, tests and instruments used

Teachers recorded information from the child's psychological report during Autumn 2003. Each pupils ***age and intellectual ability*** as assessed on WISC 3; U.K, (1997) was recorded.

Reading attainment: Pupils reading ability as measured on the Weschler Objective Reading Dimension (WORD) was also recorded. The WORD test is a standardised assessment of reading which is widely used by educational psychologists. This is an individually administered test which measures reading, spelling and reading comprehension as assessed by an educational psychologist.

Reading accuracy and comprehension: Reading attainment scores for all pupils on entry to special placement September 2003 was recorded using the NARA (1997). Percentile scores were recorded where possible. Alternatively a reading age score was recorded.

Word recognition: Attainment in individual word recognition was measured by a score obtained on the Marino Graded Word Reading Scale (Ó Suilleabhain 1979). Other tests of word recognition could be used such as the Schonell Word Recognition test (1982) or the Macmillan Graded Word Reading Test (1985).

Spelling ability: A measure of spelling ability was recorded for each child using the Schonell Graded Spelling test (Aston Index, 1982).

Scoring and recording of results: Teachers were requested to record Percentile Rank for reading accuracy and reading comprehension using the NARA (1997). The word identification tests (Macmillan, Marino, Schonell) give measures of attainment using a reading age, as do the Schonell spelling test. A measure of each students reading attainment on entry to the special support was recorded by the teacher. Scores on entry to special placement 2003, after one year of special support, and after two years of special support were recorded by teachers.

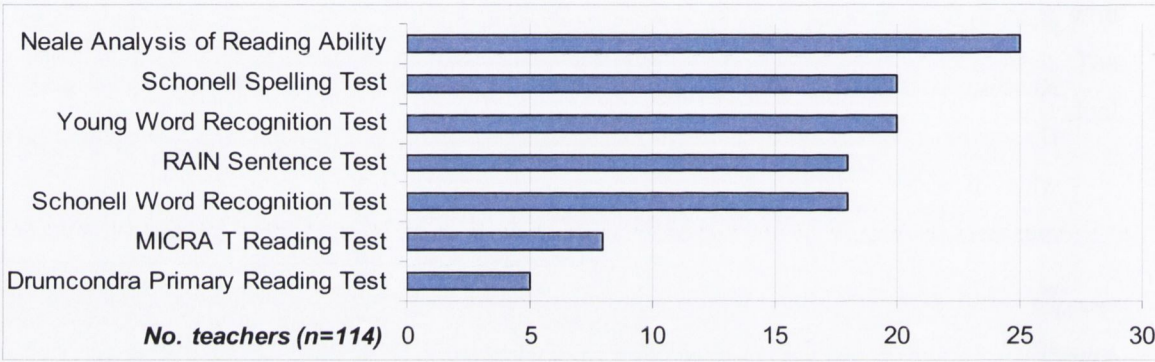
Limitations of data recorded by teachers

Reading schools and Reading units: There were limitations to the data returned from the Reading schools and the Reading units. One reading school has discontinued using the NARA and now uses the MICRA T reading test. The reason given was the NARA is considered too time consuming.

The MICRA T test is a group administered screening test with national norms for measuring reading among Irish pupils. The researcher had sought to record reading progress from individual administered reading tests. The individual word reading tests used are not consistent across schools, or even across the two years. Some schools used one word reading test in 2003, and a different one in 2005. The Dolch 100 word list is used in some schools to measure individual word recognition.

Learning support teaching: The greatest variation in measures of reading attainment may be seen from the data returned for the pupils receiving learning support teaching. All schools did not use the same reading test. The chart below shows the range of reading tests used by schools.

Fig 3.1: Reading tests used by Learning Support Teachers



- Six different reading tests and one spelling test were used among the four schools with this cohort of 52 pupils receiving learning support.
- Some teachers used more than one test.
- Some schools record reading ages of pupils while others regularly use percentile rank.
- Some schools record reading age one year, percentile rank the next.
- Tests that are used are administered at different times during the year.
- There is variety in tests used across schools and within the same school from year to year
- Results and reading scores recorded vary from reading ages, standard scores, percentile ranks and raw scores.

A second group reading test (the Drumcondra Primary Reading test) and two additional individual reading tests (the RAIN sentence reading test and the Young reading test) were added to the pupil data base. A category of 'Other reading tests' included tests such as Middle Infant Screening Test, the Burt word recognition test (administered by psychologists) and others. The Dolch list of 100 high frequency words is also regularly used among support teachers.

There is a wide variety of tests used in the learning support / resource setting. Data returned showed no single standardised test used across all schools or for all pupils receiving resource/learning support. The study could not rely on the pupil data returned from the learning

support/resource teachers to measure progress over two years (see full account in findings section). However, the returned data illustrated that the study was taking place among the same population as a previous study (Nugent 2003) and that progress in reading was consistent with previous outcomes.

Parent participants

The child needs an adult who believes in him/her, who understands the nature of the difficulties s/he has with literacy and who can actively work to receive the help and support his/her needs. It is the persevering activist parent who can make all the difference to a vulnerable child, according to Shaywitz (2003), who says that the child with dyslexia is *'in need of a champion, someone who will be his support and his unflinching advocate* (p. 173). Parent support is a significant factor in determining the progress of children with dyslexia. This support is vital to the continuing progress of these pupils particularly when the special placement has ended. This group of parents have experienced the special setting and now their children have returned to mainstream. Some of the past pupils are now in second level education, some still in primary level. It was considered important to hear the voice of parents whose children are past pupils of the special reading school.

Table 3.4: Parent participation

Method of data collection	*No. parents*	*Child's setting*
Parent Questionnaires	12 49 2	Reading unit Reading school Individual resource teaching
Questionnaire total	63	
Parent Focus groups (2)	7 9	Currently enrolled in special placements
Focus group total	16	
Parent Telephone interviews	61	Past pupils of a reading school

Table 3.5: details of focus groups with parents

	Parent sample and response		*Child's setting*		
Location	***Invited***	***Attendance***	***Reading school***	***Reading unit***	***Second level***
Regional	13	7	0	4	3
Urban	17	9	9	0	0

Qualitative data Collection

The following table presents the instruments used and the timescale involved in the collection of data from the main groups of participants, teachers, parents and pupils. The methodology used a mixed method approach.

Table 3.6: Instruments used in data collection, and dates of operation

Data collection	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*
Teacher Questionnaire	December	October	
Teacher Focus Groups			9th February 24th February
Teacher Interviews		October	May
Tutor Questionnaire		December	
Parent Questionnaire		February	
Parent Telephone Interviews			January-March
Parent Focus Groups			15th April 30th May
Pupil data	September	May	June
Pupil discussions			February- May
Case Studies			February-May

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were designed to obtain information on the teaching approaches, interventions, and literacy programmes used by teachers and specialist tutors. This section describes the main survey procedures, and the methods used in selecting groups for participation. Information is also given on the administration and response rate of each instrument administered as part of the survey.

Three different questionnaires (see Appendices 3c and 4a) were developed to generate background and contextual data for use in evaluating the extra support provided for pupils in the three different settings. A teacher questionnaire was designed for teachers of pupils with dyslexia, a parent questionnaire for their parents and a tutor questionnaire for tutors who assist students with dyslexia. The questions were developed by reference to the research questions on teaching and learning, the main focus of the study. The literature of the teaching and assessment of reading, remedial interventions for low achievement in literacy, learning support guidelines, and other documents were consulted in devising the teacher questionnaire. The teachers' questionnaire was developed in November 2003. As noted above, it was distributed to teachers in special settings in December 2003. Further questionnaires were distributed to teachers in mainstream schools in October 2004. Parent questionnaires were distributed to parents whose children were participating in the study in February 2004. Tutor questionnaires were distributed in December 2004.

Development of Teacher questionnaires: The selected sample of teachers for inclusion in the study was based on all the teachers who work in special reading units and special reading schools. A third group of teachers who provide support to pupils in mainstream was also included. There were a total of 24 teachers in the reading schools and all of these teachers received a questionnaire

(all four reading schools participated). Teachers from 14 reading units also received a questionnaire. There were five reading units participating in the study, this explains the lower response rate for this group of teachers. Eighty questionnaires were distributed among the learning support and resource teachers. Table 3.1 shows the response rate for each group of teachers.

A teacher questionnaire was developed. The questions focused on the special support provided for pupils with dyslexic type reading difficulties in primary school. The main focus of the questions was on the teaching interventions, the methods and approaches used in the special placement as well as the literacy instruction and teaching strategies used. The teacher questionnaire contained four sections. The first section asked questions about the school, age group taught and teachers' experience (demographic background). It was considered important to see if teachers' experience and number of years teaching in the current position would have an effect on the teaching methods used. Section two asked for information about the teacher's description of dyslexia and identification of students' difficulties. The teachers' understanding of dyslexia and the underlying reasons for the students' difficulties may vary between each teaching setting. Section three asked about the teaching materials and literacy programmes used. This could vary between special placement and mainstream settings. Section four asked about consultation with specialists and assessment. Multidisciplinary consultation and support for pupils with dyslexia may vary between special placement and mainstream settings.

Pilot Study: A pilot questionnaire was distributed among six resource and special class teachers for evaluation. In general, feedback was satisfactory. It was suggested to have a separate question on time spent on literacy and numeracy skills instead of combining this in one question. It was also suggested to include a question on parental support. Subsequent to the pilot study, minor modifications to questions and changes in the instructions were made to the Teacher questionnaire. Minor alterations to the lay-out of questionnaire and font size were made, including more space for teachers' own comments.

Analysis of data: Data was recorded from the teachers' questionnaires and was entered into an Access database. Each item of information was coded and checked. Each individual response received a code on the design sheet. The categories created were linked with each of the questions asked in the questionnaire. The instruments were modified to reflect insights from the trial.

A Parent Questionnaire was designed for parents of each pupil receiving special support for dyslexia. A number of items covered pupil characteristics, including time spent with learning support teacher prior to enrolment in special setting. These parents are currently involved in the special setting with their children and it was considered important to have background information and to include their voice in the study. The duration of learning support prior to special intervention and the type of learning support activities might affect the child's present level of reading and writing ability. It could also provide an insight into effective teaching strategies. Questions asked

included parents' description of the child's main difficulties, their views on the special placement and suggestions to improve the service for children with dyslexia. It was considered that parents have good knowledge of their child's continuing literacy difficulties and would be aware of the teaching strategies which make a difference to their child.

This questionnaire was ***piloted*** with a small group of parents (four) who have children in special schools but are not involved in this particular study. Each pilot questionnaire was accompanied by a blank sheet for comment and feedback. A suggestion was made to include 'parent' as possible response for question 2 '*prior to enrolment who decided your child should receive a psychological assessment?'*. Another suggestion was made to change time spent on homework to time spent *per night* instead of hours *per week* (question 6). Parents were satisfied with the short time taken to complete the questionnaire and welcomed the structured format of each question which necessitated limited written responses.

Analysis of data: All the parents' questionnaires were numbered and coded as the data was entered onto an Access database, in the order of questions 1-17. Each individual response was entered on the database. Factual information from section one was filtered and sorted. Tables were created to present the findings (see findings section). Textual information on opinions and views from section 2 and 3 was pre structured and responses were graded along a Likert scale. This facilitated the coding of responses and the creation of tables of information.

The Tutors' questionnaire was developed in December 2004. Permission was sought from the DAI to make contact with the tutors who provide specialist tuition to students with dyslexia in regular workshops around the country. There are 35 workshops and the number of tutors working in each varies between six and twelve. Consultation took place with the director of the association, the education consultant and the educational psychologist. The tutors' questionnaire was a slightly different version of the teachers' questionnaire to allow for the different teaching setting and for the recommended model of practice.

Similar information regarding teaching approaches and literacy skills taught was elicited from the tutors and teachers. Section one and two focussed on the tutors' experience, the students' difficulties and the tutors' understanding of dyslexia. It was considered there might be a difference between the tutors' understanding of dyslexia and the teachers in primary schools. Similarly, the students may have greater difficulty in specific literacy skills than those receiving support in mainstream. Section three asked about the teaching materials and literacy programmes in use in the DAI workshop. It was felt more specialist programmes for dyslexia may be used in the weekly workshops compared to the special placements. Section four addressed consultation and assessment during the tuition period, and the tutors main issues of concern. The concerns and suggestions of the tutors concerning their students may substantiate the views of the other teachers.

A ***pilot*** questionnaire was distributed for evaluation among seven tutors in one of the workshops. These questionnaires included comment and feedback sheets to be completed by respondents. These tutors were not subsequently involved in the study. Tutors were generally satisfied with the content and time taken to complete the questionnaires. However it was discovered that some tutors expected to complete the questionnaires during the workshop session and considered it too long. The questionnaire took approximately forty minutes to complete. Some slight changes to instructions and clarification of some questions took place subsequently. Questions to be amended included more clarification on questions15, 21, and 22 which related specifically to the workshop students. Questions about the teaching approaches used (Q. 21) and the tutors' views of the effectiveness of these approaches (Q.22) was amended to include the wording *during the weekly workshop tuition sessions.* The Questionnaires were distributed to 35 workshops. Easter holidays interrupted the return of questionnaires as workshops were closed for break. A follow up letter to 19 workshops who had not returned any questionnaires prior to Easter resulted in a final count of 25 workshops returning questionnaires with a total of 79 completed questionnaires. Ten workshops did not return any questionnaires.

Analysis of data: Data from the tutors' questionnaires was entered onto a database in Access. Each questionnaire was coded according to the location of the tutor's dyslexia workshop. Each item of information was coded. Each response received one code. By reading and re reading the responses, the data was grouped and categories were selected to organise the responses.

Focus Groups

A focus group is an opportunity *to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a topic.* (Denscombe, 2001, p. 115). Focus group discussions took place to follow up and explore in depth the issues and concerns raised in the teachers' and the parents' questionnaires. Focus group discussions were organised separately for teachers and parents. The pupils in each of the case study schools took part in a group discussion.

Teacher Focus Group Discussions: Teachers who had completed and returned a questionnaire were invited to participate in a Focus group discussion in their area. The teachers were informed that the purpose of the discussion was for further consultation regarding the issues of common concern to Resource and Learning support and Special reading class teachers. Two separate venues were chosen as convenient to the majority of participants interested in attending. Two focus group discussions took place. Teachers were seated in a semi circle to allow for good visibility of all speakers. The full proceedings of the discussion was recorded by audio tape and later transcribed. A student teacher acted as assistant to the researcher by taking notes and adjusting the tape recorder. A report of the findings from each group of teachers will be presented in the results section of this report.

The 17 invited teachers comprised six from a special reading school, three from a reading unit, three learning support teachers, three resource teachers, and two mainstream class teachers. The invited learning support teachers, resource teachers and mainstream teachers were from eight different schools, all within the catchment area of the education centre. The teachers were familiar with the education centre and regularly attend in-service and curriculum support there.. A total of eight teachers attended the first focus group, representing six schools.

Contact was made with the Director of the Centre to arrange a meeting room and to book the technology required (such as overhead projector, data projector, photocopying and flipchart). The secretary of the Centre arranged for refreshments for participants. A letter outlining the purpose of the focus group, the venue, date and time was sent to all interested teachers. Follow up telephone calls and contact with the school principal was made in each case. In consultation with school principals, it was decided that teachers could leave school early to travel to the Centre. It was aimed to complete the focus group discussion within one hour. Principals agreed to organise teaching cover for the classes of the absent teachers. Two teachers from the reading unit who had intended to be present had to cancel as their parent teacher meetings had been re scheduled and they could not attend the focus group discussion. Eight teachers attended the focus group on 9th February.

Nineteen teachers were invited to attend the second focus group in an urban Education Centre on 24th February. The invited group included four each from two reading schools, five learning support, four resource teachers and two mainstream teachers. The schools were all in the catchment area of the education centre. The same contact and organisational arrangements were made as for the first focus group. The researcher was sensitive to the difficulties of arranging supervision cover for teachers during a busy month and considered that a minimum of one representative from the invited schools would suffice for the focus group discussion. Eight teachers in total attended the group discussion on 24th February, four from two reading schools, two learning support and two resource teachers. A total of six schools were represented.

The format of the Focus groups was planned around a set of prepared questions or themes designed to initiate the discussion and to allow participants to discuss their own feelings and ideas on a topic (see Appendix 4b). The purpose of this was to be *a prompt or stimulus introduced by the moderator, in order to focus the discussion* (Denscombe 2001, p. 115).

Parent Focus Groups: Focus group discussions took place with two groups of parents during the course of the study. These discussions were a follow up to the issues and concerns raised in the parents' questionnaires. A guide to the discussion was prepared which focused on specific themes.

Parents Group 1: A group of parents whose children are attending a special reading unit in a regional area were invited to attend. These parents had indicated on completed questionnaires that

they would be interested in attending a focus group. Parents of ten pupils who were attending the reading unit were invited. In addition, some parents whose children had attended the special reading unit and who had moved onto second level school, were also invited to attend. During the course of the study, the researcher had met these parents on two separate occasions and had spent time discussing and listening to their concerns about their children. The researcher had attended an Open night for parents in the local education centre and answered questions following the viewing of video 'Understanding Dyslexia' (DES, 2004). Follow up telephone contact was made and an attempt was made to establish rapport. The researcher's attendance at local support meetings was positively received. Thirteen parents were invited to attend. Seven attended the meeting, four from primary school, three in second level. All parents had experience of their child attending a special reading unit. This focus group discussion took place in the reading unit after school.

Parents in the regional area knew each other through contact with the reading unit and a local parents support group. The discussion took place in the reading unit. Parents were seated around pupils' tables. The entire discussion was recorded by tape recorder and transcribed later by the researcher. The discussion was planned around a series of themes prepared by the researcher in advance. The themes were developed from information already received from the completed questionnaires, such as the transition from mainstream to special placement and returning to mainstream. This was a major concern to parents. Other issues relating to extra support in both primary and second level were discussed. A full report of the findings of the focus groups is reported in the findings section of this study.

Parents Group 2: Seventeen parents who had indicated on returned questionnaires that they would be interested in attending a focus group discussion were invited to attend a discussion in an urban area. This focus group discussion took place in the education centre in the evening. Eight parents and one grandparent attended, nine in total. There was representation from each of the three reading schools, two parents from each of two reading schools, five from the third school. All parents had a child who is attending a reading school. Parents in the urban area met in the education centre; they introduced themselves to each other at the beginning of the discussion. They were seated in a semi circle for good visibility. The proceedings were recorded by tape recorder and transcribed by the researcher later.

Recording and Analysis of Data: Focus group data in this study was recorded by using several methods: flip charts, overhead projection, word processing, hand written notes by researcher, and a record of proceedings taken by assistant. A written transcript was subsequently taken from the tape recording of proceedings. Following transcription of the entire focus group discussion, the researcher prepared the report for analysis. Open coding of the discussion was undertaken initially. Detailed reading, coding and categorising of the transcripts led to categorising the information into 'themes' and 'topics' for further analysis.

Parent telephone interviews

A database was assembled of pupils who had left the Reading school from 1999 to 2004. Parents of pupils who had been enrolled in the special reading school during these years were contacted by letter in January 2005. A total of 134 parents were contacted by letter. This letter with self addressed envelope introduced the research study and its purpose, and invited them to participate in a telephone interview; it was accompanied by the schema of questions to be used in that interview. Seventy two acceptances were received; however, 11 of these proved not to be contactable. Sixty one interviews took place. The interviews were planned to take place between the 17th January and 11th February. Average time per interview was 30 minutes. All of the families and the pupils were known to the researcher so the interviews took longer than anticipated and the total number of weeks interviewing was longer than planned. Interviews continued until 9th March. Interviews were recorded and transcribed in full.

Researcher's relationship with parent participants: The position of the researcher as principal of the special reading school for the years covered by the study, was a distinct advantage. Each of the pupils and families were known to the researcher and an attempt was made to establish rapport at the beginning of each interview. Parents welcomed the opportunity to discuss their child's experience and their own views about the special placement with the researcher. Many of the parents wished to convey their thanks and appreciation to all the teaching staff. At least four of the past pupils had undertaken a work placement for transition year in the school over the past four years. The researcher was conscious that there could be a bias in favour of a totally positive response to the experience in the reading school, given the fact that the school principal was the researcher. This did not appear to be the case, as a small number of respondents (three) made specific criticisms concerning their child's placement. All of the respondents were encouraged to be frank in their responses.

Timing of interviews: The timing of these interviews was most suitable for the purposes of this research. Mid February is traditionally the time of parent teacher meetings in Ireland and many of the parents had just attended Parent Teacher meetings in the school, so support issues and other concerns for the student with dyslexia were fresh in the minds of parents. As each interview proceeded it was apparent that some of the issues raised and the responses to certain questions could have been more comprehensively discussed in a focus group setting. The telephone interview did not give the researcher an opportunity to corroborate the views of the parents with their son or daughters' views on the placement. This was a limitation of the interview.

Analysis of interview data: Following transcription of the data from the tape recorded report, the response to each question was entered into an Access database. Factual information was recorded in this way. The structured questions provided a guide to the themes and topics covered in the telephone interview. Information on parents' views and opinions was coded into categories.

Categories were selected to cover the main themes. The responses were graded and coded to include all responses.

Case Studies

Stenhouse (1985) classifies case studies as ethnographic, educational, evaluative and action research case studies. He states:

> *In evaluative case studies a single case or collection of cases is studied in depth with the purpose of providing educators or decision makers with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of policies, programs or institutions* (Stenhouse, 1985, pp 49-50).

Bassey (2003) distinguishes between 'summative evaluations' and 'formative evaluations'. A summative evaluation offers a perspective on the outcome or at the final stage of a process whereas a formative evaluation looks at the process from an interpretive perspective while the process is still ongoing. Case studies focus on the details of the relationships and processes involved in a social situation rather than the actual outcomes of the situation. The evaluative case study '*sets out to explore some educational program, system, project or event in order to focus on its worthwhilenes.*' (Bassey, 2003, p. 63) This study may be described as a formative and evaluative study of the processes which influence the provision of special support for pupils with dyslexia.

Reasons for selecting case studies: This approach/strategy allowed the researcher to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of key persons involved in the special settings being studied. There are great differences to be observed between the three models of special support for pupils with dyslexia. Individual resource teaching takes place within the child's own school, usually on a withdrawal basis. Enrolment in a reading unit provides extra support in literacy for three hours per school day; the child is integrated in mainstream for the remainder of the day. Enrolment in a reading school provides whole time support in literacy and all other subjects for a period of two years. There are also differences to be found between instances of the same type of support, depending on a variety of factors. For example, the experience of the teacher has an influence on the effectiveness of special provision. The teaching methods used and the child's level of ability prior to the extra support also has an effect.

There are differences not just between the different settings of special class, special school and specialised individual support for pupils with dyslexia. There are also differences between similar types of setting. Each setting may be qualitatively different depending on certain factors. For example, whole school issues such as how the pupils in reading units are integrated with their base class and how this is managed, may differ from school to school. The age of the pupil and his reading ability prior to special support may differ greatly between schools. The teachers' experience and understanding of dyslexia may vary from school to school. In this study two samples of each particular setting was chosen as an example of each model of special provision for pupils with dyslexia. It is hoped this strategy will enable the researcher to interpret and explain

from the sample of schools studied the broad trends, general concerns and issues which have an effect on other similar types of special setting. As Denscombe says the '*aim is to illuminate the general by looking at the particular*.'(Denscombe, 2001, p. 30)

The case study is one of a type, or a single example of a broader class of things. While generalisation is an important aim in quantitative research methods (Stake 1995), qualitative researchers treat the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding. A case study approach was adopted in conjunction with other data collection methods. Stake (1995) describes the case study approach as a means to *'focus on issues, on the value and utility of stories verifiable and otherwise'* and *'the need for validation through multiple accounts of a phenomenon.'*

Case Study schools: The schools chosen exemplified the three different types of special support to pupils with dyslexia: reading schools, reading units, and mainstream schools where resource/learning support provision is offered to pupils with dyslexia. Two samples of each type will be presented[5]. The case studies provide insight into the localised experience for pupils, parents and teachers. The case studies also offered an opportunity to learn more about the systemic issues affecting pupils with dyslexia.

It was decided to include urban and rural locations. Firstly it seemed possible that the experiences of those in rural and urban locations might differ, in terms of the nature and extent of support provided for dyslexia, and in terms of access to multi disciplinary or non school based resources. Also it was felt that including a rural location might help to counterbalance the largely urban nature of special reading units and schools. There are differences between special setting types, and between settings within any given type. Each has its own unique characteristics. This is an advantage which allows the researcher to deal with *the subtleties and intricacies of complex social situations* (Denscombe, 1998, p. 39).

Access and Consent: The researcher sought consent from the Board of Management to visit, interview and examine each 'special setting' in each of the participating schools. A copy of the objectives of the study was forwarded together with a copy of the questions to be asked of teachers, Principal, and pupils. Parent consent was sought for the researcher to conduct a 'focus group' discussion with the pupils in one class in each school. It must be acknowledged that the case study approach of this study could not have advanced without the support and cooperation of the principal in each school. Parents and teachers were assured of the confidential nature of the information received and this was important to the participants. Even with complete assurance that all information received would be treated as confidential, some parents declined to give consent. In this instance two pupils were removed from class for the researcher's visit. In another school, a study to examine the link between dyslexia and ADD was being conducted at the same time as this

[5] As the researcher is in the position of principal of one of the reading schools in Dublin, it was decided not to include this particular school as one of the case study schools.

study. For some parents this caused confusion about returning parent consent forms for pupils' participation. The principal of this school noted that due to the growth of research involving her school, future research studies may be confined to one study per year.

Two visits were arranged to each of the case study schools. The purpose of the first visit was to meet the principal, conduct an interview with the principal and meet the class teacher and pupils. During the second visit, the researcher observed a class lesson, facilitated a 'focus discussion among pupils in a class and conducted an interview with the class teacher. Some follow up telephone calls were made to the special needs coordinator and to the resource teacher in two schools in order to clarify information given. The Principal was given a copy of the interview for an opportunity to clarify or amend details or comments.

Data collection

A case study approach does not limit the information obtained to one fixed account. The strategy used in this study accommodated different people's perceptions of the same phenomena and events. There is more than one story to be told. Various quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used in the study of these schools. Below, the methods and test instruments used will be examined for validity and reliability.

Documents and Data: A variety of school documents relating to assessment, enrolment policy, special educational needs and other policy documents were examined, with the consent of the Principal in each of the schools. This was not a comprehensive study of school documents and it was apparent that practice varied between schools. One of the schools was preparing for a 'whole school evaluation' and had a wide range of written school policies available. The information supplied on enrolment policy, the organisation of special needs, whole school assessment was more comprehensively dealt with in the semi structured interview with the school principal.

Interviews: In all the case study schools the researcher interviewed the principals and key teachers – resource/learning support, class teachers, reading unit teachers and others with specific roles in their individual school in relation to supporting children with dyslexia.

Interviews with the school principals were conducted during the initial visit. These were structured interviews; the questions to be asked were forwarded in advance of the meeting. It was considered that the role of the principal is very important in facilitating extra support for pupils with dyslexia and therefore the views of the principal are crucial to getting a true profile of the school. The interview notes were subsequently sent to the principal to amend or to clarify points. Each principal returned the interview notes with some minor amendments. All six principals were interviewed.

Interviews were conducted with ***class and specialist teachers*** in each of the schools. The purpose of the interviews was explained verbally to the teachers; those who expressed interest in participating received a letter and copy of the questions to be covered during the interview. They

took place in the classroom, when pupils were not present or in the staff room if this was not possible. Interviews were also conducted with the base class teachers in each school. These were one-to-one interviews which lasted approximately 25 minutes each. All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed; the researcher also took notes, and could later cross-check notes and transcripts. Interviews were also undertaken with other key teachers such as the special needs coordinator (one school had established a post of responsibility for SEN). Interviews were semi structured, focussing on four main topics/issues. The time allocated to these interviews was 20-30 minutes max. Permission to use the tape recorder was requested at the outset. One resource teacher declined to be tape-recorded; the researcher took written notes. This teacher subsequently posted a written account of her responses to the researcher. In total, 10 teachers were interviewed.

Observation: The researcher observed a lesson in each class visited. The teacher was invited to select the lesson. The researcher was introduced to the class as a teacher from a reading school, who was doing a study about dyslexia and was interested to see how the pupils in this class are learning. In each case, the teacher provided a seat for the researcher at the back of the room from which to observe. This was effective insofar as there was minimal interaction with the class being observed. The researcher observed and took notes. It was felt that the pupils might become embarrassed or self conscious with an observer present. In the classes in the reading schools and reading units, the researcher observed how the pupils appeared to be accustomed to visitors, and after initial introduction by the teacher, the lesson commenced. The pupils did not appear to alter their behaviour. This was corroborated by the teacher in each case. In some other settings the pupils were not accustomed to frequent visitors, according to their teachers. However, in these teachers' views, this did not unduly limit the pupils' participation in the discussion.

Pupil discussion groups: A group discussion was conducted with pupils in each of the case study schools. The purpose of the discussion was to include the pupils' voices in the study. The group discussion was planned to take place after the lesson observation session, as pupils would be familiar with the presence of this visitor in the room. In each case it was the second time the researcher had visited the class to meet the teacher and talk to the pupils, and this assisted the process of re-establishing rapport with the children. A copy of the questions to be asked had been sent to the parents of each child and parental consent received before the visit; copies had also been sent to the class teachers. This question schedule had been developed to prompt discussion around topics on which the children would have an opinion. Discussion centred around topics such as their favourite subjects, the good points and bad points about attending the reading unit/class/group and what they would like to do when they finished school. In two cases, the teacher intervened to draw more comments from the pupils. In one instance, the teacher rephrased the question *'what are the good points about coming to the reading room?'*, to ask the pupils: *'if I said, you could bring 3 things home with you, what 3 things would you bring home from the reading room?'*. In another

class, when asked the question, *'what kind of things make it easier for you to learn?'*, the teacher intervened to explain how the children help each other: *'M is excellent at helping S,.... she's like a teaching assistant...they help each other on the computer'.*

Each group discussion was recorded and transcribed. In one school, the pupils had not been given parent consent forms in time to participate in the discussion. Their teacher, however, felt that the questions were of a kind that could be included in a normal class session so she asked the questions and notes were taken by the researcher; tape-recording was not done.

Reliability and validity of research methods used

This section will address the reliability and validity of the research methods used: questionnaires; focus groups; interviews; case studies; and pupil data. This was not a purely or even mainly statistical study; in the data presentation, charts are used for readability: they provide a visual illustration of the findings from the main participants.

Questionnaires were considered appropriate to collect the necessary type of data from teachers, tutors and parents in terms of the resources and time available to the researcher. The teachers' questionnaire offered anonymity to all respondents to avoid identification of the specific school. Thus teachers would feel more comfortable presenting a true picture of the most frequently used teaching methods. A pilot study was undertaken for each group before distributing the final questionnaire. Amendments and modifications made to the final questionnaire for each group, helped to ensure greater reliability and validity of the final questionnaires.

Follow up contact: The initial response from all of the workshops organised by the DAI was less than anticipated. This could be explained by the fact that this study was the first of its kind to address the teaching methods and approaches used by the DAI tutors. However, follow up letters and contact with some of the tutors increased the response to a very satisfactory level. The parents' questionnaire was pre coded and therefore the data was ready for analysis once all questionnaires were returned. This had a positive effect on the reliability of the data. The parents who completed questionnaires had a child in a special placement because of dyslexia and their child was already involved in the study. This ensured triangulation of the data returned from parent questionnaires and progress in reading attainment. The returned data from the questionnaires was analysed and entered onto an Access database. Each item of information was given a single code to ensure validity. To reveal profiles of data, the findings were classified in charts.

Focus group techniques were used with groups of teachers and parents to allow topics to be discussed in depth by selected respondents who have a common concern. In this particular study, the focus group discussions were suitable for addressing the issues underpinning the research. In this study rich data was generated in the respondents' own words. Although there was a small number of participants in each focus group, attempts were made to make each focus group as

representative as possible of the teaching situations being researched. The proceedings of each focus group was recorded and transcribed later. The role of the researcher in each focus group was to facilitate discussion around pre-selected topics. The issues and themes discussed were selected in order to develop the information returned from the questionnaires. The results were qualitative and indicative rather than valid for the whole population of teachers or parents.

The information and views discussed in the focus groups were recorded and analysed according to pre selected categories. When reporting the information from the focus groups, the verbatim accounts from the focus groups had to be 'tidied up' and put into finite sentences. The use of themes to report the findings from the focus groups was an effective means of ensuring validity of the issues raised. This also allowed for further triangulation of data from questionnaires, interviews and observation. An assistant to the researcher attended each focus group to operate the recording instruments and also to take notes. This helped ensure the researcher could concentrate on the facilitating role and keep the discussion on the pre selected topics.

In ***interviews***, the impact of the interviewer and of the context of the study means that consistency and objectivity can be hard to achieve. The researcher's self, according to Denscombe (1985) is an integral part of the research instrument. In this study, the researcher is the principal of one of the four reading schools in the country therefore interviewee statements may be affected by the identity of the researcher. Constant attempts were made to ensure an unbiased recording of all interviews. Efforts were made to establish rapport with each interviewee and to protect the anonymity of each respondent. The researcher was already familiar with the reading schools and had a good working relationship with these schools. The data collected from interviews were unique owing to the specific context and the specific individuals involved.

The use of a set of prepared questions for each interview ensured consistency in the data collected. The interviewees selected were parents and teachers who have a key stake in supporting the child with dyslexia. Each interviewee had a positive contribution to make in this regard. The use of a tape recorder also ensured a good level of reliability in the data gathered. Data from the telephone interviews was specific to one of the reading schools but this data was carefully recorded and later transcribed and coded into categories for analysis. The use of this research method can be considered reliable due to its consistency of use with each person interviewed. Constant efforts were made to triangulate the information recorded from interviews with information recorded from questionnaires, focus groups and observation. When reporting the information recorded in the interviews, the use of themes was more effective in maintaining the reliability of the data gathered. In this way, information was corroborated from other instruments used and triangulated with similar topics raised.

Recording of interviews and later transcription ensured an accurate record of the interview. The use of the tape recorder could have inhibited the person interviewed, although this seemed to wear off

quite quickly in all instances. Direct contact with the person interviewed meant that the validity of the information received could be checked for accuracy as the interview proceeded. Documents such as school policies on assessment which was made available to the researcher served to back up the data recorded from interviews.

Pupil data on reading attainment was recorded from five different teaching situations: reading unit, reading school, learning support, resource teaching and mainstream support. This data on pupils' reading attainment was gathered on enrolment in the special placement September 2003, and after two years of special support June 2005. This data was recorded by the teachers, with parental consent, and returned to the researcher on a structured record form. There were limitations to the reliability and validity of the recorded data. Data returned from the reading schools and reading units was not consistent across the tests used. In some cases the scores were reported in percentile rank, in others by reading age. However the pupil data was accurate as reported by the teachers, the variation was in the different types of scores reported. This had implications for comparing and contrasting pupils' performance in the different teaching settings. An even greater variation in measures of reading attainment could be seen from the data returned for the pupils receiving learning support. All schools did not use the same reading test. This data could not be relied upon to measure progress over two years. The limited number of pupils receiving individual resource teaching could not be relied upon as an adequate sample to compare with pupils in the other settings. The researcher attempted to increase the possibility of a reliable sample by including a group of pupils receiving learning support in the second year of the study. However this was not a homogenous group. These pupils all had literacy difficulties or dyslexic type difficulties but had not received a psychological assessment to identify dyslexia. Data on reading attainment was recorded for these pupils for the year 2004-2005. These results are reported in the findings section.

Six ***case study*** schools were selected. Two schools providing each type of extra support to pupils with dyslexia was chosen. Schools chosen were rural and urban. As the researcher is currently in the position of Principal of one of the reading schools, it was decided not to include this school in the selected case study schools, in order to reduce researcher bias. The researcher made efforts to increase the validation of observations made in each of the case study schools in the following ways.

A ***typical lesson was observed*** in each of the case study schools. In order to retain the naturalness of the classroom lesson, attempts were made to minimise any disturbance caused by the presence of the researcher. The following measures were adopted to increase the reliability and validity of the information recorded: the researcher positioned herself at the back of the classroom to be as unobtrusive as possible, and during the lesson, there was no interaction with the pupils or teacher. The observation took place during the second visit to the classroom when pupils had already met the researcher. Further visits to the class would have enhanced the reliability of the findings.

Field notes were taken during the observation of lessons. The researcher used field notes as data in these lesson observations. This makes is difficult to repeat the exercise to check for reliability. However it was considered that observing a lesson in its natural context would give insights into the teaching – learning interactions which were addressed in the study. The teaching approaches used and the pupils' behaviour during the lesson would give a factual account of what happens in class. An observation record used as a guide to observe the class lesson. In this instance the schedule used was a basic framework to record the observed behaviours of the pupils and their responses to the lesson in hand.

The need for triangulation was considered important in the observations of these case study schools and the interviews with key personnel. The use of case study methodology may be seen as a *search for additional interpretations more than the confirmation of a single meaning* (Stake 1995, p. 115). Each case study will not be seen as the same by everyone. The case study portrays multiple views of the case. A set of questions was worked out in advance and shown to each of the participants before the interview. Each interviewee has a unique experience, or a story to tell. Individual accounts were recorded and later transcribed. Similar procedures to improve reliability were followed as are outlined above. Further comment on triangulation follows below.

Triangulation

The research questions under consideration in this study were investigated using a multi-method approach. Because of the small numbers involved in the various groups (particularly small for instance in the case of the reading unit teachers), it was important for the researcher to incorporate these multiple perspectives. The small numbers in the different settings and methods used necessitated the researcher to establish coherence across the many clusters of data. Triangulation formed an important aspect of the methodology used in this study.

The views and concerns of one group of participants were found to resonate with the views of another group. The researcher looked for statements or views that might be challenging to the data: for instance when mainstream class teachers were present unexpectedly, they were included. Data from the tutors who work outside the school system was additional to the data received from schools; this also gave opportunity to challenge the views and findings from the different teaching situations.

The researcher was interested in non responses to certain questions. At the beginning of the study, schools who had pupils who had been sanctioned resource teaching hours, yet failed to participate in the study through the large number of non responses gave the researcher an indication of the importance of certain issues for schools. Follow up interviews, focus group discussions and observation in the case study schools allowed the researcher to develop an interpretation of the main issues of concern.

Different kinds of data can shed more light on the same topic. Data collected from questionnaires could have been challenged or corroborated by inputs from focus group discussions and interviews. Observation of behaviour and reference to school documents also provided different perspectives. Thus, triangulation was an ongoing element of the research design. Data collected from teacher questionnaires was followed up by focus group discussions to give further depth to the information received. Parent questionnaires were followed by focus group discussions which allowed the researcher to see the different perspectives of partners and to understand the issues in a more rounded manner. Interviews with parents of past pupils drew in yet another perspective. It emerged that the views and concerns of this group of past pupils' parents corroborated and supported the views of parents whose children are currently receiving special support for dyslexia Case studies of the three different models of special support allowed the findings from one method to be checked against the findings of another.

Limitations to the research methods used

An unexpected factor at the initial stage of this study was the change in the DES policy of support to pupils identified as dyslexic. This had implications for the selection of a cohort of pupils to take part in the study as has already been outlined in the previous sections. A limited sample of five pupils receiving individual resource teaching was not an adequate sample. Pre intervention data on pupils' reading attainment was recorded from the child's psychological report. It was a limitation of this study that a post intervention assessment could not be carried out by an educational psychologist. There were inconsistencies in the data returned from the schools on pupils' reading attainment. This was a limitation to the methods used. This could have been improved if the researcher had tested the pupils at pre intervention and post intervention. However there is no reason to believe the data returned is not accurate and authentic regarding the pupils and tests administered. Rather the measures used in different schools and the scores returned were not consistent. This led to limitations in the interpretation of the data.

Research Ethics

The researcher endeavoured to follow the principles of ethics in research as directed by the College. Permission was sought for access to all participants at each stage of the study. The relevant authority was consulted by letter e.g. Board of Management, Principal, Education Centre, DAI, ILSA. Participants (principals, teachers, tutors, pupils, parents) were fully informed of the purpose of the study and were free to withdraw their participation at any time. Written parental consent was received for all pupil participants. Children had an out of sight way to make a free decision to hand a letter to parents regarding participation in this study. All parties were assured of confidentiality. No teacher, child or school would be named in the study or any reports that followed. The data was stored in a secure locked press in a secure place. The researcher was careful

not to compromise the integrity of the work of any of the schools involved in the study. Therefore times of visits and observation were arranged to be convenient to the Principal and staff. Wherever a stressful incident or a sensitive situation emerged, the researcher was careful not to be invasive, and at all times to respect the integrity of the participants and not to compromise the integrity of the school work.

Overview of the Methodology

A survey approach was the main research strategy used in this study. Methods used within this strategy were questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observation. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. There were limitations to the quantitative data on pupils' reading attainment returned from schools. This could have been overcome if the researcher had recorded the data directly from the pupils' records and not rely on a secondary source. Alternatively, if the researcher had administered the reading attainment tests herself, this would have facilitated comparative data. Qualitative data was generated by surveys using questionnaires completed by teachers, tutors and parents. Factual information and opinions and attitudes were investigated using these questionnaires. This data was supplemented by using focus group discussions and interviews as a follow up to the questionnaires. This data complemented the questionnaire data. A second research strategy used was a case study approach. Six schools were selected to give more insight into the processes of special support and the organisation of that support. Each case study is an example of a particular type of special provision.

CHAPTER 4: DATA FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter the findings of the study from the main groups of participants are presented. The participants consisted of teachers, tutors, pupils and parents. The teachers were providing support to pupils with dyslexia in school mainstream settings (resource or learning support; and mainstream class teachers) and in special settings (reading school, reading unit). The tutors worked with the DAI and provided private workshop tuition on a weekly basis outside school. All pupils with dyslexia start out in the mainstream setting, and those receiving learning support and resource teaching spend most of their school day in the mainstream setting, as do pupils who go for after-school tuition to DAI tutors. The pupil participants in this study were enrolled from 2003-2005 in a mainstream setting and receiving learning support /resource teaching, or in a reading school or reading unit. The parents who participated had a child enrolled in a special placement, or a child who was a past pupil of a special placement.

Outline of Chapter

The data gathered in consultation with the three groups of participants is presented in three separate sections in this chapter. The sections are organised under the following headings and the findings are presented as follows:

Section 4.1	*Section 4.2*	*Section 4.3*
Teacher questionnaires;	Case studies	Parents questionnaires
Teacher focus groups	Pupils views: voices from the	Parents focus groups
Tutor questionnaires	case studies	Parent interviews
	Progress in reading:	
	quantitative data	

The first section of this chapter, **Teachers and tutors,** presents the findings from the teachers' questionnaires, followed by the findings from the tutors' questionnaires. The section also presents a report from the teachers' focus groups. The main focus in the first section is on the teaching approaches and main literacy skills taught to pupils with dyslexia. The views of the *teachers* were gathered through questionnaires, focus group discussion and interviews. The results of the tutors' questionnaires are presented independently of the teachers' findings. Tutors from the DAI operate outside the school system and separate to the support provided in primary schools.

The second section introduces the findings from six **case study schools**. These schools were selected as instances of a particular type of special support. . There are differences between schools in the organisation of support for pupils with dyslexia. The views of the **pupils** and the voices of the children who participated in the case studies are also presented. Pupils' progress in reading was

recorded over the two year special placement. A report on this quantitative data which was returned from the schools is presented in the second section.

The third group of participants were the **parents** of children who are receiving special support because their child has been assessed as having dyslexia. The parents' views and concerns were gathered through questionnaires, focus group discussion and telephone interviews. The third section of this chapter will report on the findings from the parents' questionnaires, focus groups and telephone interviews. Parents who have a child identified as dyslexic can give insights into the provision of both mainstream and special support.

SECTION 4.1 TEACHERS AND TUTORS

Findings from Teachers' Questionnaires

This subsection sets out the findings reported by teachers who completed and returned a questionnaire (see Appendix 4a). Respondents were from five different teaching settings The findings from their questionnaires will be presented under the following headings:

- Professional profiles of teacher respondents
- Pupils' primary difficulty
- Main reasons for pupils difficulty
- Literacy skills taught
- Main teaching approaches
- Areas of concern

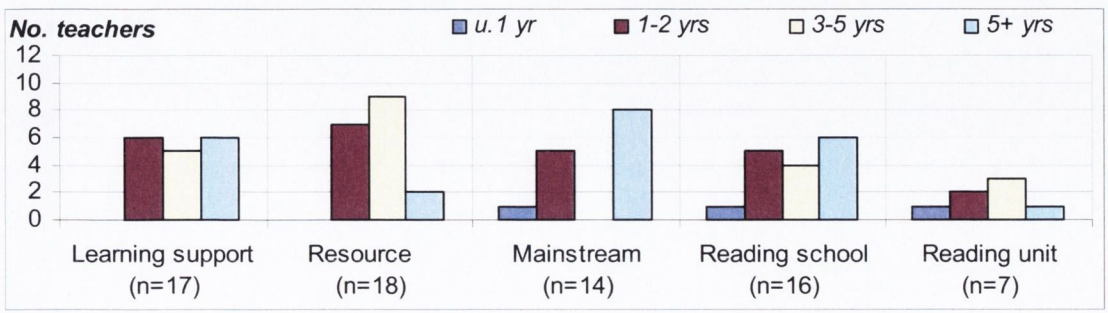
Professional profiles of teacher respondents

Questionnaires were returned by teachers in mainstream and special settings. The mainstream settings comprised learning support, resource teaching and mainstream classes; special settings were reading units and reading schools. Numbers of participating teachers were as follows:

Mainstream settings	*No.*	*Specialist settings*	*No.*
Learning support	17	Reading school	16
Resource	18	Reading unit	7
Mainstream class	14		

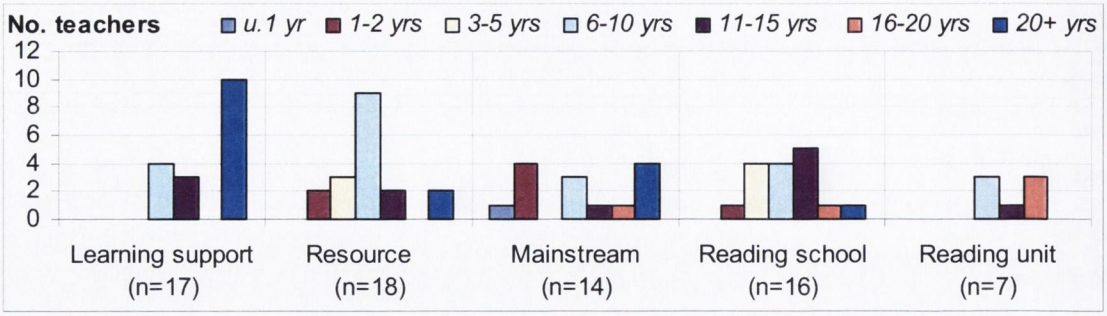
In order to see if there was any variation in teaching experience between the different settings, the findings will be reported for each setting. A breakdown of data from each of the five teaching settings shows some variation in the teaching experience and length of time in the teachers' present position. The following chart shows how teachers' experience in their present position varies between settings.

Fig 4.1: Teachers' experience in present position: group profiles



The length of time in a support teaching position may overlook the fact that a teacher also has previous teaching experience in mainstream or in another setting. Respondents also reported their overall teaching experience:

Fig 4.2: Teachers' overall teaching experience, group profiles



Below are more detailed commentaries on each of these teacher respondent groupings, beginning with those in mainstream schools.

Teacher respondents in mainstream settings

Three groups of teachers support dyslexic pupils in primary school mainstream settings: learning support, resource teachers, and mainstream class teachers.

Learning support teachers give additional support to pupils with literacy difficulties throughout the whole school. In this study a significant number of learning support teachers have been in the position for less than two years and almost two thirds are in their current position for less than five years.

Although the learning support position is relatively new for more than one third of the respondents, one might expect their overall teaching experience to compensate for this. It is significant that all of the learning support teachers in the study have been teaching longer than five years. This is significantly more than the resource teachers. In fact more than half of this particular group of learning support teachers have been teaching more than twenty years. This feature may benefit the pupils receiving learning support.

Resource teachers: A significant number of resource teachers are in this position for less than two years. However, this is not a reflection of their general teaching experience: Although the vast majority are in their present position less than five years, a significant number have been teaching for more than five years.

Special needs resource teachers were first appointed in the early 1990s to support children with Down Syndrome (INTO, 2003a). The number of special needs resource teachers has been greatly increased since the Minister for Education announced in 1998 that all pupils with special needs would be entitled to additional support on enrolment in mainstream schools. This could explain the small number of teachers in this position for more than five years, as this period was prior to the expansion of the service. The caseload of the resource teacher includes pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. It is a positive feature that such a large majority of these resource teachers have more than six years experience.

Mainstream teachers: Respondents in the study also included a group of mainstream class teachers with dyslexic pupils in their class. For this group, the length of time in their present setting matched their overall teaching experience. Almost two thirds of these teachers have more than five years teaching experience. While this is a positive characteristic of this group of class teachers, it could be noted that the support teachers and resource teachers have more teaching experience than this group of mainstream teachers. As regards the length of time in their current position, the mainstream teachers have the greatest number teaching in their present position for less than two years. This is a larger number than either the learning support or resource teachers.

Teacher respondents in special settings: Is there any difference in the teachers' experience between the mainstream settings outlined above and the specialist settings for pupils with dyslexia?
Reading Schools: Almost most two thirds of teachers in the reading schools were teaching for less than five years in their present position. This is almost the same length of time as the learning support teachers. This does not mean the reading school teachers were at the beginning stage of their career. In fact, two thirds of the reading school teachers had more than five years overall teaching experience. However, all of the learning support teachers had a similar length of experience (more than five years). It is noteworthy that a large proportion of the teachers in the ***reading units*** are in their present position for less than five years. Similarly the majority of the resource teachers are in their position for the same length of time. Teaching experience in other positions during their career may help to compensate for lack of teaching experience in the special setting. All of the teachers in the reading units had more than five years teaching experience. The learning support teachers also had a similar level of experience.

Summary

The data from ***mainstream settings*** have shown that the learning support teachers, as a group, have the greater overall teaching experience when compared with the resource and mainstream teachers. All of the learning support teachers have been teaching longer than five years. This is greater than the number of resource teachers with similar experience. The number of mainstream teachers with this level of teaching experience is considerably less.

It is worth mentioning that the ***special settings*** also had a proportion of teachers newly appointed to the position (in the past two years). In fact teachers in the reading units and the resource teachers have the greatest numbers in their present position for less than five years.

The length of the teachers' experience in the special setting compares favourably with the teachers in mainstream school. Three quarters of the teachers in reading schools and all of the teachers in reading units have been teaching for more than five years. This is in contrast to the mainstream teachers who have fewer teachers with this length of teaching experience.

Teachers' understanding of dyslexia

Individual teachers' understanding of a pupil's difficulties, particularly literacy difficulties, will influence the teaching approaches and methods used. There was a broad range of definitions and descriptions of dyslexia offered by the teachers who responded to the questionnaire. The definition and description of dyslexia can be problematic. A causal modelling framework was proposed by Frith (1999) to describe dyslexia at three levels: the biological level, the cognitive level and behavioural level. This framework was used to categorise the teachers' definitions of dyslexia. Each definition was categorised according to the main emphasis in the definition/ description. The table below outlines the frequency of types of definition of dyslexia as reported by each group of teachers.

Table 4.1: Frequency of types of definitions of dyslexia reported by teachers, by group

		Definitions			
Group	***N***	***Behavioural***	***Cognitive***	***Neurological***	***Not stated***
Learning support	17	10	5	1	1
Resource	18	7	9	1	1
Mainstream	14	10	2	1	1
Reading School	16	9	5	2	
Reading Unit	7	3	2	2	
Total	72	39	23	7	3

Mainstream settings: The majority of ***Learning support teachers*** described dyslexia according to the difficulties the child may have in learning to read, write and spell. This definition was classified as a 'behavioural' type of definition. For example:

> *Someone who is not succeeding despite getting learning support regularly, has support in class and at home, good attendance at school, is not too young for class. Has difficulty with reading, decoding, spelling and writing. Making very little progress at reading and spelling.*

A behavioural definition of dyslexia was the most frequent type reported by these teachers. Even though a behavioural definition prevailed, one third of the learning support teachers described dyslexia as a cognitive difficulty, for example: *'Children who find word recognition difficult, poor memory work, poor sequencing skills, poor retrieval of verbal vocabulary, poor phonics awareness'.*

Resource teachers tended to concentrate on the cognitive aspects of dyslexia in their definitions:

> *A condition which interferes with ability to acquire and process linguistic information and sometimes arithmetic information, Problems with sequencing, short term memory, auditory and visual perception.*

Children who have been identified as dyslexic and are receiving special support from the resource teacher have already received a psycho educational assessment. This report is available to the

resource teacher, and gives cognitive information on the child's difficulties. Access to the psychological report may inform the resource teacher on the cognitive aspects of dyslexia, for example

> *A difficulty which affects child's ability to read with fluency, write and spell. Problems with sequencing, short term memory, auditory and visual perception. Problems with left to right orientation, and reversals of letters and words.*

This is in contrast to the mainstream teachers who described dyslexia in behavioural terms.

Almost all the ***mainstream class teachers*** described dyslexia in behavioural terms such as *'poor writing skills, letter reversals, recognising stand alone words, reading fluency'* . The class teacher noticed the discrepancy in (the) child's ability between areas of the curriculum most often a clear difficulty with reading, writing and spelling. The class teacher described dyslexia in terms of outcomes in class and a discrepancy in attainment in certain areas of the curriculum.

Teachers in special settings: Teachers in ***reading units and reading schools*** mentioned neurological causes more frequently than the Learning support and Resource teachers. For example, dyslexia was described as follows:

> *A disability with a neurological base affecting the cross laterality functions in the learner. It can range in severity and can be accompanied by one or two other disabilities, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADD, organisation etc. It affects child's ability to read, make sense of symbols, letters, etc. rendering comprehension and success to all other curricular areas extremely difficult. Not curable as such but children can be equipped with strategies that enable them to cope and get over some to their difficulties.*

The teachers in the reading units have access to each pupil's psychological report, and may use this information to develop an individual educational plan for each child. These teachers also have more overall teaching experience than teachers in mainstream and may be more familiar with the profile of the dyslexic student, for example, *'A specific difficulty with information processing, which affects reading, spelling and maths abilities. Includes problems with working memory'.* The teachers in the special settings reported more definitions of a cognitive type than the teachers in mainstream settings.

> *A language processing difference with resultant difficulties in handling symbols such as letters/words/numbers which leads to problems in mastering skills such as reading, writing, spelling and often maths.*

However more than half of all teachers described dyslexia at the 'word' level or from a behavioural perspective, one third described dyslexia from a cognitive level. Teacher observation and pupil knowledge account for the teachers' dominant description of dyslexia.

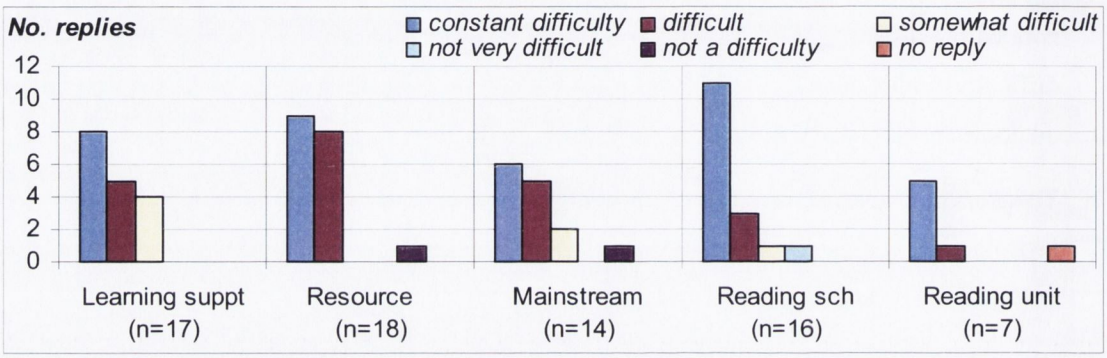
Teachers' identifications of pupils' main reading difficulties

The teachers in the study were asked to indicate their students' primary difficulty. Students with dyslexia may have difficulty with reading accuracy, fluency, or reading comprehension. They may

also have a difficulty with spelling or handwriting, or a difficulty with mathematics, Some students encounter difficulty with speaking and listening skills and attention and concentration.

Teachers were asked to rank their students primary difficulty on a scale of zero to five (0=not a difficulty, 5=constant difficulty). This section will present the teachers' views of their pupils' primary difficulty. Eight possible difficulties were considered by teachers and each difficulty was ranked by each teacher according to their pupils' level of difficulty. The following chart presents the views of each group of teachers according to their teaching situation.

Fig 4.3: Reading Accuracy: level of difficulty

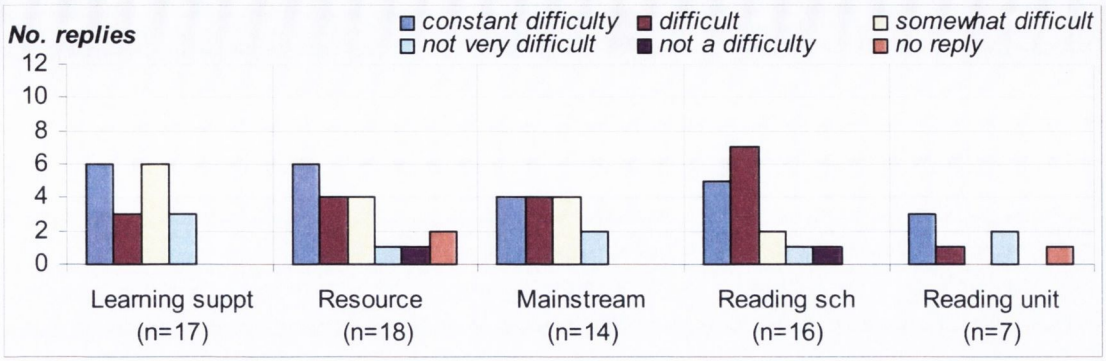


The vast majority of all teachers considered reading accuracy to be a primary difficulty for their pupils. Further comment follows regarding the variations between the teachers in the special settings and those in mainstream.

Mainstream settings Ten of the 14 ***Learning support teachers*** considered reading accuracy a constant difficulty or a difficulty for their pupils, almost half considered it to be a constant difficulty. Almost all ***resource teachers*** considered reading accuracy a constant difficulty or a difficulty for their pupils, almost half considered it to be a constant difficulty. Almost all ***mainstream class teachers*** considered reading accuracy a constant difficulty or difficulty for their pupils, almost half considered it to be a constant difficulty. The mainstream profiles are in contrast to the teachers in special provision who considered reading accuracy to be a constant difficulty.

Special settings The teachers in the ***reading units and reading schools*** almost unanimously reported constant difficulties with reading accuracy. A greater proportion of these teachers reported their pupils' primary difficulty to be reading accuracy than those teachers in the mainstream settings. However a large number of resource teachers also reported reading accuracy to be a constant difficulty.

Fig 4.4: Reading comprehension: level of difficulty



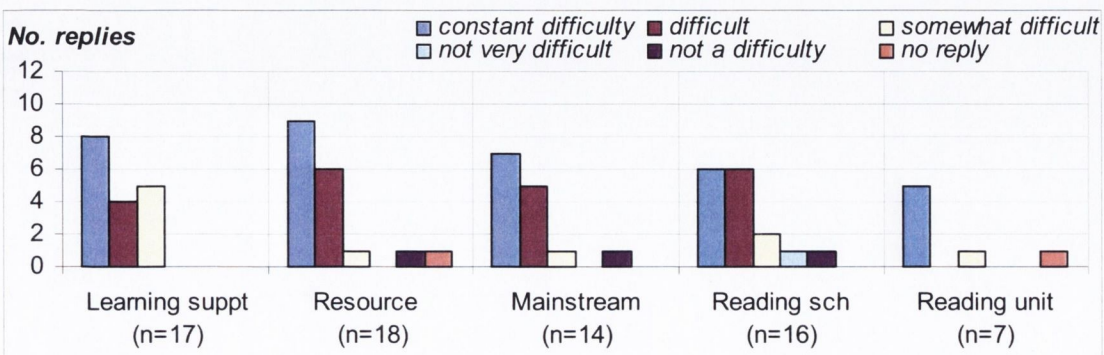
The purpose of reading is comprehension. Pupils need to be able to read for meaning and to get information from the printed page. All the teachers in the study considered reading comprehension difficulties to be less of a problem than reading accuracy among their pupils.

There is some difference in the views of teachers in the different settings regarding reading comprehension as a primary difficulty.

Mainstream settings: ***Learning support teachers*** reported reading comprehension to be less of a primary difficulty for their pupils compared to reading accuracy. ***Resource teachers*** reported a similar pattern, reading comprehension was considered to be a difficulty by almost two thirds of teachers compared to the larger majority who regarded reading accuracy as a primary difficulty. ***Mainstream class teachers:*** Significantly less teachers in mainstream reported reading comprehension to be a difficulty for pupils compared to reported reading accuracy difficulties.

Special settings: The teachers in the ***reading schools*** also reported pupils' difficulty with reading comprehension, although this was less of a constant problem than reported by the reading unit teachers. More than twice as many reading school teachers reported reading accuracy a constant problem compared to reading comprehension. The teachers in the ***reading units*** almost unanimously considered reading comprehension to be a main difficulty for pupils but less of a difficulty than reading accuracy.

Fig 4.5: Reading fluency: level of difficulty

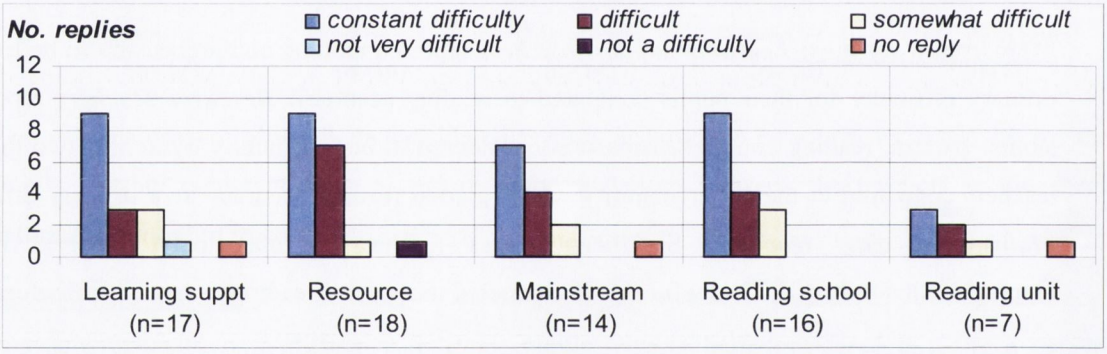


Many readers have difficulty reading fluently. Pupils must develop fluency in reading in order to recognise words quickly and easily. Reading fluency could be considered a bridge between recognising the words and comprehending the meaning of the material. Teachers in the study considered reading fluency to be generally as much a problem for their pupils as reading accuracy.

Mainstream settings: Teachers in each of the mainstream settings considered reading fluency to be as much a problem for their pupils as reading accuracy. More than half of the ***learning support teachers*** reported fluency in reading to be a problem for their pupils.

Special settings: The teachers in ***reading units*** considered almost unanimously that reading fluency is a primary difficulty for pupils. They also reported a great difficulty with reading accuracy among their pupils. Although the teachers in ***reading schools*** considered reading accuracy a constant difficulty for pupils, these teachers reported that constant difficulty with reading fluency was less significant.

Fig 4.6: Spelling: level of difficulty

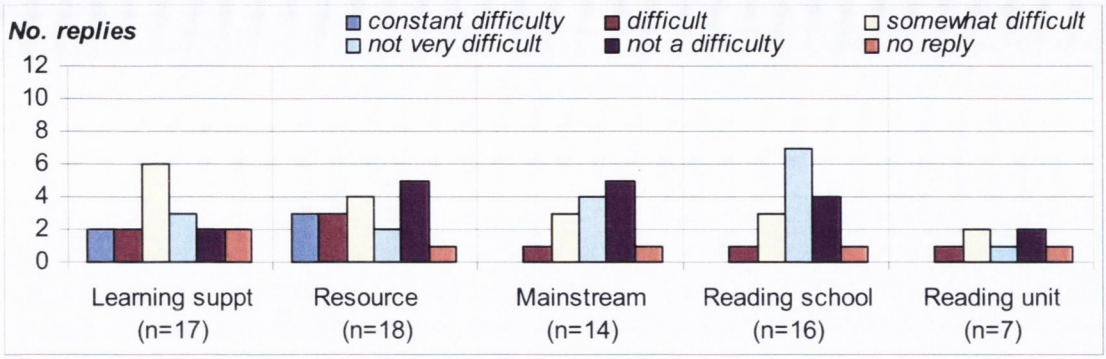


Spelling a word is much more difficult than reading it. A child who has difficulty decoding a word when reading will often have a difficulty when spelling. Teachers regularly report constant spelling difficulties for the child with dyslexia. In the following tables, teachers considered whether spelling was a primary difficulty for their pupils with dyslexia.

Mainstream settings: Half of all teachers (n=72) reported constant spelling difficulties to be a primary difficulty among the pupils. When 'constant difficulty' and 'difficulty' ratings are combined, the proportion of pupils accounted for is highest for ***resource teacher***s (16/18), next highest for ***mainstream class teachers*** (11/14), and lowest (though still high) for ***learning support teachers*** (12/17).

Special setting: The teachers in the ***reading units and schools*** present a similar profile in their reported levels of constant difficulty, or difficulty with spelling among their pupils.

Fig 4.7: Mathematics: level of difficulty

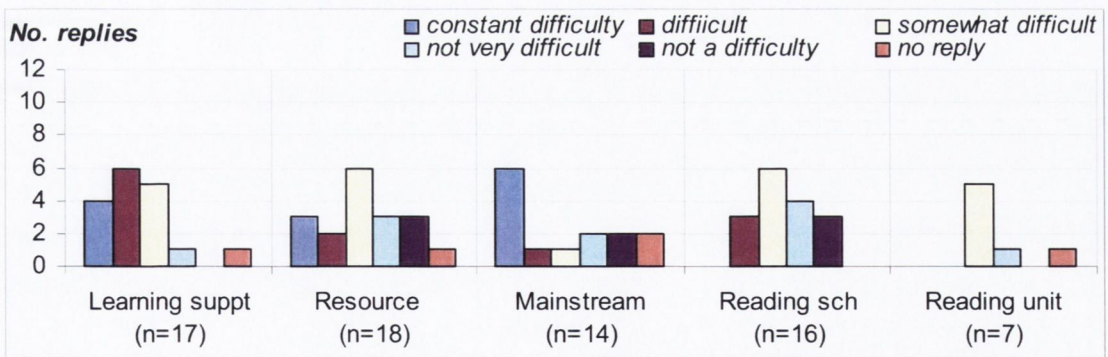


There is a significant contrast in the perception of pupils' difficulty with maths compared to difficulty with reading or spelling. Just over half of all teachers reported that mathematics was not very difficult for children with dyslexia.

Mainstream settings: A greater number of mainstream class teachers considered maths **not** to be a difficulty for their pupils compared to the resource teacher and the learning support teachers. Children attending the learning support or resource teacher could also have difficulties with numeracy.

Special settings: Teachers in the ***reading schools*** reported more pupils for whom mathematics is not very difficult than in any of the other teaching situations. Some of the teachers in the ***reading units*** reported maths to be a difficulty for the pupils. As the number of reading unit respondents was limited, a valid comparison with respondents in the reading schools cannot be made.

Fig 4.8: Reading attention and concentration: level of difficulty

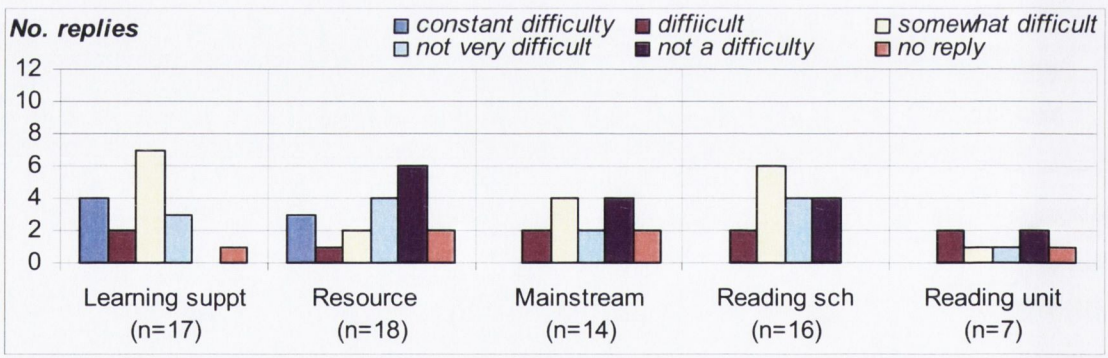


Problems with attention may be evident among children with dyslexic type difficulties. These children may have difficulty concentrating on a task or are easily distracted. They may shift from one activity to another or not finish what they start. However the learning environment or classroom setting will influence the severity of these behaviours. The above chart shows that almost three quarters of all teachers considered attention and concentration difficulties to be a difficulty to some degree for these children.

Mainstream settings: It is significant that the ***learning support, resource*** teachers and the ***mainstream class teachers*** were the only groups of teachers who reported attention difficulties to be a constant difficulty for the pupils. The question arises as to the relatively large number of teachers who reported attention and concentration difficulties to be a constant difficulty for pupils who are receiving support in small groups. The ***resource teacher*** generally works with small groups or on one to one basis. Nevertheless, over one third of resource teachers considered that concentration and attention may be somewhat difficult for the pupils. This is significantly less than in mainstream. More than half of the ***mainstream class teachers*** reported the child's attention and concentration to be a constant difficulty. This is significant compared to the other teachers, for whom attention and concentration difficulties was not such a problem. Small group teaching and methods used with smaller groups may prevent attention difficulties arising.

Special settings: The teachers in the ***reading units and schools*** considered attention and concentration to be somewhat difficult for their pupils. This is in contrast to the degree of difficulty reported by the learning support teachers. The pupils in reading units receive support for three hours per day in a small group of nine pupils. Learning support sessions provide support on withdrawal basis for a shorter duration.

Fig 4.9: Oral language skills: level of difficulty



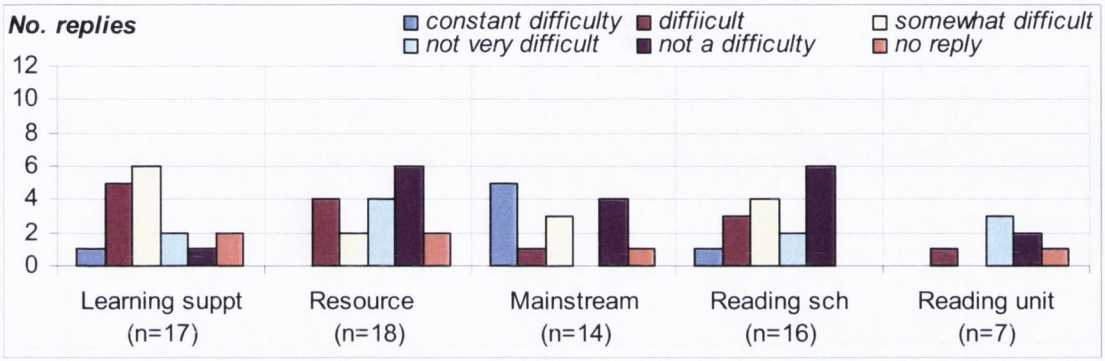
For some pupils with dyslexia, oral language may also be a difficulty. Pupils may have problems with receptive or expressive language, or with the comprehension of language. Teachers in the study were asked to report on the extent of their pupils' primary difficulty with oral language. The chart above shows the different views from each teaching setting.

Mainstream class teachers: Almost one third of all teachers reported speaking and listening skills to be somewhat difficult for their pupils. A further 25% reported a greater degree of difficulty. This means that over half of all pupils with dyslexia who were receiving support were considered by their teacher to have a difficulty with oral language skills. Further analysis showed that the Learning support and Resource teachers considered language skills to be a greater problem for the pupils than the teachers in the special settings. A significant number of ***learning support teachers*** reported oral language to be a difficulty among their pupils. This is more than the number reported

by the resource teachers. Learning support and ***resource teachers*** considered oral language skills to be a greater problem for pupils than the teachers in the reading schools and reading units. The favourable pupil teacher ratio in the special settings may be a contributory factor here. There is more time for practicing oral language skills, more time for teacher pupil discussion and more opportunities for pupil teacher interaction

Special settings: A significant number of teachers in the ***reading units and schools*** considered oral language skills to be somewhat difficult for the pupils.

Fig 4.10: Handwriting: level of difficulty



For some pupils with dyslexia, handwriting may present a particular difficulty. Difficulties with fine motor skills may hinder correct formation of letters and numbers. This can be observed in class as a difficulty copying from the blackboard or even difficulty forming a legible script.

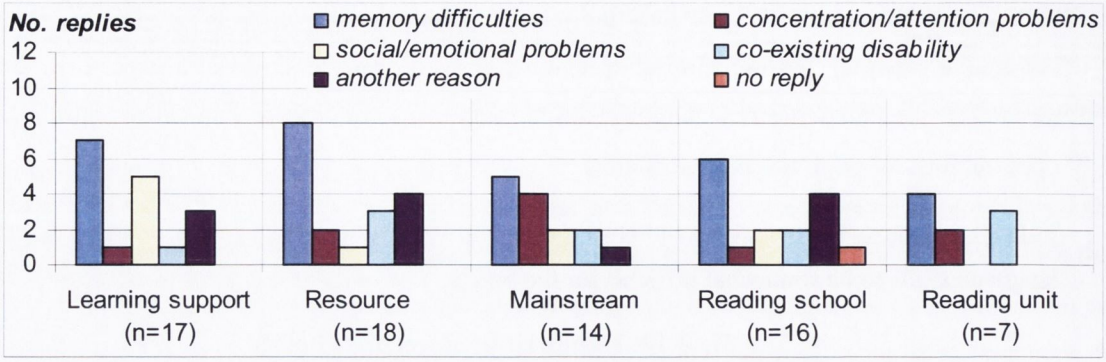
Mainstream settings: There is some small variation between the ***learning support*** and ***resource teachers*** in relation to the attribution of difficulty in handwriting among the pupils. The ***mainstream class teachers*** were more likely to view handwriting as a difficulty for their pupils.

Special settings: Generally, teachers in the ***reading units and schools*** did not consider handwriting difficulties to be a major cause for concern. Teachers in the special settings and in resource teaching in general did not regard handwriting as a significant difficulty for their pupils. A greater number of teachers in mainstream classes and those in learning support however considered handwriting to be a cause of difficulty.

Main underlying reasons for the pupils' difficulty

There may be different underlying reasons for a pupil's reading difficulty. Teachers' perception of the underlying reasons for the pupil's difficulty will influence their teaching approaches and methods. Teachers were asked to rank in order what they considered to be the main underlying reason for the difficulty of their pupils. They identified the main underlying reasons as follows:

Fig 4.11: Teachers' identifications of main underlying reason for pupils' difficulty



In the total response profile, memory difficulties were considered to be the primary fundamental difficulty for almost half the respondents. Concentration and attention problems, social or emotional difficulties and the presence of a co existing disability was considered secondary. In the 'another reason' category the following responses were given: lack of phonological awareness; dyslexia; language processing difficulties or an unspecified reason. The main reason specified by these teachers was lack of phonological awareness among pupils.

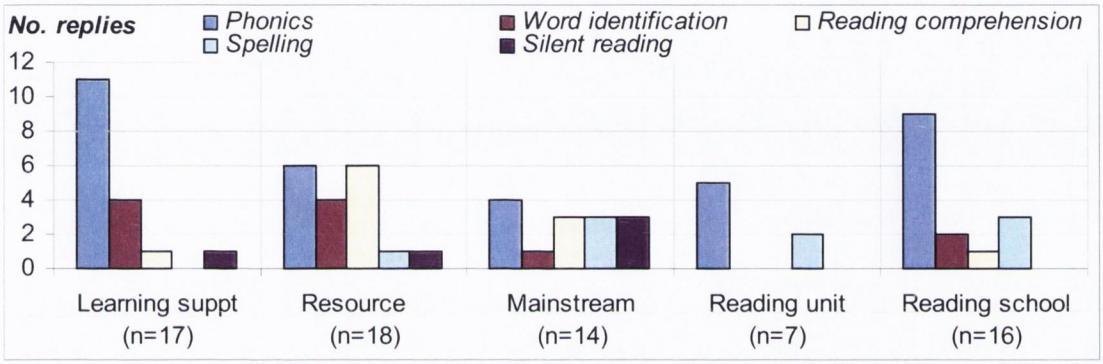
Mainstream settings: ***The learning support teachers*** regarded memory difficulties to be the main underlying reason for their pupils' difficulty. However they also considered social and emotional problems to be a significant underlying reason. This is more than the mainstream teachers and more than all the other teacher groups. ***The resource teacher's*** caseload will include pupils with a range of special educational needs, including pupils with dyslexia. A number of resource teachers considered a co existing disability as a possible reason for the child's difficulty. These teachers also attributed 'another reason' as fundamental to the pupils' difficulty. Lack of phonological awareness among pupils was considered to be the most likely 'other reason' for their reading difficulty. ***The mainstream class teachers*** regard memory difficulties as the main underlying reason for pupils' difficulty. However it is evident that they also consider concentration and attention problems to be a significant factor for these pupils. This is in line with their previous view that attention and concentration difficulties is a primary difficulty among these pupils. The mainstream teachers are the only group who considered concentration /attention problems to be such an underlying reason for the pupils' difficulty.

Special settings: There is no significant difference between the teachers in the mainstream settings and the special settings regarding memory difficulties as the primary underlying reason for pupils' difficulty. However, the teachers in the ***reading schools*** identified a lack of phonological awareness as a contributory reason for the child's reading difficulty. The teachers in the ***reading units*** reported the largest number of pupils with a co existing disability as a secondary reason for pupils' difficulties. A coexisting disability could be Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD), a Speech and language disorder, Dyspraxia, or Asperger's Syndrome.

Literacy skills taught

This section identifies the skills taught to students with dyslexia according to the time spent teaching these literacy skills. Teachers were asked to rank the skills in terms of the frequency of skills taught. Skills taught, ranked in order of total usage, are phonics, word identification, reading comprehension, spelling and silent reading. All the teachers spend more time on teaching phonic skills than any other literacy skill. Expressive writing skills such as story writing and handwriting were not prioritised by teachers. The specific profiles of the main literacy skills taught are as follows:

Fig 4.12: Literacy skills taught



Further analysis of skills taught in each setting shows some difference between the settings.

Mainstream settings: The priority skills taught by ***learning support teachers*** focus predominantly on reading accuracy. This consists mainly of phonics and word identification skills. Some time is spent on reading comprehension and silent reading. Spelling skills and writing skills are not taught as priority. The dominant instruction methods used by the learning support teachers will be outlined in the next section. These literacy instruction methods (onset and rime, phonics teaching, word families and teaching high frequency words) will show that the methods used by this group of teachers are in accordance with the priority skills taught. Learning support teachers spend a greater proportion of their time on phonics teaching than the teachers in the reading schools. The learning support teacher provides extra teaching, additional to that received in the mainstream class. A great proportion of this time is concentrated on teaching phonic skills. The ***resource teacher*** spends equal time on phonics and reading comprehension. Word identification skills are also a priority. There is less emphasis on phonics teaching than in the learning support situation. However, it can be seen that very little time is reserved for silent reading and spelling skills. Writing skill is not a teaching priority. Although the resource teacher spends one third of time on *reading comprehension*, the teaching approaches used focus mainly on *reading accuracy* and word identification (see next section).

The ***mainstream class teacher*** spends an almost equal balance of time on the four skills of phonics, spelling, reading comprehension and silent reading. Phonics teaching receives marginally more

time than the others. This is considerably less than the learning support teacher and less than the resource teacher. The teaching approaches used by the mainstream teacher which are outlined in the next section focus mainly on reading accuracy. However the classroom teacher regularly reads to the children and silent reading is practiced on a daily basis. These methods concur with the priority given to *reading comprehension*, outlined above. Writing ability is not prioritised and is absent from the chart above. However, the next section will show that mainstream teachers do teach writing skills as evidenced in the instruction methods used every day.

Special settings: Teachers in the ***reading schools*** spend up to two hours each day on reading instruction and associated literacy skills. The main emphasis is on teaching phonics as a priority skill followed by spelling and word identification skills. Reading comprehension skill is less of a priority. The amount of time spent on phonics teaching is similar to the learning support situation. The priority literacy skills taught in the ***reading units*** are phonics and some spelling skills. Although skill in spelling is necessary for effective writing, instruction in writing is not ranked as a priority for teachers in the reading units. The literacy skills taught in this setting correspond with the teaching approaches used. Hearing individual reading, daily spelling practice and phonics teaching are the main methods used by the teachers in the reading units (see next section).

Teaching approaches and methods used

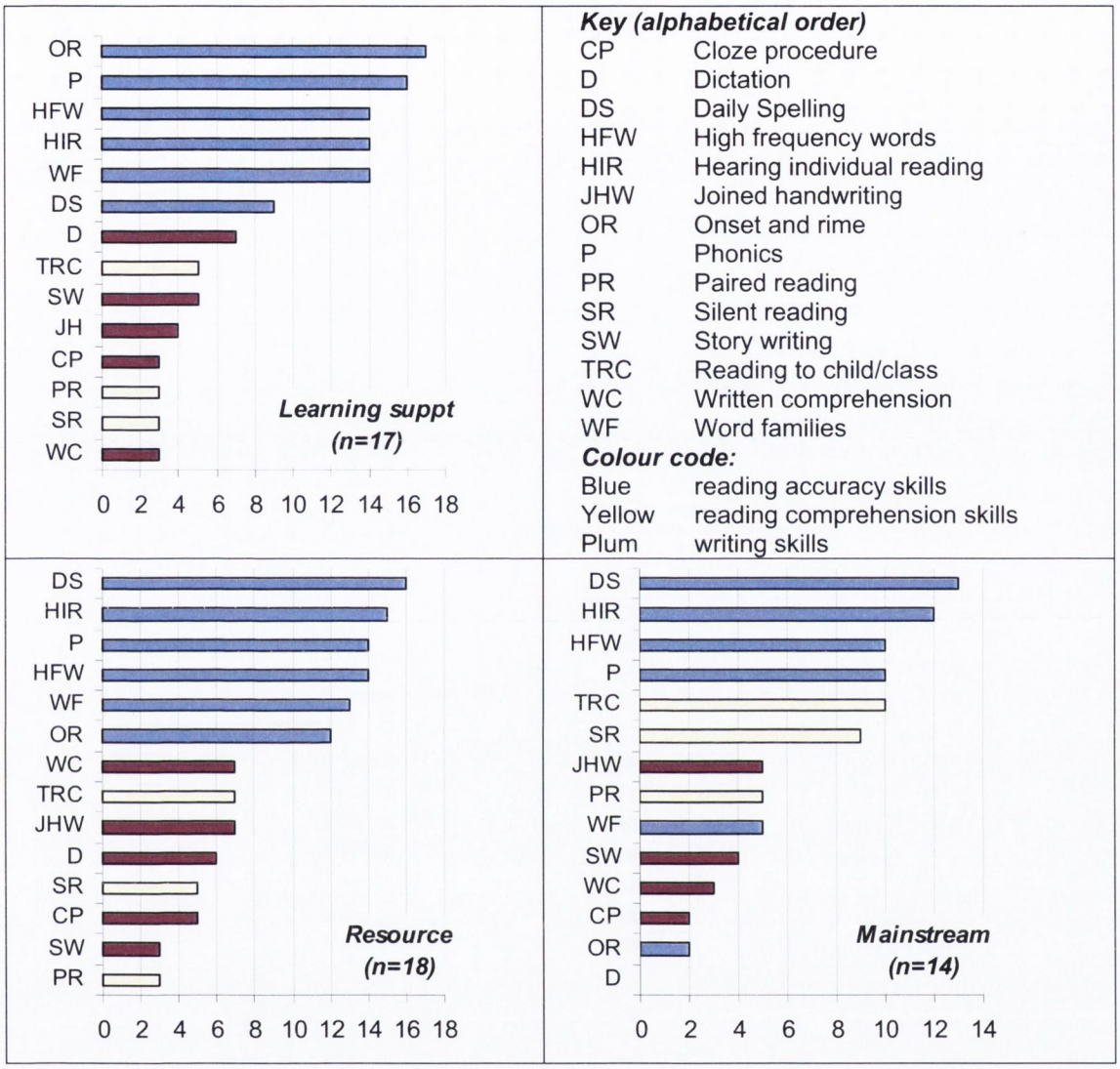
This section will examine the main teaching approaches and methods used by teachers in each of the teaching situations. Fourteen different teaching approaches were reported by teachers. The survey examined the frequency of each method used; responses were analysed according to the teaching position. The teaching methods focus on three broad areas of literacy: reading accuracy; reading fluency and comprehension; and writing skills:

Reading accuracy	***Reading Fluency/ Comprehension***	***Writing skill***
Hearing individual reading	Silent reading	Written comprehension
Daily spelling practice	Paired reading	Story writing
Phonics teaching	Teacher reading to child or class	Cloze procedure
High frequency words		Joined handwriting
Onset and rime		Dictation
Word families		

Teachers reported how often they used each method -- every day; once a week; or seldom/never. Charts in the next two subsections show how many teachers in each setting use each of the 14 methods and approaches in teaching literacy skills every day to their pupils. In a later section the teachers' views of the effectiveness of each of these methods will be presented.

Mainstream settings

Fig 4.13 (a-c): Group profiles of main teaching methods and approaches used daily in mainstream settings, ranked by number of teachers using them



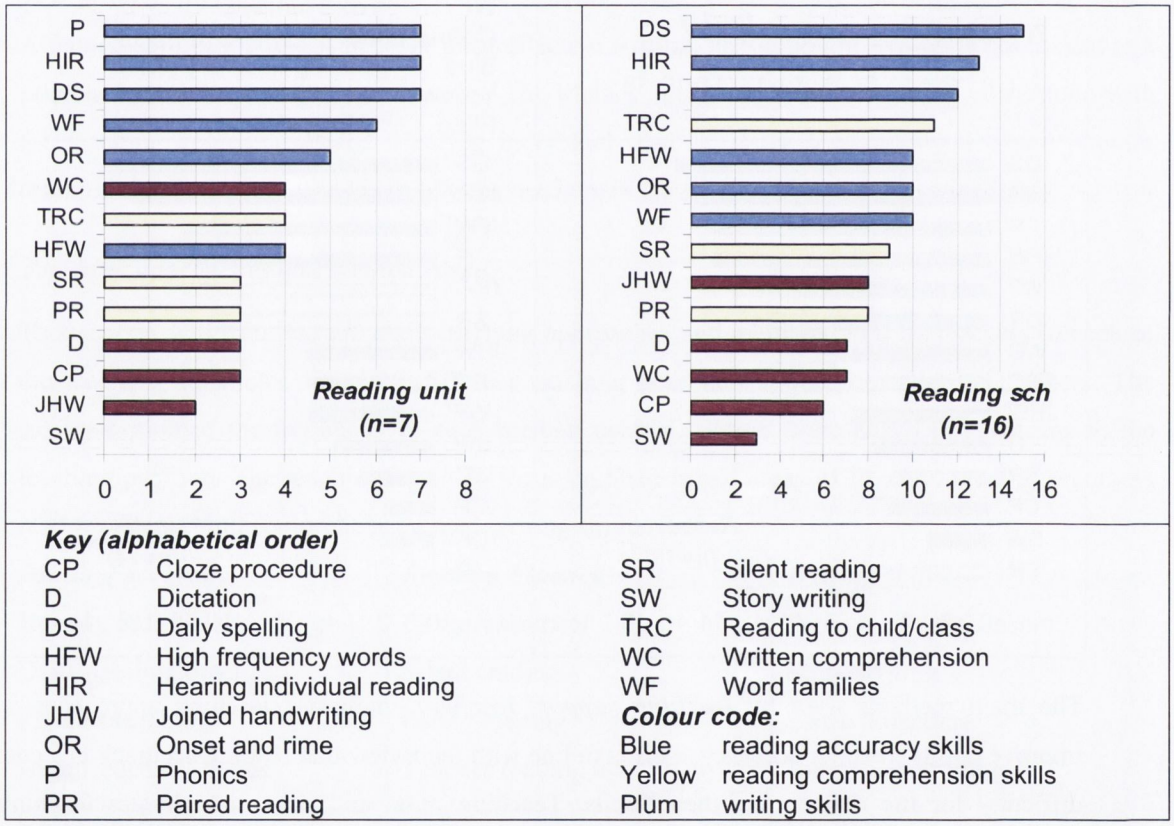
The main methods used by ***learning support teachers*** emphasise teaching approaches which improve pupils' reading accuracy. This is in line with their view that reading accuracy is a constant difficulty for the majority of their pupils. Teaching onset and rime and phonics teaching are examples of specific approaches to improve reading accuracy. The methods used by the learning support teachers are compatible with the literacy skills taught. Half of all the learning support teachers teach spelling on a daily basis, but methods to improve writing skills are used less frequently. This pattern of teaching is repeated in some of the other settings. Almost all ***resource teachers*** use daily spelling practice and hearing individual reading as the dominant teaching methods used. Specific reading instruction approaches such as teaching onset and rime and teaching word families receives less time than the learning support teachers. The resource teachers' emphasis on daily spelling is in line with their view that spelling is a constant difficulty for their

pupils. However approaches which focus on reading comprehension (paired reading, cloze procedure, silent reading) are less frequently used among resource teachers even though a majority considered reading comprehension to be a major difficulty for their pupils.

The main methods used by ***mainstream class teachers*** focus on daily spelling and hearing individual reading. This is similar to the resource teachers. Specific reading instruction methods such as teaching onset and rime, and cloze procedure receive less attention. Daily instruction in writing skills (story writing, joined handwriting), although less frequently used, is in fact used more regularly among the mainstream teachers than the other teachers.

Special settings

Fig 4.14 a and b: Group profiles of main teaching methods and approaches used daily in special schools and units, ranked by number of teachers using them



The predominant teaching approaches used by the ***reading school teachers*** on a daily basis do not differ significantly from the approaches used in mainstream. Daily spelling practice and hearing individual reading is regularly used. The least amount of time is spent on story writing, compared to other methods used. More of these teachers use each of the teaching approaches on a daily basis than in the mainstream situation. Approaches focussing on writing skill are used less frequently. This is similar to the mainstream situation.

The pattern of teaching approaches among the teachers in ***reading units*** is similar to the teachers in the reading schools. All of these teachers hear the pupils' reading individually, practice spelling and teach phonics every day. These are the same dominant methods used in the reading schools. There is no significant difference between the main methods used in the special settings and the mainstream settings.

Summary

There is a similar pattern of teaching approaches and methods used among the teachers in each of the settings. The dominant focus is on methods which address reading accuracy among the pupils. The main methods used are hearing individual reading, teaching phonics and daily spelling. The specific approach of using onset and rime is used every day by the learning support teachers. This is in direct contrast to the approach being used in the mainstream class. Daily instruction in writing skills is less frequently used by all teachers in each of the teaching situations. The mainstream teacher and the learning support teacher give more instruction in writing skill (every day) than any of the other teachers. Teaching methods which focus on reading fluency and reading comprehension receive more time overall in the mainstream class.

Teachers' views on the effectiveness of teaching approaches

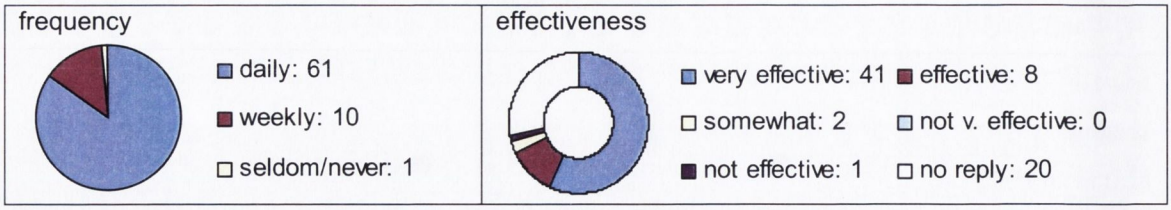
The charts outlined above focussed on the teaching methods teachers use **every day** with their pupils. However, some of the teaching methods were seldom or never used by some teachers, other methods were used just once a week The next set of tables looks at the amount of time spent using each approach / method and the perceived effectiveness of each teaching method. The methods presented cover three main literacy areas, reading accuracy, reading comprehension and writing skills, as follows:

Reading accuracy	***Reading Fluency/ Comprehension***	***Writing skill***
Hearing individual reading	Silent reading	Written comprehension
Daily spelling practice	Paired reading	Story writing
Phonics teaching	Teacher reading to child or class	Cloze procedure
High frequency words		Joined handwriting
Onset and rime		Dictation
Word families		

The following charts with commentary give an overview of the teachers' reported frequency of use of each method, and their evaluations of the method's effectiveness.

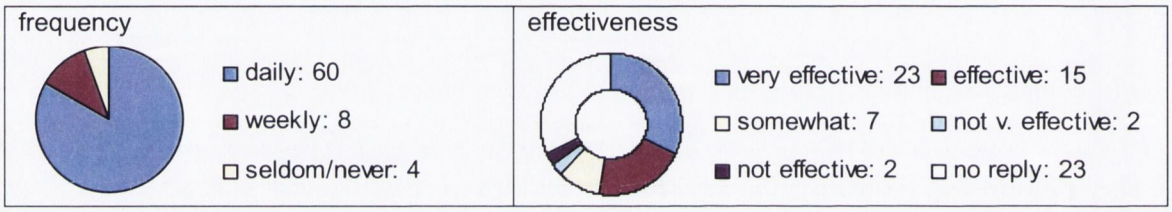
Reading accuracy

Fig 4.15: Hearing individual reading



The majority of teachers reported hearing pupils read individually every day. Teachers believed that hearing individual reading is the most effective teaching method for pupils with dyslexia. Teachers viewed this method as being very effective. Other teaching methods used are focussed on direct teaching of phonics and word identification. This is in line with the teachers' prioritisation of phonic skills as the main literacy skill taught.

Fig 4.16: Spelling practice



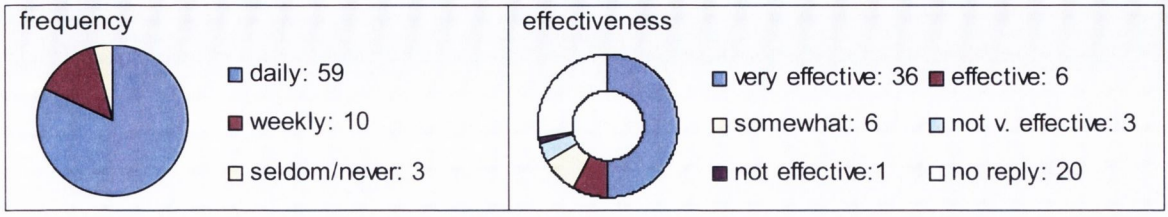
Spelling is practiced every day although teachers did not rank spelling skills as one of their priority literacy skills taught. Spelling skill is ranked fourth after phonics, word identification and reading comprehension. Less than half of all teachers viewed daily spelling practice as a very effective teaching method. The majority of teachers reported daily spelling practice with pupils, although less than half considered this practice to be very effective. Just over half of the 72 teachers considered daily spelling practice to be effective or very effective.

Fig 4.17: Onset and Rime



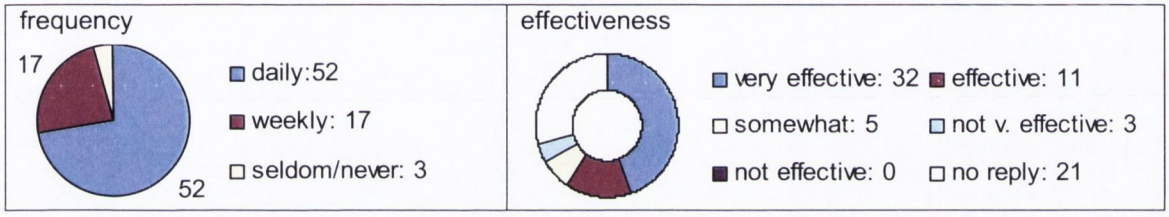
Teachers may teach word identification skill by using 'onset and rime'. This is a technique whereby children are taught to read by analogy. This technique is favoured by the learning support teacher and the teachers in the special settings. Mainstream teachers do not use this method. A significant number of teachers did not respond to this question which may indicate lack of knowledge about onset and rime.

Fig 4.18: Phonics



Using letter sound relationships or phonics helps pupils to solve words in reading and writing. Phonics teaching is considered an essential element of a teaching programme for pupils with dyslexia. The majority of teachers in all sectors teach phonics every day. Pupils need an understanding of simple and complex letter-sound relationships in order to develop skill in reading. A significant majority consider phonics teaching to be highly effective. However teaching phonic skills is not sufficient in itself as a large number of words in the English language are not phonetically regular. Pupils also need other skills and strategies to solve words.

Fig 4.19: High Frequency words



Teachers are aware that children need to develop a growing core of words that become part of a reading and writing vocabulary. Fluency in reading is supported by a large number of easily recognised words. High frequency words are taught daily by almost three quarters of all teachers. Teaching high frequency words was obviously a valued activity as almost three quarters chose this option. A majority of teachers consider teaching high frequency words to be very effective.

Fig 4.20: Teaching Word Families

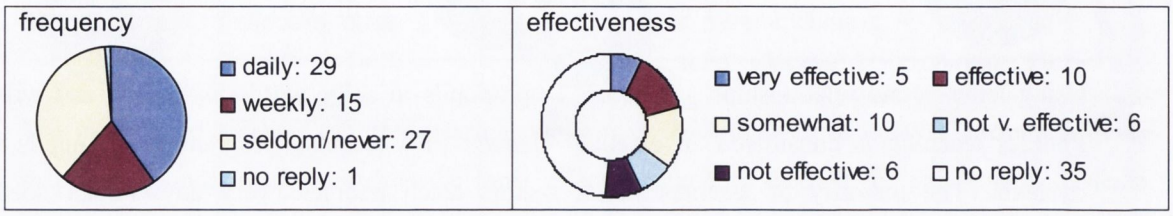


Word families or phonograms can be a word part, a cluster of letters, or a spelling pattern. It is usually a vowel sound plus a consonant sound, also called a 'rime'. Teaching children to recognise 'word families' or phonograms in words fosters an awareness of the structure of words and of the pattern in words. The majority of teachers teach word families every day to students. Teachers are aware of the importance of teaching word families and a significant number considered this method to be very effective.

Reading Comprehension

The next set of tables show the frequency of each method used to teach **reading comprehension** and the teachers' view of the effectiveness of the method used.

Fig 4.21: Silent Reading



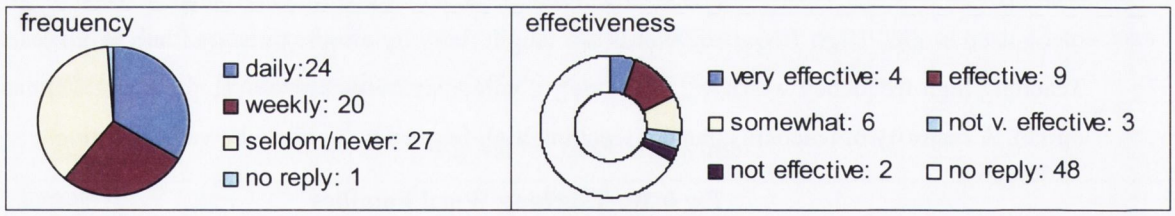
Mainstream class teachers and teachers in the reading schools use this method more often than the teachers in other settings. While over half of all teachers use this method daily or weekly, almost one third do not consider it to be effective.

Fig 4.22: Teacher reading to the child or the class



Teacher reading to the child or class is a popular method used more often by the mainstream teachers and reading school teachers. Learning support and resource teachers use this less often.

Fig 4.23: Paired Reading



Paired reading is practiced more often by the reading school and reading unit teachers. The mainstream teachers favour reading to the whole class more often than organising paired reading.

A significant number of teachers did not report on the effectiveness of this teaching method

Writing skills

Teaching methods which focus on instruction in writing skills such as dictation, cloze procedure, handwriting and story writing skills receive the least practice. This can be seen in detail from the range of methods used in each of the separate settings (previous section). This is in line with the teachers' low ranking of expressive writing skills as a priority across all the settings. Teachers did not rate these particular methods as particularly effective. In contrast with the above dominant teaching methods used, written comprehension and cloze procedure are not used as frequently by

all teachers. The following tables show how often these methods are used and the teachers' views of the effectiveness of each method.

Fig 4.24: Written comprehension



The teachers in the special settings (reading units and reading schools) and also the resource teachers, use this method more frequently than other teachers. More than half of the teachers used written comprehension once a week; a smaller number use it every day. However, only five consider it to be very effective; almost half of the teachers considered it to be somewhat effective or not very effective.

Fig 4.25: Cloze procedure



The majority of teachers use cloze procedure once a week. However, this technique is seldom or never used by the mainstream teachers. Teaching reading and writing skill by using cloze procedure was valued as an activity by less than one third of all teachers who consider it to be an effective teaching method. A similar number believe it to be somewhat effective.

Fig 4.26: Dictation



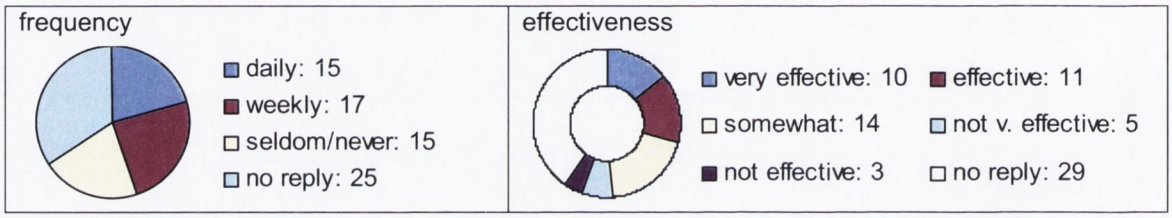
Teachers can gain valuable information from children's attempts at writing. Analysing the errors children make in dictation tasks, is one way to observe the strategies children use when writing. Almost half of the respondents use dictation once a week. One third of the teachers did not evaluate the effectiveness of this method of instruction.

Fig 4.27: Joined Handwriting



Teaching a cursive script to pupils with dyslexia may be considered an efficient method to improve the child's handwriting. Legibility and speed of writing may improve. Teaching joined handwriting was a reasonably popular daily activity with one third of the teachers. An almost equal number accorded this activity less priority as it was only used once a week.

Fig 4.28: Story Writing skills



Story writing is taught once a week by the majority of teachers. Story writing skills are ranked lowest by all teachers as was shown in the skills taught in each of the mainstream and special settings. Significantly fewer teachers responded to the question on the effectiveness of this approach. Teachers do not appear to be convinced of the effectiveness of teaching story writing skills.

Summary: The charts above show that the dominant teaching approaches which were favoured by all teachers concentrate on teaching reading accuracy. While instruction in reading accuracy is important for pupils with dyslexia, reading comprehension and fluency are also essential elements in any reading instruction programme. The most significant finding from the above analysis of the methods used among teachers is the limited time spent teaching writing skills. This is not confined to one setting but appears across all five teaching situations.

Literacy programmes

The two literacy programmes used most frequently by all teachers in the study were the Phonological Awareness Training Programme (PAT) (Wilson, 1993) and Oxford Reading Tree graded reading scheme (Oxford University Press, 2003). The PAT programme is the single most frequently used literacy programme used by teachers in this study. Few specialised programmes for dyslexia were used. The tables below show the top five most frequently used literacy programmes and also the specialised programmes used. A complete list of literacy programmes and reading instruction programmes which teachers use is presented in Appendix 2.

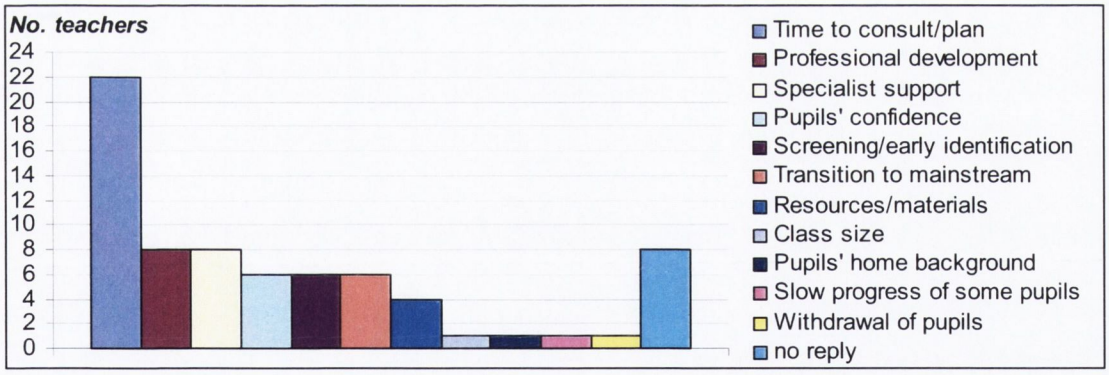
Table 4.2: Most frequently used general and specialist literacy programmes

General Literacy programmes		*Specialist Dyslexia programmes*	
PAT programme	32	Beat Dyslexia	3
Oxford Reading Tree	12	Dyslexia at Bay	1
Alpha to Omega	11	Toe by Toe	1
Fuzzbuzz	8	No specialist programmes listed	62
Prim-Ed Literacy materials	6		
No programme listed	6		
Total teachers	*72*		*72*

Areas of concern

In the final part of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to state their main area of concern in their role as a teacher of students with specific learning disability. An overall picture of the major concerns of all teachers is presented in the chart below. Subsequently the particular concerns of each group of teachers is outlined in the following section and illustrated by separate tables. Some issues were of concern to more than one group of teachers. These issues were followed up in the teachers focus group discussion and will be presented in the next section.

Fig 4.29: Teachers' concerns, by numbers of teachers (n=72) registering each



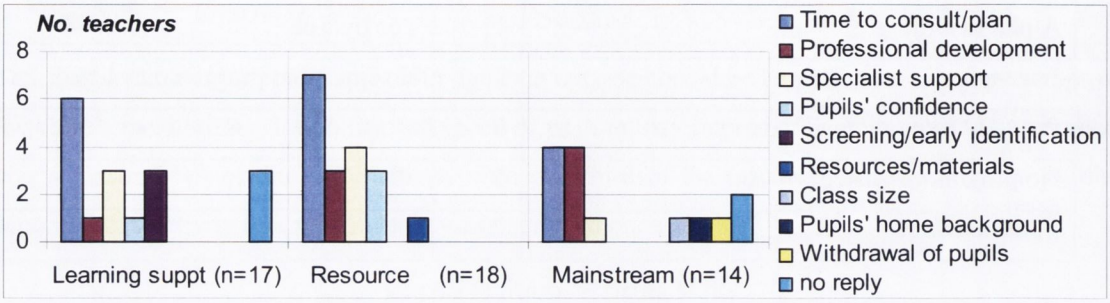
The most frequently mentioned areas of concern to teachers are

Time: All teachers reported they need more time to collaborate with other teachers and to consult and plan with the teachers who are directly involved with their dyslexic pupil(s). Learning support and resource teachers reported they need more time for individual pupil contact.

Lack of Support: Teachers were concerned about the lack of specialist support for pupils with learning difficulty. Back up support from an educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, occupational therapist was considered necessary but lacking. This was a universal concern to teachers in reading units, reading schools, learning support, resource support and mainstream settings.

Professional development: The need for ongoing professional development, in service training in areas of learning difficulties was a concern to all teachers. The following two charts and commentaries focus on the specific concern profiles of the different teacher groups in more detail.

Fig 4.30: Teachers in mainstream settings: concerns

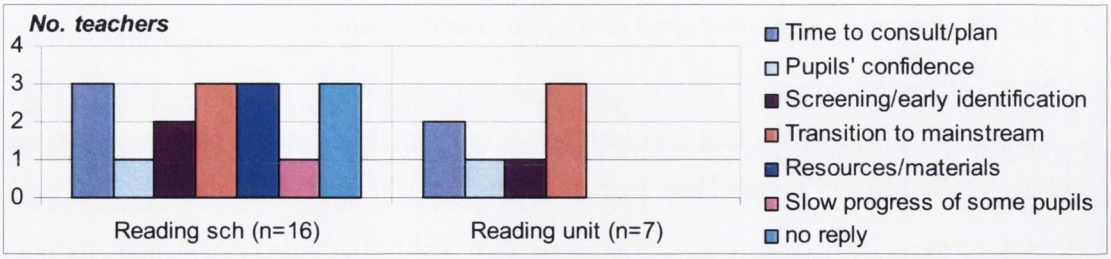


It can be seen that the concerns of the ***learning support teacher*** are similar to the resource teachers. Limited time for collaboration with colleagues and limited time spent with individual pupils was a major concern for almost half of these teachers. A similar number are also concerned about the lack of specialist support for the pupils in their care. The need for professional development was also a concern to a significant number.

An even larger number of ***resource teachers*** also reported limited time for consulting with colleagues. Of particular concern to this group is the inadequate support from professionals such as NEPS, speech and language or occupational therapists. Students attending the resource teacher were identified with a specific learning disability and need regular access to professional services.

The ***mainstream class teachers*** expressed an equal need for more time to consult with support teachers concerning a child's individual needs, and a need for professional development. This concern is repeated in each of the teaching situations and is a major concern to teachers. The need for teachers' ongoing professional development is mentioned by each group, both in the mainstream settings and in the special settings.

Fig 4.31: Teachers in special settings: concerns



Even though teachers in the ***reading schools*** have longer instruction time for literacy skills, almost one quarter reported limited time for planning to be a concern. Individual education planning is an important process in the reading schools. An equal number of these teachers are also concerned about the transition back to mainstream, when the two year placement is complete. This is also a

concern to the parents of students in special placements and will be reported more fully in the next section. The availability of suitable materials and resources is a particular concern to of the teachers in the reading schools. The teachers in the ***reading units*** have a similar concern regarding transition to mainstream as the teachers in the *reading schools*. The small number of teachers in this sample makes comparison with teachers in the other settings difficult.

Summary

The teachers supporting the child in mainstream, the class teacher, learning support or resource teacher, all share the major concern that they have limited time to discuss the child's needs, to consult with each other regarding teaching and learning plans and to liaise in a regular way for the benefit of the child. They are also aware of their own need for professional development and concerned about the lack of specialist support.

The resource teachers and the learning support teachers are worried about the limited support available from professionals such as NEPS and speech and language therapists. They need this specialist support. An issue specific to the teachers in the reading schools and reading units is the child's transition back to mainstream. This concern is shared with the parents of these children as the next section will show.

This section of the research examined the teachers understanding of dyslexia. The majority of teachers attributed memory difficulties as the main underlying reason for the child's difficulty. Reading accuracy, reading fluency and spelling / writing skills are a constant difficulty for the dyslexic learner regardless of the setting or type of support received. Difficulties with speaking and listening skills are also evident, but not considered to be the primary difficulty. Difficulties with attention and concentration are particularly noted by the mainstream teacher. Reading comprehension is less of a problem for all pupils than other skills in reading. This is in line with the profile of pupils who receive special education support because of dyslexia. All the teachers prioritise teaching phonic skills. This is perceived to be a core deficit among pupils and is the main literacy skill taught. In terms of frequency of skills taught, the main literacy skills taught are phonics, word identification and reading comprehension. There is no integrated model of literacy evident from the teachers own ranking of skills taught. Writing skills, handwriting and spelling skills are not incorporated into the teachers literacy model.

The main teaching methods used are based on direct teaching of phonics and word identification. Teaching *phonics, high frequency words* and *word families* are the main methods used. Teachers considered these methods to be effective. Daily spelling practice was frequently reported although teachers did not rate spelling skills as one of their priority literacy skills taught. Methods which focus on writing skills, such as dictation, cloze procedure, story writing skills and handwriting receive the least practice. This is in line with the teachers' low ranking of expressive writing skills as a priority across all the settings. Teachers did not rate these methods as particularly effective.

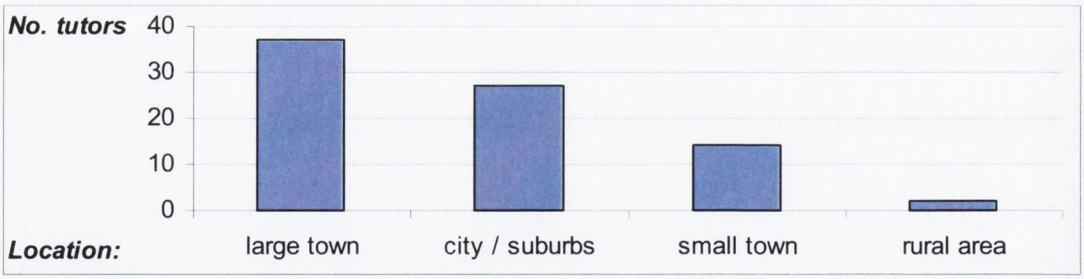
Hearing individual reading ranks overall as the prime method of specialist teaching for these pupils. Teachers in the study used a variety of literacy programmes which are also used in mainstream settings. The predominant programme used is the PAT programme. All teachers reported they need more time to collaborate with other teachers and to consult and plan with the teachers who are directly involved with their dyslexic pupils. They were also concerned about the lack of specialist support for the pupils with learning difficulty. Back-up support from an educational psychologist, speech and language therapist or occupational therapist was considered necessary but lacking. This was a universal concern to teachers in reading units, reading schools, learning and resource support and mainstream settings.

Findings from tutors' questionnaires

This section of the study reports the findings of the questionnaires returned by a group of teachers who are also tutors with the DAI. The questionnaire was distributed to 35 workshops around the country. A total of 25 workshops returned a total of 79 completed questionnaires. These tutors provide tuition in weekly workshops for students who have been assessed as having dyslexia. The first section presents background information on the tutors. The next section describes the tutors' views on the students' main difficulties and the underlying reasons for the difficulties. The main literacy skills taught in the workshops and the main teaching methods used are described subsequently. The final part reports the main issues of concern to the tutors.

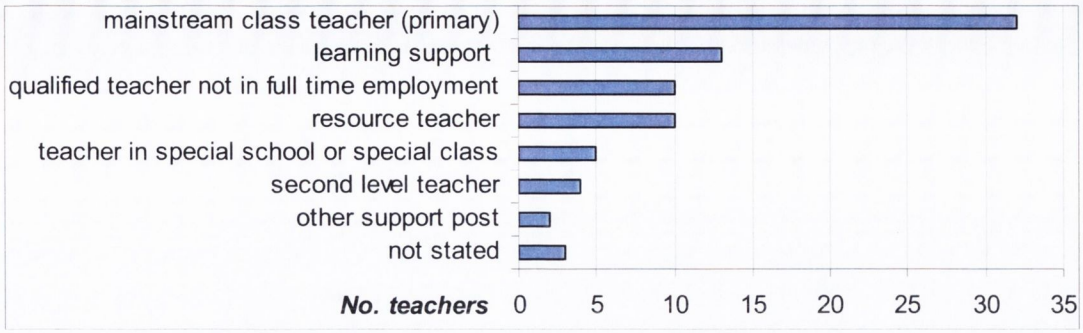
There are 35 workshops organised by the DAI located around the country. Almost half of the DAI tutors were teaching in workshops located in large towns.

Fig 4.32: Geographical location of DAI Tutor respondents (n=79)



The tutors are also qualified teachers; their present teaching position is outlined in the chart below.

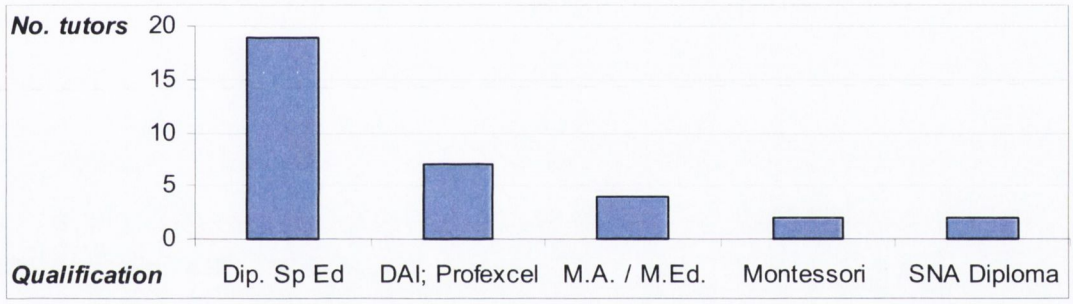
Fig 4.33: Teaching positions of tutors (n=79)



About 79% of tutors are teaching in primary schools. This includes a teaching position in mainstream, learning support and resource teaching, or teaching in a special school or special class. The majority of these tutors are in a mainstream teaching position.

Almost half of the tutors had additional qualifications, distributed as follows:.

Fig 4.34: Tutors' further qualifications (n=34)



DAI provide training for teachers in the identification of dyslexia and support teaching. Profexcel is a private company that has become involved in professional training for teachers in Ireland. The most common additional qualification for tutors is the postgraduate diploma in special educational needs provided by the Colleges of Education.

Formal school teaching experience among teachers providing extra tuition to students is desirable; the respondents had a wide range of previous teaching experience:

Fig 4.35: Teaching experience of tutors (n=79)

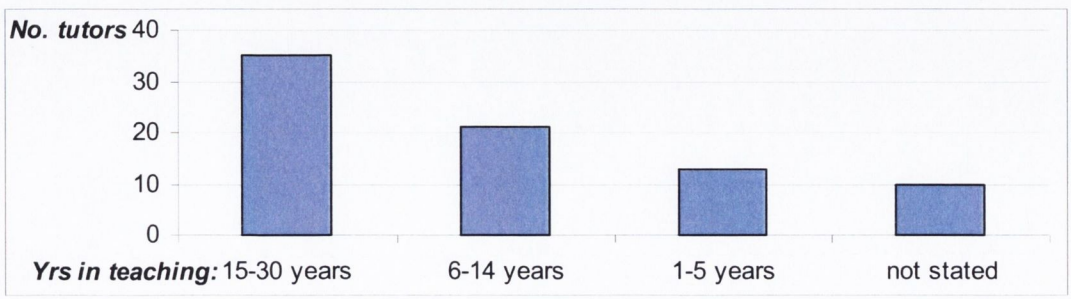
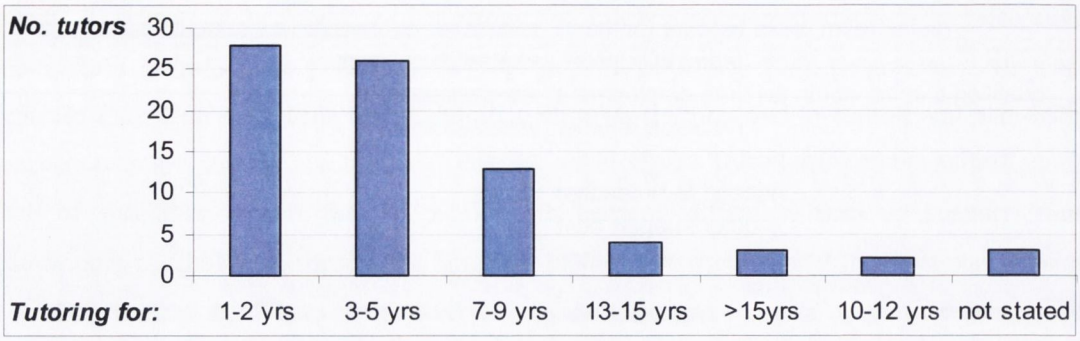


Fig 4.36: Length of time tutoring with DAI. (n=79)



Almost half of the tutors have been teaching for over fifteen years. However, a substantial minority are relatively inexperienced. Although more than half of the tutors have been teaching for over fifteen years, tutoring experience for many of them is relatively short; the majority of tutors have been tutoring with the DAI for less than five years. The tutoring sessions are additional to the teachers' full time teaching position.

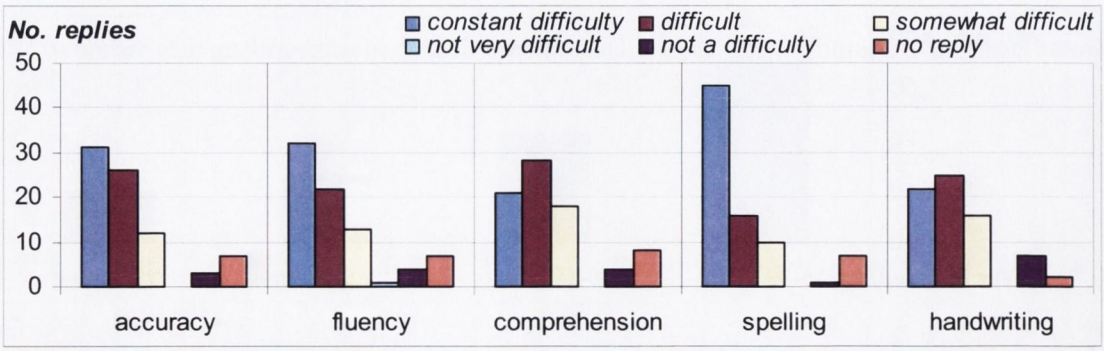
Tutors' views on students main difficulties

Difficulties encountered by students with dyslexia may include: reading accuracy, reading fluency, reading comprehension, spelling, difficulties with handwriting,, difficulties with mathematics, difficulties with speaking and listening skills, attention and concentration difficulties. Tutors ranked the students' difficulty on a five-point scale. The students' primary difficulties, according to the tutors, are in the areas of reading accuracy, reading fluency and spelling difficulties. Spelling was considered a constant difficulty by almost two thirds of tutors. This was considered to be an even greater problem than reading accuracy and reading fluency. Reading comprehension is less of a constant difficulty.

Reading accuracy is considered by the tutors to be a primary difficulty among their students:

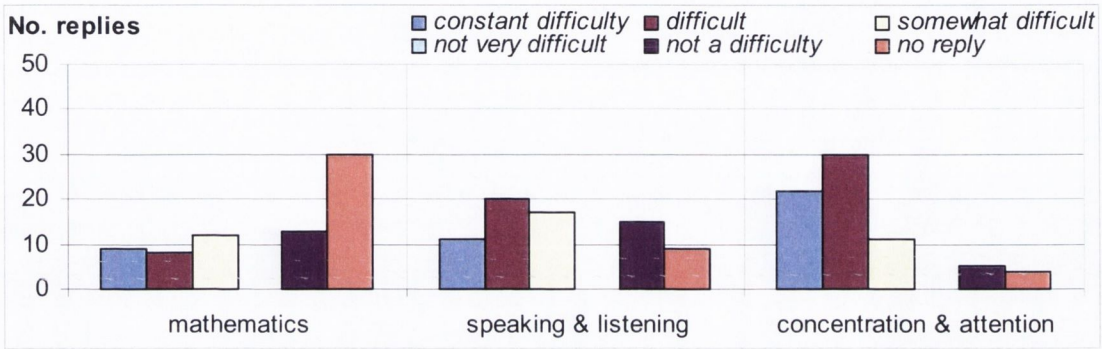
A large number of tutors reported accuracy in reading to be a difficulty or a constant difficulty for the students. However an even greater number reported spelling to be a primary difficulty:

Fig 4.37: Tutors' views on students' difficulties with reading skills



Difficulty with spelling and writing skills may be a persistent difficulty for students with dyslexia. The chart above shows the tutors' views on the students' difficulty with spelling. The majority of tutors reported students to have a major difficulty with spelling. The number of tutors reporting spelling difficulties among students is significantly greater than reported difficulties with reading accuracy, fluency or reading comprehension.

Fig 4.38: Tutors' views on students' difficulties with other skills (n=79)



Difficulties with mathematics: A difficulty with reading accuracy or spelling does not necessarily mean associated difficulties with mathematics. In fact mathematics may not be a problem to the dyslexic learner. Actually, mathematics was not considered to be a difficulty for students by one third of tutors. Mathematical skill for some students may be a strength. However, the chart above shows that in the tutors' view, mathematics presents a constant difficulty for a small number of students.

Difficulties with speaking and listening skills: Pupils with dyslexia may also have difficulties with speaking and listening skills. Almost fifty percent of tutors rated the students speaking and listening skills as a cause of some difficulty. The workshop tuition sessions take place with small groups of students and tutors work with the same group of students on a regular basis. Tutors develop a good knowledge of the difficulties faced by the students over time.

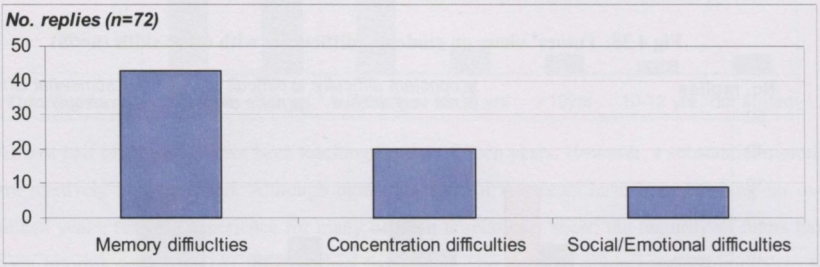
Attention and concentration difficulties: A total of 52 tutors considered students to have attention and concentration difficulties. One third of the tutors considered it to be a constant difficulty. This is a significant number of students who find it difficult to maintain concentration in the small workshop setting. It is likely that these students would have even greater difficulties with concentration in a larger classroom setting.

Tuition in the DAI workshops takes place outside school hours, one evening per week. The tuition session lasts for two hours. This extra tuition is additional to the students school work and may place extra demands on attention and concentration for the student.

Reasons for the students' difficulty

Tutors were asked to rank in order what they considered to be the main underlying reason for their students' difficulty:

Fig 4.39: Tutors' reasons for the students' difficulty (n=79)

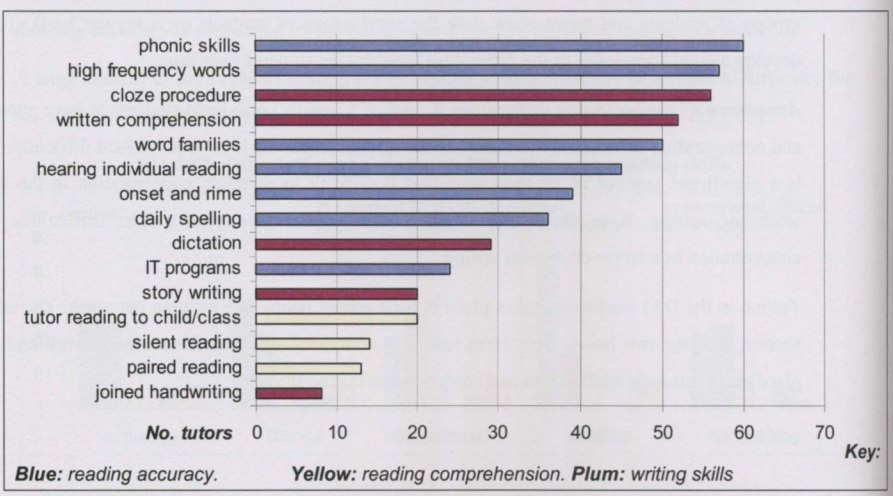


A large proportion of tutors considered memory difficulties to be the main underlying reason for the students' difficulties. Short term memory difficulties are frequently associated with dyslexia. Although a significant number of tutors considered concentration difficulties to be an issue for students in the workshop it was not perceived to be the main underlying reason for the students' difficulty.

Main literacy skills taught

A wide range of literacy skills are taught in the workshops. Tutors were asked to rank in order of frequency the skills taught. The chart below shows the main emphasis to be on instruction in literacy skills which foster reading accuracy.

Fig 4.40: Teaching methods/approaches used by tutors, by numbers using them (n=79)

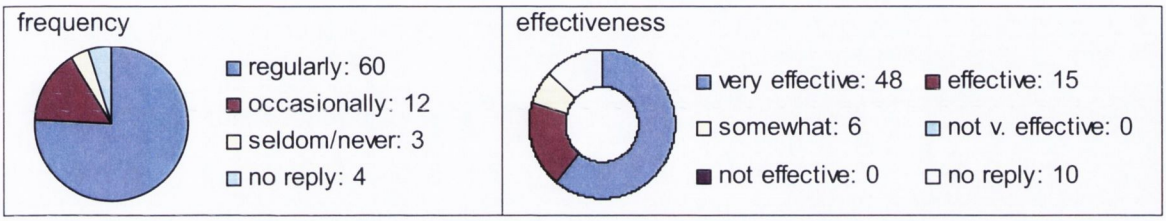


Phonics skill is considered the most important skill and is the dominant skill taught. Handwriting and spelling skills are considered to be less important.

Reading may be viewed as having two main components, decoding and comprehension. The tutors used a range of teaching methods to foster skill in decoding and also reading comprehension. Fifteen teaching methods were considered by the tutors. The tutors' perception of the effectiveness of each of these methods was also reported. Their identifications of key literacy skills in each area and of their effectiveness are outlined below.

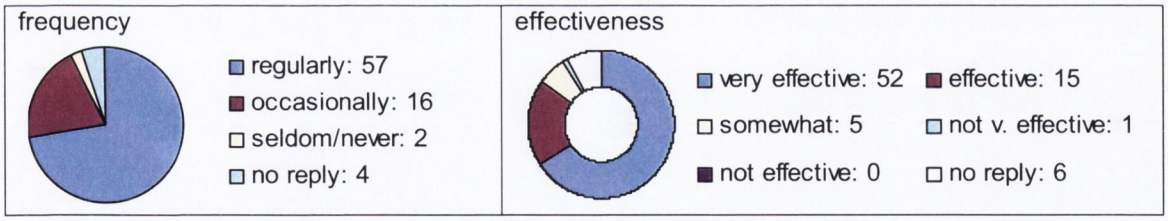
Methods which foster reading accuracy:

Fig 4.41: Phonic skills



Phonic skills are considered the most important skill among tutors and is ranked number one in the list above. Phonic skill is essential to develop decoding skills in reading. Phonic skills are taught every day by the majority of tutors. This method is used by a greater number of tutors than those who hear individual reading each day. Phonic skill is a major component in each lesson taught by the tutors. Teaching phonic skills is believed to be effective by almost all the respondents. Decoding skill is essential to developing reading accuracy.

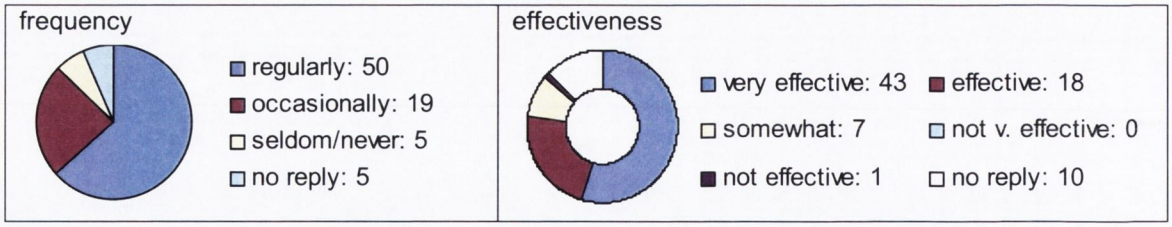
Fig 4.42: High frequency words



As a reader and as a writer, skill in phonics is not sufficient. Pupils need knowledge of a large core of high frequency words. Reading accuracy is also fostered by instruction in high frequency words. This helps to develop the students' sight vocabulary. More than three quarters of tutors teach high frequency words every day to their students. This is almost the same as the number who also teach phonic skills every day.

Teaching high frequency words is considered to be a very effective teaching method for pupils with dyslexia. The majority of tutors perceived this method of instruction to be very effective for students in the workshops. This was a greater majority than the number who considered teaching phonic skills or word families to be very effective.

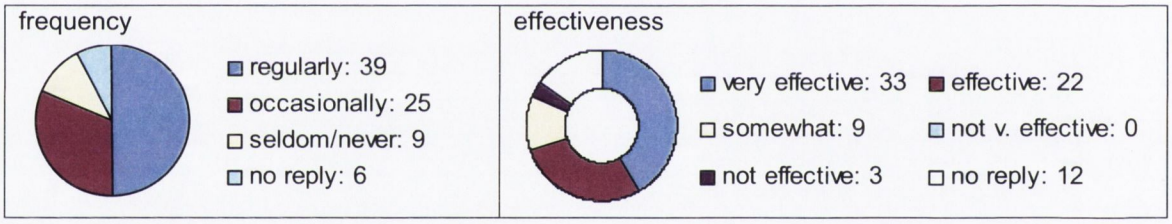
Fig 4.43: Word families



While training students in the structural analysis of words and the letter patterns within words, teachers may coach students to use 'word families' to develop reading accuracy. A significant number of tutors use this method every day to instruct students in the structural analysis of words.

Tutors reported their views on the effectiveness of this method to improve reading accuracy. Almost two thirds of tutors considered it to be a very effective approach. This corresponds with the number of tutors using this method every day. Teaching phonic skills, high frequency words and word families are the main methods used regularly by tutors to foster reading accuracy. The tutors reported these three methods to be very effective. However, a greater number perceived instruction in high frequency words to be very effective, compared to the other two methods.

Fig 4.44: Onset and rime



The tutors reported teaching word identification by using the technique of onset and rime. This method teaches reading unknown words by analogy. A significant number of tutors use this technique every day and almost the same number consider it to be a very effective method.

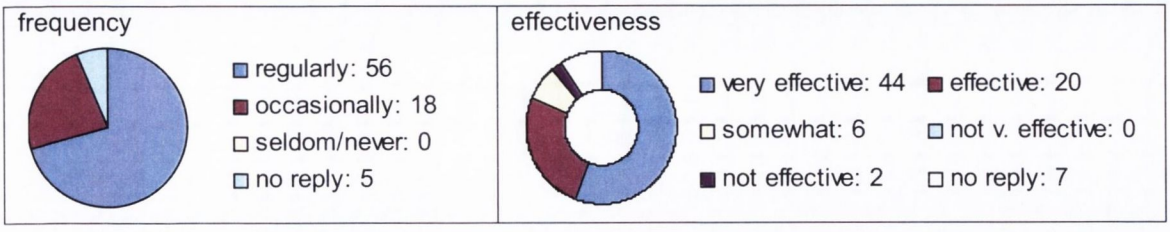
Fig 4.45: Hearing individual reading



Hearing students' individual reading is a particularly useful method for providing information to the teacher on the strategies the student uses while reading. Hearing individual reading regularly also provides feedback to the student on his progress in reading. A significant number of tutors regularly hear students read individually. Less than half of the tutors considered hearing individual reading to be effective However, a smaller proportion of tutors perceived this method of instruction to be *very effective.*. In the tutors' view, this method appears to be less effective than any of the other methods used which support reading accuracy.

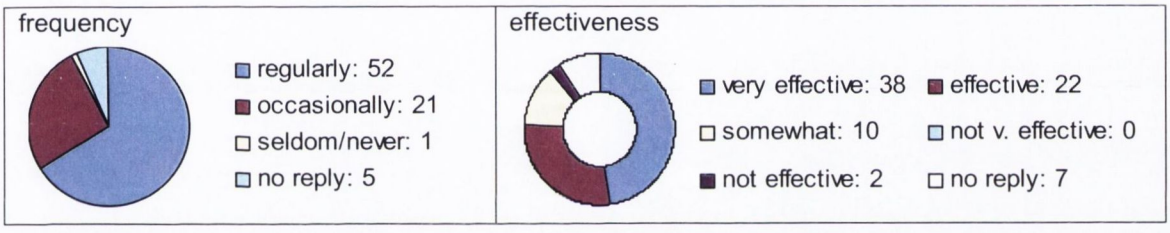
Methods which foster comprehension

Fig 4.46: Cloze procedure



Students who have been assessed as having dyslexia may have poor skill in writing. Tutors frequently used methods to encourage writing and to aid comprehension skills, such as *cloze procedure* and *written comprehension.* The cloze procedure is a useful technique for building comprehension and language skills. It is used in the tuition sessions every day by over three quarters of the tutors. The cloze method is considered to be very effective almost two thirds of tutors to teach written expression.

Fig 4.47: Written comprehension

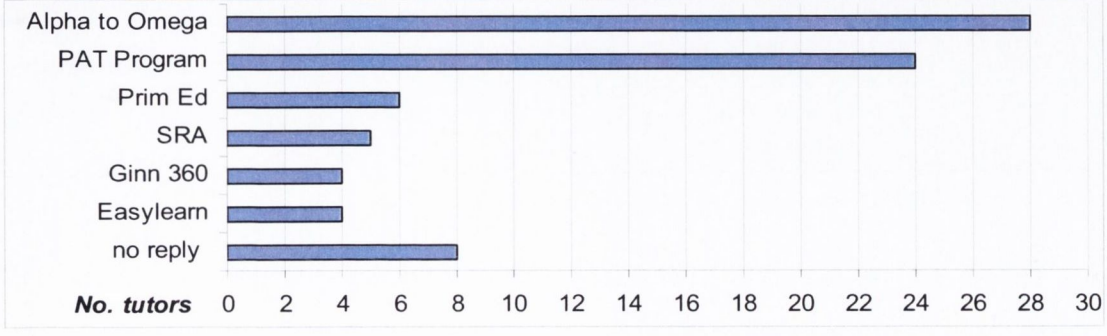


Ability in reading and writing can be fostered by developing written comprehension. Written comprehension is regularly taught by tutors. A large majority of tutors use written comprehension exercises as a teaching method in every workshop tuition session. More than half of the tutors considered written comprehension to be very effective for students. However, the use of cloze procedure is considered to be effective by more of the tutors than exercises in written comprehension.

Literacy Programmes used

There are six predominant literacy programmes used by the tutors in the weekly workshops. The programmes reported as used most frequently are shown in the chart below.

Fig 4.48: Most frequently used literacy programmes (each tutor listed two)

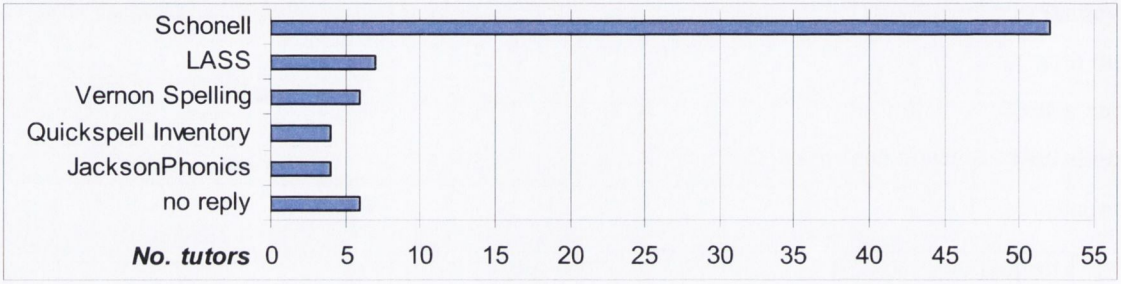


The two literacy programmes most frequently used by tutors are *Alpha to Omega* (Hornsby & Shear 1994) and *Phonological Awareness Training Programme* (PAT) (Wilson, 1993). (A description of these literacy programmes can be found in Appendix 2)

Assessment tests used

Each student is assessed by a tutor in the workshop at the beginning of the term. This information is used to group the students appropriately. Assessment of the students is organised by the coordinator of each workshop.

Fig 4.49: Each tutor's most used assessment test (n=79)



There is a dominant reliance on one single test, Schonell reading and spelling tests. A description of all the assessment tests used by the tutors can be found in Appendix 1

Parental involvement

Parents give wide support to the child's attendance at the weekly workshops. Tutors reported that parents are an integral part of the workshop, both in terms of organisation and child support. Some parents are involved in the day to day running of the workshop. Tutors liaise with parents on an individual level and also at formal parent teacher meetings each year. Occasionally parents are involved in homework exercises or additional work with the student at home.

Main issues of concern to tutors

The following issues were repeatedly mentioned by tutors.

Students' self esteem: Tutors' responses frequently mentioned students' lack of self esteem and confidence as a major area of concern. Many tutors reported that '*students need to be encouraged as they often feel they are failures'*. Tutors provide support to students and '*increase confidence and self esteem in the student's approach to learning'*. Tutors expressed their concern about student anxiety because of dyslexia. They identified a need for support, guidance and advice from specialists on emotional issues and ongoing learning. Tutors reported that they do not have any additional outside support services available to them.

Workshop–school links: Tutors reported '*lack of contact with teachers in child's school'* as an issue of concern. A total of 18% of the tutors, however, did have some contact with the child's school. Some expressed concern at the level of support the student receives in mainstream. Tutors

suggested that the workshops organised by the DAI should have greater links to the students' school. They recommended that information should be given to secondary schools and more information to teachers. They reported that teachers need information on the social and emotional aspects of dyslexia and the effect it can have on a students self confidence. They explained that second level teachers need knowledge about the signs and identification of dyslexia and appropriate teaching strategies for the dyslexic learner. The tutors were of the view that this is a role for the head office of the DAI.

Parents' understanding of dyslexia: Tutors commented on parents' *'lack of adequate understanding of dyslexia'*. Tutors reported that sometimes *'parents of dyslexic children have very little knowledge of how to help the children'*.

Consultation and Support: Tutors reported they needed back up support and advice on students' ongoing learning. A significant number of tutors stated they do not receive advice or support on students' individual needs. Information and teaching recommendations are available from the students' psychological report. This appears to be the main source of advice. However, they expressed a need for more information on individual students' learning needs. This could be provided from school reports, consultation with class teachers or the coordinator of the workshop.

Team work: Tutors reported on the need for more communication and coordination between tutors working with the same students. There appears to be limited time for consultation among tutors in each workshop. Ways of working together, collaborating in planning and sharing information about the students was suggested *'generally a more collaborative approach to working'*. Tutors would favour contact with other workshops.

Conclusion

The large majority of tutors are teaching in primary schools. A significant number have additional qualifications. Tutors reported the students' primary difficulties in reading accuracy, and writing skills. They attribute memory difficulties to be the source of the child's learning difficulty. They reported anxiety among students as a result of dyslexia and are concerned about the students' lack of self esteem. The main skills taught are phonic skills and word identification skills. The main instruction methods used are those methods which develop the students reading accuracy and comprehension. The tutors' perception of the effectiveness of certain teaching strategies is in line with the time spent using these teaching methods.

Tutors working in the weekly workshops reported that they need more back - up support and advice on students' ongoing learning. There is little or no contact between the students' school and the workshop tuition sessions. Workshops vary in the extent of collaboration and communication among tutors. Tutors asked for more opportunities to meet other tutors.

Findings from Teacher Focus Groups

Following the return of completed questionnaires, teachers were invited to participate in a focus group discussion. The purpose of the discussion group was to follow up and explore in depth the issues and concerns raised in the questionnaires. The teachers were informed that the discussion would focus on issues of common concern to resource and learning support teachers. Focus group discussions were organised separately for two groups of teachers. Eight teachers attended each focus group. Teachers from special reading schools, reading units and ordinary primary schools attended. In this section, the views of the teachers from both focus groups have been collated and the main themes and subsidiary themes selected. (For more background information see methodology chapter)

The teachers who attended are involved in supporting pupils with dyslexia in three different ways:

- **Mainstream support:** some curriculum modification and adaptation of teaching materials;
- **Learning support; Resource teaching**: intervention in the child's own school, support is provided in a small group or one to one; most common model is withdrawal from class ;
- **Special placement**: pupils are enrolled in a reading school for two years or attend a reading unit in a designated school for two years.

The discussion focused on a number of issues of concern to teachers. Interaction in the groups focused on the themes of providing support to pupils in mainstream, withdrawing pupils for support or integrating them within the class. Other topics covered included the extent of disadvantage for these pupils and the problems surrounding the identification of dyslexia in the classroom. The perceived effectiveness of schools and the organisation of special support were also discussed. Key themes were:

Collaboration	*Inclusion*	*Pedagogic concerns*
1. Issues for learning support and resource teachers	4. Withdrawal of pupils	8. Comprehension skills
2. Issues for reading units / reading schools	5. Models of support	9. Identifying dyslexia
3. Collaboration with second level school	6. Special support V Mainstream	10. Teachers' views on disadvantage
	7. Integration V Inclusion	

Collaboration

Learning support and Resource teachers: The need for collaboration with other teachers was a recurring theme among the teachers providing support to pupils with dyslexia. Currently there is very little or no collaboration among teachers involved in supporting pupils. Collaboration is haphazard and not an integral part of the support teachers' timetable. Teachers believed this is due to lack of time. They described efforts at collaboration as *'a snatched moment here and there, or at*

coffee time, or.....in the corridor'. Most teachers do not have consultation and non teaching contact time scheduled into their weekly timetable. *'With the best will in the world, you're standing on the corridor, there's no time allocated for it'*. The most significant perceived factor in successful outcomes of support teaching is the collaborative relationship between the learning support teacher and the classroom teacher. There was agreement that teachers need to *'discuss the general plan, what's being done, what's being done at a specific time, and the need to link it to the class subjects'*. Resource teachers and learning support teachers are conscious that collaboration with the class teacher is vital in terms of planning and accommodating the child with his peers in mainstream. Collaboration was also reported to be necessary between the learning support/resource teacher and the teacher in the child's special placement. This was perceived to be constrained by time and limited resources. Resource and learning support colleagues were interested in greater contact with the reading schools. They expressed a wish to find out more about the teaching methods and the literacy programmes used in the reading schools. A two-way communication system should be established as a priority. This has already been recommended. (SERC, 1993; TFD, 2002).

Reading units and Reading schools: Teachers in the reading units were concerned about withdrawing children for support and the integration of these pupils for other subjects during the school day. Collaboration with mainstream colleagues is on an ad hoc basis and varies between teachers and between schools. The reading unit is self contained in that the pupils receive intensive tuition for most of school day yet regular communication and planning with the child's main class teacher is not structured. This has implications for the successful outcome of placement in a special reading unit. The relationship that presently exists between teachers in special reading schools and units and their mainstream colleagues is of two separate parallel systems. Teachers in the reading schools have little or no contact with the child's previous school, during or after the special placement. As was mentioned above, teachers in mainstream wished to have more contact with teachers in the reading units and reading schools: *'feedback on the approaches used [in the reading school] would be useful'* (learning support teacher).

Collaboration with second level school: All teachers noted that when pupils transfer to second level there is a greater need to exchange information and to be in contact with the second level school. Parents often request specific information from the primary class teacher but according to the teachers *'there is nothing uniform across the board'* and the transfer of information between schools varies between schools. This was an issue also identified by parents during their focus group discussions. One of the teachers described the differences between primary and second level teachers:

> *We're like two different breeds, on a different planet, we make an appointment. We meet them when a child is leaving Sixth Class, and you've been working with them, you're like a parent worried about them how they are going to survive, we're like two different species.*

Teachers agreed that '*some schools are more in tune than others.* One of the teachers explained how this issue has been addressed in her area:

> *In the last two years, all the secondary schools for the girls with learning support all came down (to meet the Sixth Class teachers) and have a meeting, they want to know how the child is getting on and the approaches used.*

This is a positive development as the exchange of information between teachers eases the pupils' transition to second level.

Inclusion

The current direction of educational policy to include all pupils with a diversity of needs in mainstream classes has begun to impact on all teachers in different teaching settings. Although the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs was not a specific topic discussed among teachers, all the teachers are aware of the extra demands being placed on the mainstream class teacher. Teachers had experience of different models of classroom support and expressed their views on the issue of withdrawing pupils from class for extra support.

Withdrawal of pupils: The main model of learning support/ resource provision in Irish schools involves the withdrawal of pupils from their classes. The learning support/resource teacher takes individuals or groups of pupils for short periods of time in order to provide intensive instruction in English or maths. The Review of Remedial Education (1999) stated that the practice of withdrawing children with learning difficulties for learning support is problematic. The disadvantages of taking children out of class for additional support were acknowledged by the mainstream teachers in the discussion group '*I hear teachers say they hate when child is taken out of class, he misses so much'.* They described the difficulties with the timetable, when children are withdrawn for support at the same time each day. This is a disadvantage for the child. One of the mainstream teachers described her own situation last year, when small groups of pupils were withdrawn from 11.00 till 11.50 each morning: *'I was just like a train station, I had to keep the top group going. You just went with it you knew they were getting what they needed, it played hell with the timetable'.* However one of the teachers in a reading school was of the view that:

> *its not realistic to expect a mainstream teacher to be able to give these children the intensive support and attention these kids need, its not practical, thirty odd children in the room, where have they got the time to do that?*

The learning support teachers were of the opinion that withdrawing pupils from class is *'getting to be a huge issue because of the number of different teachers pulling out of different classes ....all get taken out at the same time'.* There was consensus among these teachers however, that some form of withdrawal is frequently necessary: *'If he was back in the classroom, he would be switched off completely'* (learning support teacher). A resource teacher explained about one of her pupils: *'I don't think he'd want me to be in there doing the level of work he needs, that's my feeling. He would be embarrassed, he just wants to be able to read, and he wants to learn to read.'* Other

teachers agreed that it is more stigmatising when support teachers come into the room, than when pupils are withdrawn from class.

The need to spend time collaborating with the class teacher and the fact that there may be other adults working in the classroom were mentioned as factors which have an influence on withdrawal support. One teacher who is attending a training course for resource teachers agreed with the recommendations to teach children within their own classroom, yet she could see difficulties with this method of support. One of the resource teachers noticed that the children withdrawn for support, *'feel like guests in the classroom.....other children treat them differently'.* A good relationship between the class teachers and support teachers was considered helpful for effective support for pupils.

Models of support: Some schools have begun the practice of the support teacher working in the classroom. The teachers' willingness to search for solutions to structural or organisational problems in the school was evident in the discussion. An alternative model of support is being piloted in one of the participants' schools. Special support has been re-organised to in class support for pupils needing extra help regardless of the category of need. Team- teaching takes place with two teachers working cooperatively in the class with a mixed group of pupils. The teacher described the benefits of this type of support *'kids liked it, I liked it, it was extra support for both of us'.* Advantages mentioned were less traffic (and disruption) in the corridors and cooperative planning of the work by the two teachers. The other teachers could see difficulties with this model in the present organisation of their schools. One of the resource teachers observed that *'teachers don't want you in the classroom'* as this was her experience. There was agreement that every school situation is different. It was quite significant that the discussion focused on teachers looking for structural solutions to supporting and integrating pupils rather than focusing narrowly on the needs of an individual child.

Special support V Mainstream: The advantages and disadvantages of placement in a special school or unit was discussed. The teachers in the reading units stressed the small class size to be a significant factor in the effectiveness of the special support. The resource teachers noted that individual attention and less pressure on the child were considered advantages of a special placement. The learning support teachers considered the intensity of support and experience of success to be the essential advantage of a special placement. Disadvantages mentioned by the resource teachers were that children sometimes have continuing difficulties on returning to mainstream following a special placement. They may be in a different class, their friends may have left and they may continue to have learning difficulties. There was agreement that the parents' encouragement and support for the student is all-important in maintaining a smooth transition back to mainstream.

Integration / inclusion: Teachers expressed an awareness of the demands being placed on the mainstream teacher as more and more children are identified as being in need of 'special support'. All of the teachers strongly believed that the average size of classes has to be reduced for effective inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. The suggestion of 'weighting' of pupils with SEN (one pupil with special educational needs would be equivalent to three without special educational needs) was put forward as a possible solution.

Pedagogic concerns

Neglect of comprehension skills: Teachers in the ***reading schools*** observed that in their opinion, some areas of literacy are suffering because of the present organisation of special support. Thinking skills and comprehension skills were mentioned as being particularly neglected in mainstream class. There was agreement that teaching reading is *'vastly more than just reading....its also a function of language....thinking beyond the lines'* The ***learning support teachers*** reported on the low level of comprehension among some of their pupils. Reasons put forward were the need for regular class discussions to develop thinking skills. They stated that comprehension needs to be specifically taught. These teachers stated it is not practical to meet the needs of thirty children and, in addition, to give intensive support to those pupils who need it most. Large class size was acknowledged as a factor, and the issue of time influences this support. The inclusion of more and more pupils with additional learning needs was considered a reason for limited teaching time for comprehension skills. The ***reading school teachers*** believed that the mainstream teacher has a much more difficult job. They felt that the mainstream teacher '*cannot look at the individual needs of the child'* and that a pupil teacher ratio of nine to one is more favourable for pupils with dyslexia and an advantage of the special placement.

Identifying dyslexia: Concern was expressed about the recognition of dyslexia and how to identify it for teachers and parents. Teachers called for an assessment and definitive diagnosis from the psychologist. When questioned further, it appears that teachers in learning support and resource do not have the tools to identify and assess a child with dyslexia.

Learning support teachers said that they may '*suspect*' or '*guess*' that a child has dyslexia but without a full psychological assessment and diagnosis they do not have the authority or conviction to 'label' a child. Teachers described the diagnostic assessment procedures they use to identify dyslexia. At the time of these focus group discussions, a new policy directive from the DES (SPED 01/05 and 02/05) had recently been issued.

Schools had received a general allocation of special resources to meet the needs of pupils with 'high incidence' learning difficulties. Pupils with dyslexia will now be included in the learning support teachers' caseload. There was concern about including pupils with dyslexia in the school's general allocation of resource support. The recent policy directive from the DES describes dyslexia

as a 'high incidence' learning difficulty (DES SPED 02/05). The learning support teachers expressed concern that teachers in mainstream are not aware of the individual needs of a child with dyslexia. They stated they have difficulty identifying a child as dyslexic, particularly if a psychological assessment is no longer necessary for the provision of resources. The learning support teachers believed that although they have good diagnostic procedures for assessment, such as checklists and pupil profiles, this is still not a diagnosis of dyslexia and the class teachers will take it more seriously if the child has a psychological assessment.

Resource teachers stated that they would find any feedback on the teaching approaches for the dyslexic learner as used in the reading school to be useful. Pupils who have been allocated resource teaching have already been identified as dyslexic. Resource teachers expressed a need for ongoing professional development and for *'more specialised training, more training for ourselves, and development. We need it to be more specialised, more specific'.*

Mainstream class teachers described having to *'wait until the child failed'* before receiving any support for the child with dyslexia. They were of the view that the recognition of learning difficulties in junior classes and early identification of dyslexia would be in the best interests of pupils, parents and teachers.

Teacher views on disadvantage: Some of the participants in the focus group had experience of teaching in schools in disadvantaged areas. These pupils were considered to be *'doubly disadvantaged'* because of the impoverishment in their daily lives and also because of their literacy difficulties. Teachers expressed concern that nowadays there is less communication in the family, fewer whole- family mealtimes and a television in each pupil's bedroom. This has an effect on the pupils' language development; they do not read for pleasure, and in some schools, children are impoverished as a result. Teachers expressed the belief that large class size also disadvantages these pupils further as smaller groups are necessary for oral discussion. A broader intervention was suggested which would be aimed at the whole family, and not just for the pre school years. One teacher who had experience of Early Start in a specific school suggested that while parents may be involved in the school programme and supporting the child in the early years (age 3-5 years), as soon as the child moves up to second or Third Class (age 8-9 years) the parent support is reduced. There was speculation that this could be because of the parents' own standard of education or a sense of insecurity. The Early Start programme is targeted specifically at communities which are socially and economically disadvantaged. One of the aims of the programme is to support family literacy.

Conclusion

The need for collaboration and communication between support teachers and class teachers was a constant theme in the focus group discussions. Currently there is very little or no collaboration among teachers supporting pupils with dyslexia. This has implications for in service and

professional development for all teachers. Teachers are not confident in identifying a child with dyslexia. The current practice of withdrawing children for special support was acknowledged as problematic. There appears to be a resistance among learning support and resource teachers to developing in-class models of support for pupils in the present organisational structure. This is not surprising given the huge need for extra professional supports for these teachers. Teachers need increased time for planning, for consulting, for collaborating with class teachers in order to assist them in their role. They also need support from services such as educational psychologists, and other specialists. The leadership role of the principal in developing models of support for pupils was also recognised by teachers.

SECTION 4.2: CASE STUDIES, VOICES OF PUPILS, PROGRESS IN READING

This section presents the findings from six case study schools. The schools were selected as samples of three different types of special provision for pupils with dyslexia. The case study approach allowed the researcher to examine the differences and similarities in the teaching and learning context for the student, the special class teacher or resource teacher, for his parents and his mainstream 'base class' teacher. The schools selected included two reading schools, two primary schools with an integrated reading unit and two primary schools with a learning support and resource teacher. A selection of rural and urban schools were selected.

Extra support to pupils with reading difficulties can be provided by the primary school in different ways. The case studies give an opportunity to observe in detail how the provision of additional support to pupils is organised and delivered.

The methods of data collection used in the case studies included *interviews, discussions* and *observation.* An interview was held with the principal in each school, the class teacher, and key persons providing special educational support in the school. A *discussion* took place with a group of pupils in each school about dyslexia and the pupils' experience of the special support provided for them. These interviews and discussions were recorded. The researcher *observed* a lesson in each of the classes, conducted by the teacher. These observations were recorded and supported by the author's field notes. Policy documents, where available from the school principals, were also consulted.

The teachers in the case study schools had already completed a questionnaire exploring the teaching methods and approaches used (see Teachers questionnaire in Appendix 4a). Three of the teachers (one from each of three separate case study schools) had participated in a teachers' focus group discussion three months previously (see report of findings from focus groups). Data on the pupils' progress in reading was recorded on entry to the special placement or extra support (June 2003), and again at the end of the two year placement (June 2005).

Structure of the case study reports

The first two case study schools reported in this section (Case Study 1, Case Study 2) are mainstream schools. Extra support is provided to the pupils by the Learning support teacher in one school and by the Resource teacher in the second. Case Study 3 and 4 are mainstream schools that have a reading unit integrated into the school. Case Studies 5 and 6 are two reading schools. Each pair of case studies is followed by a summary of the main issues. The case study presentation is followed by a summary of the key issues. The schools will be introduced and described to the reader under the following headings: *Location and context; Staff; Pupils; Special provision; Issues of concern.*

Where additional issues are discussed in an individual case study, these will be listed in the introduction to that study. In the final section, the issues which are shared by all of the different settings will be presented, and also the differences and divergence between each type of setting. The tables below present a summary of background information on each school.

Table 4.3: Case study school locations

	Mainstream Schools	***Reading Units in mainstream schools***	***Reading Schools***
Urban	Main Street	Avenue	Cityside
Regional	Riverside	Greenfields	Parklands

Table 4.4: Case study school enrolments and staffing

School	***Enrolment***	***Mainstream teachers (incl. Principal)***	***SEN teachers***	***SNAs***
Mainstreet	283	23	7	12
Riverside	219	11	2 part time 1 fulltime	4
Avenue	439 (10 in RU)	32	16	11
Greenfields	714 (10 in RU)	35	9	6
Cityside	54	7	0	1
Parklands	57	7	4	10

Table 4.5: Case study pupils and supports they receive

	No. pupils in discussion group	***Support provision***
Mainstreet MS	5	Learning support: 3 hrs 20 mins. per week
Riverside MS	2	Resource support: 4 hrs per week
Avenue RU	8	2 year placement
Greenfields RU	8	2 year placement
Cityside RS	8	2 year placement
Parklands RS	7	2/3 years placement

Case study 1: MAIN STREET SCHOOL

This school was selected as an example of an urban *mainstream school offering resource/learning support* to pupils with dyslexia.

Location and context

The school is located in an urban area, in what is considered to be a settled local authority area. Local amenities include a large shopping centre, which includes regional south city council offices, cinemas, and restaurants. A longstanding traditional employment site is now being developed for apartments. The school building dates from the 1950s with a flat roof, long corridors, and classes on two levels. Refurbishment and painting has recently taken place. Some of the grandparents of

the current pupils had attended Mainstreet boys' and girls' schools. Anecdotal evidence from teachers reported that during the 1980s, many of these local authority tenants were offered a grant to buy private houses in the west of the city. This was described as a blow to the school as many families left the area. One of the teachers described the area as follows:

> *an old area, a lot of the parents are not living here but they are working in (large local employer) they wanted their children to go to school here, so the grannies are minding the kids.*

In September 1989 the old boys' and girls' schools amalgamated to form a co-educational school. There have been major developments in the provision of support to pupils with special educational needs since the school was established: in 1991 the school's first special class for children with mild intellectual disability was set up, and a class for pupils with a speech and language difficulty. The school has built up a strong reputation in the area for meeting the needs of children with learning difficulties. This school was chosen as a case study because the researcher wished to evaluate current practice in the context of recent DES policy changes.

Staffing There are 23 teachers. Besides the principal, there are ten mainstream class teachers, and 12 teachers in specialist posts: there are three special classes for children with mild intellectual disability, and two (one junior, one senior) for children with speech and language difficulty. There are three resource teachers and one each of the following: Resource teacher for Travellers, Home-school liaison, English language support, resource/learning support. The staff also includes 11 special needs assistants, one classroom assistant, a secretary and caretaker.

Pupils At present, there are 283 pupils enrolled in the school. Pupils range in age from four to twelve and are in classes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

Special provision

According to the principal, there was a strategic reason for the establishment of special classes in the school. In the late eighties and early nineties when the school was amalgamated, there were *'lots of good middle class schools but none catering for special educational needs'.* Mainstreet school *'set out to attract students who needed extra support',* although it recognised that a high proportion of its own enrolment also needed extra support. The DES set up two speech and language classes with an enrolment ratio of 7:1, and three special classes for children with mild general learning disabilities (pupil-teacher ration, 10:1) which were filled from the schools' own enrolment. The principal reported that nearly 50% of the pupils enrolled in the school are 'statemented' or have had their special educational needs recorded in some way. Current changes in DES education policy have implications for the continuation of special classes and the management of change.

Referral: The learning support teacher regularly communicates with one of the resource teachers regarding the analysis of the whole school assessment test results. This is part of the school process

of identifying which pupils need additional support. Early screening using the Middle Infant Screening test (MIST) for Senior Infants and QUEST for First Class; Literacy Probe is also used.

Referral to the two speech and language classes is in collaboration with the speech and language therapist who is employed by the local Health Board. Referrals are also made by individual psychologists. A recently appointed 'admissions advisory committee' for enrolment is an attempt to make the enrolment more objective. The enrolment committee includes the speech and language therapist, principal and language class teacher. The other three special classes enrol pupils who are assessed as having a mild intellectual disability. Referral to one of the special classes may be made by an individual psychologist who assesses the child; a teacher from another school who makes contact with the principal; a NEPS psychologist who contacts the school, or parents who apply to enrol their child.

The ***learning support teacher*** has responsibility for the pupils who are under achieving in literacy throughout the school. The role of the learning support teacher involves whole school screening and identification of pupils needing support in literacy. She provides daily support to small groups of pupils, on a withdrawal basis. She withdraws groups of three or four pupils from class three or four times a week. The researcher visited one of these groups on two occasions to observe a lesson and engage pupils in a discussion about dyslexia. Three pupils in this group have been assessed as dyslexic, they receive regular small group support.

In the past year the learning support teacher has been involved in in-class teaching with the Fifth Class and Senior Infants teachers for a specific purpose. Fifth Class pupils were trained in practicing comprehension skills by the independent use of SRA reading laboratory. In the Senior Infants class, where the teacher was untrained, the learning support teacher taught the pupils letter names and sounds. This was reported to be a positive experience for both teachers. However, the predominant strategy used by the learning support teacher is withdrawal teaching. Diagnostic testing and identification of pupils needing support teaching is carried out each year by the learning support teacher. This teacher has wide experience in using NARA, QUEST, MIST, and other diagnostic tests. The learning support teacher and one of the resource teachers who has a post of responsibility to coordinate test results, regularly engage in identifying pupils needing further testing or withdrawal teaching.

The principal described how the approach to special needs in this school has always been an integrated approach. He described how some pupils move between special and mainstream class according to the activity and their ability level. For example, in the Junior special class, the children are involved in intensive work in the special class for literacy and numeracy and they are integrated with mainstream classes for activities such as PE, Art and swimming. In another special class, the speech and language teacher takes a cookery lesson, and pupils from the mainstream classes may attend. The principal described this as *'reverse integration'* for the pupils who attend.

According to the principal *'integration works both ways'*, some pupils in Sixth Class recently asked if they could '*go down to an extra maths class'* in the special class. In the senior classes, a team approach has been put in place. This includes the mainstream teacher, special class teacher, resource teacher, and a special needs assistant. This team of teachers organises the teaching for all the pupils, regardless of individual need.

Management of change: The principal outlined the future direction of special provision in the school as moving away from separate provision according to category of need. At present all the specialist teachers listed above offer support across the school, from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. He envisaged reorganising this support provision into junior, middle and senior sections. In his view, this would be a more pragmatic response to the existing situation of one teacher dealing with four or five support teachers. At the time of the study, there was uncertainty as to how the general allocation model of resource support to schools, would determine staffing in the coming year.

The Principal expressed concern that the teachers are *'still thinking in terms of special and mainstream'*, that there is too much 'categorisation' of pupils. He envisages the planned development as the beginning of efforts to change from this categorical model of 'within child deficit' to a more inclusive model of support. This has huge implications for the professional development of staff. Current roles and practices take time to change. Teachers need support and evidence that the changes will benefit the teaching and learning for the pupils. The learning support teacher explained that *'we have a lot of new staff who would be more innovative than me'*. The learning support teacher was aware of the need to coordinate the literacy support in the school, *'somebody to see the whole picture'*. This could be the role of a literacy advisor, or a special needs coordinator. No such role exists in the Irish current situation.

The role of the principal is crucial in implementing such change. The challenge for this principal is to shift the concentration away from the various categories of learning difficulty and to focus on the teaching and learning process. He expressed this as a question '*have teachers worked through the idea of how to present this material in a way that they can all access it, and then chart progress?'* Differentiation in learning and setting realistic targets for pupils was an issue of concern.

Lack of specialist teaching resources was not the barrier in this school. More than half of the school staff are designated for special educational needs. The special classes in the school enrol pupils from other schools in the area. Organisational barriers may be overcome gradually but the systemic barriers are more difficult. Teachers' comments to the researcher suggest that even in this school boundaries between teacher roles are fixed; the question is does the school have the flexibility to address this.

Support for the student with dyslexia: A group of 5 pupils identified as dyslexic were withdrawn from class in small groups, for 40 minutes per day. Three of the pupils are from Third Class, two are from Fourth Class. Recent scores on MICRA T and NARA showed the following results:

Table 4.6: Micra T and NARA test results

	Pupil A	***Pupil B***	***Pupil C***	***Pupil D***	***Pupil E***
Micra T level (3rd/4th class)	SS 74	SS 103	SS 79	SS 102	SS 88
Neale Accuracy	PR 1	PR 22	PR 14	PR 9	PR 14
Neale Comprehension	PR 3	PR 34	PR 9	PR 24	PR 20

Three of the pupils (A,B,D) have been identified as dyslexic by an educational psychologist; the other two (C, E) are underachieving in literacy. The pupils were identified from whole school screening on the MICRA T test and further testing on NARA. The teacher described three of the pupils (C,D,E) as '*disadvantaged*', explaining that they use a '*restricted language code*'. Teacher reported limited support from home for these three pupils. There are no other co-existing difficulties among the pupils. The learning support teacher's priority for these pupils is to improve their reading fluency and comprehension. The researcher observed the pupils reading aloud from *Barrington Stoke* readers: they read as a group supported by the teacher co-reading the text with them. She remarked that there has been a *noticeable improvement* since she started this '*round robin reading*'. When asked about comprehension, she explained they have to work hard to read it, and admitted '*I don't give enough time to the comprehension....from short stories to group novels, they've moved up very fast in their reading*'.

Observation of lesson: The researcher observed a lesson in a small group of 5 children (one girl, four boys aged between ten and eleven years). The lesson was a dictation exercise from the PAT programme, level 3.This was a tightly structured lesson. The teacher explained that each of the words contained in the sentences had been practiced during the previous four days: Friday was '*dictation day*'. The teacher called out each sentence, then repeated it; children then wrote each sentence in a copy book. The sentences to be dictated were as follows: *'The girls popped out to do some shopping'; 'The boy on the ship was calling for help'; 'You will feel better soon said Jackie's mom'.*

There was evidence of the teacher's approach of coaching and supporting the pupils' learning by prompting a correct response. The researcher observed the children counting the words in each sentence before writing. Teacher drew attention to capital letters, full stops and punctuation marks and reminded the pupils to use the marks as needed. The written work was accurately completed, including correct punctuation marks. The teacher described how '*when you look at their writing skills, you really need to go back to basic sounds for this (writing), they need to hear the sounds, and break the sounds*'. The teacher is still concerned about the writing ability of the pupils in the group and is aware of the gap between the mainstream class level and their ability level.

Issues of concern

The following issues of concern were observed and discussed during the visits to the school: writing instruction, identifying dyslexia; supporting milder cases of dyslexia; lack of time and the changing nature of the job.

One of the concerns expressed by the support teacher is how to include writing instruction in work with the small groups. All of these activities focus on reading related skills. This leaves little time for teaching writing skills (this was a particular concern): *'I'm trying to do four or five different things maybe I'm spreading myself too thin. If you do one thing, you're neglecting another thing'.* This teacher uses software (Story Book Weaver, Clicker software) for creative writing. *'I feel I should be doing more, you can't touch all the aspects of reading and writing, I still worry about their writing'.* All of the pupils were working on individual stories on the computer *'I give them a picture and they have to put the sentences with it'.* Teaching writing as part of the 40 minute daily sessions seems to be a difficulty, *'it's very hard, it's very time consuming'.* Writing skills are a real difficulty for these pupils, according to the learning support teacher: *'I get depressed when doing writing, looking at the pupils' copies. You give the likes of them a blank page and discussion about it, they can't sequence it.* Teaching writing as an integrated part of the reading lesson as recommended in Reading Recovery would benefit these pupils.

The role of the support teacher in the identification of dyslexia was viewed as unduly restricted. The diagnosis of dyslexia in the Irish school system is dependent on psychological assessment. It was the view of the support teacher that she should have a role in identifying dyslexia for parents and for teachers. In her view *'it's not being diagnosed, I can't diagnose [dyslexia]'.* Assessment is a gateway to extra resources. The teacher has made efforts to inform teachers of the signs and symptoms of dyslexia *'I give them my checklists from the task force, I can give the advice, I still can't give the diagnosis'.* Some pupils and families just need recognition of dyslexia *'even if they don't get the resources, the relief of knowing, and much more so with the milder cases'.* A particular concern of this teacher is the pupils with dyslexia, who are not eligible for support because they are *'scoring above the limit for learning support'.* Part of the problem was perceived to be that *'more needy children are getting NEPS assessments'* and the *'milder types of dyslexia are not getting assessed'.* Two of the pupils in the present group will not be receiving support next year as their scores are above the 12th percentile. The teacher was of the view that these pupils require continuing support but there was uncertainty whether there would be any in class support provided. This difficulty recurs at transition points: *'Going into secondary school, they still need a diagnosis, they still need a psychological assessment'.*

The learning support teacher emphasised that lack of time to meet the class teachers was a real barrier to the effectiveness of her position. Time is not scheduled to meet with each of the class teachers. Some Friday afternoons she meets with teachers, otherwise *'it's mostly at the classroom*

door'. She considered 40 minutes per session with the children to be too limiting. Her present size of groups has decreased from five or six pupils in the past to three or four pupils in each group this year, and this is more manageable.

In the past two years the organisation and management of support to pupils with special needs in the school has begun to change. From the learning support teacher's perspective, this means that every year her job has been different. There is now more movement among the resource teachers. This year, one of the resource teachers has been assigned to Junior Infants. There was a feeling of uncertainty as to where and how the role of the learning support teacher would be re organised in this new arrangement. Reading Recovery training has been offered to teachers in schools in the immediate area. This learning support teacher expressed uncertainty as to its implementation in all schools or just in some of the schools.

General comments

The school has begun to review and re organise the support it provides to pupils with learning difficulties as a movement away from separate provision according to category of need. This has implications for all the teachers and particularly the teachers who have been directly involved in providing separate support up to now. The issues of concern to the learning support teacher are of concern to all teachers and could be addressed by proper collaboration between the mainstream and support teachers. Successful collaboration among teachers underpins the effective provision of support. An experienced learning support teacher is in the position to contribute to a whole school approach on the early identification of dyslexia.

Case study school 2: RIVERSIDE SCHOOL

Riverside is a rural mainstream primary school. It was chosen as a case study school as an example of a mainstream school that provided extra support for pupils with reading difficulties. The main focus of the case study is on the extra support provided for pupils who have dyslexic type difficulties. In addition to the topics listed in the introduction, the following topics will be addressed in this case study: *teaching approaches; voices of the pupils*; and *whole school issues*.

Location and context

Riverside school is located close to the centre of the village on an attractive elevated site surrounded by grassy fields. The village is on the outskirts of a large suburban area which was until recently a rural area; the school is located in the midst of private housing developments. The population in the immediate area around the school and village is rapidly expanding as sites for further housing are developed. There are four other primary schools within the same wide area. Children attend Riverside school from outlying small 'villages' which are now also being absorbed into the city suburbs. The present school building is large, modern and attractively decorated. A recent extension in 2000 doubled its size and since then new and younger staff have joined the

school. There are attractive landscaped grounds with separate outdoor areas for sports and playgrounds. The appearance of the interior is of a busy, purposeful, child centred school. Separate notice boards for the parents' association and for community activities reflect a school where the partners in the child's education are very much active participants. Science week photos, healthy eating week, green school news and plans for nature trails, upcoming events in the wider catchment area were on display. Children's art work, projects in science and nature, and a reading wall are proudly displayed. The school has a green flag in recognition of the promotion of environmental awareness among the pupils and is very active in promoting eco- friendly practices among the pupils and families. On one of the research visits, the pupils were involved in 'schools heritage lessons' with the president of An Taisce.

Staff

The principal was new to the position. She had not introduced any major changes which might affect the existing organisation and practice although some changes were being planned. The principal, staff and Board of Management were concentrating on drafting school policies and updating existing policies. A warm ambience was evident from the first visit to the school and meeting with the school secretary. This welcoming and friendly atmosphere from all staff members continued throughout subsequent visits. The Principal has made a great effort to know each pupil by name in the short time she has been in the school, and makes discrete inquiries about pupils on meeting teachers throughout the day. There were 11 full time teachers including the Principal. Additional support personnel included a full time resource teacher, a part time resource teacher and shared learning support. There were four special needs assistants assigned to individual pupils. Next year (2006), a resource post will become 'transitional' in the new model of general resource allocation to schools. The school will gain resources in the short term.

Pupils

A total of 219 pupils were enrolled in the school. There were eight classes, at of each level from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. Pupils' ages ranged from four years in Junior Infants to eleven years in Sixth Class. Pupils are identified for extra support on the basis of their class teachers' assessments, or from the results of the DPRT and the DPMT, administered annually. Pupils in First Class are screened using MIST. Some pupils have been recommended extra support following assessment by NEPS. Four pupils receive additional support from a special needs assistant and the resource teacher: two of these have been identified with ADHD and two with Asperger's syndrome.

Special Provision: Special needs provision had been managed up to the previous year by an experienced resource teacher (replaced while on career break by a temporary teacher). The school was in the process of selecting an additional permanent resource teacher. The temporary resource

teacher supported 14 pupils, seven of whom are dyslexic. An additional part time resource teacher concentrated on support in mathematics for the children who were receiving resource teaching.

The learning support teacher is shared with another local school; Riverside is her base school. She works three days per week in base school, two in the other school. She was the longest serving member of the teaching staff. She had over 20 years' experience as a mainstream class teacher in the school and was in her current position for two years. She had a case load of 41 pupils: 26 from the base school, 15 from other school. Of the 26 in her base school, eight have been assessed as dyslexic. Teachers regularly refer pupils about whom they are concerned to her for extra support. This could include undiagnosed dyslexic pupils. In practice the pupils receiving learning support were achieving literacy scores up to the 30th percentile. One pupil is scoring at eighth percentile (DPRT, 2005); the majority between the 20th and 30th percentile on standardised tests in reading

Issues of concern

On the first visit to the school the researcher realised that the school was facing issues in the organisation and management of additional support to specific pupils. It was hoped that this setting would enhance an understanding of the issues which are being faced in many schools. As the study evolved, the issues and topics addressed by the school became apparent. There appeared to be an understanding that meeting the special needs of pupils required an expert or 'specialised' approach. It was the practice in the school that pupils were withdrawn from their class for resource support teaching. It was felt that pupils with dyslexia needed one to one teaching and this instruction needs to be very specialised. The principal was concerned that the person who would be giving this support should be qualified in special education needs and would provide this service to all the staff. There was an implication that withdrawal of pupils for support would be the most effective use of resources although additional training of staff would also be welcome.

Change had begun to happen: though the experienced resource teacher (now on career break) had operated mainly withdrawal support to pupils with specific learning difficulties, she had initiated early intervention in-class support to one group of Senior Infants. However, the temporary resource teacher decided to continue the old withdrawal system: she was 'comfortable' with this and believed this to be effective. The shared learning support teacher's viewpoint coincided with that of the experienced resource teacher. She believed in a holistic approach to literacy learning and was willing and interested in 'team teaching' or 'shared teaching' with class teachers. She had already begun going into the Senior Infants class to work with the class teacher on early literacy skills for a small group. In Fourth Class she works one day per week in the class. In Sixth Class for the last term, she is working in the mainstream class, covering mind mapping, note taking, study skills and preparation for transition to second level. She favoured this type of in class support. She was of the view that *'there's very little you can do now at this stage at withdrawal* (from class). She explained *this term I don't do any withdrawal I do all classroom teaching. I go in and do things like mind*

mapping, study skills, lots of preparation for secondary'. She felt that in class support was more effective for these children because *'it s nicer for them, you can work them harder. They kind of look on withdrawal as a little treat, coming out and having a little rest'.* As an experienced tutor with the DAI workshop in the nearest town, she has first hand experience of supporting students with dyslexia.

Teaching approaches used by support teachers: The temporary resource teacher demonstrated to the researcher the teaching approaches she uses with the pupils who attend for extra support. The pupils with dyslexia attend in groups of 2 or 3 for one hour per day, four times a week. The teacher explained that two and half hours per week as an individual allocation was more effective if pupils attended in small groups for one hour per day. She prepares mostly individual activities for the pupils, based on the needs and abilities of the child. Multi sensory materials are used for comprehension. The resource teacher uses *Stile trays* as an aid to comprehension. The Stile trays contain 12 answer tiles and are used with all the Stile materials. Using the tiles to complete the exercises pupils are rewarded with a symmetrical pattern if their answers are correct. Because they check their own work, any wrong answers can be quickly identified and easily re-attempted. She also uses the *Phonological Awareness Training* program (Wilson 1993). This programme teaches children to read and spell words by making analogies. There are three levels; the teacher chooses the level to suit the needs of the child. She also uses the PAT programme for regular spelling tests, and the dictation sentences for extra practice in spelling. Writing skills are developed through a process approach: pupils use a word processor to present their own stories. Individual projects are encouraged and pupils select their own topic. The approach is based on developing the skills individual pupils need. Two of the pupils discussed their own stories with the researcher. The level of writing and spelling was lower than that expected for a Fourth Class pupil. The teacher explained her approach is based on developing the skills individual pupils need.

Learning support teacher: The learning support teacher uses a wide variety of approaches, methods and materials. She uses a process approach to writing and links reading and writing activities throughout the lesson. She described her approach as 'holistic' and is conscious of linking the different literacy skills. She thought that the DES Learning Support Guidelines (2000) put too great an emphasis on reading and word identification skills and *learning to read* and not enough on *reading to learn.* She is particularly conscious of the weak writing skills of some of her pupils. In her opinion *'the (class) teachers are setting spelling tests, not teaching spelling'* She showed an awareness of the importance of writing:

> *It always starts with a drawing, little vocabulary development, little cloze exercise, the most basic. Then a little mind map, who, what, when, where and why. When they get used to it, they develop it with their own ideas, I bring them into the library and we do research, and look at photos, and see what kind of book would you get to find out more e.g. a caterpillar in a jungle, in a very natural way. They all write their own individual stories. They put the*

pages together, we put a cover on, they read it to their own teacher. It's all about process and they don't realise it.

She shows her pupils how to find out more, research their writing and develop their topic believing that motivation to write is essential for acquiring skills in writing.

Observation of class: Two of the pupils attending the resource teacher discussed their most recent individual project.

An 11-year old boy in Fourth Class proudly explained how he completed his project on Sharks. The scrapbook contained detailed drawings of about twelve different types of shark, where each one is found, his distinguishing features and interesting facts about each one. Detailed notes had been transcribed from a nature book from the library and pasted into a carefully illustrated scrap book. Further information had been typed from the internet: he explained his mother had helped with this part. There were also short descriptive sentences in his own words. All the writing was in a cursive style, he had used a pencil. He was very proud of his work, and could remember and relate the details of each species. His fascination with sharks was evident. He spoke with an air of self confidence, in a clear speaking voice, taking time to find the correct word. There was evidence of self correction (rubbing out) in the writing and the handwriting appeared immature for his age. Accurate spelling appeared to be a difficulty. Later on, he explained how the resource teacher gives help with spelling

Child:	*When Ms. C. writes the last letter, the .... last word, Ending? On the board we use the alphabet to spell it, make words out of it;*
Researcher:	*Is it better on the board or better in your copy?*
Child:	*Better On board*
Researcher:	*Why?*
Child:	*Don't have to write it, I don't have to rule the page;*
Researcher:	*When you're finished?*
Child:	*I rub it out*

The teacher explained that she allowed him write on the blackboard, because of his difficulty with writing, and this was quite effective in giving lots of practice, he loved rubbing it out. The child himself mentioned this in responding to the question 'how does the teacher help you? He said that the teacher '*gives us little hints and we write stuff on the board'*

A ten year old girl in Third Class (she had repeated a year) showed the story she had written in a large book called 'Spooky story'. She pointed out the drawings, the art work, and said the story was not yet finished. This little girl was quite shy and hesitant during the conversation. She spoke quietly, somewhat indistinctly; her replies were single words or very short sentences. She showed the draft she had made of the story, the plan and the characters, setting, and action in the story. During the conversation later, M. could not express how the teacher helps her learn, but did say *'I usually go up to her ... Up to teacher's desk'.* When she first started receiving resource support, this child was attaining at a very low level in reading accuracy and comprehension (below the first

percentile on NARA test) and spelling age of 6.7 years. One year later (2004), reading accuracy is still below the first percentile, but reading comprehension has improved to the third percentile and spelling age is eight years. She loves drama class and is very good helping classmates with the games in the reading room, and *'she's like a teaching assistant'* according to the resource teacher. She says it is hard to learn *'when her little brother distracts her and wants to play'* and she does not like to miss art when she is in the reading room.

Issues of concern

The following issues appeared central to the extra support provided for pupils: *Teacher competence; Sense of pressure; Lack of differentiation.*

Teacher competence: The capability and skill of the teachers in the support role is crucial to the organisation of special provision in Riverside national school. The previous resource teacher had a competence and experience which as she herself described as *'part of the problem'* insofar as the other teachers viewed her as the 'expert' and so were less likely to introduce some differentiation of teaching in their classroom, not even a *'three ring circus'* i.e. managing three groups in class. The pupils with the most severe level of need (at or below the second percentile) are presently receiving resource teaching from a less qualified and experienced support teacher. The learning support teacher, however, supports pupils in or around the 30th percentile in literacy (May 2005 DPRT). She views dyslexic difficulties in the context of literacy teaching and takes a whole school approach to supporting teachers and pupils. The resource model provides one to one withdrawal support to the pupils with weakest literacy skills.

The overall view of the **categorical model** of special need was very evident in the school. Pupils were easily identified by their disability or need. Pupils attending the resource teacher were clearly identified. There seemed to be a division between 'special' and 'ordinary' learners. The learning support teacher reported that she rarely 'discontinued' a child's extra support. This was due in part to an experience of parents coming back to the school five or six years later alleging that their child had been neglected because his difficulty had been overlooked.

As the research progressed, the role of the learning support teacher appeared to be broader than that portrayed initially. Through her experience of supporting dyslexic students and her broad interest in the area of literacy learning, she was taking on the role of supporting teachers and pupils and facilitating learning, not just teaching content.

Sense of pressure: A big concern to both resource and learning support teacher is that of **lack of time.** Time to meet the class teacher, time to collaborate and plan, time to really understand the child's strengths and needs, even more time per week for teaching, were expressed again and again. Collaboration among class teachers and support teachers in Riverside school takes place 'informally', sometimes after school.

The learning support teacher was concerned that 'spelling is set, not taught' in majority of mainstream classes and the spelling lists given to pupils do not seem to follow a pattern, or are not based on personal words needed by individual pupils. She has proposed improvements to the current practice. She was also aware of the class teachers need to assess ongoing spelling progress in the mainstream class and individual spelling lists would make more work for the teacher.

Lack of differentiation: In the future, learning support and resource teacher roles may be combined to provide 'support teaching' to the most 'needy' pupils (DES SPED 24/03). Class teachers will have to differentiate in their teaching for pupils who would previously have attended learning support. The learning support teacher is willing and competent to take up this role. Parents would also need to be educated and made aware that individual teaching is not always the best option for pupils, and withdrawal from class is not always effective.

Mainstream schools: Summary of key issues

A key issue in these two case study schools is the separate and distinct roles of the learning support and resource teacher. The learning support teacher provided support for pupils with the weakest literacy skills, while the resource teacher supported pupils with more severe literacy difficulties. Pupils with dyslexia overlap in the caseload of both learning support and resource teachers. Difficulties surrounding the identification of dyslexia are evident in both schools, and also the level of support considered necessary. There is a lack of structured time for collaboration between the learning support and resource teachers in each school and also limited time for meeting class teachers. This is a common concern to teachers in both schools. Withdrawing pupils for support is the main method of providing extra support, although there was evidence of some limited in-class support in both schools. There was agreement about the type of support required by pupils with dyslexia. There is the perception in one school that specialised teaching methods and approaches are necessary for dyslexic pupils, in the other school a belief that individualised and structured approaches are most effective. The schools diverged in their methods of organising extra support. One of the schools was moving away from separate provision according to category of need. In the other school, a more categorical model of special need was evident, and there seemed to be a division between 'special' and 'ordinary' learners. This could be explained by the recent appointment of a new principal to this school and her wish not to introduce any major changes at the present time. The Learning support teachers in both case study schools have already begun to take on the wider role of supporting teachers and pupils by providing in class support. The competence and wide experience of the learning support teacher in each of the schools, is a positive factor in the schools' approach to addressing literacy difficulties at a whole school level. It was evident to the researcher that the differentiated teaching approaches used in the resource and learning support setting could be transferred to mainstream class. The support teacher's emphasis on coaching and prompting strategies to encourage accuracy in writing was evident. Making

explicit links between reading and writing as described by the learning support teacher would also be appropriate in mainstream. Self management skills among pupils are fostered by the one to one intensive support provided by the resource teacher. The teacher resources and skills which focus on meta cognitive learning are evident in these two schools and could be more widely adopted.

Case study school 3: AVENUE SCHOOL (Reading Unit)

Avenue school was selected as an example of a mainstream urban school with integrated reading units. In addition to the headings outlined in the introduction, this case study school will also include *teaching approaches.*

Location and context

Avenue senior primary school is located amongst a large number of local authority housing estates. The majority of houses in the immediate environment were built twenty years ago. Many of the residents were rehoused from the inner city to this suburb at the foothills of the mountains. The nearest shopping centre is a 20 minute drive away. There is a bus service to the city centre, and regular buses to the shopping centre. The school was designated disadvantaged in 1984, and gained additional provision to schools under the Scheme of Assistance to Schools in Designated Areas of Disadvantage. This support included increased capitation grants, and grants for home school activities. In 1990 the scheme was extended to other cities and towns and schools were entitled to concessionary teaching posts. Criteria for inclusion were the number of pupils (a) whose families reside in local authority housing or non permanent accommodation; (b) whose families hold medical cards; and (c) whose families are in receipt of unemployment benefit or assistance under schemes administered by the Department of social Welfare. In 2001 the Designated Areas scheme was subsumed into the *Giving Children an Even Break* initiative. This scheme provides additional funding and support for disadvantaged pupils in 2,350 schools, including most of the schools in the previous Designated Areas Scheme.

The identification of and interventions to address educational disadvantage in Ireland has been focussed on the school. Avenue school, one of the 242 urban schools with the highest concentration of disadvantaged pupils, has access to a range of DES initiatives to tackle disadvantage in education, such as the Early Start Programme and the School Completion Programme. Staff allocations allow a maximum class size of 20:1 in Junior classes and 27:1 in senior classes. The Junior school on the same campus has a more favourable teaching allocation of fifteen to one as part of Breaking the Cycle Scheme.

Staff

The principal has been in the school for over 20 years and has initiated many of the additional supports and programmes presently in place. The Principal is a strong advocate for the families and the individual pupils in the school. He reported that the pupils are as good as anybody else:

we encourage them to go for anything that is available. We have pupils in the University centre for talented youth .....we take them to places other schools go to ...e.g. the Point Depot

Wherever possible he says 'we give employment to locals from the community'. Pupils receiving extra support include pupils from ethnic minorities, some pupils with a Traveller background, and pupils with literacy difficulties. The Principal explained that there is an 'open enrolment policy' and he emphasised that 'we try to be fair' in accommodating all pupils.

There are 32 teachers in the school: 16 teach in mainstream classes and 16 are in specialist posts. In addition there were two classroom assistants and nine special needs assistants. Two additional special needs assistants will be employed for the new school year following a DES audit of special resources in school. The special needs assistants are employed on a contract basis and officially assigned to an individual child. In practice they are used flexibly in the classrooms as needed.

Up to 2004 a different model of special support was in place in the school. There were six special classes for pupils with mild intellectual disability and borderline intellectual disability. Pupils were segregated according to 'category' of need. A large number of additional pupils were withdrawn from mainstream classes for extra support and/or supplementary teaching. This was the model of practice for all pupils with special educational needs which had been in place in Ireland since 1993. Difficulties with this 'withdrawal model' became apparent with the allocation of individual resource support to children with special educational needs. As more and more children were withdrawn for individual support this raised issues for the reorganisation of classes.

The principal adopted the DES guidelines for special support in response to a growing concern about the number of pupils being withdrawn for support:

each class was like a railway station. Teachers could have up to twelve pupils leaving the room for different reasons, for example, learning support, special class, language support, resource teacher for travellers etc.

Avenue school decided to tackle the issue in two phases. In phase one, beginning in 2003, the teachers and Principal began to integrate the pupils from the special classes with mainstream pupils, while at the same time providing special support where needed. This was a system of integrated withdrawal for special support. Phase two began in 2004: since then there has been total inclusion of all pupils in three classes in mainstream but with the advantage of extra support for the class teacher and all pupils in the class. Support teachers are now working in class with the class teachers. There was one teacher between every two mainstream classes. The support teacher also withdraws children who require intense intervention. Third, Fourth and Sixth Class pupils were involved in the 'total inclusion' organisation of support. Fifth Classes remained outside the 'inclusion model of support' as a *'control group'* or comparison group for review of the initiative after one year, according to the Principal. These Fifth Class pupils continued to be withdrawn as necessary. The Principal and special support staff and all the teachers involved will review this

approach at the end of the school year. The table below summarises the re-organisation of teaching support to all classes:

Table 4.7: Class teacher deployment and teaching supports

Class level	*No. Classes/ No. class teachers*	*Full-time teaching support*
Third Class	4	2, each shared between 2 classes
Fourth Class	4	2, each shared between 2 classes
Fifth Class	4	Withdrawal for learning support as per guidelines
Sixth Class	4	2, each shared between 2 classes
Junior Reading unit	1	None
Middle Reading unit	1	None
Senior Reading unit	1	None

The school had other specialist teachers whose support was available to mainstream and reading units: Resource teachers for Travellers (two); Language Support Teachers (two), one Home School Community Liaison, and one Teacher counsellor. A special educational needs coordinator oversaw the operation of the range of specialist support.

Pupils: Avenue school is a senior primary school for pupils aged eight to twelve years. Less than 20 years ago, enrolment was over 700 pupils. Today there are 439 pupils enrolled. Pupils attending the school all live locally. The children transfer from the Junior school after completing Second Class (age eight years) and continue in the Senior school until Sixth Class (age 11 years). The two schools are on the same campus. In common with school buildings constructed at the time, Avenue school is a flat roofed building with a large general purpose hall in the centre. The presence of various community groups involved in the school and the regular use of all the rooms in the building gives the sense of a community based amenity. The children qualify for assistance with purchase of text books and a 'Back to school' allowance. A Breakfast club has recently been set up for pupils. Local parents involved in Community Employment and Jobs Initiative scheme run the breakfast club. The entrance lobby is brightly decorated with certificates of achievement presented to the school for various community awards.

Special Provision

Reading Units: History and Background: It appears there was a greater need than anticipated for the establishment of reading units in the area; three units were opened in 1993. Pupils from other schools in the area were eligible to apply for placement. In practice, mainly Avenue school pupils attend the units: this year (2005) one child from a total enrolment of 33 pupils came from outside the area. Retention of the reading units, according to the Principal, will *'be on the basis of getting assessments done…a lot depends on NEPS'.* The change in recent years for children assessed as

dyslexic to be provided with resource teaching hours in their own school, has also meant that there is less demand for places in the reading unit from other schools.

The recent change to a general weighted model of special needs will, according to the Principal, result in at least two additional teaching posts for the coming year. He has no plans to change the organisation of the three reading units: *'the only grouping we now have is .... SLD (specific learning difficulty) ... because it was going so well'*. The criteria for access to a reading unit are:

> *Assessment by a psychologist on a standardised test of intelligence should place general intellectual ability with the average range or above.....performance in basic literacy skills as measured by a standardised test should be at a very low level compared to vast majority of students in a similar age cohort. It would be expected that not more than 2 percent of the overall student population would be found to be in this category.* (DES, 1998)

These criteria are similar for entry to a reading school. Due to large number of children in the school with a lower level of ability (as measured by WISC), the Principal has to take this into account when selecting pupils for the Reading unit. Out of a sample of ten new entrants this year, according to the special needs coordinator, three were in the low average WISC band. Similarly, from the sample of pupils in this study, four out of ten were in the low average range. *'average in our school is low average'* (SEN coordinator). A higher than average number of pupils in Avenue school have had psychological assessment: the school had been allocated six special class teachers for pupils with borderline and mild intellectual disability. All of the eligible pupils have been assessed. The Principal remarked that *'the normal curve of ability is slightly moved to the left'*. This researcher noted that in the group of ten pupils with dyslexia who were the focus of this study, six are in the average range, one is low average and three are upper low average (see also section on pupil data on reading attainment, above).

There are three Reading Units in the school, Junior, Middle and Senior. At the time of the study, there were 11 pupils in each but the following year the revised pupil teacher ratio of 9:1 would prevail. The Junior reading unit had ten pupils from Third Class and one from Fourth. In the Middle reading unit there was one pupil from Third Class, six from Fourth Class, three from Fifth Class and one from Sixth Class. The Senior reading unit had nine pupils from Fifth Class and two from Sixth Class. There were specific reasons for the overlapping allocations of pupils to the units. One child who had serious emotional difficulties could not cope with his peers in the Senior unit, and as he was perceived to have a strong relationship with the teacher in the Middle reading unit, so had been placed there. Another child, who was in Third Class, was more able than his peers in the Junior unit, and so had been placed in the Middle unit. Pupils were organised into the most appropriate class according to their ability on the basis of the initial psychological assessment, and also teacher observation. The principal described the pupils as *'home grown'*: they are already enrolled in a 'base class[6]' and return to that class each afternoon. The main emphasis of the reading

[6] Base class is the child's mainstream class where he returns each day for non core subjects

unit is to focus on the literacy skills of the pupils. One reading unit teacher described the support: *' It's an extra help for them in the reading class ... they'd be lost in mainstream, they know it themselves.*

Curriculum: The main subjects taught were English, Mathematics and religion. Two hours each morning were spent on developing literacy skills. In the afternoon, pupils returned to their base class for History, Geography, Science, Art, and P.E. Placement is for a maximum period of two years and pupils return to base class full time. Occasionally, a pupil who needs extra support will spend a third year in the reading unit.

> *At the end of two years you see a big improvement in them, whereas in base class, regular class you mightn't see that much improvement.....that's an advantage for them, but they need it.. (reading class teacher)*

Teaching approaches in the reading units: Observation of language lesson

This section will present the researcher's observations on the teaching approaches used in the reading units. The researcher visited the reading unit on two occasions. On one of these visits a language lesson was observed. This class had eight pupils present, six boys and two girls. The classroom was spacious and bright with a word wall for creative writing, and separate areas for choosing and reading books, lots of illustrated written work and displays of art. Some of the pupils were involved in *Write a Book project* in conjunction with the local Education centre. The language comprehension lesson was a sample of daily language lesson. The children were seated at desks, two per desk. A poem, 'The Shark', was read by the teacher. Pupils repeated one line at a time after the teacher. The teacher asked questions on the new words introduced (examples: *treacherous, remark, astounding, self control, rage, demeanour*). There was an emphasis on the repetition of word meanings and vocabulary development. The teacher insisted the pupils raise a hand to answer. The pupils were familiar with the lesson sequence. Sometimes there were group answers and teacher tried to get all pupils participating and answering individually. The pupils were attentive to the teacher's questions and were observed to be concentrating. They did not object to the repeated questions to suggest the meaning of a new word and appeared to enjoy the lesson. Each of the pupils had an opportunity to respond and participate. They had many opportunities to repeat the meanings of the new words which they had learnt. Following the oral part of the lesson, students were instructed to open a copybook and write sentences using the new words introduced in the poem. Pupils readily started to write. Most could write at least two sentences using the new words. The teacher uses *mostly group teaching* as the main teaching approach. This lesson was a good example of the teacher's style, as the teacher described it '*my style is teacher to group, I teach the whole group and I know who needs more';* she considers this to be more effective as the following comment illustrates:

> *Some of the characters in the group couldn't work in a group* [with other pupils]. *I teach them all, then touch in with those that need more; I would encourage them to ask their friends too.*

In terms of priorities in literacy she mentioned that *'phonics teaching is a big thing; Alpha to Omega every day, half an hour every day; PAT every morning for them, they like it; they see an improvement themselves'.*

The teacher was also conscious of weak comprehension skills among the pupils: *'Comprehension is a big thing ... some of them are good readers but they haven't a clue what they are reading.'* The teacher considered the size of the class to be an advantage

> *It's easier to monitor their progress in a smaller class because none of them really get lost. You can see if his strength is comprehension or does he need work there'.. I'm very lucky there's only eleven in that you can focus, you can give them one to one and that's an advantage for them. They know it themselves.*

Pupil Progress: The teachers' expectations for the students is that they *'improve their reading and their maths, spelling and writing...literacy and numeracy skills is the big focus here'.* Progress in the reading unit is measured at the end of the year using standardised reading tests. The teacher was confident about the value of continuous informal assessment of the pupils work:

> *you have a sense yourself of what level they're at because of ... 11 in the class ... it's easier to monitor their progress because none of them really get lost .... the stage* [level of reader] *they're on ... spelling tests, writing wise...you have a sense yourself.*

Transfer of learning could be observed according to the teacher by listening to the pupils. She mentioned the PAT programme (Wilson 1993), one of the phonological awareness programs in use which children are familiar with: *'PAT is something you definitely see, they recognise the endings, they might say 'there's one of our PAT words.....that's a word we had two weeks ago.'* The PAT programme has been described earlier in this report. It teaches pupils to read and spell words by analogy. Spelling and dictation sentences are also used. At end of the two year placement the teacher believed that progress is evident: *'You see a big improvement at the end of the year, especially after two years, whereas in base class or regular class you mightn't see that much improvement*

Integration of pupils: The base class teacher considered that *'it is very important to let them back in their class'* as they were taken out of base classes originally. This is not always an easy transition for the pupils although they are matched as far as possible with the pupils in the mainstream Fifth Classes. She described the two pupils who come from the reading unit: *'They are on a par with the weakest in my class, I have two weaker...they're relatively able for what we do...the level they're at here for what I'm doing'.*

The main difficulty, according to the base class teacher seems to be *'because they have done so much English, that's their routine, as a class group we have been doing something above them,*

they have less interest'. For example, the class was working on the topic of 1916 rising and this was perceived to be too difficult for the pupils re-integrated from the reading unit.

Two pupils from the middle reading unit join a larger class of 18 in the afternoon. This Fifth Class was described by the teacher as the '*weakest Fifth on the corridor,...they are particularly weak and particularly disruptive'*. There is a special needs assistant working in the class with a child with emotional and behavioural disorder, described as a *'full time job'*. When that child is absent the assistant can support the two pupils from reading unit. The teacher expressed the view that *'sometimes it's hard to know what to have organised for them. I never had L or A in my class before, it's hard to know what ability they are, you just find your feet as you go along'*.

The pupils in Fifth Class in the school do not have a support teacher designated to work with the class teacher unlike Third, Fourth and Sixth Classes. A support teacher could alleviate the workload for the class teacher in Fifth and support the integration of pupils from the reading unit each afternoon. When the pupils from the reading unit join the base class, the teacher differentiates the written work. She usually does history or geography in the afternoon and would have *'a separate set of questions for those children (half the amount)...less questions and more drawing for the four or five children that are weaker'*.

Collaboration: Time for collaboration among the teachers from the reading units and the base classes was in short supply. The priority is direct teaching and instruction. The teacher in the reading unit admitted *'there is nothing formal, but we do check in, the teacher would say it to you, there is collaboration'*. The base class teacher did not have regular meetings with the teacher in the reading unit . She has a difficult class this year '*a troublesome class, I can't leave it for a minute'* She had some ideas about materials that would help the children:

> *a folder coming from the reading unit class..... to come back and they can do that sometimes...maybe extra help for the two of them and a folder with their work in it,....maybe more of a routine so they know what's going on*

In fact, the movement of the children back and forth from base class to reading unit seemed to make it more difficult for the second teacher to maintain a relationship with the pupils: *'Its funny, I feel I don't have a relationship with the two of them, fact is, they just come in and go, it's only for that last hour' [1.30-2.30 p.m.]*

When asked if they felt like visitors in the class, teacher replied '*Yes....they are really, I just do what I can for them when they're there'*. This is an aspect of integration that could benefit from the regular support of one of the special education teachers in the school.

Issues and concerns

The following issues were of particular concern to the principal and teachers in Avenue school: *class size, teacher turnover, transition to second level school, parental support, and pastoral care.*

Class size: Although the Early Start programme in the Junior school give pupils a supportive start in the early years of primary school, the Principal was aware of problems which arise when the pupils transfer to Third Class and cannot cope with larger number of students in the class. Early Start classes have a maximum of fifteen pupils, whereas classes in the senior school have on average twenty four. At time of writing, the Minister for Education has announced a range of measures to tackle class size in disadvantaged schools.

Teacher turnover: The Principal expressed concern about the difficulty in encouraging teachers to teach in the reading unit. He described a constant turnover of teachers, due to the age profile of the teaching staff. After three or four years, teachers move to other schools in non–disadvantaged areas. There is a high turnover of teachers. The principal observed that it could be due to behavioural difficulties that *'every year ...four, five or six new teachers are appointed'*. Research undertaken by the principal on this subject found that support from a colleague among the staff in the early years teaching or 'mentoring' had a beneficial effect on developing experience and *'learning the professional craft of teaching'*. Support for newly qualified teachers is now provided in the school through the re-organisation of special support for pupils this year. The principal reported that in service training and ongoing support for teachers was needed. The perception of some of the teachers was that the teaching position in the reading unit was a *'hard act to follow'*. This was due no doubt to the expertise and experience of the teacher who had initiated the project. Three other teachers who had been involved in the reading units over the years have all left to take up positions in non disadvantaged schools.

Transition to second level school: The majority of pupils transfer to the local second level community college; 30% of the pupils transferring to second level in 2005 had special educational needs (Taylor & O'Shea, 2005). Of this group, 16 were of exceptionally low ability, one had a moderate learning difficulty, six had borderline mild general learning difficulties and ten had specific learning difficulties. All of these students have been previously assessed on the WISC. This has implications for the second level school in devising access to the curriculum for these students. The students who have major problems in acquiring basic literacy skills, will probably need some periods of withdrawal teaching or at least regular small group support. It will be necessary for the second level teachers to adapt the curriculum and teaching methods. If these students are to be successfully included in the second level school, close and ongoing liaison with parents will also be essential. The School Completion Programme which has been established in the local second level school, is making positive effort in this regard. This programme has been designed specifically for students who have difficulty covering the complete prescribed Junior Certificate curriculum yet can achieve core components on a module basis. Not all second level schools offer this programme. It is specifically targeted at students who are at risk of leaving school early or who have mild intellectual disabilities.

There is a comprehensive transfer programme in place between Avenue school and the community college. The School Completion programme workers are in a position to give information on students at risk of early school leaving. A student profile on learning strengths and needs including history of learning support and other issues is prepared. A 'fun day' for pupils and open night for parents is part of this transition process. The desired outcome of the transfer programme is to help the students settle in the second level college and achieve their potential in a supportive environment. It is a system which would benefit many other schools with similar difficulties.

Parental support In general, there is very little evidence of parental support for the pupils. As the special educational needs coordinator stated '*parents are not advocates for them'* and there are many social and economic factors contributing to this. The school makes great efforts at creating a safe, caring, secure environment for the pupils. There is a very friendly sense of community evident within the school. Ancillary staff such as special needs assistants, breakfast club workers and adults in a reading club, all work in the school on a daily basis. Teachers reported that parents' level of education, their previous experiences in education and more immediate economic or social concerns make it difficult to maintain a supportive relationship with the class teacher. If a child has two teachers in the course of the day, this adds to the difficulty.

Pastoral care: The issue of behavioural difficulties is a concern to the Principal and teachers in the school. Challenging behaviour co exists alongside low literacy levels throughout the school. A support teacher, previously known as teacher counsellor has a role in the school to support the emotional and behavioural needs of the pupils. Weekly meetings take place with the 'Care team' which consists of the class teacher, support teacher, and Principal. Behavioural issues are addressed at these meetings. One of the class teachers expressed her concern about the level of disadvantage. In particular, she reported that in her experience, the pupils get

> *very little support from home, no structures in place at home, nothing at home literacy wise,...reading wise, many have never seen a book until they came to school, they have never seen a newspaper at home.*

As children learn and grow academically and socially, they are also developing emotionally. As all pupils do, they experience emotional aspects to their learning. According to the teacher with responsibility for special needs in the school, there is a '*very large emotional component in the lives of all the pupils in the reading units'*, and there is very little support from home '*the parents are not advocates for them'* she said. The Avenue school gives them a huge sense of security and a sense of belonging. She described some of the issues affecting the pupils as violence in the home, a parent in prison, parental separations with difficulties around parental visits and access.

Concluding comments

Over two years, the school has undertaken a huge re organisation of special support for pupils in order to better respond to the needs of pupils in an inclusive setting. The pivotal role of the

principal and the special needs coordinator has managed to facilitate this enormous change. The school has adapted to the difficulties caused by high teacher turnover by assigning support teachers to Third, Fourth and Sixth Classes. Fifth Classes could also benefit form this extra support. This process was still in a transition stage and the resources are already stretched to cope with existing needs in mainstream classes. There were no plans at present to integrate the three reading units into the wider school, although partial integration does take place each afternoon for the pupils in the reading units. The difficulties surrounding integration into base classes of these pupils could be addressed by extra support from one of the special needs teachers. There was a very strong sense of community evident in the school. The school aims to have a positive presence among the families of all the pupils. Avenue school was taking positive steps towards greater inclusion of all pupils and responding to pupil diversity. This is an evolving process and the changes which were taking place were due to be reviewed at the end of the year.

Case study school 4: GREENFIELDS SCHOOL (Reading Unit)

Greenfields School is a mainstream primary school located in the centre of a large regional town. It was selected as a case study school because it is a regional school with a special reading unit.

Location and context

Greenfields national school was built in 1973. The school is within walking distance from the main shopping streets. It is a large flat roofed building typical of schools built in the 1970s. There are eleven semi permanent prefabricated classrooms on the same site. There is parking for teachers and staff in the school grounds. During school drop off and collection times, traffic congestion is a problem. The majority of pupils live in the town or a short distance away. Parents who attended the school as pupils now continue to send their children to the school.

The Principal has been in the school for over 30 years. The principal has a strong commitment to supporting the marginalised, the disadvantaged and those with learning difficulties who attend the school. Other teachers concurred with this. The town has expanded considerably in the past ten years and there is a visible presence of new Irish workers living and working in the town. Children of different cultures attend the school. There is a language support teacher for these new pupils. The school population has grown in the past ten years and the present accommodation is presently a major cause for concern. According to the Principal, some pupils will spend their complete primary education in one of the 'pre fabs' outside and separate to the main school building. A new school building has been sanctioned by the DES to replace the 32-year old present building. A suitable site for the proposed new school has not been decided.

Teachers and ancillary Staff

There were 34 teachers in the school; 17 had posts of responsibility with duties relating to in-school management. Teachers who did not have a post of responsibility were encouraged to 'shadow' a

post holder. There were three classes at every grade level from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. Nine teachers worked in the Special Educational Needs department; these included two learning support teachers, four resource teachers, one teacher in the Reading unit, one for language support and one resource teacher for Travellers. There were six special needs assistants assigned to individual students but also working with other pupils under the direction of the class teacher. The average class size was 29 but some pupils were withdrawn for extra support during the course of the day.

Pupils: There were 714 pupils enrolled in the school. Pupils range in age from four years to twelve years. They were grouped in classes according to their age.

Special Provision: Reading Unit

A special reading unit for pupils was established in the school in 1999. The unit caters for pupils in Fifth and Sixth Class (ages 11-12). A Junior reading unit (Third and Fourth Class, ages 8-10) was established in the local convent school at the same time. However, each unit is a separate entity. There is strong support from parents and the local school community for the special reading unit. A parent support group for parents of pupils with dyslexia meets regularly in the school. The establishment of the reading unit was directly attributable to the efforts of the principal to cater for the number of pupils in the school who had a specific reading difficulty.

Criteria for Enrolment in Reading Unit: A committee for enrolment of new pupils meets in March to decide on enrolments for the following school year. This 'screening committee' includes the Principal, the reading class teacher, a psychologist from NEPS. An inspector from the DES is also invited to attend. Places are offered according to the Principal, '*based on the differential between the child's potential and his current attainments in literacy'*. The criteria for access to the reading unit is similar to reading schools as set down by DES (1998).

Pupils in the Reading Unit: There were ten children currently enrolled, nine boys and one girl. Seven of the pupils are in Sixth Class, three are in Fifth. The intake each year includes pupils from outside the area as well as the schools own pupils. There were two pupils enrolled who travel from outside the immediate area. Pupils are based in the reading unit each day till 12.30 p.m. They move to their base classes for the afternoon. Lessons in Religion, History, Geography, Science and P.E. take place in the base class. One afternoon a week, the teacher in the reading unit recalls groups of three for extra literacy work according to individual need. One of the groups was working on phonological skills; another on word identification skills and a third on reading comprehension. One afternoon a week, pupils in the reading unit have a designated computer class in the school computer laboratory. Some of the pupils have associated difficulties in addition to literacy difficulties. According to the teacher, many of the pupils have a short attention span and concentration difficulties. She noted that there is some evidence of ADD among the pupils. The most marked feature of teaching in the reading unit, according to the teacher is the pace of the

class. She explained that some of the pupils may have been *'fighting with dyslexia'* in their previous class or maybe avoiding being shown up as having a difficulty. Now they are accepted and can learn at their own pace.

Teaching approaches: The teacher uses a group approach to teaching literacy skills with the class: *'I generate the group....get it going, do the group thing, because some of them can't come up with their own ideas, they have to be led by the others'.*

During a writing lesson observed by the researcher, there was close interaction between the teacher and children in getting ideas for writing. The teacher used a 'mind map' to help pupils structure their ideas before writing: *'Mind maps.....gives them ideas to get started, something to look at, gives them support, and then they get down to doing their own thing'.*

Even with this level of support, the pupils had difficulty getting started. They needed help sequencing their ideas, *'which part goes first?'* (pupil). The teacher gave constant spelling prompts, encouraging each word, and every sentence. She used the whiteboard for spelling prompts, lists of words on the classroom walls for visual prompts, and the other pupils to help 'break up words' for easier spelling. The children seemed accustomed to listening to all of the prompts and explanations. This was constant throughout the lesson.

Progress: Progress is measured using standardised assessment tests twice during the year. (September and February). NARA, Schonell spelling test and Macmillan word reading tests are most regularly used. The teacher also uses a selection of diagnostic tests for further information on pupils needs. A test of alphabetical knowledge is given at beginning of year, a test of phonological awareness using the Sound Linkage screening test, the Aston Index for visual discrimination test, and British Ability Scales spelling test. An individual education plan is then prepared on each pupil. Each pupil has a display folder of work in progress which contains items such as worksheets and written work. As each piece of work is complete it is stored in a large file for each pupil. However the teacher commented about other areas where progress is made but not tested:

> *You have your formal testing, and your informal, your observation. A lot of the time the formal does not show advances that you know the child has made. You could see a big change in a child, maybe in personality, maybe in reading, their fluency has come on, yet when you do their reading test, their scores have only gone up one month in a year, and parents know they have come on in their reading but it doesn't show up in the test. So a lot depends on their personalities, how comfortable they are in themselves, in talking to other people, relating to staff and confidence all round, that would be my number one objective.*

The teacher described how parents first express the difference in the emotional state of the child when he settles down to learning in the reading unit *'he stops bed wetting, he no longer cries before coming to school....he begins to come out of himself, to be more confident'.*

One of the parents described how her child looked into the camera for the first time when his photo was taken to illustrate 'self portrait stories' that were published in school. This photo and story

hangs on the classroom wall. During the second year of the placement, according to the teacher, many pupils progress further, and transfer of learning takes place:

> *Some of them go slowly the first year, then they just take off. Some progress slowly the whole time, it's maturation as well, confidence as well....if they came in from another school maybe a smaller school getting used to this school they struggle in the first year, then second year, it's all familiar the learning can happen...they just take off*

Integration with Base class: The pupils return to their base class in the afternoons and join their class group level. This can be difficult for some pupils and the reading unit teacher reported that:

> *Some cope, some don't, it's an individual basis, its related to ability again, the ones who are bright will cope, the others, not so bright, won't. If they have a negative feeling, and negative behaviour and there's a negative feeling about them, if others have a negative feeling toward them.....*

Some of the pupils from the reading unit seem to get into trouble more often:

> *Some students are used as fall guys, they stand out, they're on the corridors, coming and going, they are more likely to be set up, to get into trouble and fall foul and situations are created where they are shown up by some of the other 'gougers'(reading unit teacher).*

However, the base class teacher felt that the pupils adapted quite well socially to the transition to mainstream each day:

> *They float in and they float out, I try to encourage it, this particular year they are good ... sometimes they leave and they say teacher is doing something and I want to go back down and finish it and I'll be back late ... or J is still doing something with F, there's nothing rigid at all about it ... sometimes they can't come at twelve because they are continuing on a project with so there is a lot of that ... but when you get them to understand they are responsible to come and go in an ordered manner, and we depend on them.*

This may sound laissez faire but the researcher's observation was that class management was relaxed, orderly and purposeful. This flexible form of integration seemed to suit the pupils and the teacher. The other pupils in the class, according to the teacher, *'don't take any notice, they're not the only three (from reading unit) that door is opening and closing all the time'.* This teacher takes three pupils from the reading unit each afternoon; that brings his total class to 32 pupils. When asked if he does anything differently for these pupils when they are in the class he replied:

> *It depends on what we are doing.....three ways they work in my class. One is they work as part of the class with no special help from me, that can be areas like drawing in simple form, geography, maps, history, relating a piece of poetry or art, it could be wide and varied, not just the art class.... [The second way is]in certain areas they are working on work based on what we have done. I need to go round to them, see can they even read the questions, and if they can, can they understand it, them if they understand it how can they do it simply. Another way we help them, and I think its very important is where I use other pupils in the class to help them, that's working very well .....I simply don't have the time, so I get someone to help them*

He explained that *'they're not the weakest children in my class, or anything like the three weakest....although they have a special difficulty. They can surmount that to a certain extent, in so many areas'.* This teacher expressed concern about some of his other weak pupils as follows:

I have some children with very, very low IQ they have a major difficulty....they're floundering, were very worried about next year what will happen to these children (when they transfer to second level)

Special provision in the school

Throughout the school, nine support teachers provided extra support for pupils with learning difficulties. These teachers included; two learning support, four resource teachers, one language support, one resource teacher for travellers and one reading unit teacher. It is noticeable that while the support and commitment to pupils with learning difficulties is evident from the principal and the individual teachers, the organisation of extra support to those children takes the form of a segregated, withdrawal model. Children leave their mainstream class for additional support in language, learning support or individual resource teaching. One of the teachers commented '*we just don't have enough resource teachers'*. The principal stated that support is available for all teachers if an individual pupil is having difficulties in class. The practice in the school is generally a withdrawal model of special support. The teacher in the reading unit gives advice where necessary. The principal has plans to streamline the support for children with learning difficulties. A combined role of learning support and resource teacher would minimise disruption in classes. More integration of learning support with special needs staff is planned.

In the base class referred to above, 13 pupils are withdrawn for extra support. The teacher described this as follows:

These three (from reading unit) are only 3 of 13 who leave the class for other resourcing of one kind or another, learning support, or resource (support) or English lesson. Two are being helped by special needs assistants we just don't have enough resource teachers.(Sixth Class teacher)

There appeared to be dependence on this 'withdrawal model' of providing extra support.

Collaboration: There are organisational difficulties about meeting with mainstream teachers and difficulties around collaboration:

If the class teachers could be freed up occasionally to talk to me. Its easy for me to free myself up by sending the children to the class teachers but they can't do the same really....not timetabled as such, only on staff days, We have a phone system. We do collaborate all the time, we send notes up and down, in staff room a few words in passing at the break or whatever. On staff days we have a timetable (teacher in reading unit)

This teacher would be the teacher with the most experience and expertise in the area of literacy development. Collaboration among the 'learning support teachers' is an ad hoc approach and has not been developed as yet. The reading unit teacher was of the opinion that not all teachers in the school see dyslexia as a learning difficulty. Although she did not elaborate on this point, it could be observed that lack of collaboration among teachers could lead to this belief.

Issues of concern

The following issues were of concern to the principal and teachers*: accommodation, resources, pastoral care.*

Accommodation: It is evident that the issue of school accommodation and the current state of the present building are foremost in the minds of Principal and teachers. There has been ongoing pressure from the management and parents regarding the replacement of this thirty two year old school building. Health hazards have been identified in the building. The reading unit needs larger accommodation for senior pupils. Even the mainstream class teachers are under pressure for space:

> *There's absolutely no room in my classroom, its full of tables...I'd say classroom facilities within the classroom that's the first thing.....more room, a space, a little corner where a computer on all the time, with maybe some reference books, where I could sit at ease with (Sixth Class teacher)*

A second issue of concern to Principal and reading class teacher is lack of time. Time for meeting parents, discussing individual education plans, planning with other teachers and time to contact other agencies where necessary, were all mentioned as a concern. The principal noted that the allocated time in primary school for the administration of special educational needs is less than in post primary schools. For example the post of deputy principal in a school the size of Greenfields would be a fully administrative post in a second level school of similar size.

Resources: As in all local communities, politics plays a part in the development of services to schools and the local community. The principal expressed frustration at the bureaucracy and delays of administration in the DES in securing resources for the school. The principal was aware of the importance of computer skills for children to access future learning. There was one teacher designated in the school to teach word processing skills and to introduce pupils to educational software in a group setting. There was no full time maintenance person on site. The reading unit needs ongoing funding for extra resources and specialised equipment for pupils and teacher. The main burden on the school is for psychological assessments of pupils. As is currently the situation, a full psychological assessment is the 'gateway to special provision' for pupils in the primary sector. The principal stated that:

> *the reading unit eats up resources, for example we get ten National educational psychological assessments (NEPS) a year. The reading unit could take up to three of these. The school pays for any (further) assessments necessary.*

From September 2005 this situation will change. Individual psychological assessments will not be necessary to access priority to special support in school. Each school will have the flexibility to prioritise extra resources for pupils according to their need. For entry to special schools and special reading units, a psychological assessment will continue to be necessary.

***Pastoral Care*:** The principal reported that concern and care for each child in the school is the main priority of his day to day work in the school. He quoted from the parent of a dyslexic child *'if we*

give them respect and care we are doing something right.' This concern extends to the pupils who are marginalised or disadvantaged in any way and is particularly evident in his daily concern for the pupils who attend the Reading unit... *'the difficulties he has in reading can be solved'* (principal). He quoted from a poem written by one of the pupils:

I'm not stupid / I'm not thick / I'm just dyslexic

Concluding comments

The reading unit in Greenfields school provides specialised and individualised support for a small group of pupils in Fifth and Sixth Class. This large school had other supports available to all the pupils, this extra support is provided on a withdrawal basis. Lack of time for collaboration among teachers providing extra support was a major constraint to the provision of special support in the school. The major current concerns of the principal and staff were the accommodation crisis facing the school and the shortage of resources such as psychological support and back up. The pupils in the reading unit reported a very favourable and positive learning experience, despite some social disadvantages associated with integrating with their base class for part of the day.

Reading Units: Summary of key issues

Pupils in the reading units are integrated with their base class group for non-core subjects every afternoon. The transition to mainstream class is a common difficulty for the pupils in both case study schools. The lack of sufficient differentiation in the larger class group was an issue of concern to the teachers in the reading units. Collaboration and communication among the teachers in the reading unit and the pupils' base class is limited or non existent. Teachers believed that lack of time to meet and plan together was the major cause of this problem. There was a perception that the reading unit in both schools is a separate entity and remains separate to any re organisation of special support for pupils in the school. There was partial integration of pupils in mainstream classes, and the social aspects of integration are considered important to all teachers. However the base class teachers expressed a need for relevant curricular support (and advice on differentiation) in order to include these pupils in the mainstream. The role of the teacher in the reading unit is considered to be a 'specialised' role and separate to the mainstream classes.

The teachers in the reading units seemed to differ in their expectations of the pupils. In one school, the teacher held very high expectations for the pupils. This appeared to be due to her professional competence and experience. This was at variance with the school in the disadvantaged area, where the teacher in the reading unit expressed an awareness of the number of children with a lower than average level of ability. The principal in this school expressed a difficulty encouraging teachers to take up a teaching position in the reading unit. He reported a unit had a problem with the retention of teachers and the high turnover of newly qualified teachers.

It was evident that the teaching approaches and methods used in the reading units in both schools emphasise building pupils' self esteem along with explicit and focussed teaching of basic literacy skills. Teachers in both schools used extensive modelling strategies, prompting pupils to give the correct answer in shared writing, or prompting pupils to develop their oral vocabulary. Differentiated approaches and interventions regularly used in the reading unit would benefit all pupils not just the dyslexic pupils. The intensity of instruction provided in a supportive and safe environment provided a positive learning experience for all the pupils.

Case study school 5: PARKLANDS SCHOOL

Parklands reading school caters for children of average IQ who experience specific learning difficulties but it also caters for pupils with specific learning difficulties such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, ADHD, Asperger's syndrome, Sensory Integration difficulties. All pupils have average intellectual ability. Placement is for two or three years. Parklands is a co-educational school. It was chosen as a case study because it is the only reading school outside the capital.

Location and context

Parklands reading school was set up in 1978 by a large charitable foundation which offers services for children and adults with intellectual disabilities through its system of schooling, vocational training, sheltered employment, housing, information and advice. The charitable foundation no longer provides funds for the school but health and other education support services continue to be channelled to the school. The school is now funded by DES as a special primary school.

In September 2004 Parklands school relocated from Park Street to the Community School campus as the old building was no longer adequate to meet the needs of pupils and staff. The school is located on the outskirts of a large town.

Teachers and staff

There are six class teachers and the school principal. Additional staff includes a resource teacher, a speech and language therapist, an occupational therapist and nurse. There are also ten special needs assistants.

Multidisciplinary staff: An *occupational therapist* attends two days a week. A special needs assistant is assigned to work with the occupational therapist. A *speech and language therapist* has been appointed this term. This is a new appointment and is funded by the Health Board. In previous years the school could avail of speech and language therapy provided by the charitable foundation. A *nurse* attends for three hours per day. This service is in a transition stage as the charitable foundation reduces funding to the school. The *resource teacher* holds a temporary position, sanctioned from year to year. A NEPS psychologist attends the school regularly for multidisciplinary meetings. NEPS allocates 20 days per year plus five days (for report writing) to

the pupils attending the special school. The principal was of the opinion that this arrangement is the result of pressure from parents for the need for a psychological service to the school.

Pupils: There are 57 pupils in the school. Pupils' ages range from eight to twelve years. Pupils are grouped into mixed class levels according to their age and reading ability, for example, eight and nine year olds, ten and eleven year olds and eleven and twelve year olds. All pupils are streamed for mathematics, according to ability. Some pupils attend specialist clinics in the town such as Child Guidance, Asperger's syndrome clinic, Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) clinic or other private clinics. The religious order and the Health Board are the main service providers. The following table gives more detail on the numbers of pupils attending specialist services:

Table 4.8: Pupils attending specialist services

Service	*Children attending*	*Relevant details*	*To be assessed*
Child Guidance Clinic	19		
Asperger's Syndrome clinic	3		4
Speech and Language therapy*	29	13 severe 8 moderate 8 mild	24
Occupational Therapy**	24	DCD severe	
	20	Sensory impairment needs	4
Total no. of pupils	***57***		***32***

**4 of the total enrolment are identified as not needing speech and language therapy*
***eight of the total enrolment are identified as not needing occupational therapy*

Special provision

The resource teacher coordinates the schools discipline policy on a day to day basis. She also liaises with teachers and implements a behaviour management programme for specific pupils. The resource teacher keeps a 'red folder' for individual pupils where targets are set and achieved. She organises individual meetings with teachers regarding any individual pupils who need extra support. Contact with outside agencies and support services is also part of the role. The resource teacher is a link between the Principal and all staff members. Social skills programmes which are in place in the school such as *Circle Time* (Moseley, 1997), *Circle of Friends* programme, *Stay Safe* and a bereavement program are coordinated by the resource teacher. This is a temporary position yet it became quite evident during visits to the school that the Resource teacher has a key position in the school and plays an important role.

Multidisciplinary meetings, as stated in the school policy document, take place frequently and for many different purposes such as: to identify/solve problems, to define school policy, to agree

procedures, to give/seek/agree information, to settle issues/differences, to assess people's reactions/understanding and to develop a team approach. The Principal emphasised the importance of *'good systems'* in the school. She explained that a large portion of her time is taken up with preparing for meetings and attending meetings. The existence of multi disciplinary personnel in the school leads to the necessity for frequent communication between specialists and teaching staff. It appears that a quasi- medical model of team meetings is the consistent pattern. Specialists and teachers meet and plan and discuss, then parents are informed of the outcome.

Meetings take place every fortnight with the multidisciplinary team concerning two or three pupils at a time. This is a case conference style meeting and during one visit the researcher was introduced to the members of the team. The meetings are attended by the principal, speech and language therapist, NEPS psychologist, occupational therapist, nurse and resource teacher. A contact person is designated to liaise with the parents, to gather information and report to the team. For a class based issue, the teacher would be the contact person, for a home based issue, the nurse or resource teacher would be the contact person. Following the meeting parents and outside agencies receive feedback. A similar pattern of meetings takes place with the *'class team'*. Meetings with the class team involve the teacher, special needs assistant(s) and therapist where necessary. The principal felt that regular class team meetings were important for clear communication and planning among all staff dealing with a child. Regular Monday morning meetings take place with the ***school management team*** consisting of the Principal, deputy principal, and holders of posts of responsibility. The purpose of the meeting is to outline the priorities and other issues for the week.

Teaching approaches: The main priority for the Fifth Class teacher was literacy. This is echoed by other teachers and the principal who reported that in Parklands the *'curriculum emphasises reading literacy and numeracy'*. The teacher of a group of eleven year old pupils explained further:

> *They need to be able to read. My priority is to get them to a reading level and expecting they can read no matter how difficult they find it. There is a way around learning to read and once they've learnt to read they have education at their fingertips because they can use the literacy to research any subject they wish*

The teacher explained how this approach works with her class:

> *Because of my expectation they are all reading at some level even my weakest reader has a reading level, even the text in history or geography they see it as a reading lesson as well. They may not have to read it out but they have to track it....they're all reading at their own pace*

This teacher has high expectations for the pupils and expressed it as follows:

> *The children here in the school all have normal IQs so I have high expectations for them. I feel what they have is a learning disability they're not....stupid...they can achieve and that just because something is stopping them right now....I actually set quite high standards for them. They get a bit of a gonk sometimes when they see what I expect from them. I feel sometimes they've come from schools where the expectations were set a bit low for them because the expectation wasn't there for them. They might have just got side lined a bit...*

The pupils' views reinforced this point: *'Work is easier because you get more help'; 'You can do things better....differently....in this school'; You show us what our mistakes are and how to fix it'.*

A teacher of a class of eleven year olds emphasised the importance of language development for the pupils:

> *I... want to motivate them a lot, through listening to me reading to them....something that came up in my learning support course here, stories and pictures for language development. I use Tough's strategies, projecting, imagining, predicting. I read five or six novels a year and I use that for language development, I do a chapter every day, even if a book is a high reading level when I get to the end of novel, I have children asking me 'can I take that book home for a week'. Maybe they 'pair-read' at home.*

A range of literacy skills are taught during the morning period 9-11 each day. The teacher described the literacy programmes she uses. *'all pupils use the Wordsworth programme, it's a phonological training programme, the bulk of it is a phonological processing skills programme'.* Wordshark was described as invaluable:

> *because you can get the Dolch words into them, you can do the spelling aspect of it, you can do the phonics aspect, or CVC words. It's an ideal programme for an IEP because you can enter each child's name into the computer and they have their own personal list. No two children are working at the same level or at the same pace*

Language lesson: classroom observation

A language lesson was observed. There were nine pupils in the class (one absent), seven boys, two girls. The pupils were seated up close to the teachers desk. Teacher read a story aloud to the class summer camp. It was evident that the pupils were accustomed to this type of lesson. They seemed familiar with the close up seating arrangement around the teacher's desk, and did not turn around at the frequent interruptions from callers to the classroom door. The teacher noticed the interruptions and had to respond each time, e.g. special needs assistant called with message; nurse called with child, transition year student called, pupils from another class doing a survey called. The teacher read a story and then asked the pupils various types of questions about the story. Pupils were asked to repeat a line from the story. They were asked to complete the sentence e.g. *'we wear life jackets when.....'; 'an outdoor grill is called a .....'; 'another name for shore is.....'.* They were asked 'true or false' questions. They were asked some questions seeking one word answers. Some children continued to answer out of turn despite teacher's corrections and insistence of 'one voice at a time'. Some children shouted out the answers. Children answered in single word replies or a short phrase. A couple of children at the beginning of lesson laughed at the responses of others. This was corrected by the teacher. There were some word finding difficulties evident among the children, some had hesitant replies to questions asked. Even towards the end of the lesson pupils had difficulty taking turns answering. The teacher varied the sequence around the group, beginning at one side for one question and the other side for the next question. The lesson was thirty five minutes long.

Personalisation of plans: The planning and development of individual education programmes for pupils in all aspects of their learning, is central to the teaching and learning in the school. Individual plans for pupils is a central focus of the working day, this may be during informal discussions or even over coffee with teachers. This individual planning had become a specific post of responsibility. Individual targets were set for pupils and highlighted. A school policy document on planning states:

> *The cyclical process of assessment, planning, teaching, assessment provides the structure for the children's learning process in Parklands.* [The purpose is] *identification of the specific learning targets for individual education plans; to provide feedback to other professionals parents and pupils; to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and programmes used in the school.*

Specific strategies are put in place to help each child meet his targets. Teachers use a variety of programmes. The programmes used in one class are also available to other classes. One teacher mentioned two programmes she finds most valuable, Wordshark and Wordsworth. Individual targets for all pupils are set in the following areas: reading level, word recognition, reading comprehension, phonological awareness, language, visualising and verbalising, mathematics, behaviour, speech and language, occupational therapy and other areas.

Each day in the school year is dated and targets are highlighted alongside. Teachers record and fill in daily work completed in each of the areas. This work plan is kept alongside the pupil profile and the pupils individual education plan. Individual education plans are formalised in mid October. There is a formal review of targets in February and formal closure of individual education plan targets in June. There was general agreement among the staff that the computer programmes in use such as LASS and CoPS (see Appendix 1) are *'great'* for identifying pupils strengths and needs and for planning individual programmes. The principal reported she is now reviewing the assessment tests used and the reasons for using a particular test. She was interested in finding out about the standardised tests used in other reading schools. The most widely used test of reading ability used in other reading schools and reading units NARA (1997) is no longer used in Parklands. LASS computer assessment is now used to get each pupil's learning profile. MICRA T reading test for Irish pupils is also used. An issue raised by teachers and frequently expressed in the schools visited is the measurement of progress using standardised reading tests. One teacher expressed her frustration: *'I put so much work into N this year and it doesn't show in any results...or in* [standardised] *tests scores'.*

Pastoral care: The philosophy and ethos of the charitable foundation was evident in the sensitive and caring attitude of Principal, the teachers and support staff. The researcher spent two school days in the school and this was followed up by telephone conversations, letters and email in the following weeks. On one occasion, before meeting a particular class to discuss dyslexia with the pupils, the Principal provided some background information. She described the group as *'recently*

unsettled' although they were previously quite a settled class. The class teacher later explained that a child in the class was recently bullied and called names because of his enrolment in the reading school. This had caused an outburst in the classroom which had an effect on all the pupils. The Principal was concerned that a class discussion on dyslexia and the children's experiences in the reading school would re open what up to now is 'closure' *'When the pupils come here....they feel safe. They know they are different and you are drawing attention to it'.*

The principal's concerns were treated sensitively as she was hesitant about the proposed class discussion. It was agreed that the class teacher would conduct the discussion and the researcher would observe from the back of the class. The teacher and pupils had already received a list of the questions to be asked. The discussion proceeded in a relaxed manner. The issue of bullying did not arise. Sensitivity of the teachers to the concerns and needs of pupils was evident. One of the characteristics of successful special schools lies in their capacity to value children for what they are and to continue to value them regardless of their sometimes destructive and self destructive behaviour. (Dessent, 1987). When asked about the main strengths of the pupils in her class the teacher replied: *'They're good to talk... we do a lot of SPHE, we do a lot of Circle time in the school because the children need to talk about their problems. They have a lot more problems'.*

Concluding comments

The detailed information on the pupils showed that they have a range of difficulties of a dyslexic and dyspraxic type and these difficulties range from mild to severe. The Principal stressed that the difficulties the pupils have '*must be of a specific nature'*. In practical terms this means pupils must have average intelligence combined with difficulty with acquiring literacy skills. As the school moves to a more independent arrangement and the charitable foundation withdraws all funding and support in the future, it will be necessary to continue the level of specialist support the school presently enjoys if the needs of its pupils are to be addressed. Clustering of special supports around a special school is one way to address this issue. At present, services and support is available for the pupils from the multidisciplinary staff in the school and also from outside agencies. The principal noted that the pupil profile is becoming younger. Pupils aged seven and eight are now applying to the school. She considered earlier intervention to be a positive move. This could mean pupils would remain in the school for the remaining years of their primary education. It has been found that returning pupils to mainstream for Sixth Class is a huge concern to parents, teachers and the pupils themselves (see further comment on this issue in findings from parents and teachers). At present, placement is available for up to three years in the school with parental agreement. The voices of the pupils must be heard when changes are considered: *'In this school, the teacher will help, (you are) not just reading it off the blackboard ...In other school they were pushing you, you had to be at the same speed as everyone else...We were doing work that was too hard for us and they didn't give us much help'.*

Special provision for these pupils means individualising the teaching and learning in the safe environment of Parklands. When considering some of the attitudes and practices associated with successful special schools, 'child cantered' as opposed to 'subject cantered' teaching seems to be one of the hallmarks. In this respect, Parklands school is on the right track.

Case study school 6: CITYSIDE SCHOOL (Reading School)

Cityside school was selected as an example of a reading school. The case study was selected to examine how it is coping with the current changes in policy in special educational needs.

Background; Location

The school is located in an urban area surrounded by housing developments; the majority of the houses are in private ownership. Local amenities include a small shopping centre church and community centre. There are three schools on the same campus, a Junior and a Senior National school and the Cityside reading school. The three schools share the car park, and large playground. They also share the large general purposes /school Hall.

The Principal described the area as a settled established community and explained that some families who grew up here could not afford to live locally, but would prefer their own children to attend the local schools in the area. Consequently some parents enrol the children in local schools close to their grandparents' residential area. Children are driven to school by parents and some are collected from school by grandparents living locally. There is a village-like atmosphere among the well tended housing estates and local shopping centre. Playing fields and football pitches are close by. There is a national basketball arena in the immediate area.

The school is accommodated in two separate flat roofed buildings which face each other across a wide playground. Cityside shares the premises with the Senior primary school but has its own separate entrance. Photos and press reports of a presidential visit to the school are proudly on display in the entrance area. The pupil of the week award is displayed on a notice-board and also this week's award for good behaviour. A large mural in the hall way, completed by the pupils *'success comes in cans not can'ts'* is a striking welcome to the visitor.

The Principal believed the school to be '*quite well resourced'* in terms of teaching materials and equipment. The room housing the school library was not big enough so the library has been devolved into six class libraries, one in each of the six classrooms. The Principal explained this is more satisfactory. Likewise it is planned that the computer room will close as two or three computers are moved into each individual classroom. The school has had recent refurbishment, painting and internal decoration. A large expenditure program on communications technology will commence in the summer. This project will network all the schools computers, install broadband and internet access in each classroom and re wire and upgrade the electrical service in the school. A similar program of work was being carried out in the other two schools on the campus. All three

schools on the campus were collaborating together on the logistics of undertaking this project. The three school principals planned to coordinate the ongoing work over the summer months.

Teachers and staff

The staff includes the principal (administrative), six teachers, one special needs assistant. There are six classes ranging from Third to Sixth Class. Teachers had from four to 25 years teaching experience. Four of the teachers have postgraduate qualifications in special educational needs.

Pupils

There are 54 pupils enrolled, ranging in age from eight to twelve years. Pupils come from a wide catchment area covering the regional town, outlying areas in surrounding counties. Pupils avail of the DES special school transport system provision. The pupils are organised into six classes (two classes each from Third to Sixth Class level) of nine per class; placement is based on each pupil's level of reading and his/her class level in mainstream school. On entry information on reading ability from the student's school report and psychological assessment report is used to determine the class level of each pupil for the coming year. Six pupils at present have a co existing speech and language difficulty. This difficulty was diagnosed prior to enrolment in the school and the pupils receive therapy outside the school. A further six are estimated by the Principal and class teachers to have an undiagnosed speech and language difficulty. One pupil is supported by a special needs assistant, due to additional care needs arising from ADD and Dyspraxia prior to enrolment. This child receives support outside school hours from a voluntary agency.

The recent DES policy developments in special education provision did not adversely affect the number of pupils enrolled in the reading school each year. Some slight effect was noticed in that the application and referral process was extended into the final months of the school year. In effect the reduced demand for places has been adjusted by the more favourable pupil teacher ratio.

Referral of pupils: Pupils are referred to the school by a variety of different personnel. The Learning support teacher in school may refer a child, or referral may be made following an educational assessment by NEPS. The DAI refers pupils and some are referred following private assessment. Parents may contact the school themselves regarding enrolment. Full background information on the child's specific difficulties, his strengths and needs and his current level of attainment is requested from the mainstream school as part of the application process. Information is also sought on the child's current behaviour, language skills, and writing skills. The school does not have any school based multi disciplinary supports for co-existing or other learning difficulties. The purpose of the application process is to determine the suitability of the placement for each individual child. Occasionally a behaviour report will be requested from the child's school to determine the suitability of the transfer to special reading school.

Criteria for enrolment: Definition of dyslexia: When asked about the identification of dyslexia among the pupils, the Principal referred to the SERC Report (1993). The reading school identifies pupils for enrolment according to the nature of specific learning difficulties as set out by SERC in its definition of specific learning disability:

> *Severe difficulties in reading or writing skills, results of standardised attainment tests indicating the extent to which the reading attainment of such pupils is behind the average attainment of children of a similar age. Ability is confirmed to be in average range or higher and actual performance is at a substantially lower level* (SERC, 1993, p. 87).

The reading school follows the criteria of enrolment as set out by the DES (1998). Placement in the reading school is for a maximum of two years after which time pupils return to their own school. A third year may be sanctioned if it is considered necessary. Each case is considered individually. The principal is confident that the reading school *'has a place on the continuum'* for children who have not made progress in reading because of severe dyslexia.

Applications for enrolment are currently considered by the DES District Inspector. Each application is carefully considered by the Principal in consultation with Inspector and Chairperson of the Board of Management, before a placement in the school is offered to a pupil and his parents. All pupils must meet the criteria and guidelines as set down by the DES on enrolment as outlined above. It is envisaged that the new position of Special Educational Needs Organisers may have a role in the referral and placement of pupils in the school in the future. Applications for enrolment in Cityside are considered up to March of the preceding school year. Each application is accompanied by a current psychological assessment of the child, indicating child's intellectual ability in average range; child's current attainment in reading and comprehension; evidence of a specific reading disability/ dyslexia.

A school report with detailed information on the child's current attainments and his learning strengths and needs is also required. Further information may be requested by the reading school during the application process. The Principal has regular and ongoing contact throughout the year with the Inspector regarding placement of individual children. Consultation takes place with the Inspector for Primary schools regarding all applications. Pupils who are not eligible due to (a) intellectual ability being below the average range or (b) reading attainment above the percentiles as laid down by Department of Education, frequently do not receive a placement in the school. Pupils with co existing difficulties, such as for example a speech and language difficulty, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome, may be accommodated in the school. Each pupil's application is considered individually. The pupil's primary difficulty must be a reading difficulty of a dyslexic type. The school must address how it can best meet the needs of each individual pupil, without the support of any back up multi disciplinary services.

An ***Induction*** day or 'Open Day' takes place in the school in May every year. Attainment in reading accuracy, reading comprehension, word identification skill and spelling skill of all new

students is assessed on Induction day. Students are subsequently organised into classes for the following year. Each student's reading accuracy and reading comprehension is assessed individually using the NARA (1997). Spelling ability is assessed using the Schonell spelling test (out of print). Individual word recognition is assessed using Macmillan Graded word reading test (1985) or Marino (1970) word recognition test. New pupils have an opportunity to visit the school and meet the teachers on 'Open Day'. Following the individual reading assessments, there is an information meeting for new parents.

Organisation of classes: Pupils are grouped into classes according to their reading ability as outlined above, and their mainstream class level and other information gathered from the child's psychological assessment and teachers' reports. This is their main class grouping. Early in the first term, pupils are grouped by ability for mathematics on the basis of assessment using the Norman France Maths Profile (1979). A further grouping for religious instruction takes as the teachers change classes for religion and pupils are taught religion by a different teacher. In effect, pupils have three teachers during the course of each school day, a separate teacher for reading, maths and religion. The principal described the benefits of this approach as a *'a team approach'*, which is regularly adopted to address individual difficulties or specific issues regarding a particular pupil. The teaching team consists of the pupil's main class teacher, his religion teacher and his maths teacher. Teachers from the child's previous year may also be included in 'team' discussions. Teachers acquire a depth of knowledge about individual pupils during the course of the two year placement. A formal parent teacher meeting takes place in February each year. An informal meeting takes place towards the end of the school year.

Teaching approaches: classroom observation

In order to observe the teaching methods a visit was arranged to one of the classes. Fifth Class was selected by the principal and parent consent was received for pupils to participate. The researcher spent an hour with the Fifth Class teacher and pupils in the class. There were eight children present (one absent) in the class, two girls and six boys. The pupils were all in their second year in the reading school. The teacher considered how to describe the teaching approaches she uses with this particular group. A central focus her approach is the ongoing process of assessment through teaching, that of formative assessment.

> *Its very different for each child.....you can't say we do this as a whole group...Every one of them has different strengths and weaknesses, you have to work on their strengths and weaknesses. For some children their auditory skills are appalling and you try and work on those, ……...to be honest with you....when they reach Fifth and Sixth the older groups, I zone in on what their strengths are rather than trying to bring up the auditory skills, for example, if they are good visually. Its very much whatever I feel the need for each child is, be it auditory or visual or whatever.... and I work on the strengths. ... For some children handwriting would be a huge problem for them, and their reading might be quite good, other children spelling is a huge issue for them.... And that's an area I would zone in on .... Very much an individual basis on what they need.*

As regards pupils' involvement in setting their own learning targets, the teacher reported using *Culligan's Core words* spelling programme as a resource for setting individual spelling targets for pupils. The teacher reported motivation as an important factor in the teaching approach used. She described how the pupils had completed a writing activity some weeks previously and

> *it was great, they had loads to write about, more than they normally would, it was their own experience they all contributed very well, it was fresh in their memory they had plenty to write about, it was based on our presidential visit, very posh.*

Oral work is central to teaching of other subjects in the curriculum. The teacher described how she teaches history and geography

> *We cover topics ...oral work e.g. Germany, we wouldn't do the text and all the questions and test map and all, we wouldn't go into that level of things.....they love oral work, they have really improved on that...they all participate.....oral thing has really improved, their confidence has really grown.*

The morning sessions are reserved for literacy teaching and subjects such as history, geography and science are taught in the afternoons. The curriculum content is adapted according to the ability of the pupils. The teacher explained that fewer topics are covered compared to mainstream classes but subjects are covered in depth, using other approaches such as project work, visits to museums and galleries and other ways of accessing the curriculum.

Teaching approaches: The following topics were addressed by the class teacher in an interview with the researcher to clarify the teaching approaches used: *independent learning ,over learning, small group size, self esteem, assessment..*

The principal and teachers in the school strongly believed that the special setting is very different to mainstream. The Fifth Class teacher reported that *'special reading schools are very different, its completely individually programmed for every child, very different to mainstream, they couldn't operate like we do, not like mainstream'.*

Independent learning: The pupils receive a high level of support for their literacy difficulties. The Fifth Class teacher noted that '*coping skills'* receive emphasis and she believed that the trend now in the school is for more independent learning wherever possible. This was evident in the Fifth Classroom where pupils worked on separate literacy activities / tasks during the morning 'English session'. This was a daily session of one and three quarter hours fully concentrated on developing literacy skills. The pupils described the morning routines and the independent learning approaches:

> *In this school they actually just focus on your reading.....for first half of the day we, up to little break, do most we can, do as much as we can get done. Then its Maths and then religion*

Independent learning is organised around the literacy programmes the teacher uses in class. The teacher described the morning session

> *They're all working individually... quiet time... All at different levels on the kits, its individual work, comprehension or whatever skills are involved. They're all on different*

levels on that.... They need lot of variety, short bursts of written work, bit of oral work, they need lots of different activities ...and [meanwhile] I'm working with one child maybe doing reading.

It was evident that some self management of learning takes place in the reading school. The pupils were actively involved in their own learning.

Over learning: Reinforcement of learning is a priority for the teacher with this group of eleven year old pupils. She stressed over- learning and

Repetition, we go back on it and back and back, the kids need it, constant reinforcement....we get much better chance to do all the areas that need to be done....our whole morning is devoted to English.

The teacher showed the researcher the different literacy programmes used. Pupils are timetabled to use the Lexia and Wordshark software literacy programmes, daily. Each child works individually at his own level. Pupils work in twos for spelling practice on the exercises in the *Culligan's Corewords* programme. Pupils use the *S.R.A. reading workshop* for phonics and comprehension exercises. While the pupils are working individually or in pairs on this work, the teacher hears individual pupils reading aloud: *'It's a different way to do the same thing reinforcing the same thing; it's a break from the written work and that kills a lot of them you know'.*

Small group size: The small size of the group is an important factor in the classroom organisation and monitoring of individual programmes of work:

Some children are fantastic, just let them off and they will do it they work very well together some children definitely need the one on one ... I try and get around to see each of them at some stage during the week

The teacher was aware of the high level of support these pupils receive in the school.

'I don't think its realistic to expect a mainstream teacher to be able to give these children the intensive support and attention these kids need. Its not practical, thirty odd children in the room, where have they got the time to do that?'

The pupil teacher ratio of nine to one has been consistently mentioned by teachers, principals, parents and pupils themselves as a significant factor in the success of individualised approaches to teaching and learning in the special reading school. Later during the pupils discussion, the researcher observed that the pupils were aware of the extra support they receive from their teacher in a smaller class: *'.teachers helping you'; 'It's easier because everyone else has dyslexia you don't get slagged'.* A fuller account of pupils' discussion reported in earlier section of this chapter.

Self esteem: The pupils were learning in an environment where they feel safe and supported. Self esteem received particular emphasis as pupils may have experienced repeated failures in their previous learning situation. The principal described the school's approach as an attempt to look at the child in a *'holistic way'* and she sees reading difficulties *'as part of the child's self belief and self perception'.* The social skills programme *'Circle Time'* (Moseley, 1997) has been integrated into the Social Personal Health Education (SPHE) programme in the school. All pupils take part in

the programme. The pupils confidence and easy rapport in the discussion was readily observed. The teacher noted that *'when they come in first...a lot of them are very afraid, reserved, (they are) much more outgoing now, confident, their whole self image has improved'.*

Assessment: The class teacher's main emphasis was on improving the literacy skills of the pupils. Pupils received a high level of individual support in all literacy areas. Progress is monitored through standardised reading tests twice each year (May and December). In addition, the teachers maintained constant contact with the parents regarding any aspect of concern:

> *We have a Parent Teacher meeting in October usually. I show them samples of work, and have their scores there. Most parents are usually delighted and they see the progress as well.*

Issues of concern

The Principal underlined three essential resources which contribute to the effectiveness of this special support. These were *low pupil teacher ratio, staff development and training, and maintaining parent involvement.*

Low pupil teacher ratio: Teachers address children's literacy difficulties in a holistic way in this reading school and the low pupil teacher ratio also gives an opportunity to build the child's self esteem. The reduction of pupil teacher ratio to 9:1, as recommended in the TFD was welcomed.

Staff development and training: was considered to an urgent need for all teachers:

> *We are a resource but this resource will not be maintained in top peak if development of staff is not given priority.....you could become stagnant very quickly, you need to keep on top of what's happening (Principal)*

Maintaining parent involvement. The teachers and school principal maintain constant contact with parents during the child's placement in the school. The Principal noted that the school *'does not have the same connections as a parish school. Parents are involved with the school for two years, then pupils return to mainstream' (Principal).* Maintaining continual parent involvement takes a considerable amount of time.

The Principal's present concerns regarding the role of the reading school relate to the following: Support services; Psychological consultation and assessments; Liaison with mainstream schools and Classroom assistants

Support services: Contact with outside agencies, clinics and services was reported to be fragmented as a result of the wide catchment area. There is no speech and language support designated to the school. Pupils may be referred to clinics or services according to their home address. This could cover more than three different health board areas. Direct support to the school and its pupils is non existent. Occupational therapist support and guidance was not available.

Psychological consultation and assessments: NEPS provides a service to all primary schools, although the full complement of educational psychologists has not yet been appointed. An

educational psychologist was assigned to this reading school in 2003, who is currently on maternity leave. The reading school is shared with twenty nine other schools in her caseload. A replacement psychologist had not visited the school this year. The Principal would wish for an updated psychological report for all pupils on returning to mainstream. She was of the opinion that the current level of service to a special school is inadequate.

The Principal expressed concern that some pupils who don't make progress appear to *'slip through the net'*. In spite of intensive support and special teaching, some pupils do not progress as expected and are a cause of concern to the teachers. There may be underlying emotional difficulties which are not identified until the placement has commenced. Best practice would recommend a multidisciplinary approach to addressing these individual cases. When teachers and families need this advice, consultation, or back up support, it is either not available or the service is inadequate to meet the need. In particular the back up support and consultation with specialist services is needed for some pupils at the time of transition back to mainstream. However, frustration is acutely felt by the principal and teachers due to the current lack of multi disciplinary support.

Liaison with mainstream schools: Liaison with pupils mainstream schools and with second level schools was reported to be difficult to maintain without adequate staffing. The Principal suggested a Home school resource teacher would have a role in liaising with pupils class and/or support teacher on return from the special placement. A 'mainstream liaison week' is held in the school every year and is well attended. This was an opportunity for teachers from the pupils' mainstream school to visit the reading school and meet with the child's teachers before the transition. The Principal considered a home school liaison person to be a necessary support to the special school.

Classroom assistants: The principal suggested a classroom assistant or special needs assistant was needed in each class to support the work of the teachers. The Fifth Class teacher explained how she would use the classroom assistant:

> *For the one child that has particular difficulty, ...to help him.....to have that person to look after him or her, to help with reading, its so time consuming, its so important, you do have to do it, it has to be done, to make sure its done... I'd love a second pair of hands, even one extra pair of hands.*

Concluding comments

The individualised teaching approaches in use in the school are made possible by the small group sises and the low pupil teacher ratio. Specialised literacy programmes and appropriate software were used to reinforce basic literacy skills. However, the frustration of providing a specialised teaching resource without adequate back up support was a daily challenge for the principal and teachers of Cityside reading school. Pupils with additional co existing needs did not receive regular access to the multi disciplinary services as needed. Liaison with mainstream schools was difficult to maintain without adequate staffing. While there has been recent investment by the DES in

capital resources in the school (computers), the need was expressed for a classroom assistant to support the teaching and learning in each class.

Reading Schools: Summary of Key Issues

It is evident that there are similar teaching approaches and methods used in both reading schools. The pupils were encouraged to monitor their own learning and work independently on various appropriate literacy programmes. There was evidence that some self management of learning takes place. Individualised education plans and the continuous assessment of pupils progress was a common feature of the teaching approaches used in the reading schools. There was a strong focus on the reinforcement and over learning of basic skills and building the pupils' self esteem. Teachers in both reading schools were of the opinion that the intensive teaching and the supportive environment helps to break the 'cycle of failure' for many of the pupils. Teachers expressed very high expectations for the pupils and the methods used promoted a love of books and reading.

There was a significant difference in the level of specialist support available to these two reading schools. Due to funding and support from a local voluntary service since it was established, one of the schools had access to extensive multi disciplinary support. The other school does not receive any extra supports because of its special school status. It was apparent that there is a need for regular access to specialist support for the pupils attending a reading school. It was a concern to the Principal in each of the reading schools that liaison with mainstream schools is difficult to maintain without adequate (staffing) resources. Returning to Sixth Class for one year was seen as a particular difficulty for many pupils and is a concern to the teachers and parents.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

This section will conclude with a summary of the common issues and the divergent issues in the three settings.

Re organisation of special educational needs

Mainstream settings

The traditional roles of Learning Support and Resource teacher were undergoing development and change as schools began to organise more inclusive practices for pupils with special educational needs. Since the introduction of a recent policy direction (DES SPED 24/03; 02/05) the reorganisation of additional support for pupils with special educational needs must be addressed by schools. It was evident in two of the mainstream schools that the existence of special classes prompted the re organisation of special support at a whole school level. Two out of four of the mainstream schools visited are now in the process of developing a whole school model of support for special educational needs.

Special settings

Reading Units: The re organisation of provision for special educational needs did not appear to be correlated to the existence of a reading unit in the school. In fact the schools which had a reading unit established, continued to provide separate provision for pupils, although the pupils in the reading unit were integrated in their base class for non core subjects. The reading units remained separate to the inclusive practice in the whole school.

Reading Schools: The reading schools provided a separate parallel school system of small group teaching with particular emphasis on literacy. Pupils in the reading schools were not withdrawn for extra support, as the focus in the whole school was already on providing extra support to the pupils during the two year placement. There were nine pupils per class. The recent re organisation of special needs provision in mainstream schools due to Department of Education policy changes, may have an impact on the demand for places in the reading schools in the future.

Collaboration

Mainstream settings: There was very limited collaboration between the learning support/resource teacher and the class teachers in the mainstream schools. There were organisational difficulties about meeting with mainstream teachers and constraints on time for collaboration between teachers.

Special settings:

Reading units: There was little or no evidence of collaboration between the teacher in the reading unit and the base class teacher in each of the schools. Lack of time for collaboration was an issue of concern to teachers in the reading units. There was concern about the lack of ongoing communication of information about pupils' learning, and the lack of time for planning and differentiation of learning for these pupils.

Reading Schools: There was a high level of collaboration and regular communication among staff in each of the reading schools. This consisted of team meetings with teaching staff, support staff and also specialist staff. However, communication with the child's class teacher in the mainstream school (the child's 'home school') was limited. There was no linkage or outreach provided from the reading school to the mainstream school.

Integration

Pupils in the reading units and pupils receiving learning support or resource teaching expressed difficulties with the movement from a small learning group to mainstream class every day. Their main concerns were timetable issues and social issues. The lack of collaboration between teachers was a contributory factor to this difficulty. The pupils in the reading schools remained in the special placement for two years before returning to mainstream. However the pupils expressed

concern about the transfer back to mainstream and the longer travelling time to and from the reading school.

Identification of dyslexia

Mainstream settings: The early identification of dyslexia among pupils was an issue for the teachers in the mainstream schools. There was agreement that this requires proper training of teachers and qualified resource teachers. Although experienced and competent in the position of support teacher, these learning support and resource teachers reported that they did not feel qualified to identify pupils with dyslexia. The need was expressed for greater access to NEPS The support teachers were aware of pupils who have a 'dyslexic type' difficulty and need additional support.

Special settings: The pupils who attend the reading schools and reading units have already been identified as having a learning difficulty arising from dyslexia following a psycho- educational assessment.

Teaching approaches

Mainstream settings: Direct and focused teaching of basic literacy skills predominantly took place in a small group setting with the learning support or resource teacher. It was evident that the support teachers showed an awareness of the importance of linking reading and writing and encouraging the self regulation of pupils' learning. Building the pupils self esteem was considered by teachers to be an important element of the supportive teaching. It was evident that some self management of learning takes place in the small group setting. The methods used by the support teachers included modelling and prompting correct responses in reading and writing.

Special settings: The teachers in the ***reading units*** used similar teaching strategies. Oral discussion is a central part of every literacy lesson. Listening comprehension and reading comprehension was encouraged by the teacher reading regularly to the pupils. The teachers encouraged the use of meta cognitive strategies by scaffolding the pupils' writing activities. 'Shared' writing enabled the pupils to plan and prepare their written activity. The teachers in the ***reading schools*** had a longer instruction time for literacy activities but there is a similarity of methods and strategies used. Building the pupils' self esteem is linked with explicit and direct teaching of basic reading and writing. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and pupils are involved in monitoring their own learning. The development of oral language skills and reading comprehension is evident.

Voices of the pupils

This section reports the findings from the pupils' discussion groups in each of the case study schools. Pupils were invited to take part in a group discussion with the researcher from each of the six case study schools. The three largest groups had eight pupils present, the smallest had two

pupils. In this school (Riverside) the two pupils receiving individual resource teaching took part in the discussion. Numbers of pupils in each group and the type of school setting were as follows:

Table 4.9: Description of discussion groups

School	*Number of children in group*	*Type of school/setting*
Main Street	5	Mainstream / Learning support
Riverside	2	Mainstream /Resource support
The Avenue	8	Reading Unit
Grenfields	8	Reading Unit
Cityside	8	Reading School
Parklands	7	Reading School

Topics covered in each of the discussion groups included

- Favourite subjects
- Progress in school
- Effective teaching strategies
- Literacy programmes
- Learning strategies
- Disadvantages of extra support
- Advantages of extra support

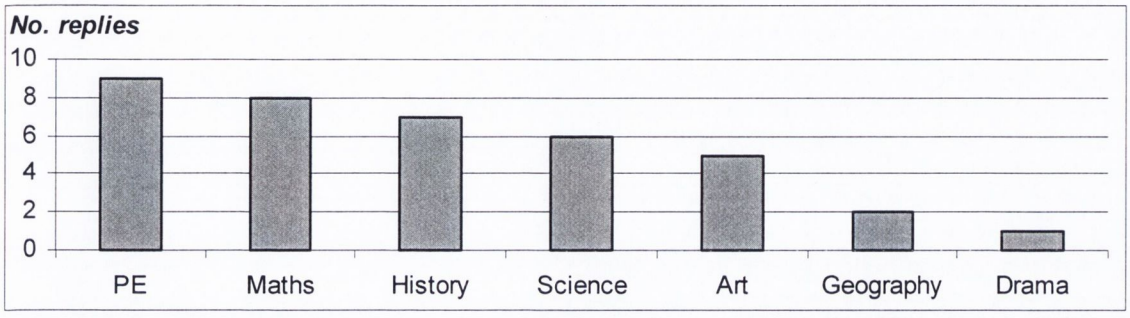
Before each discussion, the pupils had met the researcher on at least one previous occasion and in some situations at least twice before the discussion. The researcher had been observing in the classroom, taking notes and had also explained all about the research study. In the two mainstream schools, the pupils were familiar with the reading school as pupils regularly attend from time to time. There were individual differences between the groups with the older pupils more relaxed and interested in the topics under discussion.

A group discussion among pupils took place with parental consent in the classroom. Each discussion was recorded. The class teacher remained present in all cases. Parents had received a copy of the questions to be asked in the discussion. The presence of a tape recorder did not appear to affect the behaviour of the larger groups. The class teacher observed in each case that the pupils responded openly. In the smallest group of two pupils, the tape recorder may have contributed to hesitancy of replies from one of the pupils. Each discussion lasted approximately thirty five minutes. Discussion with the smallest group lasted twenty minutes.

Favourite subject

The chart below shows pupils' favourite subjects. What they enjoyed most reflects what they believed they were good at. A significant number preferred mathematics, but physical education was the most frequently selected subject. None of the pupils selected English as a favourite subject.

Fig 4.50: Pupils' Favourite Subjects



Progress in school

When asked about progress in school work pupils in each of the teaching situations responded positively. They were able to point out areas where they felt they had made progress Spelling and reading was mentioned as specific areas of improvement. There was a sense of confidence as pupils reported evidence of this progress. The level of difficulty of the reader now in use, was cited as evidence of progress in reading.

Reading school: There was a sense of confidence among pupils as they described their progress: '*I was stage 10, now I'm on stage 15 [Oxford Reading Tree] I never get stuck'*; ' I used to read little books, real easy books. I've started reading Harry Potter and stuff'. The level of difficulty of the reader now in use, was cited to confirm progress in reading. Progress in spelling and written work was also mentioned: *'I am not making the same mistakes as I used to, in spelling stories'*. Other pupils displayed a self assurance as they said *'I'm better now at spelling than I was last year'*.

Reading Unit: Pupils in the reading units similarly reported progress in their reading. They were aware of their developing progress in reading by extending their level of reading: *'Moving on to harder books and I can read them now, now I'm used to them'*. These pupils reported all round progress: *'For the answers, I put up my hand and I know the answers, I'm able to do it. People tell me that I've improved'*.

Learning support: Pupils receiving learning support also reported an awareness of their progress in reading: *'I can say that I know words that I didn't know before'*. These pupils also recognised their improvement in writing skills: *'Every time I practice my writing slow I see it getting better and better'*. Another child mentioned an improvement in writing skills: *'The other day I moved on to the next section with my spellings, my spelling's improving'*

Effective teaching strategies

Pupils were asked specifically how the teacher helps them. A range of approaches and methods of instruction was evident in all the replies in each of the teaching situations. The main teaching approaches considered helpful were prompting strategies, modelling techniques, and specific approaches to developing phonic skills.

Reading School: Pupils reported the way teachers help them learn. Help with phonics was specifically recognised by the pupils as very helpful: *'She says the things out loud for you to write them down, sometimes she splits up words and all that'; 'She helps you with the words, she makes you sound them out and if you can't she kind of helps you say it'; 'In this school, the teacher will help you, not just reading it off the blackboard'.*

Reading Unit: Help with spelling was mentioned in all of the groups. Spelling skills are frequently weak for many students with dyslexia. One of the students in a reading unit reported how the teacher *'gives us little hints if we are stuck'; 'if it's a big word she says it slower'*

Learning support / resource teaching support: Pupils thought it helpful when teachers regularly read with the student. Instruction in long vowel sounds was mentioned as a teaching strategy which the pupils found particularly helpful. The *magic e* rule as an aid to remembering the long vowel sounds was reported as useful in one group. Techniques such as '*breaking up the words'*, was also mentioned as being useful by the students. One class mentioned mnemonics as a method of remembering spellings *e.g. Big elephants can always upset small elephants =because;* and *Can you cut large eggs? = cycle.*

A particular strategy pupils mentioned is identifying specific areas pupils need to work on For example, the teacher *'shows us what our mistakes are and how to fix it'.* This was considered particularly helpful by the group receiving resource teaching.

Literacy Programmes and learning strategies

Pupils mentioned specific literacy programmes which are in every day use in the class. They were familiar with these programs and could describe how the programme helped them to learn. The programmes mentioned were PAT Program (Wilson, 1993 *Phonological awareness training*), Corewords (Culligan, 1997. *Improving Children's Spelling*), SRA reading Laboratory and Writing centre. Computer programmes mentioned were *Wordshark and Lexia.*. Pupils reported many different approaches to learning which they find helpful.

Reading units: Pupils reported some of the strategies and conditions which help them learn. A quieter classroom and fewer pupils in the class was mentioned, for example: *'peace and quiet, no one nagging at you; I hate the noise I can't concentrate, the teeniest thing can distract me'.*

Pupils who return to their base class in the afternoon reported a different learning experience in a larger class. They expressed a preference for the small reading unit or reading class. The larger class size was considered a disadvantage to accessing extra help. This was not the teacher's fault, according to one student, *'teachers don't have time, they have to keep moving on, they have other students in the class and they are on different stories'*. The pace of learning in the reading unit is more suited to the needs of the individual pupils. Keeping up with the workload in mainstream is difficult but *'it's not really the base teacher's fault he can't stop, he's a good teacher, he has a big class of thirty'*.

Some pupils could describe the learning strategies they use. This pupil mentioned how he keeps focused while writing: *'Writing stuff along the side, in the margin, and I keep on looking at it; if I was writing a story and I got stuck, I'd read back over it'*. When asked about the kind of things that help him learn, this student explained:

> *When I'm writing stories, I don't write adventures and stuff I write facts about animals and stuff. So if I'm stuck and don't know what to do I look at a book or the television. I don't need to read to get the information. I like facts.*

Praise and encouragement were reported frequently s positive features of the teaching approaches used. Stickers, and rewards for work done or *for getting your work done early* were appreciated. Some pupils preferred to work with a friend or in a group. There was some evidence that there were opportunities for group work in each of the classes. One child however, preferred the big class because *'in the big class your friends will help you, I like the noise, the chat'*.

In one of the reading units, pupils were asked the type of lesson they would prefer and hands were raised as follows: When writing is on the board and pupil can see it (six hands raised); teacher talking (explaining) but no blackboard (three hands raised); and teacher asks pupils to write what they know (no hands raised

Difficulties with writing and a dislike of writing was reported frequently by the pupils. The teachers' awareness of the pupils' difficulties was appreciated that *'there's not so much writing, that's the good thing'*.

Reading schools: Pupils in the reading schools were also aware of the different teaching and learning strategies they had experienced in both mainstream and in the reading school. One student reported that *'we were doing work that was too hard for us and they didn't give us much help, ...you had to be at the same speed as everyone else'* The teaching strategies used to teach writing were particularly recognised and preferred by the students as these comments tell: *'I like it best when you can just say it, you don't get tired'; 'Writing ...hurts your hands'; 'The posters (points to wall) helps us'; 'The computer helps us...to write stories'*.

In one class the pupils explained they could write on the board and this helped with spelling and corrections: *'It's better on the board, I don't have to write it, I don't have to rule the page (when*

you're finished?) I rub it out'. In the learning support group the pupils reported proudly that *'Our teacher gives us dictation, she gives us 23 words in a sentence. She gives us sheets, and dictation, we write down a word'.*

Pupils who had moved to a reading school referred to the differences in teaching approaches they had experienced in the smaller group.

> *In this school they mostly focus on your reading, ...in other classes (mainstream) there was thirty one people, and the teachers don't really notice you, there's so many children in the class.*

Pupils described the teaching approaches in mainstream setting as follows: *'She just gives you hard work, she doesn't help you, she just says "do it"'; 'In the other class....in the big class, ..shouts at us and we get lines'.* One of the pupils described a significant difference between the reading unit and mainstream: *' 'I think it's quieter up there, but up there I don't get that much help'.*

Learning support: The pupils receiving learning support/resource teaching could also describe the teaching and learning strategies with which they are familiar: *'She helps us work, she helps us spell, spellings that help us'; 'We can play the games she gives us, Swap and Fix'*

Disadvantages of special support

Pupils expressed some of the disadvantages associated with extra support in each of the different settings.

Reading unit: The class timetable in the base class may cause difficulties or disappointments for pupils who are integrated for part of the day in mainstream. Missing enjoyable activities such as Art or P.E. or even computer time was seen as a disadvantage of the special support. The students are aware of the subject timetable in the base class but even so it is a disappointment for them if the timetable is changed and they miss out on certain subjects: *'They just don't bother reminding you and that's the same with most subjects; if they're doing art, they never tell me and they never call for me or anything'.*

Pupils in the reading unit explained how it can be difficult moving from a small group setting to mainstream as follows: *'When you go to the big class, I can't say it out, I say it in my head, I don't like reading out loud (its) too hard up there'; 'In base class, he can't kinda stop, he has to keep going'.* There are also social disadvantages to a placement in the reading unit, as the pupils mentioned missing their friends in the base class: *'Some of my best friends are up in the base class, I have a good few friends up there'.*

Reading School: Distance from home is an issue for a lot of children who have to travel some distance to attend a reading school or reading unit: *'I've got to travel so far, you lose connection with your old school and old friends ....tired, travel all hours of the day. I can't go outside and play [after school]'.* Moving from mainstream school and leaving friends was considered to be

disadvantage: *'You miss your friends in your old school, you won't see them'; 'The problem is, they might be gone next year, if you get there [back to mainstream]'.*

There are more boys than girls enrolled in the reading units and reading schools. These gender issues were seen as a disadvantage by the girls. In one of the reading schools, one girl mentioned this as a disadvantage of the placement: *'There's more boys in the school than girls, only 16 girls in the whole school, only a quarter girls. Next year there's going to be more girls'.* There were seven boys and one girl in one of the reading units visited. This gender imbalance was pointed out to the researcher by the teacher, but was not mentioned by any of the pupils in that unit as a disadvantage of the special placement.

Learning/resource support: Moving from a small group back to base class and trying to catch up, was mentioned as s disadvantage by the pupils in the learning support and resource groups: *'When we come to the classroom [mainstream] we have to finish it [class work] and everyone is half way through it, we have to hurry up'.*

This pressure of time is a disadvantage for the pupils as they explained *'when we only have a few minutes to do something'* Differentiated class work for the pupils returning from extra support did not feature strongly in the responses, and the same amount of work was expected from all pupils in the class: *'He'd make you do it for homework or something'.* Other pupils who integrated with mainstream for some subjects had a similar experience, although this may vary from year to year: 'Last year our base class used to help us more, this year the base class teacher, he doesn't help at all he just tells us to sit down and do it'. This child has learned to ask a friend for help: *'I ask a fella beside me if I'm stuck on spelling or that'.*

Advantages of extra support

The main advantages for the pupils in the discussion groups focussed on the learning environment and the sense of improvement in their school work.

Reading school: The smaller group and more frequent interaction between the teacher and pupils was mentioned as an advantage. One of the pupils said: *'It's so much easier to learn; there's so much more people to help you, there's not as much people so you get really close friends with every one else'.* The feeling of not being 'the only one' with a reading difficulty was also evident in the students replies *'Its easier because everyone else has dyslexia and you don't get slagged'.* This perception of being in a class with pupils who have a similar difficulty was important to the pupils. Some pupils reported they had experienced name calling because of dyslexia, as one child said

> *People slag you because you can't read (where?) In old school. Sometimes in my old class if you ask what's that word, they'd say....it's easy.....you're stupid.*

Overall, the pupils were appreciative of the special support and a sense of confidence in the belief that they were making progress in reading and writing. As one pupil commented:

In my old school I wouldn't get this much help. We're lucky to be here, there's a waiting list trying to get in here. We're kind of lucky to get in.

Reading Unit: There was recognition among pupils in the reading units of the importance of the level of the work. They perceived the level of difficulty of the school work in the reading unit to be at an appropriate level for them, and this leads to more positive behaviour: '*I don't really get in trouble down here as much as I do in the base class. Down here you're able to do the work, the work is a bit easier'*. They considered the pupils in the base class to be capable of harder work: *'In the base class, they be able for their work mostly, we don't do the same work as them, so he (teacher) mostly gets us to do geography. We do different stuff'*.

Learning support/resource teaching support: The pupils attending the resource teacher appreciated the individual attention: '*If we're doing work and we don't understand it, she tells us how to do it'*.

Concluding comments

The pupils' voices from the case studies showed considerable insights into the teaching – learning situation provided for them during the extra support. Working in a smaller group and the individualised support from the teacher were repeatedly mentioned as benefits of the extra support. The main difficulties reported were concerns about moving from a small group setting to mainstream and issues such as travelling time and timetable issues. This was a common issue for the pupils in the reading schools and units and those receiving learning/resource support. However, the benefits of the extra support outweighed the disadvantages mentioned. Pupils were aware of the different learning experience in the mainstream and made a favourable comparison with the special setting. The teaching approaches used in each of the settings was considered by the pupils to be a positive factor in their progress in reading. There were no significant differences between the views of pupils in each of the different settings. The significant benefits and advantages of extra support reported by the pupils focused on the small group individualised teaching and learning approaches.

Pupils' progress in reading

One of the objectives of special support provided for pupils with dyslexia is to improve the child's attainment in reading. This section will present the findings from the quantitative data returned by teachers who are supporting dyslexic pupils in four settings. These settings, and the range of support they offer are as follows:

Support setting	***Instruction time***	***Duration of support***
learning support in mainstream schools	3hrs. 20 mins per week.	No limit
individual resource teaching	2.hrs. 30 mins per week	No limit
reading units	3 hours per day	2 years
reading schools	Full day	2 years

Information on the child's progress in reading over the two year special placement was recorded. The child's reading ability on entry to the special placement and at the end of the two year placement was recorded. Background information on these pupils was also collated. This section will present a description of the pupil participants who are enrolled in special placements and will also show the progress of the pupils in reading over a two year period.

The section will also include data from a group of pupils who were receiving learning support in mainstream. An explanation for the inclusion of these pupils is provided below. Due to changes in the DES policy on providing in-school support to such pupils (DES, SPED 24/03), pupils who would previously have received individual resource teaching were now receiving learning support. It seemed likely that the difficulties experienced by these pupils would be similar to those receiving special support. Although this group had not received a psychological assessment to identify dyslexia, it was felt that their progress in reading might differ over the same two year period. These pupils all have 'dyslexic type' difficulties although they do not form a homogeneous group.

The study took place over a two-year period 2003-2005. At the time of this study, special support was provided in three different settings: individual resource teaching, reading units and special school placement. Pupils' reading attainment was recorded on entry to special provision (September 2003), and at the end of the two year placement (June 2005). Data will also be presented in this section on a group of pupils who were receiving learning support in mainstream. Progress in reading for this group of pupils will be reported over a single year 2004-2005.

This section opens with a profile of provision for pupils with dyslexia who are receiving learning support; the main part of the section is a profile of specialised provision.

Pupils receiving Learning Support

A group of 50 pupils receiving learning support teaching because of dyslexia were included in the study. The data returned for this sample group of pupils receiving in-school support had limitations. A large number of pupils receiving learning support are presently attaining higher levels of reading attainment than that recommended by the Guidelines on Learning Support (DES, 2002). There is no single standardised test used by all learning support teachers to measure pupils progress in reading skills. Record keeping and consistency of scores used varies between teachers and between schools. Consistent data on pupils reading progress was not available for the two year period of the study 2003-2005. Changes in teacher, changes in the tests used, the record keeping and standardised use of scores, was reported to be an issue. For these reasons care must be taken with any interpretation or comparison of outcomes in reading gains among pupils.

The 50 pupils receiving learning support were drawn from four different schools; their average age was nine years two months. In three of the schools the data was recorded by the learning support teacher, in the fourth school, the learning support and the resource teacher coordinated the

measures. All of the pupils had been receiving learning support for the past two years. The following reading tests were administered by Learning support teachers: NARA, Young Reading Test, Schonell Spelling test, Schonell Word recognition test, RAIN sentence test, MICRA T, DPRT. This section will present data on pupils who are receiving extra support from the learning support teacher under the following headings:

- Class level of pupils receiving learning support
- Time spent per week receiving extra support
- Pupils' reading ability: Eligibility for learning support and reading tests used
- Pupils' progress in reading 2004-2005

The reader must bear in mind that this is not a homogeneous group of pupils. There are individual differences between pupils and differences between the level of support provided by each school. Nevertheless, all of the pupils have been receiving learning support for the past two years because of dyslexic-type difficulties. The recent change in DES policy to a general allocation model of support (DES, SPED 24/03) means that pupils with dyslexia are now supported by the learning support teacher, and will no longer receive individual resource teaching. It was expected that progress in reading over a two year period for these pupils might differ from pupils who were receiving support in a special setting.

Class level of pupils receiving learning support: The following table presents background information on this group of pupils. Data on the intellectual ability of pupils receiving learning support was not available as these pupils would not have had a psychological assessment. The pupils receiving learning support were represented across all class levels, from First to Sixth, with more pupils in Third and Fifth Class receiving learning support.

Table 4.10: Pupils receiving learning support: numbers in each class level

Class	***Pupils receiving learning support***
First Class	8
Second Class	7
Third Class	10
Fourth Class	8
Fifth Class	10
Sixth Class	7
Total	*50*

When the classes were grouped as presented in the table below, it could be seen that third and Fourth Classes had a slightly higher representation of pupils receiving learning support than the younger pupils. This corresponds with the average age per pupil as shown in the first table.

Time spent per week receiving learning support: The following table shows that the majority of pupils (33) were receiving three hours twenty minutes (two hundred minutes) per week. This usually takes the form of five sessions of forty minutes per day, in a small group of pupils of similar age. Pupils were withdrawn from class for this extra support. All of the pupils in this sample group had been receiving learning support for the past two years.

Table 4.11: Allocation of learning support hours

Learning support, Time per week	*No. Pupils*
90 minutes	1
120 minutes	2
150 minutes	6
160 minutes	5
180 minutes	1
200 minutes	33
210 minutes	1
300 minutes	1
Total	50

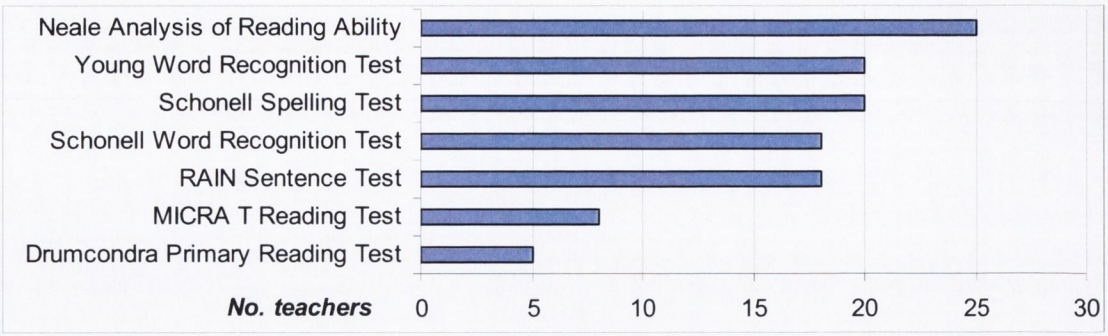
Pupils' reading ability: Eligibility for learning support: It was clear from the reading scores returned that a large number of pupils receiving learning support are presently attaining higher levels of reading attainment than that recommended by the DES:

> *strongly discourage the practice of including pupils with average attainment in the caseloads of learning support teachers. Rather the needs of pupils with low achievement should at all times be the particular focus of the learning support provision. ... In selecting pupils for diagnostic assessment and supplementary teaching, priority should be given to those pupils who achieve scores at or below the tenth percentile* (DES, 2000, pp 57, 58).

However different tests were used by the learning support teachers to determine the pupils' reading level, therefore it would be inadvisable to make a comparison across the different tests used. Also, individual schools may interpret the guidelines according to the general level of attainment in the school. This would explain the higher levels of attainment of some pupils in certain schools receiving additional support.

Reading tests used: A great variation in measures of reading attainment was reported by the learning support teachers. A wide variety of tests are used in this setting. Some teachers used just one test to measure pupils' progress in reading. Others used more than one. There were limitations and variations in the data received. The following chart shows the range of reading tests used by support teachers to record pupils' progress in reading. Although the NARA (1997) is used more frequently by the support teachers, this test was not used consistently from year to year.

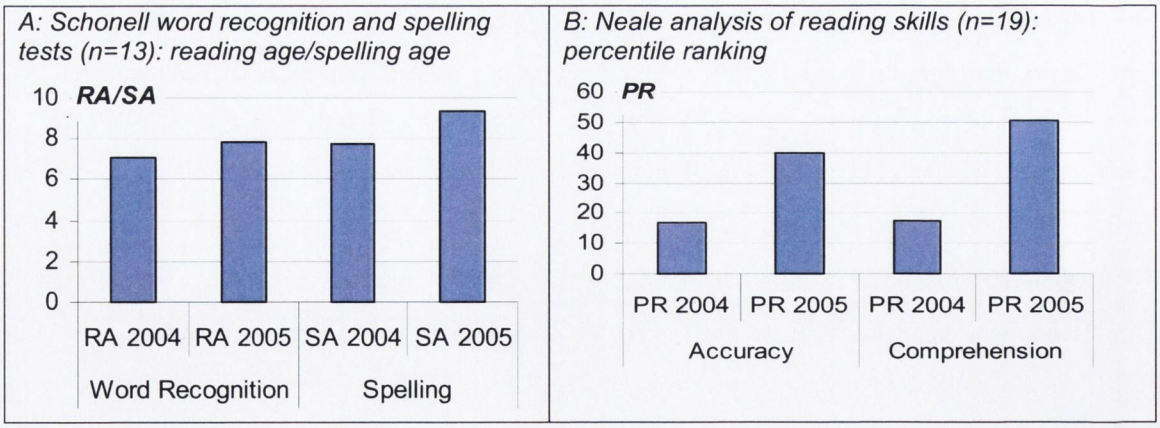
Fig 4.51: Reading tests used by the learning support teachers



The data returned for this group showed no single standardised test used across all schools or for all pupils receiving learning support teaching. There is diversity in the tests used across schools and within the same school from year to year. Tests that are used are administered at different times during the year. Progress in reading is recorded in a variety of ways. Results and reading scores vary from reading ages, standard scores, percentile ranks and raw scores. The returned data could not be used to extrapolate reliable measures of reading progress among the pupils receiving learning support. The limitations of the data recorded by the Learning support and resource teachers are reported in the methodology chapter.

Progress in reading 2004-2005: Due to gaps in the data returned to the researcher for the purposes of this study, it was not possible to outline pupils' progress in reading over the two year period 2003-04 and 2004-05. However data showing pupils' gain over a single school year 2004-05 was available for 32 of the 50 pupils receiving learning support. These pupils were in two groups: one group had 13 pupils, the second had 19. The following charts show their rates of progress:

Fig 4.52: Average scores in Word recognition, Reading Comprehension and Spelling 2004-2005



Pupils who have been identified as having low achievement in literacy may receive support from the learning support teacher. Some of the pupils receiving learning support may have low general ability; others may have dyslexic type difficulties. The findings presented above are an illustration

of the wide variation in assessment and the lack of consistency in the data reported from this group of learning support teachers.

The scores show the gain for two groups of pupils in spelling, word recognition and comprehension over one year. The first group (n=13) made limited progress in word recognition in one year. In another school, a gain of 19 months in spelling was reported among the pupils (n=19). This is similar to the gain made by pupils in the special settings. The pupils in this group made an impressive gain in reading accuracy and reading comprehension in one year. This is far greater than the gains made by pupils in the special settings. Caution must be exercised in over interpreting these results as these pupils had stronger literacy skills prior to the period of the study (2004-2005).

Pupils receiving special provision

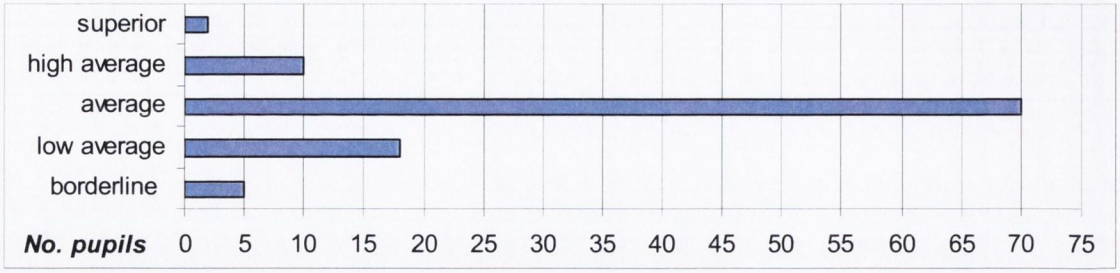
The following table profiles pupils receiving support in special education settings, by location, enrolment distribution, gender and age.

Table 4.12: Placement, numbers, gender and average ages of pupils in special provision

	Total	***Male***	***Female***	***Mean age on entry***
Reading School	71	57	14	9y 11m
Reading Unit	31	22	9	10y 4m
Individual Resource Teaching	5	2	3	8y 6m
Total	***150***	***81***	***26***	

The ratio of boys to girls is 4:1 in the reading schools. Boys also outnumber girls in the reading units. The gender balance among the pupils receiving individual resource teaching, while different to the reading units and schools, cannot be generalised due to sample size. The average age of pupils enrolled in the reading units was slightly older than those enrolled in the reading schools. Similarly, pupils receiving resource teaching constitute the youngest group in special provision. Data was recorded from the child's psychological assessment report by the child's teacher (in a reading unit, reading school, or by his/her resource teacher). The following chart shows the overall range of intellectual ability based on the WISC scores of all pupils (n=107). The subsequent table will show if there is any variation between the types of special support.

Fig 4.53: Pupils' intellectual ability



Key to classification ratings corresponding to percentile ranks

Exceptionally low PR <2 *Borderline PR 2-9* *Low Average PR 9-25* *Average PR 25-75*
High Average PR 75-91 *Superior PR 91-98* *Very Superior 98+*

Note: the WISC (third edition) is the most commonly used intelligence test for children. It is a standardised test used for children who may have specific learning difficulties/ dyslexia. WISC 3 consists of six verbal sub tests: information, similarities, arithmetic, vocabulary, comprehension and digit span and seven performance (non-verbal) tests: picture completion, coding, picture arrangement, block design, object assembly, symbol search and mazes.

Of pupils in special provision, 67% are in the average range of ability; an additional 11% are of high average or superior) ability. These pupils are within the criteria for enrolment in special provision. However 22% of the pupils (who are of low average + borderline ability) do not meet the strict criteria for eligibility for special support. The following table shows the differences in pupils' intellectual ability by type of provision.

Table 4.13: Pupil participants: intelligence levels and placement

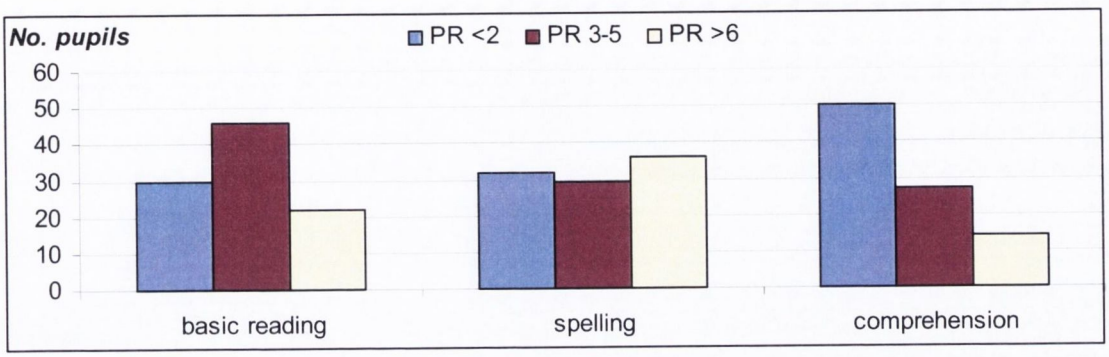
Placement	***No. pupils***	***Mean I.Q.(P.R.)***
Reading school	71	45.72
Reading unit	31	36.76
Individual resource teaching	5	58.00
Total	152	

The mean IQ score in the reading schools was higher than in reading units. The sample receiving individual resource teaching is small and cannot be generalised to a wider group.

Pupils' reading ability on entry to special provision: Data on pupils' reading ability was recorded from The *WORD* test. This test is the most commonly administered reading test administered by the educational psychologist during a psycho-educational assessment. This test is part of the WISC (outlined above), it is a related assessment that focuses on reading. *WORD* assesses reading and spelling abilities from six years of age to 16 years 11months. It consists of three sub tests, basic reading, spelling and reading comprehension. Data was recorded by the child's teacher from the psychological assessment report and the scores were returned to the researcher. Pre intervention

scores were obtained for the pupils' basic reading, spelling and comprehension. The range of ability in reading, spelling and comprehension of all the pupils in special provision is as follows:

Fig 4.54: Pupils' WORD rankings for basic reading, spelling and comprehension at point of entry to special provision

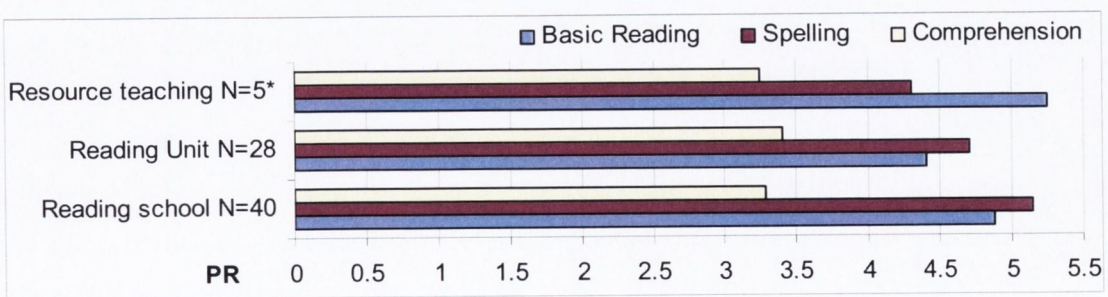


Basic Reading One third of the participants (31%) had 'severe literacy difficulties' in basic word identification as defined by the DES. Almost half of the pupils (47%) scored between the third and fifth percentile. It has already been noted in this chapter that the entry criteria for reading schools and reading units is interpreted flexibly up to the fifth percentile. On this basis, just 22% of the pupils are outside the criteria for special placement.

Spelling ability: One third of the pupils (32%) had severe difficulties with spelling, as measured by WORD. However a larger proportion had a less severe difficulty, with a spelling score above the sixth percentile (37%). This includes 11 pupils beyond the tenth percentile.

Reading Comprehension: More than half of the pupils had severe difficulties with reading comprehension. A total of 55% scored below the second percentile on the WORD test, on entry to special provision.

Fig 4.55: Mean percentile rank in pupils' point-of-entry reading, spelling and comprehension scores according to type of provision



In each of the special settings, reading comprehension on entry was assessed as lower than basic reading. This is in line with the psychological assessment information which also reported reading comprehension skills to be at a lower level than basic reading. A note of caution is needed when reading the scores for individual resource teaching due to the small number of pupils. Pupils in a reading school had a slightly higher level of reading and spelling compared to the reading units.

This is in line with the higher individual mean score in intellectual ability of pupils in a reading school. It was a limitation of this study that post intervention assessment of reading could not be carried out by an educational psychologist.

Pupils progress in reading 2003-2005

On entry to a reading unit, reading school or individual resource teaching, a base line reading assessment is usually undertaken on all pupils. In the present study four aspects of reading attainment were recorded by the teachers in the reading schools and reading units. These were *word recognition; reading accuracy; reading comprehension; and spelling ability*

Teachers used the following range of reading and spelling tests to form a baseline assessment of pupils at the beginning of the special placement:

- *The Neale Analysis of Reading Ability* (NARA), *Second Revised British Edition* (1997) consists of a set of graded passages for testing reading accuracy, comprehension and reading rate. This is a test of oral reading and is individually administered. It is used with children age 6 years to 12 years 11 months. It provides a standard age score and reading age and can be used as an attainment test and a diagnostic test.
- *The Schonell Graded Word Spelling Test* (out of print) is a written test of spelling ability. A spelling age is recorded. It is also part of the Aston Index (1982). The Aston Index consists of a series of tests which can be used to diagnose reading and language disorders. The tests are divided into general ability and attainment and performance items. The spelling test is included in the general ability section.
- *The Marino Graded Word Reading Scale* (Ó Suilleabhain, 1970. Out of print) is a word recognition test administered individually. A reading age is recorded.
- *The Macmillan Graded Word Reading Test* for pupils age 6-14 years (1990) is a standardised spoken response single word recognition test which uses word cards. Provides reading age and standard age scores, helps to monitor a pupils reading accuracy.

Limitations of data collected: Scores were recorded at point of entry to special support (September 2003) and after two year placement (June 2005). The tests selected are regularly administered to all pupils in the reading schools and reading units. However, in some instances the reading tests used are not recorded consistently across schools or even across the two years. Some schools record reading age of pupils, others record percentile rank. Some schools record reading age one year, percentile rank the next. However, the data returned did indicate that progress was made in reading and spelling over the two year period.

Variation between reading tests: It will be observed that there is wide variability in the scores obtained from the reading test administered by the psychologist (WORD) and the reading test administered by the teachers (NARA). The confidence level of the WORD test is 95% and the

confidence level of the Neale test is 67%. The following results reported for the NARA test will show pupils' scores to be significantly higher for the NARA analysis results compared to the scores reported for the WORD test.

Table 4.14: Pupils' progress in reading over two year placement in special provision: Pre-intervention (2003) and Post-intervention (2005) mean scores

	NARA		*NARA*		*Macmillan*		*Marino*		*Schonell*	
	Reading Accuracy PR		*Reading Comprehension PR*		*Word Recognition RA*		*Word Recognition RA*		*Spelling Test SA*	
	2003	*2005*	*2003*	*2005*	*2003*	*2005*	*2003*	*2005*	*2003*	*2005*
RS	5.61	14.10	6.81	21.15	6.6	8.3	7y8m	10y6m	7y1m	8y8m
N=71	n=44	n=39	n=44	n=39	n=42	n=38	n=25	n=19	n=63	n=63
RU	2.16	11.52	4.8	17.05	7.2	8.6	Not		7y3m	8y6m
N=31	n=15	n=20	n=20	n=20	n=11	n=11	given		n=16	n=19
RT	8.0	26.6	23.5	37.0	6.6	9.6	Not		7y3m	7y5m
N=5	n=3	n=3	n=2	n=2	n=3	n=3	given		n=3	n=1

Note: Data was not available on all pupils for each test, hence the varying number of pupils in each cohort reported.

Reading Accuracy: The highest gains in reading accuracy were among the pupils receiving resource teaching. These pupils were the most able in terms of literacy at the outset. The scores for these pupils at point of entry are actually higher than the recommended criteria for special provision. A note of caution has already been advised about the pupils receiving resource teaching due to the small numbers involved. The NARA scores reported a higher entry point for all pupils than the WORD scores

Reading Comprehension: There was remarkable progress in reading comprehension in all three settings. Pupils in the reading schools showed more consistent gains in reading comprehension. Even allowing for the adjustment of 3 exceptionally high scores in one reading unit, progress in reading comprehension is significant. At this level of comprehension (beyond 25th percentile) pupils are now in the average range for their age, as assessed on the NARA. The pupils receiving resource teaching were already at this level at the outset, although they continued to make progress in reading comprehension over the two years. It is worth noting that the NARA (1997) reported pupils' reading comprehension to be twice the level of the scores reported for the *Weschler Objective Reading Dimension.*

Word Recognition: Pupils' progress in word recognition skill was slightly greater among the pupils in reading schools (20 month gain) compared to the reading units (17 month gain). The individual resource teaching produced the largest gain (36 months), however this should not be generalised beyond this limited sample.

Spelling skill: The average gain in spelling skill is similar in both reading unit (15months) and reading school settings (19 months). The teachers in the resource setting did not report progress in spelling for the pupils.

Summary of section

The greatest improvement in pupils' reading skill is reported in reading comprehension scores. Pupils moved into the average range of reading comprehension as measured on the NARA test. Progress in reading accuracy, although significant for pupils, was less than reading comprehension in all three settings. Pupils in reading schools showed the most consistent gains in reading accuracy and reading comprehension although there is no significant difference in the average gain between the reading school and reading unit. The improvement in reading accuracy and comprehension made by all pupils in reading units was skewed by the exceptional performance of 3 pupils in one unit. This alerts us to the possibility of over interpreting mean results. There was a similar increase in spelling ability among pupils in reading schools and reading units. The gains made by pupils receiving individual resource teaching, although significant for the pupils, must be read with an awareness of the particularly small sample and the fact that these pupils' literacy scores were stronger on entry to special support.

This study took place at a time of transition in the DES policy on provision of support for pupils with dyslexia. Pupils identified with dyslexia may now receive learning or resource teaching support in mainstream. The data returned for this sample group of pupils receiving in- school support had many limitations. Therefore comparison with those pupils receiving special provision in reading units and reading schools is necessarily limited. These pupils had a higher ability in reading accuracy and comprehension before intervention compared to the pupils in the special placements. For these reasons care must be taken with any interpretation or comparison of outcomes in reading gains among pupils.

SECTION 4.3: PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Questionnaires

This section of the study reports on the findings of the questionnaires returned by parents whose children are presently enrolled in reading schools or reading units. The findings will be reported under the following headings:

- Background information on pupils
- Support received in mainstream
- Parents' view of child's main difficulty
- Parents' view of special education placement:
- Advantages of placement
- Disadvantages of placement
- Suggestions to improve the service to children with dyslexia

The majority of the parents who completed questionnaires had a child in a special reading school. The provision of individual resource teaching to children with dyslexia was under review during the time the study (see methodology section). The following tables present background information about the pupils whose parents completed a questionnaire. The first table shows the child's present placement, the second table shows the age of the children in each type of special setting.

Table 4.15: Child's present placement

Child's present placement	*Parents who completed questionnaires*
Reading Unit	12
Reading school	49
Mainstream class with Resource teaching support	2
Total returned questionnaires	63

Table 4.16: Special setting in which child is enrolled

Setting	*Age of child*					
	9 yrs	*10 yrs*	*11 yrs*	*12 yrs*	*13 yrs*	*Age not given*
Reading Unit	1	2	3	6	0	0
Reading School	0	19	15	12	1	2
Resource Teaching	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total children	1	22	18	18	1	3

The majority of the children were aged between ten and twelve years old. Parents reported the consultation involved in the decision to enrol the child in reading unit or reading school. The majority indicated engaging in a joint decision making process with the psychologist and teacher.

There were limited choices available to parents. Individual resource teaching for pupils with dyslexia had been discontinued (DES, SPED 24/03) pending review of all special supports to schools. Learning support continued to be available in small groups in most schools but these pupils had already received this form of support. Private tuition is not an option for all pupils.

Support received in mainstream: A majority of pupils had been receiving extra support from a learning support or resource teacher. A significant number had been receiving extra support for three years before enrolment in the special placement. Extra support was provided as follows:

Table 4.17: Parent survey data: school-going children receiving extra support

Source of support received	***No. children***
Learning support	24
Resource teacher	24
Class teacher	4
Private tutor	5
No response	6
Total	***63***

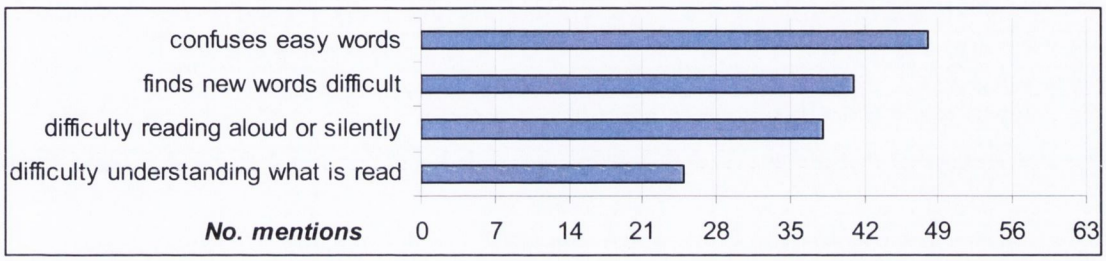
Details of extra support received: The majority of pupils received one hour support per week, before enrolment. A wide range of activities took place during tuition sessions. Tuition varied between learning support in a small group, one to one support from a resource teacher or private tutor support, or tuition in a workshop with other pupils.

Parents described the activities during ***learning support*** which helped the child with reading. Recognising letters and letter sounds, using flashcards and practicing simple spellings were reported. Some parents were less than satisfied with this extra support. Extra reading according to the parents was not very effective. The pupils were *'reading easy books, playing word games, using computers, not 100% sure what went on in the remedial room'* They observed there did not appear to be a clear plan, activities and games were varied. They reported they did not know what really went on during the learning support tuition. Support from a ***resource teacher*** was typically focussed on improving literacy. Activities such as *'learning sounds, reading, worksheets, typing, computer'* were reported. Resource teaching support included helping with reading and sounding words out. Activities mentioned were games such as word Bingo, Wordshark (on PC), working with lists of words and some typing on computer. Parents were able to provide more specific information on the activities undertaken with an ***individual tutor.*** Parents reported that the tutor worked on *Dolch list and dictation, reading and comprehension, homework, spelling lists.* The tutor gave assistance with work which the child could not complete in class,. The tutor also gave help with homework and paired reading.

Parents' view of children's main difficulties

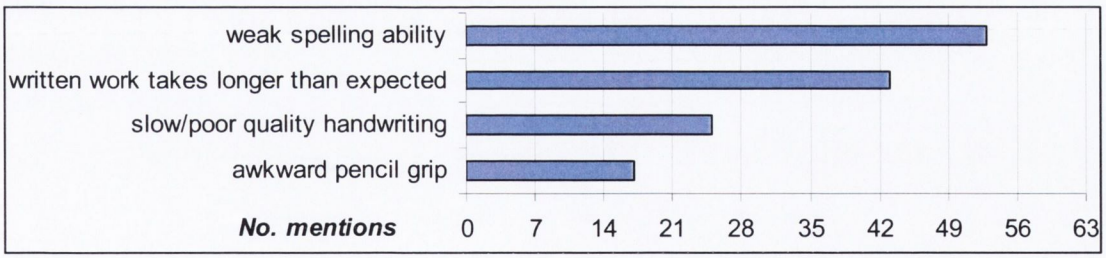
The parents of children in special placements are keenly aware of their child's current difficulty with reading and writing. Parents could recognise their child's most common difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics. Comprehension of reading was considered by parents to be less of a difficulty. Parents perceived that word identification skills and reading fluency is weak. The high proportion of pupils with weak spelling raises questions about the practice of writing skills and the approaches used.

Fig 4.56: Parents' identifications of children's reading difficulties



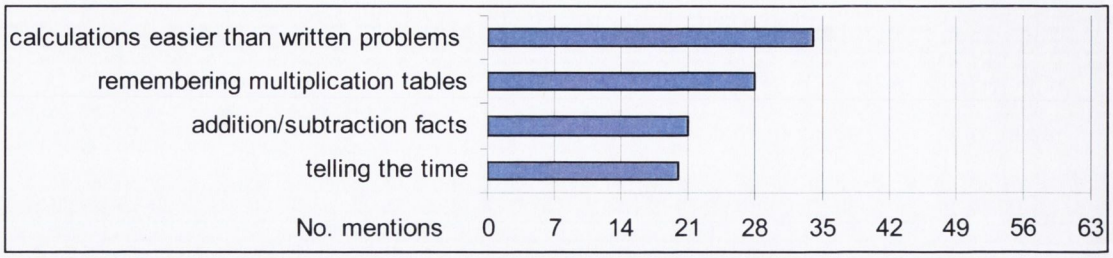
Parents described their child's reading difficulties. Difficulties were reported in reading accuracy and reading comprehension (children may have difficulties in more than one specific area, so the number of responses exceeds the actual number of parents). A significant majority considered the main difficulties to affect reading accuracy. Confusing small or 'easy' words for example *at/to*; *said/and*; *does/goes* was considered to be a difficulty by a significant amount of parents. Word identification skills are weak and the child finds new words especially difficult. The parents were aware of the child's difficulty reading aloud or silently. A smaller number of responses indicated that the child had a difficulty with reading comprehension.

Fig 4.57: Parents' identifications of children's writing difficulties



Parents reported their child's difficulties with writing skills. Taking longer than expected to complete written work and difficulties with spelling was frequently reported. A large number of responses described the child's spelling ability as being weak for his age. Parents' responses indicated that written work takes longer than expected for a large number of these pupils. In contrast, difficulty with handwriting and fine motor skills was less frequently reported.

Fig 4.58: Parents' identifications of children's mathematics difficulties



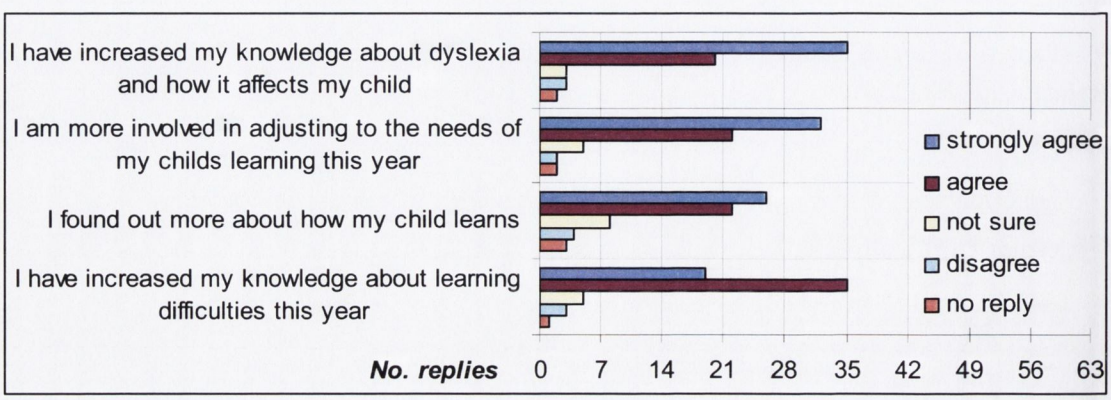
Not all pupils with a difficulty in reading and writing will have difficulty with mathematics. In fact mathematical ability may be a strength for some pupils. However, in this study population the parents indicated their child had a difficulty with mathematics. The chart above shows that over half of the parents noted that their child finds calculations easier than written problems. A large number have difficulty remembering addition, subtraction and multiplication tables. A similar number of parents' responses showed they are aware of their child's difficulty in telling the time.

Parents' strategies for engagement with their children's learning

The majority of parents are expected to help with their child's homework. Parents support their child with homework for up to an hour on a daily basis. This support includes help with reading, spelling and mathematics. Parents described how they supervise the child's homework by having '*one parent always present, encouraging him, help with reading the text or questions in the workbook; getting him to spot his own mistakes'* The support given indicates a sensitivity to the individual needs of the child and an understanding of his particular difficulties.

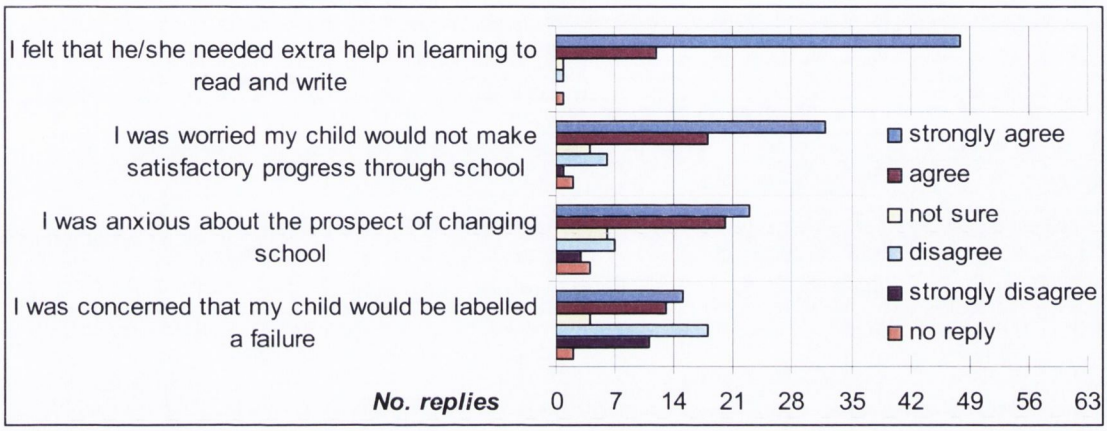
Listening to the child read, and explaining the meaning of words, organising his work and encouraging him to write are all undertaken at home with parents. A significant number of parents reported they had increased their knowledge of dyslexia and how it affects their child this year. The majority of parents were of the opinion that they had found out more about how their child learns. A large number of parents reported increased knowledge of their child's learning difficulties More time spent on homework supervision and more contact with the class teacher since the initial identification of dyslexia had led to this increased knowledge and understanding.

Fig 4.59: Parents' learning about their children



Encouragement and supervision is a necessary part of this support. Parents reported that supervision of homework keeps the child motivated and *'on task'*. This reassures the child he can do it and '*is capable of this work'*. A large majority of parents reported that they are more involved in adjusting to the needs of their child since enrolling in the special placement. The nature of support given with homework activities corresponds with this view. Parents were specifically asked how they felt after the child's assessment and the initial diagnosis of a reading disability.

Fig 4.60: Parents' expectations on hearing the diagnosis

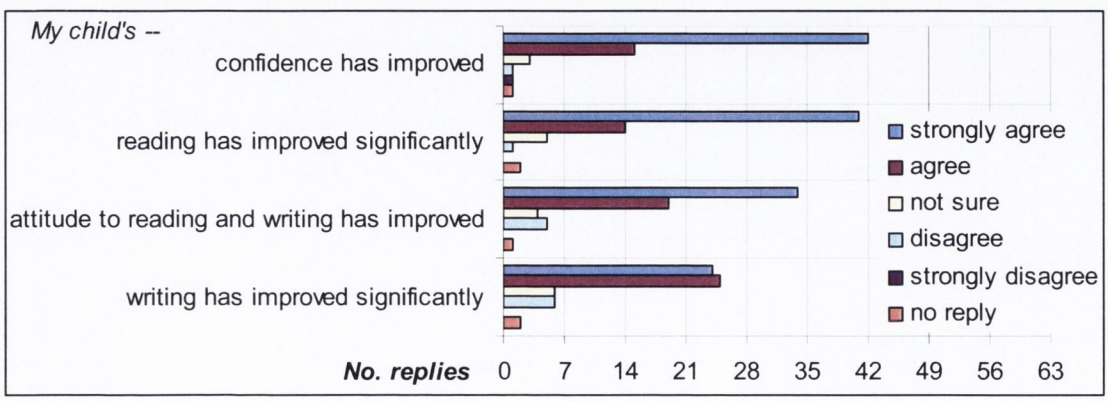


After the child's psychological assessment which identified a learning difficulty arising from dyslexia, almost all parents felt that their child needed extra help in learning to read and write. It was a very real concern to parents that the child would not make satisfactory progress through school. They were not unduly concerned that the child would be labelled a failure because of poor literacy skills. They had a practical approach to the child's enrolment in a special placement. However, the prospect of changing school was a cause for concern for the majority of parents.

Parents views on the special education placement

There was strong agreement among parents that teachers in the special education placement have more training and experience than other teachers. Parents recounted their views on their experience of the special education placement.

Fig 4.61: Parents' views on the outcomes of special placement for their child

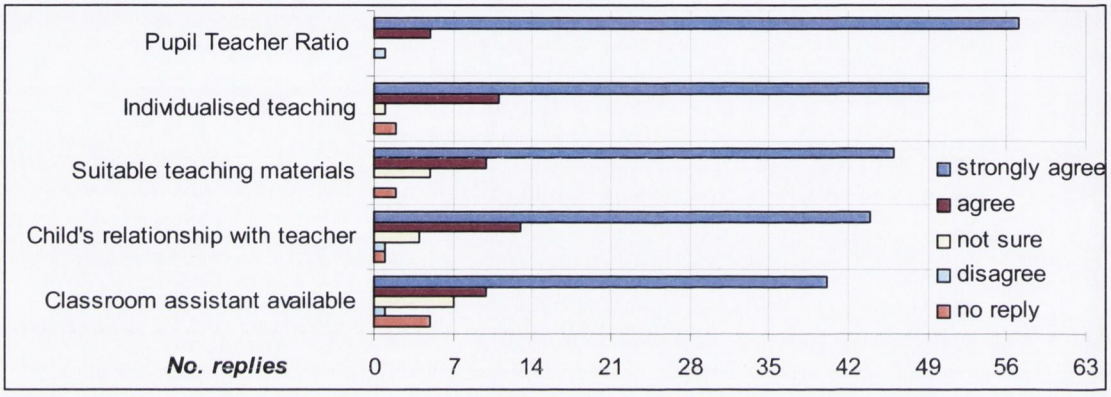


There was strong agreement that, in their opinion, their child's reading skills had improved significantly and his/her writing skills had improved. An improved attitude to reading and writing was the experience of the majority of parents. The largest number of parents agreed that the child's confidence had improved during the special placement.

Evaluations of placement

Parents were asked to give their opinion on each of five possible advantages of the special placement. The five areas and the parents' evaluations of these are shown in the following

Fig 4.62: Specific advantages of the special placement



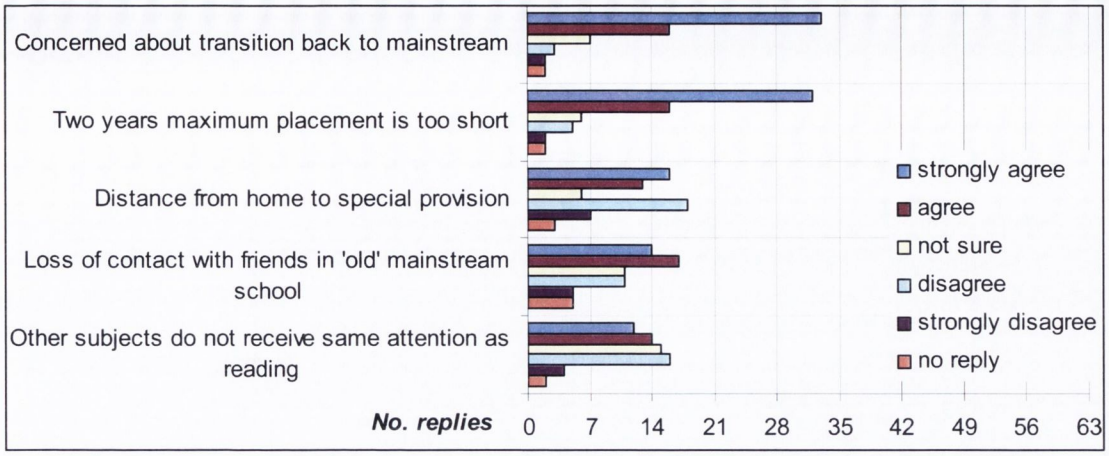
The pupil teacher ratio is 9:1 in special reading units and reading schools. This facilitates more teacher pupil interaction and hence a good relationship between child and teacher. Individualised teaching is more likely in such a favourable setting. Suitable teaching materials and resources appropriate to the literacy needs of pupils are considered to be more readily available in the reading units and reading schools than in mainstream. Additional support from a classroom assistant or special needs assistant is frequently available in these special settings.

The majority of parents considered that the pupil teacher ratio of nine to one was an advantage. Parents also considered individualised teaching of pupils in the special setting to be a benefit of the placement. The availability of suitable teaching materials appropriate to the needs of the children was also thought to be an advantage of the special placement by most parents. The child's relationship with the teacher was also a factor regarded as important by a large number of parents. This is possibly a reference to the role the teacher plays in building the child's self confidence and self belief. Parents discussed this further in the focus groups.

The availability of additional supports such as a classroom assistant or special needs assistant was mentioned less frequently by parents as an advantage of the special placement.

Disadvantages of the special placement: Parents were asked to give their opinion on five possible disadvantages of the special placement; the profile of their evaluations of these is as follows:

Fig 4.63: Disadvantages of special placement

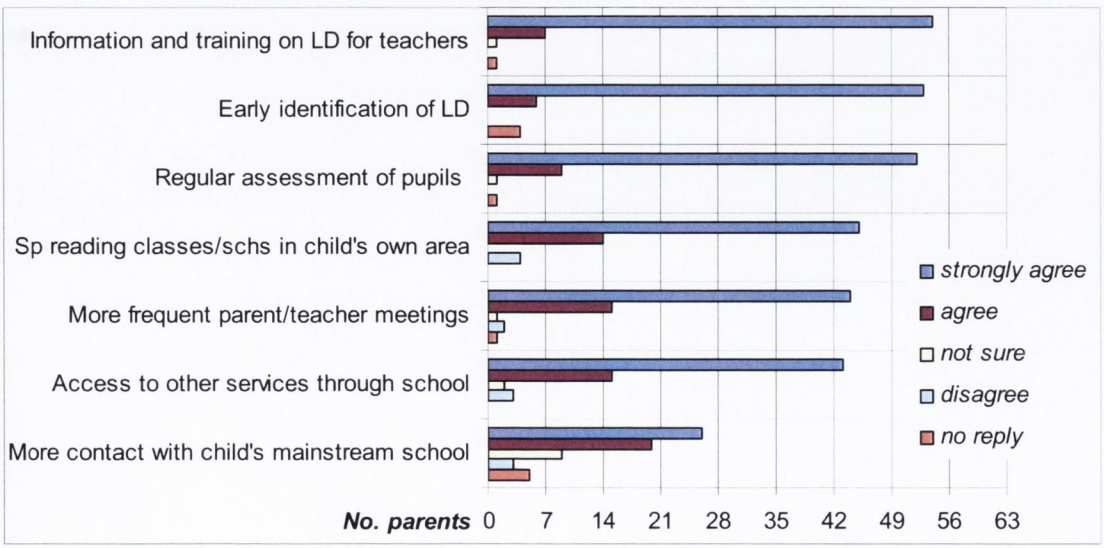


The majority of parents were concerned about the transition back to mainstream school. This could be regarded as a disadvantage of the placement. In fact they are more concerned about the transition back to mainstream, than the initial transition to the special placement. Their child had already been receiving support teaching for a number of years before transferring to the special placement and obviously this extra support was not effective. Their child continued to fail. Now that their experience of the special placement is positive, a significant number feel that two years in the special reading school or unit is too short. Distance from home was not considered to be such a strong disadvantage according to a significant number of parents. However, almost the same number of parents agreed it was a disadvantage. There was divided opinion on the view that other subjects do not receive the same attention as reading in the special placement.

Suggestions to improve the service for children with dyslexia

Parents were asked to give their opinion on a range of suggestions to improve the service for children with dyslexia. The profile of their responses is as follows:

Fig 4.64: Parents' suggestions for improved services for children with dyslexia (n=63)



Ninety percent (90%) of parents strongly agreed that early identification of learning difficulties would benefit children. Almost all parents (99%) considered that regular assessment of pupils would improve the service for children with dyslexia. Further training for all teachers and information on learning difficulties was strongly advocated by 98% of parents. Access to specialist services such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and educational psychologist support would improve the service to children according to 92% of parents. Almost all parents (94%) considered that special reading classes/schools in the child's own area would be an advantage. A similar majority (95%) considered the service to pupils with dyslexia would be improved by more frequent parent teacher meetings. A total of 79% of parents considered that improved links with the child's mainstream school would be an advantage.

Conclusion

The prospect of changing school is a major issue for parents. Transition from mainstream to special education was not undertaken lightly. Parents were involved in consultation with the psychologist and teacher before taking a decision to move a child. The child needed to improve his reading / writing skills and in the parents' view this was the main objective of the special placement.

The majority of children in this study had already been receiving between 1 and 3 years learning support prior to enrolment. Parents expressed dissatisfaction and uncertainty about the activities which took place during this extra support. Ninety per cent of parents were in favour of regular assessment of pupils and early identification of learning difficulties. Parents considered that information on learning difficulties and more training for all teachers to be necessary. Since enrolling their child in a special setting parents reported they were more involved in adjusting to the ends of their child's learning and had increased their knowledge about dyslexia and how it affects their child. This is clear from the various ways parents support their child with homework.

Parents were aware of their child's current difficulty with reading, writing and maths. Word identification skills and reading fluency is weak. Difficulty with writing and spelling is more common. Comprehension of reading is less of a difficulty. The high proportion of pupils with weak spelling raises questions about the practice of writing skills and the approaches used. In spite of these difficulties most parents were of the opinion that their child's reading had improved significantly although there was less agreement about the child's writing skills. Attitudes to reading and writing had improved reflecting the emphasis on positive acceptance of the child's difficulty and teachers focus on building confidence among reluctant readers.

Parents strongly favoured the special placement for various reasons, and considered two years to be too short. They would favour more reading units / reading schools in the child's own area. The main disadvantage of moving a child from his old school is overcome by the distinctive features of the special placement and the particular emphasis on reading and writing.

Parent Focus Groups

Focus group discussions took place with two groups of parents during the course of the study. These parents had already completed a questionnaire (see previous section) and were invited to participate in a discussion to follow up the issues and concerns raised in the questionnaire. A group of thirteen parents whose children are attending a reading unit in the southwest of the country were invited to attend. Seven attended the meeting, four from primary school, three in second level. The second focus group took place in Dublin. Seventeen parents were invited to attend. Nine parents attended, there was representation from each of three reading schools at the second focus group. The account of the parent focus group discussion will be structured according to key themes that emerged:

- Transition to mainstream
- Transition to second level
- Training of teachers
- Inclusion V special placement : advantages and disadvantages

Transition to mainstream school

It was clear from the beginning of each discussion that ***their child's return to mainstream*** was one of the main concerns of parents. At the time of the discussion (April 2005), arrangements had been made for each child's return to mainstream. Parents of children whose child had been in the reading school or reading unit for two years were equally concerned about the transition to mainstream. There was no significant difference between the concerns of either group of parents. Returning to Sixth Class was considered to be more difficult than returning to any other class. A child would have to adjust to a different school for one year and then the following year in second level school, adjust a second time. The social side was also a concern, leaving friends in the reading unit / reading school and re establishing links with classmates in the old school. Concern was expressed about applying for Resource support and Learning support for the coming year. Parents felt that schools could not give a clear answer as to how extra support would be organised the following year and this was disconcerting. Parents perceived that '*nobody is able to say what a child is entitled to'*.

They were concerned how this would impact on the child's new-found confidence and progress which he had made in the two year placement. Parents were fearful that their child would not get the support he needs on returning to his old school. Parents were of the opinion that the larger class size in mainstream is a disadvantage for the child with learning difficulties. Many of the parents were extremely positive in supporting their child regardless of the difficulties he may face when he returns to mainstream this year, as illustrated in the following parent's comment: One of the parents described how her child is

My child is looking forward to going back. He's dying to go back to his playmates, he's kept up contact with his friends. If he's dyslexic, he's going to be dyslexic for life, he has to learn to accept the disability, cope with it and move on He's not going to be mollycoddled for the rest of his life, they have to toughen up a little bit.(mother)

But some children may have had a different experience and will continue to need support. One of the parents (a father) had a son who had been in remedial classes since First class reported: *'When he was assessed, we knew ourselves the upheaval in his life; I think he lost a year; now he's looking forward to going back to mainstream'.*

Parents' fears about their child returning to mainstream were predominantly about the effect on their child of leaving the supports of the special placement and returning to mainstream with reduced support. The child's improved confidence gives parents some reassurance about the return to mainstream.

Transition to second level

Transition to second level presents issues regarding selection of school; anxiety of student; support needs; transfer of information; and training of teachers. .

Selection: Choosing a school, which would suit their individual child, is an issue of great concern for all parents. Parents' experience of applying to the local second level school for their child varied. Although all second level schools have a responsibility to address the individual learning needs of all students, some parents recent experience questions this inclusion policy. One mother expressed the view '*You know very clearly this is not the place for your child'*. Entrance tests and assessment tests to second level are a feature of almost all second levels schools. This brings extra pressure for the child who has a difficulty with timed and written assessment tests. Parents reported similar experiences of entrance assessment tests.

Anxiety of student Some parents expressed how students have anxieties because of dyslexia. In secondary school this anxiety is focused around written assessment and in particular the Junior Certificate examination. There has been a large increase in the number of students applying for 'reasonable accommodations' in Junior certificate and Leaving certificate exams throughout the country. The most frequently granted accommodation is an exemption from the spelling and grammar component to compensate for weak written expressive skills. Improved confidence is a very significant advantage of the special placement experience according to parents. Long term benefits included the confidence to ask questions, ask for help and to take risks.

Extra ***support*** for second level students who have literacy needs is a problem. Parents were frustrated that the school was unclear as to how support for children with specific learning difficulties would be organised for the coming year. Parents were often faced with uncertainty, lack of information and difficulty securing additional / appropriate support for their child on transition to second level. They expressed ways in which the second level school could support the dyslexic

student such as consulting with a teacher who would coordinate the information, and reports for the other teachers. Regular parent teacher meetings were considered essential as was advice on choosing subjects. Parents felt strongly that the school could give more help to the dyslexic student. They were of the view that second level teachers' knowledge and information about dyslexia was limited or even non existent. There was restrained anger about a lack of supports in second level schools for the student with dyslexia. Parents recognised that including students with dyslexia necessitates specific teaching accommodations. In their opinion it is not enough to be included unless appropriate support is in place. As one parent stated *'Don't include them and not have a program for them'.*

Transfer of information: Parents are concerned about the lack of transfer of information from one teacher to another and from one year to the next. There is no standardised system on the transfer of pupil information from primary to second level. It is up to each individual school to organise this. In the absence of any standardised system of transfer of educational reports and information to second level schools, the parents in this study had taken on the role of advocate for their child with teachers and schools. This involved keeping regular contact with all subject teachers (not just formal parent teacher meetings) and ensuring that all teachers got (psychological) reports and information on the student. They were dismayed about the *'climate and structure,... the mindset of secondary schools'.* It appears there is an over dependence on written assessment as only form of assessment not just at entrance stage but later on throughout the second level system. According to parents, dyslexic students are constantly assessed according to their weakest skill. Parents reported that alternatives to the traditional leaving certificate exam are not widely available. Parents in the southwest of the country were of the view that choice of subjects, extra resource supports and alternatives to the traditional Leaving Certificate exam (e.g. Leaving Certificate Applied) was more limited outside Dublin.

Training of teachers: Parents in the focus groups strongly expressed the need for ongoing training and information on dyslexia for all subject teachers, not just English teachers, in second level schools. This was in contrast to their view of the teachers in the special placement. The majority of parents believed that teachers in the special placement have more experience and training than other teachers. Criticism of the lack of teacher awareness of dyslexia (in mainstream) and the late identification of learning difficulties was strongly felt. The special placement and the positive support the child now receives seemed to highlight the need which parents felt should have been met in mainstream.

Inclusion V Special placement

Parents had a very favourable view of their child's placement in a reading school or reading unit. Some parents were of the view that this support should continue for the duration of primary level, others would favour a continuity of the special placement into second level. They consistently

mentioned improved pupil confidence and improved independence with homework. Continuing the individualisation of support was favoured by the parents. It was the view that this could only happen in a special setting. Nevertheless, they were still of the opinion that mainstream is very important. The special reading school is a separate parallel system of special educational provision for students with dyslexia. At present there is no follow up to the short term two year placement and no follow up of pupils when they return to mainstream. Parents are faced with the dilemma of removing their child from mainstream for special support or continue to receive a less effective (in their view) form of support teaching. Most parents make a pragmatic decision for their child. They believed the disadvantages of changing school are outweighed by the advantages and benefits of the special placement. The dilemmas for the student with dyslexia were expressed by one parent as follows: *'It's very hard to balance out, on one hand they need the support and on the other hand they just want to be normal'.*

The parents' view of how the school supports the individual needs of their child seemed to be the crucial factor in the discussion. This was the criteria by which parents perceived the effectiveness of a particular school for their child.

Parents of children attending Reading Units

These pupils spend three and half hours per day in the reading unit and are integrated with pupils in the mainstream school for the remaining two hours per day. Parents considered there should be improved links with the mainstream school when the child returns. Parents suggested that a teacher who would liaise with the pupil, his teacher and parent on his/her return to mainstream would ease this transition. Parents have had experience of a Home School Liaison Teacher and this position is viewed very positively. There is a clear need for improved liaison between special placement and mainstream for these pupils.

Advantages of the special placement

Parents expressed their understanding of the benefits of the two year placement for their child in a positive way: 'At least they know what it was like here to be appreciated, to be valued, maybe worthwhile to know they are dyslexic and to succeed'. The teacher's role was considered to be central in building the child's confidence. Improved confidence was a very significant advantage of the placement experience: 'He's become very confident in past two years and I hope that won't be knocked out of him'. Some parents noted the child's improved independence with homework. A parent of three dyslexic boys described how she tells them: *'The glass is always half full, it's never half empty as I say to my three boys, being dyslexic is not the end of the world There is something for everybody'.* Parents' support for their child and acting as advocate with teachers and schools throughout his/her education was clearly evident in the group: *'Confidence is more important to me than having him stressed out. He has other strengths that are not being catered for in this system*

anyway'. Improvements in the child's self-belief and confidence in his school work was the major advantage of the special placement according to parents. Parents own knowledge about their child's learning was clearly evident in both groups.

Disadvantages of special placement

Increased dependency on the special support could be a disadvantage of being in a special placement, according to one of the parents. However, this was not a majority belief. Parents were conscious of the separate systems of special and mainstream schools and this could be a disadvantage for a child. Limited communication between teachers before, during and after the transfer between schools was also mentioned as a disadvantage: *'He doesn't want to be different, he doesn't want to be labelled'*. In general, the stigma of the dyslexia label was not considered a disadvantage. When asked if placement in a special class or special school would exclude the student and disadvantage him further, it was clear from the parents that some children had a negative learning experience prior to enrolment in the reading unit or reading school.

Summary

Returning to mainstream and particularly to Sixth Class is an issue of concern for parents. Parents are concerned about the level of support their child may or may not receive following special placement. The transfer to second level presents specific issues such as choosing a school, ensuring support for the dyslexic student, and checking the transfer of information from primary to second level. This can be difficult. Parents believed that all teachers need ongoing training and information about dyslexia and learning difficulties. When faced with the dilemma of removing their child from mainstream for special support, most parents make a pragmatic decision for their child. They believed the disadvantages of changing school are far outweighed by the benefits of the special placement. Mainstream is considered to be very important for students but the crucial factor is how the individual needs of the dyslexic learner will be met. They perceived the teachers in the special settings to be more qualified and more experienced than other teachers.

Parent Interviews

In this section the opinions, views and concerns of a group of parents whose children are past pupils of a reading school in an urban area will be reported. The students had left the reading school between the years 1999 and 2004. Parents of all pupils who had left the school during those years were contacted and invited to participate in the interviews. Sixty interviews are reported, fifty two of the students were in second level education and eight in primary level. This group of parents have experienced the special setting and now their child has returned to mainstream. Sixty per cent of students (n=36) are in Junior cycle of second level. Twenty seven percent (n=16) are in the

Senior cycle. Eight are in primary school. The findings of the parent interviews will be presented according to the following themes and topics:

- Views on reading school placement: benefits, disadvantages, and suggestions to make the placement more effective
- Transition to mainstream
- Information and support: Who to contact
- Parents' expectations for their children
- Students' enjoyment of reading

This review closes with a summary of themes addressed by parents

Special placement: advantages

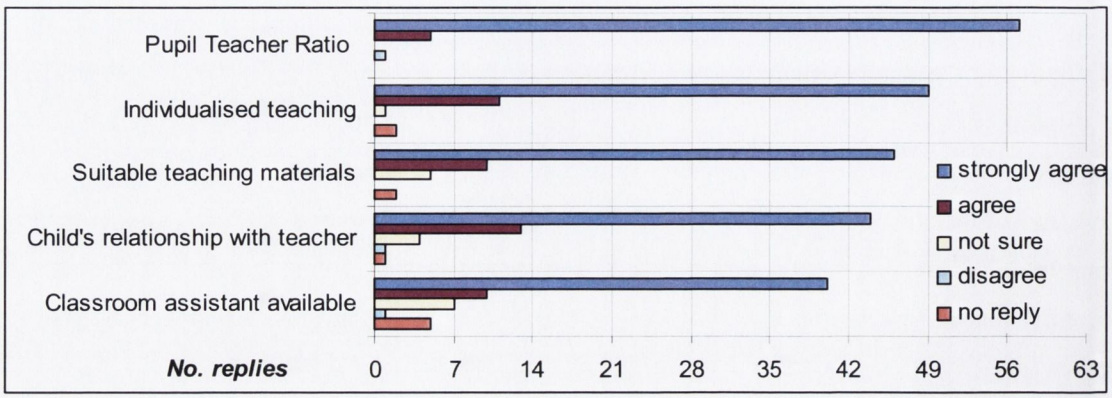
In response to the general question about their views on the special placement, a significant majority of parents' responses were very positive. Fifty two parents (87%) commented favourably on the placement, nine (13%) had some reservations.

Some parents attributed their child's improved confidence to the special placement: *'If he hadn't changed schools, he wouldn't be who he is now'.*

The teaching and learning conditions in the reading school enhanced the experience for many pupils. Parents mentioned *'Time and space to revisit the foundations...small class sises and teachers with understanding'* as specific benefits. Some of the negative issues concerning the placement were identified by parents. The segregation from friends and classmates was mentioned. For some pupils there was a sense of dislocation or a feeling the student was missing out on activities in his old school. For a small number of pupils, lack of progress was a negative issue for parents. For pupils with additional difficulties besides dyslexia, according to some parents, the placement in the reading school did not always address these co existing difficulties.

Benefits of the reading school: Parents were asked to list the specific benefits of the special placement; the profile of the benefits they cited is as follows:

Fig 4.65: Parents' views on the benefits of special placement



Parents' comments were based on their child's experience of the reading school and how their own child benefited from the placement. The main advantages mentioned were improved confidence and self esteem, teaching methods and individual attention received and improved reading and writing skills. Increased confidence and self esteem was most often mentioned as the main advantage in attending the special school.

Parents acknowledged the teachers commitment to building self esteem among the students. The teacher's acceptance of the pupils' difficulties and the emphasis on building up self confidence was recognised by the parents. For some pupils, acceptance of his dyslexic difficulty improved his overall concentration. Self acceptance was a consequence of teacher empathy. As their child moved through the second level education system parents have noticed improved self confidence and long term benefits included the confidence to ask for help.

The pupils' primary difficulty is in acquiring literacy skills. Consequently the main emphasis in the school is on the pupils' attainment in reading and writing skills. Parents considered this to be one of the benefits of the special placement: *'He couldn't read at all until he went in....I never looked back from the day he went into [the unit]'*. One of the mothers described a day she felt was a milestone for her son.

> *I always remember the day when I sat in the church on his Confirmation and he had to read. I held my breath and thought he's going to stand up there and never read. But I thought at least all the other parents know the same difficulties. And he read and I thought God that's surprising....that's a milestone to stand up there and actually read.*

The major focus on acquiring reading skills and literacy skills was clearly a major benefit to the pupils, according to parents: *'She learnt to read, simple as that'*. Continued improvement in reading was reported by parents of these past pupils.

Teachers in the reading school frequently individualise the reading instruction in order to meet the different interests and needs of students. One of the parents explained how her son learnt to read:

> *The computer was invaluable, absolutely invaluable because I reckon that J. ended up learning how to read on the computer because he had no interest in reading a book and he still hasn't to this day at all. He would never lift a book up, but the one thing he did was get into computers and he'd research things on the computers and he had an interest in skateboarding and he went to all the sites and he read about all the different guys all over the world skateboarding and the mere fact he had to read about something he was interested in.....that was actually the making of him I think*

Focussing on the pupil's own interests is a powerful motivator in learning to read. The approach to the use of technology in the school is as a medium, a tool for learning to read. Appropriate literacy software is also used.

Parents mentioned specifically the teaching approaches and individualised attention their child received while a student in the special placement. For many pupils this was in contrast to their previous learning experience. Matching the pace of learning according to the needs of the child was

a feature of the specialised teaching approach. A structured approach to reading contributed to an effective outcome for pupils. Multimodal teaching approaches were evident in the reading school environment. One of the parents described the teaching methods which were used in the special placement as follows:

> *J particularly liked his methods of teaching....he was taught through.....you know if they were teaching about the tsunami, they taught it through actions and pictures and words. I thought the whole method of teaching children through examples and all that is far better than studying the whole lines of a book and trying to remember lines. Whatever methods that work, that project method, where they all sit together and they all learn together in the same environment instead of having to go home and read five pages of history. Any sort of project work like that I think it sinks in much better, because he remembers the things.*

This aspect of multi faceted teaching of all subjects in the curriculum benefited the pupils: *'Academically it was all a plus; made the subjects interesting, galleries, trips, it was exactly at her level; music; projects; meetings were good'.* The pupil's relationship with the teacher, the empathy and encouragement of the teacher were essential to the success of the placement. Parents repeatedly mentioned the commitment of the teachers to the individual needs of the pupils.

Parents frequently mentioned the fact that when their child realised he was not the only one with a reading difficulty and could learn in a small group of pupils with similar difficulties, this made a huge difference. One parent described the value of the reading school *...is that 'there are other people like me in this world ok I'll cope with it, I'm not the only one'*

The small class size in the special school makes it possible for child's individual needs to be addressed: *'All the pressure was taken off M and she could just relax and I'd say she learned more in those two years than she would have if she'd stayed in primary school'.* Individual attention from the teacher and more frequent interactions during lessons may also have a beneficial effect on behaviour:

> *When he was in St... I don't think he was an angel, but his behaviour was fine because he was in an environment where he was understood and accepted, and wasn't the laugh of the class.*

The pupil teacher ratio of nine to one allows teachers to adjust the pace of the class to cater for the needs of individual children. Parents repeatedly mentioned this as an advantage of enrolment in the reading school:

> *I think it gave her space to go at her own pace, whereas when you're in a class of thirty one you're forced to develop at the pace of everyone else and she wasn't ready.....whereas she got almost ...individual tuition in M it was in a secure environment, and for a child who is finding it difficult, it gives them the space and also the one to one, and I suppose it prioritises really what her problem was.*

The school focuses on the pupil's interests and strengths and this fact was mentioned by parents who referred to the benefits of the creative side of the schools curriculum.

Motivating pupils, and ensuring that learning is enjoyable, is expressed in regular events such as an art display that was held in the school.

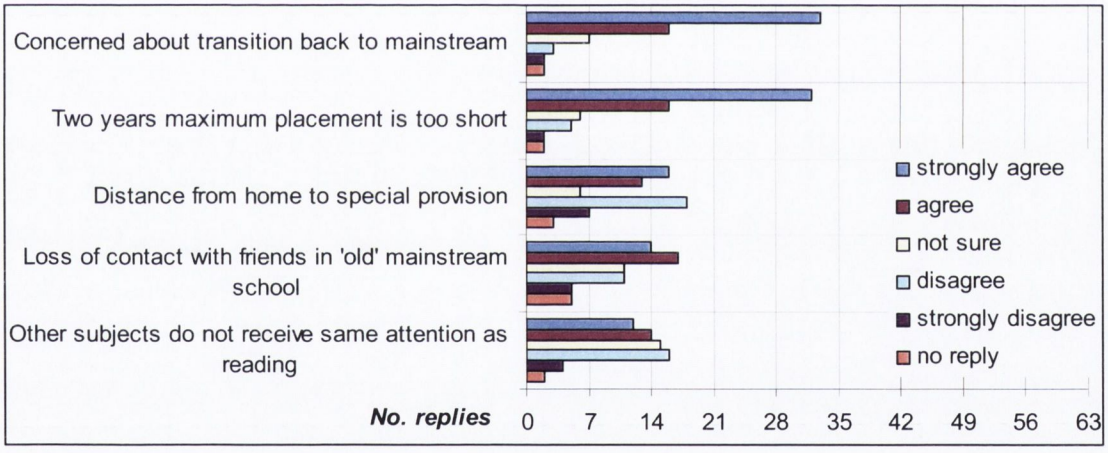
> *I think they got an awful lot out of that, that creative side, the pressure was off them for a while. Because a lot of it was learning, and for them its so hard to learn, so you can sense the weight off their shoulders when something like that happens. I just remember the girls particularly being really enthusiastic.*

Four parents out of the total interviewed (60) stated that their child had gained no benefit from the special placement. These were pupils who had additional difficulties such as anxiety, school phobia, attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity disorder.

Special placement: disadvantages

Parents were asked to specify the disadvantages of sending their child to the reading school. The main disadvantage focused on moving the child from his old school and the difficulties with the transition back to mainstream. Some parents mentioned more than one disadvantage. The chart below presents the parents' views of the disadvantages of the special placement.

Fig 4.66: Parents views of the disadvantages of special placement



Transitions: The main disadvantage of a reading school placement, according to parents is changing their child's school. Their child felt a sense of separation, or dislocation by 'missing out' on the mainstream school activities. One parent described this as '*taking them out of reality*'. Some parents felt there was a stigma attached to the move to a special school. Some parents considered the age of the child to be an important factor in the transition to the reading school. It was considered to be more difficult for a child if he was in Fifth or Sixth Class.

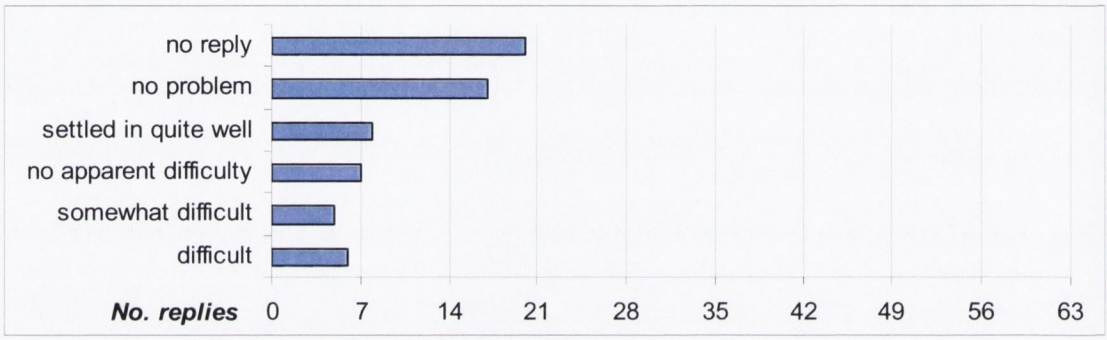
Parents were asked how their child had settled back to mainstream school following two years in the special reading school. In summary thirty two parents (74%) stated that their child adapted well to the change in school and eleven parents (26%) said their child found the transition a difficult one. Eighteen parents did not specifically answer this question. Parents pointed out how the transition to a different school outside the local area and leaving friends is a disadvantage of the

special placement. Maintaining friendships with other children can be more difficult as the majority of children travel a wide distance from the school. Leaving friends was also mentioned as a difficulty in settling into a new environment as follows:

> *They're leaving all their friends, they're going to a new environment, they're apprehensive, which would be normal anyway but they're also feeling the distress of a difficulty in learning.*

As the reading schools are located in areas which are not easily accessible to all feeder schools, the majority of pupils attending the reading schools use special school transport. Parents noted the disadvantage of distance from home to school and the time spent travelling. This could be up to four hours per day.

Fig 4.67: Parents views on pupils' transition to mainstream



For those parents who indicated that their child had difficulty settling back to mainstream, the social aspect was mentioned more frequently. *Socially a bit difficult, academically OK.* One parent expressed the ongoing social difficulties her son continues to face in his second level school. She describes it as *a 'work in progress'* he was *'socially isolated'* Students need time to adjust to the larger classes and a change from the personalised and individualised nature of the special school. Parents' comments such as '*Initially he missed the support of the school'* and *He had a tough first year'* describe the social difficulties some of the pupils experienced.

While the question was not asked specifically of all parents, it was apparent that a significant number of children had changed schools more than once since leaving the special reading school. In some cases the student had changed second level school after one year. In other cases the student had returned to a different primary school on leaving the special school. This information emerged in the course of the interview. A follow up investigation would be necessary to establish the reasons for the changes.

Some pupils return to Sixth Class and there was agreement that this is the most difficult year for transition as the child has to transfer again after one year. Parents reported limited attention paid to the transition back to mainstream. It was parents' experience that some pupils needed to be re assessed in order to secure resources in the mainstream school. Transfer of information and communication of that information to the support teacher and class teacher is a crucial factor in a

successful transfer. Some parents reported that the information provided was not acted upon. Sixty per cent of this group of parents have experienced the primary system and their child is now in secondary school. It appears that transfer of student information from year to year does not always occur. The lack of information between teachers in the same year, was also a concern. The transition back to mainstream is also an issue of concern to parents with children currently in special reading schools. Their views would corroborate the views of the parents of past pupils. This theme will be addressed in the discussion section of the report.

Parents were of the opinion that the age of the child at transition, and the class level is a significant factor in the effectiveness of the special placement. Some parents felt that a transfer for Third and Fourth Class, or for Fifth and Sixth Class is more appropriate. This would mean that child would return to his 'old school' for two years before transferring to second level, or, alternatively he would transfer to second level school with his peers. Moving back to mainstream for one year, and then moving schools again one year later, to second level is more difficult. One of the parents expressed the dilemma:

> *On the one hand it would be advantageous for the child to do the last two years and go on to secondary school but on the other side the younger they are, the break mightn't be as difficult.*

Students with complex difficulties: Although their primary difficulty is dyslexia, some pupils enrolled in the school may have co existing difficulties. Parents noted that this was a disadvantage of the placement for their own child. Management of pupils with attention difficulties or behavioural difficulties can take a disproportionate amount of the teacher's time, and parents were aware of this. They viewed this as a disadvantage of the placement. If the emotional and behavioural difficulties of pupils are not managed effectively by the teacher within the class, this can have an unsatisfactory outcome for other pupils. Pupils with attention difficulties need specific intervention for this difficulty. There was a suggestion of the need to provide supports to the reading school to deal effectively with other co existing problems associated with dyslexia. Parents were aware that some children in their child's class may have had attention or behavioural difficulties such as ADD, ADHD or emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Some parents could find no disadvantages with the special placement. There were many very positive statements about the school as follows:

> *When it came to* [my son], *I was delighted to think he could be educated in a small classroom environment in a school that presents itself very professionally. I thought the whole ambience of the school bought me into letting him go there as well as knowing he needed the help, without a shadow of a doubt*

Suggestions to make placement more effective: Parents of past pupils of the reading school were asked if they had any suggestions or ideas which would make the placement in the reading school more effective. It was hoped that some ideas for improving the service for the present group of

parents would emerge. Some of the responses were specific to the reading school. Others were directed to the primary school system and special educational support in general. The following charts present parents' suggestions at school level, and at system level. The subsequent section clarifies the parents' suggestions.

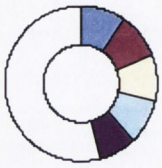
Fig 4.68: Parents' suggestions for improvement (a) at school level, and (b) at system level

a):



- more parent involvement: 10
- link with other schools: 5
- open day: 4
- past pupils support: 4
- no reply: 40

b):



- liaison between special & mainstream: 6
- information/support for families: 6
- more reading schools/units: 6
- early identification of dyslexia: 6
- consider child's age at transition: 5
- no reply: 34

Some of the parents who were interviewed felt that they would have liked to be more involved in their child's education while he was a pupil in the reading school. More structured support for parents was suggested. For example, help and guidance in supporting with homework was suggested. Parents considered regular communication with the child's teacher to be effective in supporting his learning but they hoped for further information and knowledge. Some parents mentioned they would be willing to attend a training course. More structured support for parents throughout the placement was suggested.

Structured links with other schools in the area would provide opportunities for the pupils. Basketball matches regularly take place between the reading school and local primary schools. Parents mentioned the opportunity for the reading school to make further links with the other schools in the local area particularly for sport. Parents specifically mentioned Open Day as an opportunity to prepare the new pupils for the transition to the special reading school. This is an induction day for new pupils who are introduced to the school, they meet all the teachers and an individual assessment of reading takes place. Meeting the other students before the new term and becoming familiar with the school was considered an advantage. A longer induction time before joining the school was suggested. Past parents suggested more help be given to parents before placement begins.

Parents of pupils in the school already provide information and support to each other during the placement. One parent described a network of families of past pupils who keep in touch and suggested how this could be developed for other families. Past pupils could also play a more active role in supporting the school.

At system level, ongoing communication between the 'home school' and special school would lead to more efficient transfer of information when the pupil returns. Many parents mentioned the need for continuing communication between the child's schools as he moves from ordinary to special and back again as being very necessary. One father suggested:

> *Some sort of liaison between both schools.... it would probably be good if they kept in contact with the kids in the class or with the teachers....even if it meant that they spend a bit of time in their old school, or the other class came over to --- to see what they do..*

Transfer of information from special to mainstream and follow up of pupils was considered important. Parents suggested more liaison with teachers, A few of the parents recommended that a teacher should monitor the child's return to mainstream and follow up progress in the ordinary school. This was described as:

> *Somebody who has dealt with the children to follow up. Even to get the child's opinion on what they're being taught in school or what way. They were taught a certain system that kept them going and ...he might need a different type of work to do at home.*

Teachers in the reading schools and in the special reading units also considered this idea. This theme will be further addressed in the discussion section of the report.

Parents need support when their child is experiencing difficulties in school, particularly when the difficulties are ongoing and persistent. Parents need information to understand the signs of dyslexia. Information talks, leaflets for parents and parent information nights and videos were suggested. Parents stated they needed information before the placement as well as during the placement and suggested a network of past parents to support the families of pupils enrolled in the school. Parent to parent contact is a feature of parents whose child has attended the reading school. A large number of parents are members of DAI. Parent networking and support is maintained by attendance at conferences, or summer schools.

Support in mainstream

Some parents felt strongly that their child's needs had not been met in the mainstream school and so had no choice when transferring him/her to special reading school: *'It was the thought of him not having anything, you felt you'd give him a chance [send him to a special school]'.* This mother would have preferred to leave her son in his mainstream school if support had been provided:

> *I think overall, possibly yes, (leave him in mainstream) because he would have been with his brother, with neighbour's children. I think he would have got along maybe, but he would have struggled, he would always have been struggling.....when he did go along (to St...) he realised that there were other children who hadn't got great reading skills either. If I had to do it all over again I would have fought tooth and nail to make them get somebody for him [in his mainstream school].*

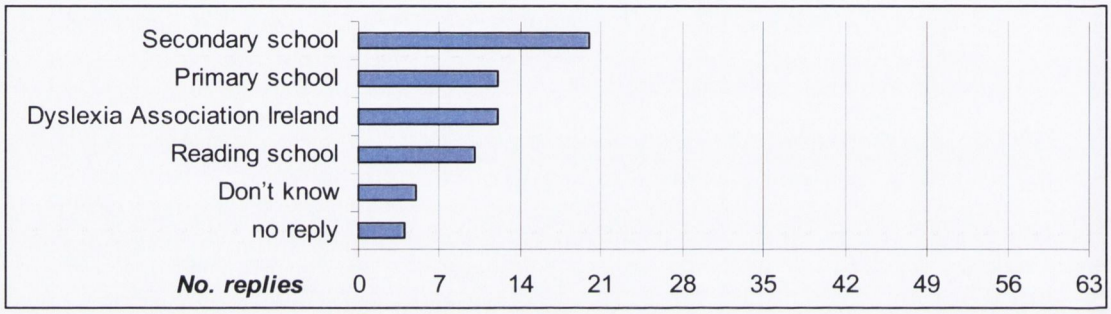
Parents are generally positive about special provision and stated that there should be more special reading schools and reading units, at primary and at second level. Parents suggested that ***regular assessment*** of children would identify learning difficulties as early as possible. Information leaflets

for parents outlining the signs of dyslexia and early checklists for literacy skill development were suggested. There was some criticism of ***second level teachers' understanding of dyslexia***. This consisted of parents' experience of information not passed on to teachers about their child's specific difficulties:

> *Even though I put it in red letters on the form that B had a reading difficulty, this teacher didn't know. The information hadn't been passed on. There just seems to be lack of communication down the line you know.*

Guidance and Support: who to contact: Parents were asked who they would contact if their son or daughter needed support now or in the future. The chart below illustrates who parents would contact for guidance:

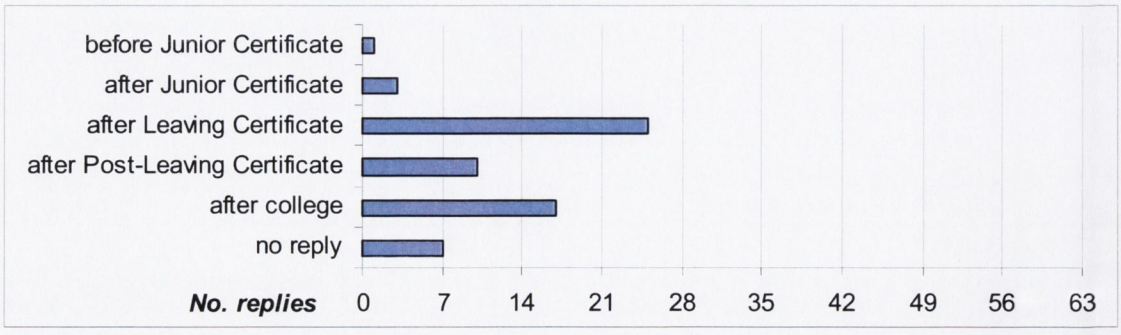
Fig 4.69: Guidance and support: whom to contact



The majority of parents replied they would contact a member of the staff in their child's school. In primary school the personnel mentioned were the class teacher, Learning support, Resource teacher or Principal. Second level staff mentioned were: the home school liaison person, the Year Head, Resource or Learning support teacher or Guidance teacher. Some parents said they have a good relationship with a private psychologist or tutor and could contact this person for guidance. Others would contact the DAI or a tutor in the workshops if their child attends one. Some parents said they would prefer to contact the Reading school and have done so since their child left. A small number said they did not know who to contact

Parents Expectations for their children: Parents were asked when they thought their child would finish his full time education.

Fig 4.70: Parents educational expectations for their children

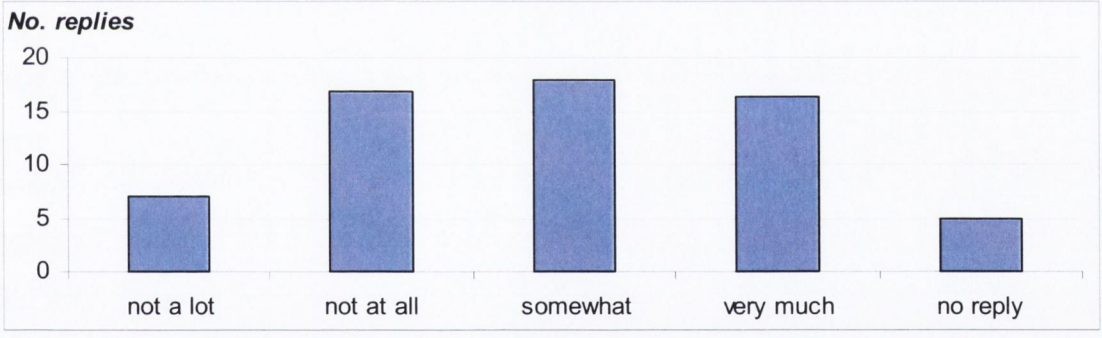


Responses ranged from before Junior Certificate to after college. One parent who replied that she thought her son would leave full time education before Junior Certificate was actively involved in encouraging him to remain in school and had enlisted support of Teen counselling services in her local area. Parent support is a significant factor in determining the progress of children with dyslexia. This support is vital to the continuing progress of these pupils particularly when the special placement has ended.

Second level/Examinations: Queries were raised about the kinds of support available in second level school for Junior Cert and Leaving Cert examinations. Parents were concerned that students who had been granted special consideration at Junior Certificate (for example, a reader, scribe, use of word processor) had to re-apply for consideration at Leaving Certificate and they were uncertain whether the consideration would be repeated. This was a cause of stress and anxiety. Some students had an exemption from Irish but other students with dyslexia did not. Parents needed advice on applying for an exemption. The problem of extra time needed by students with dyslexia to complete written exams was also a concern to parents.

Parents were asked to rate their ***child's enjoyment of reading***.

Fig 4.71: Students' enjoyment of reading



Some parents expressed delight at their child's love of reading More than half of the past pupils enjoy reading somewhat or very much, according to their parents. Others realised that their son or daughter would never enjoy reading as it has always been so difficult. Less than half the parents reported their child did not enjoy reading.

Conditions of Learning: Parents commented on the extra effort their children put into school work. This often leads to tiredness. Availability of books and texts on tape is a problem for students with dyslexia.

Overview of themes addressed by parents.

Many of the same topics and concerns were repeatedly addressed by parents in the questionnaires, focus groups and telephone interviews. This section will summarise the common issues addressed under the following headings:

- Students' self confidence
- Transition to and from special placement
- Level of support in mainstream
- Transition to second level
- Need for information

Students' self confidence: Parents of past pupils commented on the child's increased confidence and self esteem as a result of enrolment in the special placement. The social and emotional issues surrounding a child's failure to develop adequate literacy skills is a major issue for families Building up the child's confidence was considered by parents to be the main advantage of the special placement.. The benefits of improved self confidence among past pupils appear to be long lasting. Parents acknowledged the teacher's emphasis on building up the child's self esteem. Parents attribute this to the commitment of the teachers, in the special placement. It was the parents' opinion that their child's reading had improved significantly Parents also reported their child's improved attitude to reading. Support from parents is a significant factor in determining the progress of pupils with learning difficulties The majority of parents were very supportive of their child, assisting with homework, acting as an advocate in secondary school and seeking out career guidance and support at all stages. This support is vital to the continuing progress of these pupils particularly when the special placement has ended. The majority of parents reported that they expected their child to remain in full time education until after Leaving Certificate. A significant number expected their child to complete a third level course in college.

Transition from mainstream to a special placement was a major concern to parents and an issue that was addressed in focus groups, telephone interviews and questionnaires. The prospect of changing school is a major issue for parents. Parents were of the view that moving a child from his friends and his 'old' school can cause great concern. Some parents considered the move to a special placement as stigmatising for the child. The child is separated from his friends in his mainstream school and usually has to travel a long distance outside his local area to the special school. One parent described it as a disadvantage *'breaking the links with old school and re establishing the links with a new school'* Changing school was one of the main disadvantages of the special placement. However, parents reported that the inconvenience of changing school was offset by the academic and social benefits to the child. Improved self confidence and improved reading skills were repeatedly reported by parents as benefits of the special placement.

Moving school is never undertaken lightly and following the special placement parents were concerned about the support the child would receive on ***return to mainstream***. This was perceived by parents to be one of the disadvantages of special placement. The parents in the focus groups and parents of past pupils expressed a particular concern for those children who must return to Sixth Class. This can be the most difficult year to return to mainstream, after an absence of two years,

then at the end of Sixth Class, to begin again in a new school with new friends and new teachers. Pupils attending reading units have also changed school to attend a mainstream school with a reading unit. Although they are integrated in mainstream classes for some subjects each day, they have a strong identification with the reading unit. At the end of the two year placement they return to their original school. Parents of these pupils also found changing school a disadvantage. There are two main issues of concern: the level of support child will receive in mainstream, and the restrictions on support teaching in mainstream

Parents were concerned about ***support resources in mainstream*** for their child. They felt that some pupils will not be eligible for ***learning support*** as a result of the progress made in the special placement. Other pupils will not be prioritised for support teaching because of the schools recently changed allocation of special education resources. Parents are justifiably concerned about the level of support for their child on his return to mainstream. Parents of pupils who had previously received learning/resource support were less than satisfied with the level of support their child received

Parents believe the ***large class size*** in mainstream is a disadvantage for the child with learning difficulties. Parents questioned the effectiveness of support teaching for the child with dyslexia. They are dissatisfied with the lack of special support for pupils who have a specific difficulty with literacy skills. They do not expect the mainstream teacher to support their child; instead they look to the learning support or resource teacher. They are unclear about the type of support teaching and literacy activities which take place during withdrawal teaching sessions. Previous experience of learning support/resource teaching is perceived as unsatisfactory.

Parents of children in special placements are keenly aware of their child's ***poor spelling ability and poor written skills***. Parents of past pupils are aware of continuing difficulties with writing. A significant majority have requested special considerations in the writing and spelling component of the Junior Certificate examination. Parents reported that their child continued to have difficulty with writing skills despite long period of support teaching.

Transition to secondary school is a challenging step for all students but for the student with dyslexia it presents more specific challenges. The separateness of two systems creates difficulties for parents during this transition. Transfer of information between schools and between teachers does not receive priority. Difficulties seem to be greater at second level when parents and student have to deal with more teachers and subjects. Parents expressed dismay at subject teachers' lack of awareness of dyslexia at second level. This caused undue stress for the student and parent applying for special consideration at certificate examinations. A liaison teacher or resource teacher to follow up an inform parents and students would relieve the anxiety for students on returning to mainstream. The student with dyslexia may have difficulty with the following tasks:

- Timetable for different subjects; moving to different classrooms;

- Organisation of subjects, textbooks, notes;
- Submitting homework on time;
- Taking notes in class, copying from blackboard;
- Reading aloud in class;
- Extra time needed to process information, to finish work;
- Written assessment tests, weak writing skills;
- Planning projects and assignments.

Parents were of the opinion that all teachers' awareness of dyslexia is necessary for a successful transfer to secondary school. They believed that the teachers in primary level have a better understanding of the whole child and are more aware of learning difficulties than teachers at second level. Transfer to second level was a major concern for all parents. The parents in this study reported extensive homework support and have acted as advocate throughout their child's education. Parents called for ***more information*** about their child's difficulty, and about reading schools and reading units

At all stages, parents do not feel they have sufficient information about their child's difficulties, the extent of his difficulty, the signs and implications of dyslexia and the options for additional supports. They frequently make the decision about special provision in a state of anxious uncertainty. They were of the opinion that reading schools and reading units should provide information to all schools in the region about the special service and increase their profile as a support and resource for all mainstream schools. This was suggested by SERC in 1993.

Regular assessment of pupils would improve the service for children with dyslexia. Parents felt strongly that each school could do more for the student who is dyslexic. They were critical of the lack of information and training for teachers and the lack of information for parents.

Concluding comments

Building up the child's confidence was considered by parents to be a major benefit of the special placement for pupils with dyslexia. Parents face difficulties through changing school, moving back to mainstream and transferring to second level. Transfer of information between schools and between teachers is a particular difficulty. A major issue of concern for parents is their perception of an inadequate level of support teaching provided for pupils with dyslexia in mainstream. They are of the view that teachers need further information and training in the area of dyslexia and reading difficulties. The lack of information about their child learning difficulties and information about reading schools and reading units was a recurring theme.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study set out to identify the main literacy skills taught and the teaching approaches and methods used in different settings for pupils in primary school, mainstream and special, who have been assessed as having dyslexia. The question is whether children with dyslexia need distinctly different teaching approaches.

The question asked is how does each setting differ in terms of the teaching and learning context and is there any difference in the learning outcomes. To date, there has been no systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning situation in each of the special settings for pupils with dyslexia. As the study progressed the question was asked is the model of literacy instruction in use the most appropriate model of instruction? Could the most effective elements found in the special setting be transferred to mainstream? A further question considered by the study was: is separate support in special settings for pupils with dyslexia the best use of resources?

There is evidence that the key factor for children with dyslexia is how materials and programmes are presented and how learning outcomes are assessed (Reason, 1998: Peer & Reid, 2001). These pupils may be receiving extra support in mainstream school from the learning support or resource teacher or in a special placement such as a reading unit or reading school. Questions were asked about the effectiveness of the teaching approaches and methods used, and how teachers prioritise the literacy skills taught.

The study addressed the different teaching situations and examined how there are similarities and differences between extra support in mainstream and special provision. The study highlighted the central role of the support teacher and how the identification and assessment procedures for dyslexia in Ireland have an impact on the effectiveness of this role, and also on the teachers' understanding of dyslexia.

In this chapter, the discussion of these issues will be structured as follows:

- Teaching approaches and literacy skills: hearing individual reading; teaching phonics; teaching phonological awareness
- Issues which make a difference to the effectiveness of extra support
- Dyslexia in Ireland; key issues

Teaching approaches and literacy skills

The findings from the questionnaires and focus groups showed that the main teaching approaches focus on reading accuracy and reading fluency. Methods used most frequently are hearing individual reading, teaching phonics skills and phonological awareness. The case studies, however, showed that the teaching strategies also involve pupils monitoring their own learning, and there is some evidence of metacognitive approaches to learning.

It was found that an imbalance exists in the literacy skills taught to pupils with dyslexia. The findings showed that limited time is spent on teaching writing skills and that there is no integrated model of reading and writing evident in the instructional approach. Evidence from the case studies showed that there are variations between how teachers prioritise literacy skills taught and the actual teaching situation in each of the special settings. Individualisation of teaching and differentiation of methods used is clearly evident in the case studies.

The research has established that a wide range of factors contribute to teacher effectiveness in teaching reading (Wragg, 1998). Pupils' progress is largely dependent on the teaching strategies and approaches used rather than the provision of extra resources and personnel (Solity et al., 2000). In this section, the predominant approaches which were found to be used by teachers of pupils with dyslexia such as *hearing individual reading, teaching word recognition, teaching phonics and phonological awareness* will be discussed. Do these predominant approaches contain all the elements of balanced literacy teaching? The limitations of a dependence on an outmoded model of reading instruction will also be discussed.

Hearing individual reading

All children make errors in reading when learning to read. Research evidence suggests that teachers can gain a better understanding of the child and his difficulties by regularly hearing oral reading (Hall, 2003). The teachers in the present study were found to use this method of regularly hearing individual reading as their main teaching approach. Regular one-to-one hearing of individual reading by teachers has the potential to provide intensive support for readers (Slavin, 1987; Adams, 1990). In addition, the literature also highlights this method of instruction as a means of observation and direct assessment of reading. A technique known as *miscue analysis* (Beard, 1990; Hall, 2003) is a procedure for analyzing how children use skills and strategies as they read aloud. Keeping a *running record* of the child's errors is long established as a method of giving diagnostic information about the child's specific difficulties (Neale, 1958; Clay, 1985). The teachers in the present study were regularly 'hearing reading', they were listening to the child read, and giving feedback as necessary. Do the teachers maximise/take full advantage of this widely-used teaching approach?

The literature on assessment has shown that 'formative assessment' which directs teacher attention to what needs to be taught and the pupil's attention to what needs to be learned, can be integrated into the teaching and learning (Black & William, 1998). However, for the teachers in the study, this aspect of individual *assessment* while reading appears to be lacking in the teachers' instruction approach. Teachers do not appear to make the best use of the opportunity for an oral reading assessment while hearing individual reading. Children use different cueing systems in learning to read (grapho-phonic, syntactic and semantic) and strategies (initiating, predicting, confirming) as they read a text aloud. The errors or miscues a reader makes give insights into the range of

strategies he/she has, and how well he can apply these cues and strategies. The vast majority of the teachers hear pupils read individually every day. They listened to the child read and gave feedback as necessary. This warrants further research into the teachers' understanding of the issues associated with formative assessment. The findings show that the teachers have the skills to carry out formative assessment in reading. They need support in making connections between assessment and teaching approaches.

Formative assessment: The individual teacher-pupil interaction while hearing individual reading is an important component of the effectiveness of this method of reading instruction. Hearing individual reading is a means of responding to pupils' individual differences. Teachers would find the Drumcondra English Profiles (Shiel & Murphy, 2000) a helpful support for linking assessment to the teaching of reading. The Drumcondra Profiles provide a useful framework for assessing reading by providing indicators of achievement at each class stage. In terms of ongoing or formative assessment of reading, the profiles can be used by teachers to clarify the teaching goals and expectations of pupils. The teacher-pupil interaction during reading instruction needs to be closely matched to the child's developing use of reading strategies as recommended by Marie Clay in Reading Recovery in order to be effective.

How does this most widely used teaching method -- *hearing individual reading* -- differ in each of the special settings?

Reading Schools: The teacher-pupil interaction in the classrooms of the reading schools was very much a child-centred instruction method. The style of communication between teacher and pupils showed a supportive and responsive attitude. Teachers in the reading schools wished for more time to hear reading as they considered it to be a very important daily exercise. It has been established that the input of the teacher is seen as the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of instruction in literacy (Adams, 1990). These teachers in this study used *hearing individual reading* as a means to give pupils regular practice in oral reading, to measure progress in fluency, to record this progress, and to give regular feedback on their progress. In this way they were carrying out formative assessment of reading progress. Teachers from reading schools (in the focus groups) expressed some degree of frustration that the standardised tests used to record progress do not adequately record the child's progress in reading. These standardised tests record the extent to which a child's performance as a reader is in line with national norms. However the teachers' ongoing assessment of reading progress was not recorded in a similar structured or systematic way. Further support for teachers is indicated in this area of understanding formative assessment. The case studies showed that the teaching strategy of prompting pupils, modelling correct responses and supporting or 'scaffolding' the pupils while hearing individual reading appears to be an almost automatic/unconscious teaching response among the teachers in the reading schools. This close teacher-pupil interaction is a key element which is evident in the teaching approaches used.

Additional small-scale classroom based research is needed to investigate how teachers could use regular hearing of individual reading as a means of formative assessment of reading.

Teachers in Reading Units: Data from the teachers in the reading units indicated that they used the method of hearing individual reading as their main teaching approach. While this approach represents one element of effective literacy practice as highlighted in the literature (Solity et al., 2000), there was an absence of any form of *'miscue analysis'* or a structured approach to linking assessment and teaching. However, data from the case study reading units showed that teachers used strategies which helped pupils to monitor their own learning and that some self management of learning took place.

Learning support teachers and resource teachers also used this method of hearing individual reading as their main instruction method. As the majority of these pupils are withdrawn from class for this extra support, hearing individual reading is an opportunity for intensive one-to-one support which would not be available in the large class. It is a useful method to determine the strategies the child is using in developing reading skills. In this way a direct link between assessment and teaching is available. However the learning support/resource teacher needs to become more aware of the potential of this method as a means of formative assessment. The case studies showed that self management skills are fostered by the one-to-one intensive support. Parents expressed concern, however, that there was limited transfer of skills from learning support to mainstream class.

Tutors from DAI reported they do not have the time to regularly hear individual reading. The main teaching approaches used by the tutors involve teaching phonic skills, high frequency words and cloze procedure.

To conclude, data from the teachers' questionnaires and focus groups emphasised hearing individual reading as the main instructional approach used by teachers. However evidence from the case studies showed that the teaching strategies used included metacognitive and self management strategies for pupils. The teacher-pupil interaction included the use of prompting, modelling, and supporting each pupil while hearing individual reading. In each of the special settings in this study teachers were implementing an effective instructional approach by emphasising the importance of hearing individual reading on a daily basis. Their predominant teaching method provided intensive support for the pupils; this contributes to effective reading instruction. Hearing individual reading is widely recommended as an effective teaching approach particularly for pupils with reading difficulties. For the teachers in this study it was the main teaching approach they used. However the potential of this method could be vastly extended if it was developed as a method of linking assessment and teaching. This would provide a framework for a formative assessment of reading progress. This could be addressed by means of training in 'miscue analysis' and 'running records' and similar techniques. Such an approach would provide a more effective approach to the ongoing

assessment of reading. Research into the ways teachers record information on the strategies pupils use would enhance the benefits of this widely-used approach to teaching reading.

Teaching phonics

Teaching phonic skills was a priority for all teachers in the study. Phonics skills means the knowledge of the sounds represented by letters and common letter patterns and the ability to apply that knowledge to read unfamiliar words. However, it needs to be stressed that phonics instruction is a means to an end and children need to know why they are learning letter-sound information (USA NRP, 2000). This will help them to apply their knowledge to reading. Phonics instruction is just one component in a reading instruction programme. Successful literacy approaches that include all the elements of an integrated approach have been called *'balanced literacy'* programmes. This and other research (Pressley et al., 1996) conclude that phonics instruction is an essential component of effective literacy instruction. It has been found that letter sound cues are more important in recognising words than either semantic or syntactic cues (Pressley, 1998). The UK National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998a) also has a strong emphasis on phonics as a component in its framework for literacy. The strategy promotes literacy teaching based on phonic knowledge taught with a multi sensory approach.

It could be said that a teacher's instructional approach is determined by her dominant view of reading. There are at least two theories that explain how readers get meaning from print. The 'bottom up' or 'top down' view each place a different emphasis on 'decoding' or 'using context' as a strategy to read unfamiliar words (Reid, 1998). The 'top down' model claims that readers gets meaning from context and prior knowledge (Goodman, 1976). The 'bottom up' model (Tunmer, 1991; Stanovich, 1988; Adams 1990) claims the reader must focus on each word to decode the meaning of the text. An alternative approach (Moss and Reason, 1998) suggests that literacy learning is composed of three main areas: *Meaning* (understanding the content), *Phonics* (sounds and the analysis of sounds) and *Fluency* (related to word recognition). Instruction in phonic skills is just one aspect of a balanced approach to teaching reading. It is the integration of skills and behaviours which leads to successful reading instruction (Clay, 1985). This is well established throughout the various models of literacy teaching (Hall & Harding, 2003; Stahl, 1997).

Meaning, phonics and fluency

There is an implicit assumption that phonics teaching is but one element of literacy teaching but explicit links between text, sentence and word levels are not made (Piotrowski & Reason, 2000). This is a common occurrence among teachers of reading. A large proportion of the teachers in the study were in their present position for less than five years. Teachers' underdeveloped understanding of the stages of reading has already been noted as an explanation for poor progress in reading (Eivers et al., 2004).

The other two components of the reading instruction model suggested by Moss and Reason (1998) Meaning and Fluency received less attention by ***all the teachers*** in the present study. Reading comprehension (meaning) was not considered a priority for teaching, but was addressed through paired reading and some silent reading in class. The teachers considered reading comprehension to be less of a primary difficulty than reading accuracy. However, training in reading fluency, though not considered to be a teaching priority, was nevertheless addressed by the amount of time spent on hearing individual reading.

In summary, the data from the questionnaires and focus groups support the view that teachers in this study had an over-emphasis on one aspect of literacy instruction, namely phonics. The approach teachers used was a 'skills based' model whereby the main deficit skill areas are addressed. A broader approach to literacy instruction is widely recommended in the literature. However, there is evidence from the case study schools that there is more integration of literacy skills than was reported by teacher participants. Further research is needed to examine the use of generalised teaching of phonics skills to pupils with dyslexia. The teachers in the reading units and reading schools in this study have been found to use elements of individualised programmes (highly structured phonics) and also elements of assisted learning techniques (learning from others, including adult support) The teaching of phonics skills was highly individualised for the students and was also supported by coaching, modelling and adult support. Additional research needs to question if this combination of individualised programmes of phonics skills and peer or adult support could be transferred to a mainstream setting for all pupils. The question also arises as to what is the most effective balance between the individualised approach and the assisted learning.

Teaching phonological awareness

Phonological awareness means an awareness of the sounds in words and an ability to manipulate these sounds orally, to segment sounds, and to break words into syllables. Phonological awareness has been recognised as a predictor of a child's development in learning to read and research has emphasised its importance in predicting success in reading (Bradley & Bryant, 1983). There are three levels of phonological awareness: syllabic awareness, onset rime awareness, and phonemic awareness. Research also reflects theories on onset-rime awareness in influencing the child's reading development (Goswami, 1993). Phonemic awareness and knowledge of phonics are key reading related abilities (NICHD, 2000).

Teachers and tutors in this study used a mix of literacy programmes and materials designed to address the needs of pupils. The predominant literacy programme used reflects current research on the importance of phonological awareness in predicting success in reading (Bradley & Bryant, 1983) and recent theories on onset rime awareness in influencing the child's reading development (Goswami, 1993). There is agreement among researchers that development of phonological skills moves from an awareness of large units (syllables, onsets and rimes) to smaller units (phonemes).

Phonemic awareness is also considered to be essential for reading development, and a predictor of reading success. However the research studies are criticised on the basis of lack of stringent evidence for the order in which phonological skills develop (Solity et al., 2000). It appears that phonological awareness is most successful when the skills taught are directly linked to reading. The two skills of phoneme synthesis (blending) and segmentation (naming the sounds in words) directly parallel skills used in reading and spelling. Phonological awareness training must be taught within a well-structured and balanced approach to reading (Wise, 1999).

Literacy programmes used

In this study, teachers and tutors used a mix of literacy programmes and materials designed to address the needs of pupils. The programme most frequently employed, PAT (Wilson, 1993) emphasises the awareness of larger units (rhyme and alliteration) and trains children in making analogies. This programme covers a very precise aspect of literacy development and as the author states *'should not be regarded as a complete reading programme'* (PAT programme, Level 1, p. 1).

An unexpected result from analysis of the findings of this study has been that, although phonic skills are the predominant skill taught, the main literacy programme used by the teacher participants was a phonological awareness training programme (PAT Program). It could be assumed that teachers believe that training in phonological awareness will necessarily improve the child's phonic skills. It has been found that there is no difference in outcomes for the child who is taught by either of three approaches: rime based, phoneme based or mixed rime and phoneme based. A recent extensive intervention study (Savage et al., 2003) found that all three approaches were equally successful in improving children's reading.

However, findings from recent research into phonological awareness and the relationship with reading remain inconclusive. As well as good phonological awareness, pupils need to decode words and to understand the grapheme-phoneme relationship. As already mentioned in other sections of this discussion, the integration of reading instruction with the development of writing skills is also necessary for progress in literacy.

The idea that teaching onset and rime awareness has an influence on reading development has been challenged in the literature (Deavers et al., 2000; McMillan, 2002). The importance of onset and rime awareness was significant in the design of the Key Stages in the UK National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 2000). The researchers continue to question the assumption that children make rime based analogies on the basis of their reading (Deavers & Solity, 1999). In Ireland there has been some criticism of the lack of emphasis on phonemic awareness training for beginning readers (Gleeson, 2005) as outlined in the Revised Curriculum (NCCA, 1999c). It appears that phonemic awareness training has been overlooked as an essential element of early reading instruction.

Teachers in reading units; learning support teachers: All the teachers in this study tended to have an over reliance on one particular literacy programme (Wilson, 1993). It was noticeable that the learning support teachers and teachers in the special reading units spent significantly more time using the PAT programme to teach reading than other teachers. This could be accounted for by time constraints as a result of withdrawing children regularly from their base class.

Teachers in reading schools: In contrast, the pupils in the reading schools do not have the same time constraints on their reading instruction. Teachers in the reading schools taught a more balanced range of literacy skills, with more time spent on whole language activities involving speaking and listening and developing oral language. This seems to be more a result of extended time than a preference for any other literacy programme. The PAT program was also the number one literacy program used in the reading schools.

The DAI tutors used a phonics programme *Alpha to Omega* as their main literacy programme and PAT programme as a secondary source.

The combination of teaching a structured phonics programme, complemented by phonological awareness training is more grounded in research on effective literacy teaching, than teaching phonological awareness skills alone (NRP, 2000). The teaching programme for the tutors is prescribed and directed by the educational consultant in the DAI and implemented by the coordinators of each workshop.

Phonological awareness: phonemic awareness

The term 'phonological awareness' is often used interchangeably with the term 'phonemic awareness'. To be precise, phonemic awareness refers to an understanding about the smallest units of sound that make up the speech stream: phonemes. Phonological awareness encompasses larger units of sound as well, such as syllables, onsets and rimes. A position statement from the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association (1998) pointed out that approaches to phonemic awareness which combine interaction with print and attention to the sound structure in spoken words is *'the best vehicle towards growth'* .The PAT program (Wilson, 1993) combines interaction with print and practice with larger units of sound. Further research into the effectiveness of this specific programme in developing phonemic skills would give further insights into the reading process. Does the awareness of phonemes (the smallest unit of sound) help the child to become aware of rhymes or does the ability to create rhymes help develop an awareness of phonemes? Findings from the present study add to the body of knowledge on the effects of this approach on reading development. The predominant approach of teaching onset and rimes (large units) as a method of phonics teaching needs to be explored further. Is this approach more effective for readers who already have a difficulty with the sounds of spoken language? Or is it more effective

with beginning readers? The manipulation of phonemes, such as deletion of final phoneme, or the substitution of initial phoneme is a difficult task for beginning readers.

It could be asserted that the widespread use of the PAT program in reading instruction supports children's acquisition of reading, and that reading instruction and experiences with print facilitates phonemic awareness development. The question remains as to the amount and forms of phonemic awareness one must have in order to benefit from reading instruction that is focused on decoding (International Reading Association, 1999). It has already been established that phonological awareness training does not stand alone and the most important aspect of developing this skill is to incorporate it into a well-structured approach to reading (Wise, 1999). The PAT programme could have an important role in a more balanced approach to reading in Irish schools.

This leads us to the question of transferring research knowledge and information into teaching approaches and 'best practice'. A note of caution is necessary here. There has been criticism of the *'technicist'* approach to teaching in special education whereby teachers adopt a *'standard model'* as a way of teaching and pupils learning needs are reduced to *'one size fits all'* (Wearmouth, 2004). Research outcomes into the development of reading are often read as *'tips for teachers'* rather than a coherent theoretical perspective on effective teaching and learning (Solity, 2000). Similarly a particular reading instruction programme may be embraced by teachers as a complete programme for teaching reading. Teachers of reading need to understand the theories and concepts underlying commercial literacy materials and programmes in order to make an informed choice of materials. Irish teachers' reading of professional journals and related educational research is low by international standards according to the IEA survey (Morgan & Martin, 1995). Practising teachers in Ireland have limited access to educational journals. Primary teachers, especially teachers of pupils with dyslexia, need to know about recent research in reading development and related issues. The effectiveness of the PAT programme as an intervention to teach onset and rime skills to children needs to be more critically assessed. Does the awareness of rhymes facilitate the development of phonemic awareness or is the PAT programme more effective for those children who have already mastered phonemic skills?

The question as to what is the most effective combination of teaching methods and approaches for pupils with dyslexia may be viewed as one that includes elements of two separate pedagogical approaches (Reid, 2005). These are individualised programmes and assisted learning techniques.

Specialist literacy programmes for students with dyslexia are highly structured and include explicit teaching of phonics skills. Teachers in the special settings were found to use phonics skills as a central part of their teaching approach. This corresponds to the main focus of the specialist individualised programmes. However, the teachers also incorporated additional elements into their teaching which involved assisted learning for the student. This included modelling, prompting, and

peer or adult support. The case studies showed that the teaching approaches used in the special settings could be described as an 'apprenticeship' approach.

To conclude, analysis of findings has shown that teacher participants in this study had a certain reliance on one specific literacy programme which emphasises the larger units based on syllables, onsets and rimes. This must be questioned as to its long-term effectiveness as a predominant reading approach. This reliance on a single literacy programme to teach phonics/phonological awareness questions the teacher's knowledge and understanding of phonics, phonological awareness and phonemic awareness. Further research into the effectiveness of the PAT programme is needed to establish the effectiveness of this literacy intervention. The findings from this study suggest that teachers need more engagement with academic research to understand the reading process.

Writing skills

In this study, spelling practice was conducted every day by all teachers, although spelling skill is not ranked as a priority skill taught. This could be explained insofar as daily spelling practice is an activity which pupils are regularly engaged in, rather than a skill which is specifically taught. The majority of teachers reported daily spelling practice with pupils although less than half considered this to be very effective. Teaching spelling as an isolated skill separate from reading and writing is less effective.

Assessment of learning in Irish classrooms traditionally takes the form of written tasks. For the pupils with poor writing or spelling skill, or the dyslexic student, written assessment tests present additional difficulties. In this study, ***teachers in the reading units, reading schools and in learning support/resource posts*** reported that they spend the greater part of instruction time teaching phonic skills, word identification and reading comprehension. Significantly less time was spent on spelling, story writing, written comprehension, handwriting and teaching joined handwriting. The DAI tutors spent the major part of their instruction time in the weekly workshops teaching the same separate skills of phonics, word identification and reading comprehension.

In each of the special settings, the separate skills of word identification, decoding and structural analysis of words were taught in isolation. There was no integrated model of literacy evident from the teachers' own ranking of skills taught. Writing skills, handwriting and spelling skills were not incorporated into the teachers' literacy model. However evidence from the case studies showed that the assisted learning techniques used in each of the special settings gave practical support to pupils in developing writing skills on an ongoing basis. There was evidence in each of the special settings and also in the learning/resource support settings of shared writing activities, the use of mind maps and other differentiated approaches to teaching writing skills. It was clear that teachers could link

reading to writing activities and there was evidence of modelling and prompting correct responses to writing as well as reading.

Instruction in writing skill, although not considered an integral part of literacy instruction, appears to be taught and personalised as needed among pupils receiving extra support because of dyslexia. As was mentioned earlier, the teaching approaches to reading and writing observed in the case study schools could be described as an apprenticeship approach to literacy instruction. Additional research is needed to establish how these approaches can be modelled by the child's base class teacher to transfer the learning to mainstream. It appears that teacher competence is evident in the teaching situations but teachers are not aware of the benefit of these approaches

The use of these effective 'coaching strategies' for supporting writing skills among pupils needs to be more fully integrated into the overall model of literacy instruction by teachers.

There is no doubt that teachers in the special settings were aware that pupils need a high level of support in developing independent writing skills and this support was provided on an individual basis. But the main emphasis and focus of the instruction was on developing reading accuracy and reading fluency. This underlines the need for teachers to have an integrated approach to teaching reading and writing. The lack of an integrated model of literacy instruction has resulted in the separation of discrete literacy skills and consequently an imbalance in the literacy skills taught. It is a serious concern to parents that writing and spelling skills present a constant difficulty for their children. In this study, the parents of past pupils in a reading school identified writing and spelling skills as a persistent weakness and continuing difficulty for their children. The majority of these parents were seeking special considerations for their child in the writing and spelling component of the Junior and Leaving Certificate. The increase in the number of students seeking special consideration in the examinations every year includes a significant number of students who have attended a reading unit, a reading school or received special support from learning support/resource teacher because of dyslexia. Further research would identify those students who have received extra support in primary school because of dyslexia, and are now presenting for special consideration in the Junior or Leaving Certificate examination.

Lack of emphasis on writing

An unexpected finding in the present study was that teachers reported that writing skills, story writing and handwriting receive little if any direct teaching. Teaching approaches which focus on developing writing skills receive less emphasis than approaches which emphasise accuracy and fluency in reading. It was also a major concern for parents at the weak spelling and writing skills of their children.

This is in contrast with significant elements of Reading Recovery as developed by Marie Clay. Clay stated that remedial programmes should have a *'bias toward text'* (Clay, 1985). There is a

huge time component spent reading and writing continuous text during Reading Recovery intervention tuition. There is no time for phonics worksheets or word drill. The very limited amount of time reportedly spent on writing and spelling activities in the specialist settings in this study was a significant disadvantage for the pupils with dyslexia. Shanahan (2001) pointed out that it is a common mistake among teachers of pupils with poor literacy skills not to teach writing at all, or to have no authentic purpose for writing or to not reading students' writing. He suggests that the four skills of *word knowledge, fluency, comprehension* and *writing* receive a half hour instruction time per day. A total of two hours' literacy instruction is recommended in this literacy teaching framework. Instruction time in itself is not sufficient; it is the balance in the range of literacy skills that makes the difference. Writing should be taught in the context of reading, and reading instruction should contain elements of teaching writing. This has implications for the pupils as they transfer to mainstream classes.

Instruction time

Teachers in ***mainstream settings*** spend 48 minutes per day (five hours per week) on English language teaching (Shiel, 2004). This includes reading instruction. Further time is spent throughout the day on discrete language activities and on oral language learning. This study also found that teaching methods which focus on reading fluency and reading comprehension received more time overall in the mainstream class. Daily instruction in writing skills is less frequently used by all teachers in each of the teaching situations.

Teachers in the ***reading schools and reading units*** have a longer instruction period in literacy than teachers in each of the mainstream settings. This could account for more time spent using each of the instruction approaches. However they used approaches which focus on writing skill -- dictation, story writing, cloze procedure, and joined handwriting -- less frequently. Learning support and resource teachers have limited time to provide extra support to pupils, and this may account for the low ranking of methods used to develop writing skills.

Teachers in reading units; learning support/resource teachers all had a narrower focus specifically on phonics skills than the teachers in reading schools and mainstream class teachers. Time constraints on instruction time may be one reason for the focus on repetitive phonics and the study of common letter patterns. These pupils are more likely to be older and to have a lower level of literacy on entering special support (Nugent, 2005). The teachers' understanding of the importance of phonics in teaching pupils with dyslexia could account for the central role of phonics teaching in the study. It is recognised that all of the specialist individualised programmes designed for pupils with dyslexia place priority on phonics teaching. These programmes are highly structured and phonics is a central element of the programme. In this study, although there was limited evidence among teachers of the use of these specialist programmes, the core skill of phonics was central to the teaching.

To conclude, teachers in this study did not prioritise writing skill as a significant part of their approach to literacy teaching. There was an imbalance in the reported range of literacy skills taught to pupils with dyslexia. The limited time spent on writing and spelling activities in the reading units, reading schools and workshops, and by learning support/resource teachers is a significant disadvantage for the pupils. Consequently the continuing difficulty with writing skill persists into second level and has implications for assessment. However, the case study schools showed that teachers do have the skills to link reading and writing activities. There was limited evidence of support in developing writing and spelling skills.

Commentary on current practice

In Ireland there has been a noticeable difference between teachers' emphasis on teaching basic skills as opposed to their neglect of critical thinking, reasoning and the *'higher order abilities'* (Lapointe et al., 1992). An international study found that Irish teachers give a higher rating to word attack skills and developing vocabulary, and a lower rating to the development of critical thinking and to expanding world views, than do their colleagues in other countries (Elley, 1992). Evidence from the present study shows that teachers in each of the teaching situations prioritised direct phonics skills teaching. The case studies, however, showed that there is some limited evidence of integration of these discrete skills.

Using the 'top down' or 'bottom up' model of reading, the implication is that teachers in the present study had a 'bottom up' viewpoint of the reading process. Reading begins with individual words, words begin with individual sounds and one must learn these individual components before understanding the meaning of the text. Teachers in this study emphasised the separate discrete skills of phonics and word identification skills. They prioritised the teaching of decoding skills to pupils. This is perceived to be the core deficit among pupils and is the main literacy skill taught.

Is there a difference between the settings in this strong emphasis on phonics teaching? The findings showed that phonics teaching is prioritised by all teachers in the different settings. Direct teaching of phonics skills is ranked as the main skill taught to all pupils with dyslexia. Phonic skills are taught by identifying word families and practicing onset and rime activities. The main teaching approaches used by teachers in this study are hearing individual reading, teaching phonics and phonological awareness. Each of these methods contributes essential elements to effective literacy instruction. These teaching approaches contain elements of two separate pedagogical approaches. Phonics teaching is incorporated into the specialised individualised programmes for students with dyslexia and hearing individual reading may be seen as an 'assisted learning technique'. The teachers in the study showed an over reliance on phonics teaching as the main literacy skill taught and a reliance on the PAT programme as the main literacy programme used.

Teachers' understandings of dyslexia: It could be possible that the strong emphasis on phonic skills teaching is related to the teachers' understanding of dyslexia. The learning support/resource teachers and the teachers in the reading units described dyslexia in 'behavioural' terms, describing a difficulty with decoding print, or symbols. This corresponds with the strong emphasis on direct phonics teaching. The approach appears to identify the deficit skill and remediate it. This would possibly account for the emphasis on direct phonic skills. One of the features of teaching approaches recommended for pupils with dyslexia is mastery learning or '*learning to the point of automaticity*'. Teachers are aware of the child's memory difficulties associated with dyslexia and this could explain the heavy reliance on repetitive phonics teaching.

This issue of understandings of dyslexia is a fundamental one which will be discussed fully below.

Towards a balanced literacy framework

It was found that an imbalance exists in the current practice of literacy teaching. The skills of word knowledge, fluency, comprehension and writing do not receive equal balance. Limited time spent by teachers on the teaching of writing skills has serious implications for the dyslexic pupils. The current practice is compared to a more balanced reading framework and the components which must be present in effective literacy teaching.

Research has concluded that effective literacy instruction is a *balance* between high quality reading and writing experiences and explicit instruction in basic literacy skills (Pressley et al., 1996). There are many different models of effective literacy teaching. All contain the essential components of communication through language, spoken and written. It is a common mistake to teach one component exclusively or to have no emphasis on another component. The Literacy task force established in New Zealand (1998) defined the features of successful reading and writing as *text comprehension* (for reading) and *text construction* (for writing), *accuracy, fluency* and *self motivation to read and write* (Literacy Experts Group, New Zealand, 1998). In the Irish context one of the principles outlined in the revised curriculum in English is *'the integration of oral language, reading and writing in a coherent language process'* (NCCA, 1999c, p. 12). This revised curriculum has introduced an integrated model of literacy learning based on the '*integrated nature of language*'. There is evidence that teachers have difficulties with adapting to the four strands of the English language curriculum (NCCA, 1999a,b):

- Receptiveness to language
- Developing cognitive abilities through language
- Competence and confidence in using language
- Emotional and imaginative development through language

The curriculum emphasises the fact that language learning is an integrated process involving oral language, reading and writing. In practice teachers plan their teaching according to these three areas of language, not according to the four strand units.

This revised curriculum in English has presented difficulties for mainstream teachers (DES 2005a). Teachers have already demonstrated a weakness in their understanding of the curriculum framework, and have in particular identified the teaching of reading as one of the areas in which they felt inadequately trained (Eivers et al., 2005). Teachers need assistance to develop their understanding of the teaching of reading, according to DES inspectors' reports (DES,2005a). Current practice in literacy teaching for pupils in the present study suggests an imbalance in the literacy skills taught.

At this stage of the discussion we can see that a balance of literacy skills is important for effective literacy teaching for all pupils but especially for pupils with dyslexia. Further issues which were found to make a difference to the effectiveness of special support are addressed in the next section.

Issues which make a difference to the effectiveness of special support

It was found that there are certain elements which make a quantifiable difference to the effectiveness of special support. Teachers in this study placed a large emphasis on building the child's self esteem as part of the literacy instruction. The high expectations of the teachers in the special settings were significant, and were matched by parents' high expectations for their children. Parental involvement at all the crucial stages in their child's learning is also discussed in this section and their need for a working relationship with teachers.

Building self esteem

Pupils with dyslexia struggle to achieve in our educational system and tend to have low self concepts as a result (Humphrey, 2002; Humphrey and Mullins, 2002). A child's self esteem is the area of greatest vulnerability for children who are dyslexic (Shaywitz, 2003). The role of self esteem in learning is well researched. A positive self concept influences academic success (Burns, 1982). Previous small-scale studies of Irish pupils in a reading school have tested the hypothesis that the type of school can influence a child's self esteem. These studies found that the self esteem of dyslexic pupils tested was indistinguishable from the non dyslexic pupils. The pupils maintained their healthy feelings of self esteem despite their difficulties with literacy (Hall, 1994; O'Connell, 1994; Mc Ginley, 1998).

The type of school, special or mainstream was not the influencing factor. This would lead one to believe that the teacher rather than the special setting is the most important factor in developing pupils' self esteem. Other studies which investigated the relationship between reading difficulty

and self esteem questioned why self esteem was high in pupils in the segregated setting (McNamara, 1991; Quinn, 1997). Factors contributing to high self esteem in reading schools were:

- attending with peers who have similar difficulties has positive effects
- self esteem enhancement is part of the teaching approach to the child's reading difficulties
- impact of family in supporting the dyslexic child's self image (McNamara, 1991).

More recently Humphrey (2002) observed that students in special units for dyslexia revealed that they felt more valued and cared for than they had when they were in mainstream schooling. In contrast the children (with dyslexia) in mainstream schools reported that they felt isolated and excluded. Humphrey attributes this finding to the fact that children in units for specific learning disability develop more positive self concepts and levels of self esteem than those left in mainstream education. He believes that the teachers in these special settings with their experience, training and small class sizes are more able and likely to recognise low self esteem in their pupils since they spend more time with their pupils and are more knowledgeable about self esteem.

The teaching approach of combining intensive literacy instruction with building pupils self esteem is supported by recent studies in the literature (Brooks, 1999; Bowen & Yeomans, 2002). It was found that intervention in reading failure, undertaken with strategies designed to improve self esteem, was the most effective when compared with reading intervention alone, or self esteem work alone.

While improved self esteem is associated with individual support and a learning environment where the children feel valued and secure (Humphrey, 2001; McKay, 2001) the findings from this study go further in identifying the strength of this belief among parents and teachers. Parents and teachers strongly correlate the improvement in reading skills with improved self confidence, and they attribute this improvement directly to the special placement. The vast majority of ***parents*** of past pupils from a reading school strongly believed that their child's enrolment in a special reading school was the turning point for his improved confidence. No comparison is possible with past pupils from reading units as this was beyond the resources of the present study. However, ***the pupils*** in each of the case study schools expressed the view that the teachers in the special placement helped them to learn. This had not been their experience in mainstream. In their view, other teachers 'don't have the time' to give extra support to a pupil who is not keeping up with the class. Pupils were positive about the advantages of placement in a reading unit or reading school and aware of the teaching approaches which they described as 'different'. Feelings of frustration and anxiety often accompany lack of ability to cope with school work. A recent study of dyslexic pupils' views of their educational experiences in mainstream primary, reading and secondary schools in Ireland reported that their subject teachers gave the impression that they did not care for them, either on an educational or personal basis (Forbes, 2005). Research indicates that pupils are motivated when they believe that teachers treat them like people and care about them personally

and educationally. The present study would support such research, as both the parents and the pupils themselves, reported that the teachers' positive and caring relationship with them was a significant factor in their progress in reading. The focus of the placement was on the individuality and uniqueness of each child.

This has implications for pre service teacher training, where the main emphasis is on the *what* to teach rather than the *how* to teach (O'Brien, 2001; Humphreys, 1996). Some researchers are of the opinion that the training programmes for primary and second level teachers do not address knowledge of communication processes, particularly those processes that aid the development of self esteem in students (Humphreys, 1996). Education and training in social and emotional issues which affect pupils is not included in initial training or induction or as part of in service training (Humphreys, 1996). This study supports the belief that in service training needs to focus on a greater psychological and sociological understanding of student and teacher behaviour. Staff development in effective responses to emotional, behavioural and social problems in students and professional colleagues is needed. With regard to in service teacher training, the 'how to teach' needs as much attention as the 'what to teach'. Personal and professional effectiveness are strongly related to one's level of self esteem (Humphreys, 1996).

In the present study, parents and teachers strongly believed that the child's self esteem improved significantly during the special placement. The data reveals that self esteem enhancement is part of the teaching strategy and approach in the reading units and reading schools. The DAI tutors were acutely aware of the anxiety surrounding dyslexia for the students. Building pupils' confidence was a significant feature of the teaching strategies they used. This emphasis on building self esteem for struggling readers could be more widely transferred to mainstream and incorporated into the classroom programme. Research has already emphasised the link between self esteem and reading attainment. Pre service and in service training for teachers needs to address how to build pupils self esteem in reading as an integral part of the instruction.

To conclude, building students' self esteem combined with the reading instruction is a most effective teaching approach for pupils with dyslexia. It is important for the teacher to deal with both the reading skills and building the child's self esteem in any reading intervention programme. The teachers in the present study underlined the fact that the teaching methods and strategies used to support pupils who have dyslexic type difficulties are not sufficient in themselves and must be closely linked with proactive strategies to build students self esteem as an integral part of the reading instruction.

Teacher expectations

Teacher expectation is an important factor that has been identified as influencing the effectiveness of reading instruction (Taylor et al., 2002). Studies that look at teachers' beliefs and expectations

and consequent behaviour have demonstrated that students' academic performance can be affected by the ways in which they are treated by teachers and by the teachers' attitudes (Good, 1981), more than by teaching skills (Wray, Poulson & Fox, 2001). A more recent study (Silva, 2004) found that in the opinion of teachers, *believing in students' capacities* makes a major contribution to their academic success.

In this study it was found that when it came to instructional practices as a whole, teachers' expectations were of particular relevance to effective teaching. Teachers expressed concern that pupils may have experienced negative feedback in a previous class, and so provided active encouragement to all the pupils. One regular method of ensuring success reported by teachers was ensuring that all tasks were within the ability level of the pupils. The motto 'nothing succeeds like success' could be seen in the teaching approaches of the teachers in the reading units and the reading schools. Success for the learner was ensured by modifying the instruction, the written tasks and/or the curriculum content. These methods take account of the learner's need for individual attention, to have their say and to be listened to (Edwards, 1994). Alternative ways of presenting work was frequently reported, such as assigning a shorter amount of written work, or using a word processor for writing. It was significant that teachers had high expectations for the pupils, even though at the beginning of the year the pupils may have found this to be a challenge. All of the teachers visited in the course of the study noted the strengths and talents they had become aware of in their dyslexic pupils. Gardner's (1993) concept of multiple intelligences could be considered in the light of this study. Teachers in the reading schools and reading units reported adapting their teaching and motivating the pupils according to their preferred strength. The development of self esteem can only occur with concrete feedback of real success (Bandura, 1977). The implication is that mainstream class placement confronts such a child with standards so out of reach that s/he has no substantial basis for self evaluation. Teachers are 'significant others' for children and as such have an influence on the child's sense of self (Lawrence, 1985; Humphrey, 2003). It has been argued that pupils may internalise the expectations that their teachers communicate to them and that pupils may in turn adopt the beliefs that teachers hold about their ability and adjust their learning behaviour accordingly (Lumsden, 1997).

Research on effectiveness (Ainscow, 1997) refers to teachers' individualised teaching and flexibility of approaches used. Rather than seeing the pupil's difficulties as innate or within the child, adaptive teaching strategies are recommended. Central to this is the teacher creating opportunities for the child to experience success in learning. This involves modification of instruction, of assignments, of instructional materials and curriculum content. These strategies adapt to the needs of the learner. This process was seen in each of the different teaching situations.

Teacher expectations in the range of settings

In the present study, the teachers in the reading schools and reading units had high academic expectations for their pupils. They were expected to achieve the same academic goals as their peers in mainstream. The teachers expected these students to progress to second level and to sit Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations. It could be assumed that for the pupils presently in the reading units/reading schools who are currently at a low level of reading attainment, such positive expectations from the teacher are highly motivating. Each child is given a chance for success among comparable peers. As has been seen, teachers in this study considered building pupils' independence and self confidence to be a priority; appropriate high expectations endorse this positive self image.

Expectations and disadvantaged status

There was no significant difference in the expectations of teachers in the reading units, reading schools or the learning support /resource teachers. However in one of the schools in a designated disadvantaged area, the academic expectations of the teachers were noticeably lower. These teachers were aware of the association between educational disadvantage and literacy achievement. For some pupils, teachers believed the disadvantage to be twofold. The pupils were relatively disadvantaged because of socio-economic factors and they were also disadvantaged because of dyslexia. Adverse social and economic factors impacted strongly on families in the area. The level of literacy attainment was lower than the national norms. This may be a realistic view of the situation but teacher's lower expectations could have an effect on pupils. A recent study on reading literacy in disadvantaged primary schools (Eivers et al., 2005) indicates that teachers' educational expectations for many of their pupils were low. For the group of dyslexic pupils in this particular school, teachers' lower expectations may be attributed to the school's disadvantaged status rather than the specific literacy difficulties of one group of pupils. It has been recommended by the study (Eivers et al., 2005) that strategies to promote high teacher expectations of pupils' achievement should be part of an overall strategy to deal with disadvantage. The teachers in the focus groups echoed the sentiments of recent research on disadvantage and literacy in Ireland which recommends a stronger focus on family literacy and integrated family support programmes. Further research needs to link all special support for pupils in designated disadvantaged schools with a strong family support component. The teachers in one of the case study schools in this study identified the lack of parental support for the pupils with dyslexia as a distinct disadvantage. The issue of social inclusion is central to government policy. Educational disadvantage is specifically addressed by the National Anti Poverty Strategy (2003). DEIS, the most recent policy programme to tackle disadvantage in schools in Ireland, which aims to *'halve the proportion of pupils with serious literacy difficulties by 2006'* (DES, 2005b), has identified family literacy as a key measure to be implemented over a five year time scale.

The importance of socio-economic status has been consistently associated with reading achievement (Cosgrove et al., 2000; Kellaghan, 2001). Teachers of pupils in the most disadvantaged schools have been found to hold low long-term expectations for their pupils (Weir et al., 2002). This was supported by the teachers in one of the schools in an area of socio economic disadvantage in the study. Underlying this perception there is a wider view of the dominant ideology in education in Ireland (Drudy & Lynch, 1993). The school itself may be a significant factor in contributing to the maintenance of social inequality in society. There is an admission that many of the barriers to the educational progress of a child are caused by financial, family, and health-related factors. The principal and the teachers in this school were fully aware of the impact of its 'disadvantaged' status on academic expectations for all of the pupils. The pupils with dyslexia in this instance were described as 'doubly disadvantaged' because of their dyslexic difficulties. The principal had restructured the organisation of additional support to pupils with special educational needs throughout the school. This had a positive effect of easing tension between the DES policy directives and the learning needs of the pupils. Assumptions in the Irish educational system which underline the social issues of equality and inclusion need to be addressed. This author believes that aspects of the early literacy initiative of the DEIS programme (DES, 2005b) could be more closely targeted at pupils with specific literacy difficulties who are in the senior classes. The reading units in these schools cater for pupils aged eight to twelve years.

To conclude, the findings from this study are in accord with research which identifies high teacher expectations with improved performance in reading. Creating opportunities for pupils to experience success by adapting teaching strategies and individualising the teaching contributes to the effectiveness of the special placement.

Parental involvement

The third issue which was identified as making a difference to the effectiveness of special support was the involvement of parents. Relationships between home and school are of fundamental importance and this has been underlined by the principle of parent involvement in recent legislation. Parents' rights have been strengthened by legislation in USA (IDEA, 1997), the UK (Education Act, 1996) and Ireland (Education Act, 1998; EPSEN Act, 2004).

For the parent of a child who has a learning disability, involvement in their child's education process may present issues of concern. Where a child has been enrolled in a special school or unit, it has been asserted that parents have felt *'excluded'* and *'were not given complete information on all the possible options available nor on the likely consequences of particular decisions'* (SERC, 1993, p. 33).

Teachers in designated disadvantaged schools in this study reported limited ***parental involvement*** at this stage of the child's schooling. The input of parents is an essential element which contributes

to the effectiveness of special support. Future research is needed to link the literacy initiative of DEIS (2005b) beyond the early years of schooling (beyond Second Class) for these pupils. Pupils who are in schools serving disadvantaged communities and who are attending reading units or reading schools need to be identified for specific support.

Consultation with parents and their involvement in planning and decisions affecting their child are now protected by legislation (EPSEN, 2004). Parents often question whether it is a better educational experience for the child to be included in mainstream school or to attend a school or unit designed to address their specific needs. The success of support for children with dyslexia is critically dependent on a whole school understanding of dyslexia (Fawcett, 2003).

In Ireland, provision for pupils with dyslexia is organised by way of two parallel systems, special and mainstream. Several reports have recommended more linkage between these two (SERC, 1993; DES, 2002). School management factors have been related to success in reading. Those schools that have a strong link to parents are found to be most effective (Taylor, Pressley & Pearson, 2002). The degree of parental support as perceived by the principal was the strongest factor differentiating effective schools. For the child with dyslexia, early identification and effective support are two of the main issues of concern to parents. In Ireland, there are many pupils receiving learning support who have undiagnosed disabilities and disorders (INTO, 1994; Shiel et al., 1998; TFD, 2002). One of the reasons put forward is that the link between the learning support teacher and parents of pupils receiving learning support is not sufficiently strong (Shiel et al., 1998, p. 41). The revised guidelines for learning support (DES, 2000) address this issue by promoting the active involvement of parents in their child's *Individual Profile and Learning Programme*. Effective communication with parents is critically important to the success of a learning support programme. The notion of 'equivalent expertise', that is, the idea that parents and professionals both have their own highly relevant experience of children, rearing or teaching them, have been outlined by Wolfendale (1985). Parents and teachers have in common a pedagogic role which incorporates a protective, nurturing aspect into the training. Parents and teachers also have some shared aspirations for children's progress. This can be understood as a working relationship based on understanding and trust (Mittler, 2000). Many teachers however, do not feel comfortable forming these partnerships. It should become part of all pre service programmes (Winter, 2005).

In this study there was a high level of parent involvement in the education process and the decisions affecting their child. Parents were significantly involved at crucial times during the child's placement. At the initial identification and assessment of a reading difficulty, parents were proactive in consulting school personnel regarding psychological assessment. Ongoing support and supervision of homework throughout the special placement, the parent's support was 'that of an effective teacher'. At transition to mainstream, primary or second level, parents were advocating

continued support, and consultation with teachers regarding subject choice and special considerations in exams.

The findings of this study indicated the active and major role parents play in their child's learning. Parents were empowered by their child's placement in a special setting for dyslexia. While the parents role was always acknowledged as important (Wolfendale, 1985), in this study it was demonstrated to be highly significant in specific areas.

Firstly, the parents in this study are so closely involved in their child's education that they are in a pivotal position to experience the underlying dilemmas and issues confronting special education in Ireland at present. Transition to and from mainstream to special system is a painful process. The parents have experience of both systems. The separateness of the two systems is a serious disadvantage to the successful re-integration of the child into mainstream. Research has suggested that children making the transition from one setting to another have to adjust to new expectations and a different context for teaching and learning. The school may help or hinder this process (Pearson, 2003). The prospect of changing school is a major issue for parents. Transfer of information from one teacher to the next (at primary level) and from the reading school or reading unit to the second level school is an issue of concern for parents. It was suggested that a 'follow up teacher' or resource teacher provide the liaison between the two systems in order to ease the transition for pupils.

Secondly, parents' experience is of a segregated and non-inclusive school system. Their child's learning difficulty must be identified and measured as an individual 'deficit'. Only then will the child receive access to additional support because of the label / category.

Thirdly, parents' dissatisfaction with the level and kinds of learning support in mainstream school has implications for the early identification of learning difficulties and whole school provision for dyslexia. Despite highlighting the principle of intensive prevention and early identification of learning difficulties (DES, 2000;TFD, 2002) current practice falls short of recommended/ successful literacy intervention in the following manner:

- ***Duration of intervention:*** A significant majority of the pupils who are presently enrolled in a reading school or reading unit have previously experienced extra support from a learning support or resource teacher; a significant number had received up to three years of extra support. Regular monitoring and review of the child's individual learning programme is recommended in the Guidelines on Learning Support (2000). This was not the experience of the parents in this study. This is at variance with the recommended guidelines.
- ***Length of instruction session:*** A recent report in Ireland (Eivers, 2004) recommends at least 90 minutes a day additional literacy intervention for pupils who are underachieving in literacy. The actual time currently spent on reading instruction is estimated to be less than twenty

minutes a day (Eivers, 2004). In the present study, parents were dissatisfied with the average duration of forty minutes per session of learning support or one hour in a small group. They believed that this time should be 'additional to' and not 'instead of' regular classroom instruction in reading. The current time allocation falls short of the recommended length of time for pupils who are underachieving in reading. Withdrawing children from class for additional literacy support is the current practice. There is evidence that this model of support is preferred among Irish support teachers even though alternative in-class support systems are now more evident in other educational systems (INTO Report, 2003a).

- ***Literacy activities:*** An array of activities such as re reading continuous text, word study, and teaching strategies for decoding are recommended by various early intervention programmes (Reading Recovery, Success for All, Enable Plus). This was not the experience of the parents in the present study whose children had experienced learning support / resource teaching. The majority of children in this study had already been receiving between 1 and 3 years learning support prior to enrolment. This raises the question of the effectiveness of this support. Parents expressed dissatisfaction and uncertainty about the activities which took place during this extra support. This has implications for the training and professional development of learning support and resource teachers in reading instruction. Parents considered that information on learning difficulties and more training in identifying and children's difficulties in reading for all teachers to be necessary.

- ***Writing an important feature of instruction:*** Parents' concern about their child's persistent difficulty with writing skills and spelling ability is significant and this concern continues as the pupils progress into second level. In the school settings in this study there was a limited amount of time spent directly teaching writing skills to pupils with dyslexia. Priority was given to reading instruction. This has an impact on the development of effective writing skills as the child progresses to second level. Progress in most aspects of the second level curriculum is assessed through writing. Children are at a serious disadvantage if adequate attention is not paid to teaching writing skills in primary school. Successful literacy instruction teaches reading in the context of writing. Writing is an important feature of instruction. It is an important element in the successful intervention of Reading Recovery. Learning support in schools would benefit from implementing the key elements of this programme.

- ***Carefully planned assessments:*** Parents in this study were dissatisfied with the level of ongoing assessment of their child's reading and writing difficulties while receiving learning /resource support. Teachers' lack of experience, knowledge and understanding of dyslexia was frequently commented on by parents who had experienced their children receiving lengthy periods of learning or resource support. More informed assessments of pupils would help the pupils and parents.

An outcome of special placement for families of children with dyslexia is the improved knowledge of their child's learning needs. This has serious implications for adaptive teaching practices and ways of modifying the instruction, and materials, and assessments. The majority of parents reported that they expected their child to remain in full time education until after the Leaving Certificate. A significant number of parents expected their child to progress to third level. The parents' high expectations may be reinforced by the teachers in special settings high expectations for the pupils.

Parents' concern about their child's continuing difficulties with writing and spelling has implications for teachers who do not have a balanced model of literacy instruction implicit in the special provision. These parents wish to become partners to a greater extent in their child's ongoing learning. They perceive their child to have a *learning difference*, whereas the education system has categorised this as a *learning deficit*. The partnership of teachers and parents has a pedagogic role (Wolfendale, 1985) where parents and teachers share high expectations for the pupils.

To conclude, the involvement of parents in their child's learning is a significant factor in the success of the special placement. Parents were positive about the benefits of the special placement despite the difficulties surrounding transition between special support and mainstream. They were aware of the need for improved liaison between special placement and mainstream for these pupils. SERC (1993) recommended improved liaison. A 'follow up teacher' or liaison person would ease transition to mainstream primary and second level, and would support and advise on subject choice and individual education programmes where necessary.

Teacher qualifications and experience

The final issue which was found to make a difference to the effectiveness of special support is that of the teachers' experience. There is a large body of research which shows that teachers' knowledge and expertise have significant influence on how pupils learn (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998). Evidence has shown that the determinants of quality in education are linked with the calibre of those who provide it (INTO, 1994). It was a worrying finding that in a survey of literacy in disadvantaged schools in Ireland (Shiel et al., 2005) a tendency was found for more disadvantaged schools to have higher teacher turnover and more unqualified teachers. The recent report *Succeeding in Reading* (DES, 2005c) notes that pupils taught by more experienced teachers tended to have higher test scores than pupils taught by inexperienced teachers. In other words, at each class level, the number of years that teachers had spent teaching, is positively correlated with achievement in reading. Kellaghan (1994) argues that resources that are allocated to the '*teaching learning situation'* are more beneficial to pupils' learning than other resources. It has been recommended that classes of beginning readers should be given priority by school principals when assigning qualified and experienced teachers (DES, 2005). Previous studies have shown that a large proportion of support teachers do not have additional qualifications (INTO, 2003a; McCarthy,

2003). This would have an impact on the teacher's understanding of the child's difficulties arising from dyslexia, and an ability to link informed assessment to support teaching.

Differences between settings

Mainstream teachers: The present study has shown that a difficulty in applying an integrated model of literacy is not necessarily related to teachers' lack of experience. A large proportion of mainstream teachers in the present study have more than five years' teaching experience. An even greater number have this length of experience in the special settings. A comprehensive study of what beginning teachers of reading need to know about reading concludes that *it is essential that teachers at all grade levels understand the course of literacy development and the role of instruction in optimising literacy development* (Snow et al., 1998, p. 329). The views of the principal in two of the case study schools would concur with the statement about the teaching of reading as an area in which they felt newly trained teachers need support. A co existing problem in the disadvantaged schools was the retention of teachers in the school beyond the beginning years. This has been well documented in recent reports (Eivers et al., 2004, 2005).

The teachers in the ***reading schools, reading units and in the learning support and resource positions*** were aware of their need for further training and repeatedly/unanimously called for improved opportunities for training and professional development. The length of teachers' experience in the special settings compares more favourably with the teachers in the mainstream schools. Teachers in the reading units and reading schools had relatively more teaching experience than the other groups of teachers.

The ***DAI tutors*** had significantly more teaching experience. The majority of the tutors are employed full time as mainstream primary teachers, some in learning support and resource positions. They provide additional weekly tuition to the students in workshops. These 'tutors' have significantly greater teaching experience than the teachers in specialist settings. Over half of the tutors have more than fifteen years teaching experience. The teaching career of the tutors is well advanced and significantly almost fifty per cent have additional qualifications in special education. The pupils and schools where the tutors teach, evidently have the benefit of this expertise and experience. These teachers know how to link assessment with teaching.

All of the ***learning support teachers*** in this study had been teaching longer than five years. In the present situation, the support teacher is expected to fulfil a dual role of providing supplementary teaching to pupils with dyslexia and also to collaborate with colleagues. Whereas learning support teachers had a number of years mainstream teaching experience, more than one third had less than two years' experience in their current support role. This has implications not just for the pupils who are receiving support but for the larger school community. The pupil needs individual support but the class teacher also needs support to differentiate the teaching in all other subjects. This is a huge

difficulty for the inexperienced teacher. This paradox of special need is outlined by Dyson (1991) who conceptualises the support teacher's role as tension between the notion of specialist support to the child and/or support for the mainstream teacher. It appears that given how the service is presently structured in many schools this dual role is not feasible.

There is a huge teaching resource of experience already available in the special setting such as the **reading schools and reading units,** and in the mainstream setting among the learning support and resource teachers. There is also additional experience available among the tutors with the DAI. These teachers have wide experience in differentiating the support for pupils with dyslexia. However structural constraints have made it difficult for any of this experience to be conveyed between teachers. The existence of separate parallel systems of special and mainstream provision has led to the perception of a qualitatively different approach for pupils with dyslexia. It has already been recommended that the specialist setting such as a reading school could be used as a resource centre for teachers in mainstream schools in the immediate area (SERC Report 1993; TFD, 2002).

This research suggests that ***information on specific approaches to reading*** could be provided by the special settings to the mainstream schools. The allocation of resources to the teaching-learning situation has been shown to be more effective for pupils' attainment (Kellaghan, 1994). Information on the following techniques could be readily identified by teachers and would be particularly useful: the use of *cloze procedure* as a means of developing reading and writing comprehension; the use of *onset and rime* as an approach to teaching reading; and the use of *metacognitive strategies* such as modelling, prompting, think-alouds and mind-maps.

To conclude, the experience of teachers is long recognised as most effective in making a difference to the achievement of a child, particularly a child with a learning difficulty. For this reason, it is sound practice that pupils with the greatest learning needs should be taught by teachers with the most experience. This study showed that teachers in the special placements have the longest teaching experience. In practice, the mainstream teachers in the present study have the least experience in their current position and many of these teachers are at the beginning of their career. In contrast the DAI private tutors have far greater teaching experience and additional qualifications. In the mainstream schools, it is more difficult for these inexperienced teachers to provide differentiated teaching and also to collaborate with more experienced colleagues. Teacher education and in service is long recognised as essential to providing teachers with professional support. Future small-scale, school-based research which identifies specific techniques and approaches to reading instruction could be provided by the special setting.

This section has addressed four issues which were found to make a difference to the effectiveness of special support for pupils. It is important for the teacher to focus on building pupils' self esteem as an integral part of the reading instruction. High teacher expectations for pupils with reading

difficulties were indicated in all of the special settings. Parent involvement is a significant factor in the success of the special placement. Teacher experience was also shown to make a difference to the achievement of a child.

Dyslexia in Ireland: key issues

The discussion so far has focused on the main teaching methods and approaches used by teachers and other issues which make a difference to the effectiveness of special support. This section will discuss the teachers' understanding of dyslexia and the issues raised by the current organisation of support in primary school. The categorical approach to special needs provision in Ireland as evidenced in this study will be addressed. The dominant 'school code' in practice and how this can be a structural constraint for pupils will also be discussed.

Teachers' understanding of dyslexia

The study examined the teachers' understanding of dyslexia and the findings showed that this is affected by the current organisation of support and the categorical notion of a 'within child' difficulty. The role of the support teacher is currently undergoing change in Ireland in the light of legislation and the world- wide trend towards inclusion. This trend has an effect on the provision of whole school support for pupils with dyslexia. Most of the current debate on identification of learning difficulties has centred around the post-Warnock concept of non-categorisation of special educational needs and inclusion on the one hand, and the specialist lobby of the qualitatively different dyslexic learner. The need for 'expert' teachers and 'special schools' has been questioned (Dessent, 1987). The notion of 'specialists' in learning difficulties has also been questioned (Dyson, 1990). The IQ/attainment discrepancy has been central to the identification of those with dyslexia as a distinct group different to poor readers. It is one of the key issues in relation to the concept of dyslexia. This concept of discrepancy is central to the many 'exclusionary' definitions of dyslexia i.e. tells us what dyslexia is not, rather than describing the condition (World Federation of Neurology; BDA, 1997.) The argument is that dyslexic children have an average or above average potential and are experiencing 'unexpected difficulties' in the area of literacy acquisition (Reason & Frederickson, 1996). Critics of this approach have shown that it is difficult to demonstrate cognitive differences among poor readers of differing IQs (Stanovich, 1988) and that the scores of children with a low verbal IQ may be 'artificially depressed', as these verbal scores lie at the heart of the difficulties (Siegel, 1996). In other words, children are tested on the specific skill areas in which they already have a difficulty. Literacy learning is linked to language learning and language development. Struggling readers read less and this may affect their language development. A discrepancy definition of dyslexia presupposes a group of dyslexic learners who are qualitatively different to other poor readers in primary school. Their dyslexia has been identified and assessed according to ability – achievement criteria and they are eligible for special

provision *'intelligence in the average range and reading ability... at or below the second percentile in a standardised reading test'* (DES, SPED, 1998).

Children with dyslexia may have difficulties in remembering or retaining and recalling information. Difficulties with short term or working memory and long-term memory difficulties have proved to be correlated with later progress in school (Reid, 1998; Westwood, 1997). The role of memory in learning has been widely acknowledged (Reid, 1998; Lerner 2003) The information processing model of learning emphasises the flow of information within a person's a mind and memory systems (Lerner, 2003). This is in line with the views of the teachers in this study who believe that memory difficulties are the main underlying reason for their pupils' difficulty.

The present system of identification of dyslexia and subsequent special provision of support has heavy reliance on a discrepancy and exclusionary model of dyslexia.

Differences between settings

The present study examined the teachers' understanding of dyslexia. The majority of teachers considered memory difficulties to be the main underlying reason for the child's difficulties. They were also aware of the idea of dyslexia as a discrepancy between reading achievement and intellectual ability. The teachers' understanding of dyslexia was inevitably linked to the concept of a discrepancy between reading achievement and intellectual ability. Although teacher observation and pupil knowledge account for the teachers' dominant description of dyslexia, the descriptions were categorised according to a causal modelling framework put forward by Frith (1999).

Almost all the ***mainstream teachers*** described dyslexia in behavioural terms. The class teachers described dyslexia in terms of outcomes in class and a discrepancy in certain areas of the curriculum. Difficulties with attention and concentration were areas particularly noted by the mainstream teacher. Tithe learning support and resource teachers defined dyslexia by describing the behavioural signs and symptoms such as difficulties with decoding symbols or print, difficulty with reading comprehension or reading fluency. These pupils may not have received a psycho educational assessment, although some pupils had been privately assessed. This could explain why the dyslexic difficulties are described at the 'word level'. However the teachers' general understanding of dyslexia at the 'word level' is a possible explanation for their main teaching approach to teaching phonics skills as the main literacy 'deficit skill'.

Oral language skills were considered by learning support and resource teachers to be an additional primary difficulty among pupils with dyslexia. This was perceived to be a greater problem among these teachers than the teachers in the special settings. The more favourable pupil teacher ratio in the reading units or reading schools may be a contributory factor here. The learning support teachers also regarded social and emotional problems as a significant underlying reason for their pupils difficulties. For this group of teachers more than any others, social and emotional problems

were reported as a significant difficulty. The small group setting and individual attention provided by the learning support teacher can offer a supportive environment for the pupils with social and emotional difficulties. It may also be possible explanation for widespread support for withdrawal as the predominant form or support for pupils.

In the ***special settings*** attention/concentration was not seen as such a significant problem. The difficulty in this instance could be the classroom environment rather than a within-child difficulty. The child may be easily distracted by the activities, and questions of other pupils. This is understandable in the larger class size of mainstream classes. The teachers in the reading schools in the present study described dyslexia in terms of neurological and cognitive functioning such as memory difficulties, or sequencing difficulties. This could be explained by teachers' regular access to pupils psychological assessment reports. The teachers in the reading units reported a similar description of dyslexia. Opportunities to consult the pupils' psychological report may influence their understanding of the child's difficulty. All of the pupils in the reading units and reading schools have already undergone a full psycho educational assessment prior to enrolment.

To summarise, the teachers' view of dyslexia as evidenced in the present study, is informed by a 'within-child' medical model of dyslexia, which focuses on the deficits and difficulties the child faces in learning. This view has been criticised as unsuitable for an education setting (Pumfrey, 1990). The concept of dyslexia underlying current practice is a categorical quasi medical model as outlined by SERC (1993). It is not surprising that the teachers in the mainstream schools, learning support and resource, expressed difficulty with the identification of dyslexia. They are excluded from the current identification and assessment process. In Ireland, the process of identifying dyslexia is confined to an educational psychologist who 'diagnoses' dyslexia following an individual assessment of cognitive ability and reading attainment. Psychologists are also using the same framework as teachers. A more recent description of dyslexia was put forward by the TFD:

> *Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling and/or writing, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities and educational experiences. Dyslexia can be described at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically characterised by inefficient information processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing and motor skills may also be present* (TFD, 2002, p. 31)

This definition includes the concept of a 'continuum' of disability from mild to severe and the notion that there is an 'individual profile' of difficulties. In this study the teachers in the reading units and reading schools were sensitive to the difference between individual learners and the relative strengths and weaknesses of the individual child, as evidenced by their definitions. As regards a 'continuum' of difficulty, the teachers were aware that the children attending the reading units and reading schools are in the 'most severe' category. Assessment and teaching strategies used by these teachers were, as far as possible, individualised. They were also aware that for

teachers in mainstream settings, it is more difficult to cater for the individual needs of the dyslexic learner. This has implications for the support of teachers working with mainstream class teachers and with pupils in these classes who have been identified as dyslexic. Teachers need knowledge and support in understanding how to differentiate the teaching for these pupils.

To conclude, in this study, the teachers understanding of dyslexia is in line with the exclusionary definition described by SERC (1993) which adopts a within child model of disability. The notion of a discrepancy between ability and achievement is central to the teachers' understanding of dyslexia. The main reason for the difficulty, according to teachers, is an underlying memory difficulty. A more recent description of dyslexia as proposed by the TFD (2002) has not yet impacted to any significant degree on the teachers understanding of dyslexia. This is not surprising given the present identification and assessment process which relies on a 'medical – categorical' diagnosis.

Organisation of support

Extra support for children with dyslexia in Ireland is provided for in three different ways: learning support or resource teaching, enrolment in a reading unit or enrolment in a reading school. Each type of support may be described as existing on a continuum of segregation, integration or inclusiveness (McGregor, 1998). At a system level, the model of support for pupils with dyslexia is provided mainly in a segregationist way. This involves referral by psychologist and direct teaching in a unit or separate school. Policy direction at present suggests a movement away from the discrepancy notion of identification of dyslexia (DES SPED 24/03; 02/05).

A weighted system has been introduced for allocating resources to pupils with higher incidence special educational needs. These needs are defined as

> *borderline mild and mild general learning disability and specific learning disability and those with learning support needs (that is functioning at or below the 10th percentile on a standardised test of reading and /or mathematics.* (DES, SPED 24/03;02/05)

If identification of dyslexia is to be changed to a broader framework of assessment as the literature suggests (Reid, 1996; Frith, 1998), resources for special instruction in reading would need to be expanded throughout all schools. Children whose intelligence is not severely discrepant from their word reading skills would no longer be excluded from the category of reading disability and dyslexia. These children do need support as they are outside the present system of qualitatively different support for a specific group of pupils. The concept of a 'continuum' of reading difficulties would be more appropriate in these circumstances. However there are implications of an organisational change. There is a large gap between ideology and practice which has been well documented (Clark et al., 1997).

Addressing reading difficulties among all pupils in school, on a continuum from the mild to severe, would involve a huge systemic change. The present capacity of the system is already challenged by existing demands. Adopting a continuum would involve all teachers, mainstream and special in the

early identification and support for these pupils. This has implications for training and professional development, pre service and in service. It also requires that the DES play a leadership/strong decision making role. The learning support/resource teacher has a role in collaborating with class teachers to implement school policies on preventing learning difficulties (DES, 2000). However current knowledge about dyslexia and strategies to address underachievement in literacy at all levels is limited in schools. There are also systemic constraints in the capacity of the system to respond to the concept of a 'continuum' of reading difficulty. The introduction of the system of 'general allocation' of extra resources to schools (DES SPED 02/05) is an attempt to give schools more flexibility in allocating extra support to those pupils who need it most. This will have the effect of moving the provision for pupils with dyslexia away from an individual model of support to a whole school model of support.

Continuum of provision

The concept of a 'continuum' of provision has been recognised in special education since Warnock's de-categorisation of special need. Warnock (1978) argued against designated categories of 'handicap' and for appropriate education of children in mainstream. In Ireland the SERC Report (1993) proposed that overall provision for pupils with special educational needs should develop along a continuum, according to need. This implies the necessity to have a continuum of services to match the continuum of special needs. For pupils with dyslexia, the TFD Report (2002) defined dyslexia as a *'continuum of specific learning difficulties'* and also recommended a *'continuum of identification and provision'* (p. 76). This means that those pupils with the greatest learning needs at a particular stage should receive the most intensive levels of support. The reality is that in practice, parents and teachers must 'wait until the child fails' and meets the ability–achievement discrepancy criteria in order to be eligible for *special* support. The learning support model as it presently operates falls short of what is appropriate and required for the pupil with dyslexia. The findings from this study has shown that the definition of dyslexia held by all the participants has been influenced by the resources and support provided for dyslexic pupils in the Irish educational system. This system supports the notion of a discrepancy based definition of dyslexia (SERC, 1993; DES, SPED 08/99, 09/99).

This system also performs a secondary function. The process of assessment and identification performs a 'gate keeping' function to limited resources. Only those children who fit the discrepancy notion of dyslexia are entitled to a special support service. Other children who are just marginally outside the 'cut off point' and who would also benefit from special support, are denied the placement. The research has highlighted difficulties with such a 'categorical' model. A 'dimensional' model is now more commonplace (Shaywitz, 1992; 2003). A dimensional model describes how biological, cognitive and instructional factors are assumed to influence differences in reading skills at all points along a continuum. Children at either side of the cut off point have

very similar abilities and needs as those of children who are at the other side of the cut off point. The location of cut off point determines the prevalence and incidence of reading difficulties in the pupil population. The practice of relying on a statistical measure of second percentile in reading attainment is a systemic barrier to providing appropriate support to all pupils with dyslexia.

Following a review of special support in primary school (DES, 2004a) there have been recent changes in the allocation of special support to schools (DES, SPED 02/05). Pupils with dyslexia who were previously assessed as meeting the criteria for resource teaching (DES, SPED 8/99 and 08/02) and who continue to have a significant level of need, will continue to receive a differential allocation of teaching support. These pupils are now considered to be at 'stage three' in the staged process of support: *Stage one*: extra support from class teacher; *Stage two*: supplementary teaching from support teacher; and *Stage three*: additional support from learning support/resource teacher; or enrolment in reading unit or reading school.

These pupils who have been assessed as dyslexic, should receive more additional teaching support than pupils at stage two. However, the actual level of support will be based on *'the varying levels of need of pupils and within the teaching time available to the school under the general allocation model'* (DES, SPED 02/05, p. 5). In practice, additional support to these pupils will vary according to the level of existing resources in the school. Teachers in the present study expressed concern that the change from an individual allocation model to a general allocation of support for these pupils would reduce the amount of additional teaching time for each pupil. This points to the need for extra professional development to support teachers who will implement this change. There has been some positive increase in professional development for teachers since the implementation of the Education Act (1998), the SESS and establishment of the Primary Curriculum Support Service.

Identification of dyslexia

This system of identification compounds/reinforces the notion that these pupils require a qualitatively different and specialist type of support because of their dyslexia. School principals, mainstream teachers and support teachers are still developing a comprehensive understanding of dyslexia. Schools lack basic knowledge about many disabilities not just dyslexia. The notion of disability and special educational need is still a confusing one for schools. A child may have a dyslexic difficulty but it does not necessarily mean he has a disability. Full participation in the curriculum is possible with appropriate adaptations. The current focus is firmly fixed on the deficits and learning problems of the learner. A change in focus to the teaching-learning situation and the adaptations necessary would benefit all. The medical categorical model is the dominant conceptual understanding of dyslexia as evidenced in the present system of identification and assessment. In this author's view such an understanding of learning difficulty is flawed.

Parents' understanding of dyslexia

The parents views also support the notion of a 'categorical' model of dyslexia as outlined by the 1993 SERC Report. The separate provision of support to dyslexic pupils by specialist teachers in special units or special schools serves to compound the belief that this level of support could not be provided in the child's mainstream school. In reality, the parents and the teachers are aware that this level of support does not continue outside the special setting. Parents believe that this type of 'special' provision is only available from specialist teachers such as those in the reading units or reading schools. The evidence (pupil outcomes) shows that the majority of 'specialist' teachers in the reading units and special schools do not differ significantly in terms of experience from the teachers in mainstream.

This would lead one to believe that other factors have a greater effect. Teachers identified smaller class size and an acceptance of pupils' learning difference as major advantages of special placement in a reading unit or reading school. Teachers were also aware of the benefits of individualising their teaching. Parents noted the teaching methods combined with building up the child's self esteem as reasons for success of placement. Pupils themselves mentioned the teacher's acceptance of their difficulties and learning at their own pace in a class of peers with similar difficulties as the benefits of special placement. All of these factors do have a positive effect on the learning outcomes for pupils in special placement. The study showed that the teachers perceived these favourable conditions to be essential for the reading progress of the dyslexic learner. The collegiality and support evident among all teachers in the reading schools is a positive indication that special placement in a reading unit or in a reading school is for some pupils the most inclusive placement. The special support is provided parallel to, but separate from the mainstream class.

To conclude, special support for pupils with dyslexia is segregational, organised separate to the pupil's own class. This organisation of support is influenced by the current system of identification and assessment of dyslexia. Teachers and parents are aware of the need for individualisation of support in mainstream but there are structural constraints to developing this in primary school. The recent policy change towards a general allocation model of support for 'high incidence' difficulties is a move towards a 'continuum' of support for pupils with dyslexia. This has huge implications for teachers who need support in identification and assessment of dyslexia.

Whole-school provision for dyslexia: the 'school code' a structural constraint

This section will focus on how whole school provision for dyslexia depends on the underlying structural 'code' in schools.

In all of the schools surveyed a 'categorical' model dominates the school code. The pupil with dyslexia is identified as needing a qualitatively different instruction to other pupils with literacy difficulties. The traditional approach to special education has been reviewed in the literature in

education (Dessent, 1989; Dyson, 1993). The role of the learning support teacher lies at the heart of one of the dilemmas in special education. The concept of differentiation suggests alternative ways of grouping pupils and using different teaching approaches to facilitate partnership between mainstream and special (Sebba & Ainscow 1996; Good & Brophy 1994; Salend, 2001). The categorical model of special support is increasingly seen as counterproductive to promoting equality and inclusion in education. A 'four stages' model of identification and assessment of dyslexia was proposed by the TFD (2002). However the current identification process is based on a categorical model of special need as evidenced by the enrolment criteria for special provision in reading unit or reading school (DES, 1998). Learning support and resource teachers prefer to withdraw pupils for support even though in-class models of support are now more widely known (DES, 2000; INTO, 2003a). Mainstream teachers believe that there are limitations to in class support and special needs are often better served by individual and small group tuition. This could be called the 'school code' or guiding principle of the school.

This role of the support teacher has been described as a 'relational' or 'categorical' role (Emmanuelson, 2003). From a *categorical* perspective, special needs are seen to refer to the characteristics of the individual, and support is related to the diagnosed difficulties of the student. The *relational* perspective, on the other hand, sees special needs as a social construct and the aim is for inclusive provision of support. In the traditional sense, the learning support teacher is in a managerial or *categorical* role and spends the majority of time teaching pupils with special needs and the remainder of time consulting with colleagues. However, policy has dictated that this support role should be more consultative and less separate to mainstream (DES, SPED 24/03). The role needs to become a '*relational*' one whereby the support teacher is more involved in the planning and differentiating of teaching in an inclusive setting. Teachers themselves may not necessarily agree with the policy direction towards more cooperative teaching, believing withdrawal and individual tuition as the most appropriate method. In Ireland, the traditional view of the support teacher's role may be challenged by the inclusive approaches beginning in schools which means that special education knowledge does not remain the separate or the 'specialist' preserve of the support teacher. The whole school needs support to enable all teachers to cope with a diversity of pupils' needs. More time is needed to develop collaborative approaches among teachers in order to make classroom teaching more inclusive. There is a '*proactive and reform guiding*' role (Emmanuelson, 2001) for the support teacher in focusing attention on pedagogy / teaching and learning approaches to develop this knowledge among all teachers. However this is a challenge for the whole school.

Towards a more consultative role: In the present study the learning support teacher was seen to support those pupils who are under- achieving in literacy, whereas the resource teacher supported the pupil with more severe needs. In many cases this included the child with dyslexia (at or below

second percentile in reading attainment). There was some evidence among the case study schools of a current shift towards a 'blurring' of these two support roles. Schools now have the flexibility to organise support for pupils according to their needs. Support teachers are now seeking ways to organise and integrate the support for pupils. There is a widespread need among support teachers and class teachers for information on different models of in class support which are effective. Practices such as team teaching, parallel teaching, or cooperative learning are all possible alternatives to withdrawal support. This focus on one aspect of pedagogy could begin the 'proactive and reform guiding' process mentioned above. Small scale in-school projects, or cluster school projects which would inform teachers on these alternatives are needed.

Differences between schools

This tension between teachers' beliefs and the direction of policy was evident among the teachers in the focus group discussions in the present study. In all of the schools surveyed a 'categorical' model dominates the school code. The pupil with dyslexia is identified as needing qualitatively different instruction to other pupils with literacy difficulties. This specialised support takes the form of enrolment in a reading unit, reading school or provision of individual resource/learning support.

This support takes place separate in the ***mainstream setting*** with little or no communication between the two settings. In many cases the support teacher or teacher in the reading unit is fully aware of the need for collaboration but there are structural constraints preventing this taking place. These structural constraints are as follows:

- It appears that resources have been removed from the mainstream class to the specialist teacher in a reading unit or reading school. The class teacher needs support in incorporating differentiation into curriculum content, materials and resources. The teacher in the reading unit or reading school is perceived by parents and mainstream teachers to be the person with the expertise.

- Currently there is very little or no collaboration among teachers in mainstream schools who are supporting pupils with dyslexia. This has implications for in service and professional development of all teachers. At a conceptual level this raises questions about the mainstream provision that exists where certain pupils are expected to 'fail' and the specialist teacher will provide extra teaching, separate from the mainstream curriculum.

- Teachers are not confident in identifying the child with dyslexia. There is presently no early screening test for dyslexia which would identify pupils at risk of developing dyslexia. An early screening test is currently being developed. (TEST. D, Cogan, Trinity College Dublin, 2005) which will address this problem.

- In terms of the wider school being in need of support, the learning support / resource teacher could find herself in a situation of being solely responsible for the literacy needs of the whole school. In one of the case study schools the support teacher had taken on the role of special needs coordinator in the school. This teacher had over twenty years teaching experience of special needs and modelled the position on the SENCO role in schools in the UK. In another school, the support teacher has already begun in class support for the pupils and teachers at junior, middle and senior classes.

- The support teachers in the survey expressed constraints on time as a major issue of concern. They had aspirations to be in a more consultative /collaborative role but were limited by the constraints of the school code in determining how they operate. The current role of the Irish learning support teacher does not extend to a *'proactive and reform guiding'* (Emmanuelson, 2003) role in the present organisation of schools.

A solution to the dilemma faced by support teachers would involve 'reconstructing' the role of support teacher to emphasise the process of teaching and learning throughout the whole school rather than supporting the individual pupil. (Crowther et al., 2001). This shift in emphasis would not be easy but would support the whole school approach that is necessary for any fundamental change to take place. The teachers in the present study were committed to seeking organisational reforms within their school. In this study, it was significant that the discussion groups focussed on teachers looking for structural solutions to supporting and integrating pupils rather than focusing narrowly on the needs of the individual child.

There were structural constraints also evident in the ***special settings,*** as follows:

- The teacher in the reading unit is in a pivotal position to provide literacy support for the whole school. However, each of the reading units in the study remained separate to whole school developments of in class support for pupils with learning difficulties.

- The lack of proper collaboration between teachers in the reading unit and the child's base class is a significant barrier to whole school provision for dyslexia. In the schools with a reading unit, these pupils are integrated with mainstream pupils for other subjects. However the whole school philosophy of special education is of a categorical model of special support. Pupils receive specialist teaching by expert teachers in a literacy unit separate to mainstream. The structural constraints and dilemmas evident is the traditional approach has been reviewed in the literature (Dyson, 1993; Dessent, 1989; Ainscow, 1993; Skrtic, 1990).

- Two of the case study schools in the study were developing whole school approaches to support for pupils with learning difficulties. One had undertaken a huge re organisation of special support for pupils in order to better adapt to the needs of pupils in an inclusive setting. However the reading units remained separate to the inclusive practice in the whole school. In

the second school, in class support was planned at junior, middle and senior class level for pupils with a diversity of learning needs. There were no plans for any further integration of pupils from the reading unit into mainstream. Pupils in reading units are already integrated in base classes for 'non core' subjects. The perception of pupils with dyslexia as being qualitatively different from pupils with a diversity of learning needs persists in these schools.

Parents' views on school support provision

The parents in this study raised serious questions about the benefits of withdrawal in mainstream for support teaching. The parents concern and experience of support teaching in mainstream school raises questions about the effectiveness of this support. The majority of pupils had received up to three years extra support before enrolment in a special placement. The teaching sessions lasted one hour per week in majority of cases, a significant number received up to three hours tuition per week. Ninety per cent of parents were in favour of regular assessment of pupils and early identification of learning difficulties. The typical activities which took place during withdrawal tuition, according to the parents, appeared to be unrelated to the mainstream curriculum. Also, the extra tuition was perceived to have ended as soon as the child returned to his/her 'normal' class. Class teacher and support teacher did not have an opportunity to plan or collaborate together in order to transfer this learning. The support teachers considered time for planning to be the single greatest constraint to the effectiveness of their support.

Early identification of dyslexia is not facilitated in the present system. In a significant number of cases parents were the first to suspect their child had a persistent reading difficulty. Teachers indicated they did not feel competent to identify dyslexia, although they may make an 'educated guess'. It is not surprising that there appears to be some resistance to developing in class models of support in the present organisational structure. The dominant categorical model of dyslexia prevalent in the school means that teachers must 'wait until the child fails' and meets the ability – achievement discrepancy criteria of current practice in order to receive extra support. The proposed organisational change (DES, SPED 02/05) whereby schools will be given more responsibility and greater flexibility for the deployment of teaching resources for pupils with special educational needs, will bring greater responsibility for the class teacher and support teacher. This is an issue all schools must address. Pupils transferring back to mainstream need support re integrating and support for their continuing learning needs. Parents of pupils currently in special provision expressed this as a major concern. A probable reason for this is the fact that these pupils have already received support in mainstream and the parents are dissatisfied about the kind and level of support their child received in mainstream.

The transition from special to mainstream is a crucial point where resources need to be matched to the present level of pupils learning need. Recommendations from SERC (1993) and TFD (2002) have repeatedly recommended this linkage of the two 'parallel systems'. Teachers in special

schools have expressed their dismay at the lack of connectivity between special and mainstream (IATSE, 2006). However for parents of children who have already transferred to mainstream, these past pupils have adapted well to the change in school. Parents attributed this to the child's increased confidence, the academic benefits of the placement and the teaching methods used.

To conclude, whole school provision for dyslexia is organised according to a segregational model where the class teacher and support teacher have separate responsibilities for children with dyslexia. The underlying 'school code' determines the structure of this support. Although two of the case study schools showed some limited movement towards in class support for pupils with dyslexia, the dominant school code is a categorical/segregational model. Although recent policy direction is of a movement towards a more 'inclusive' and 'collaborative' model, this development cannot be the sole responsibility of the learning support/resource teacher. As Dyson stated, these support teachers cannot themselves 'reconstruct the curriculum', as he believes is necessary for effective inclusion.

In this study, parents' concern about the transition back to mainstream highlights the issue of a lack of a continuum of support. Parents' concern around the issue of transition focuses on the lack of continuity between special support and mainstream, based on their own experience.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The increased commitment to addressing special educational needs in Ireland in recent years must be recognised and acknowledged. This is reflected in the most recent legislation, EPSEN Act (2004) and in the current development of curricula for pupils with special educational needs (NCCA, 2002). Ireland has responded to the worldwide trend towards inclusion of all pupils in mainstream. Pupils who previously would have been educated in special classes and special schools, are now entitled to be educated in mainstream alongside their peers (DES, 1998). Schools have benefited since 1998 from the increase in the number of specialist teachers appointed to support pupils with a diversity of special needs. There has also been a significant increase in the number of special needs assistants appointed to support children with disabilities. The planning of individual education programmes for students receiving additional support has become more widespread NCSE (2006).

There has been greater recognition of specific learning disabilities including dyslexia among teachers and parents in the past ten years. Extra support has been provided to these pupils in mainstream schools and classes. Special support is also provided in a reading unit or a reading school. The present study has looked at the teaching of reading to pupils with difficulties arising from dyslexia and has analysed the different types of provision and the effectiveness of this provision.

This concluding chapter is an exploration of the key issues which have impacted on the provision of support for the child with dyslexia, and the insights that were gained into these through this research project. These issues may be at a systemic level such as the identification criteria and assessment procedures for extra support, or at a structural level such as how support is organised for the child either in mainstream or in a special setting. Questions asked will be:

- Is the model of literacy instruction in use an appropriate model of instruction?
- Is separate support in special settings for pupils with dyslexia the best use of resources?
- Can the most effective elements found in the special setting be transferred to mainstream?
- What are the implications for teacher education, for the DES policy and for whole school provision for pupils with dyslexia?

These questions need to be addressed in the context of the findings of the present study.

Teaching literacy skills: teachers' understanding of literacy

The findings of this study showed that the literacy framework, conceptual and pedagogic, in use in Irish primary schools is seriously inadequate. There is an imbalance in the range of literacy skills taught to pupils. This has implications for the teaching of reading skills for all pupils but particularly for children with difficulties arising from dyslexia. The study showed that teachers

have limited skill in engaging with literacy instruction and use a relatively restricted range of teaching methods and approaches to teaching reading. The main emphasis is on teaching phonic skills, with little or no direct teaching of expressive writing skills. A more balanced model of literacy gives equal focus to each of the essential components of reading and matches it to the needs of the learner at a particular time (Solity, 2000; Hall & Harding, 2003).

It is important that teaching reading does not fall into either extremes of an isolated *'skill and drill'* approach or an unstructured *'whole language approach'*. This has implications for the development of literacy skills particularly as regards expressive writing skills. This suggests an important role for current teacher education. Teachers need to extend their knowledge and skill in understanding the reading process. There is an urgent need for an integrated approach to teaching literacy and a balanced approach to teaching reading and writing.

A continuum of provision?

Early identification of a reading difficulty is a whole school responsibility (DES, 2002). There is still confusion in schools about identifying difficulties arising from dyslexia. Teachers do not perceive themselves as competent in identifying dyslexia in their pupils. Nor do they feel competent to inform parents. This is not due to a lack of experience but more to the categorical nature of the identification and assessment procedures. The present system of identification reinforces the notion that these children require a qualitatively different and specialist type of support. The notion of a continuum of reading difficulties is widely accepted in the research literature and is now the practice in other countries. It has also been recommended in education policy in Ireland (NEPS; DES, SPED 24/03, 02/05; TFD 2002). Despite such recent promises of a continuum of support the study found a serious lack of any attempt to implement a continuum of services. The current model of support is that of a segregated categorical model. Children with dyslexia are considered to have a special educational need requiring qualitatively different provision.

The current procedures for identification and assessment of dyslexia involves the notion of a 'within child' disability which may only be diagnosed by a psychologist. The concept of a 'discrepancy' between intelligence and reading attainment in identifying dyslexia is a barrier in developing the competence of teachers in identifying dyslexia. The literature has already recommended an individualised assessment (Reid, 1998) based on a profile of the child's strengths and needs. The recent DES policy change from individualised special support for pupils with dyslexia to a more general organisation of support further highlights fractures in the current identification procedures. There is a disparity between how support is organised (DES, SPED 24/03; 02/05) and the persisting medical categorical model of identification of dyslexia. This has

implications for NEPS who may need to examine the assessment model in use in the light of current international best practice, and of DES policy direction.

Teacher education

The present study highlights the inadequacy of current teacher education in the area of conceptualisation of dyslexia, and of pedagogic skills relating to literacy, both at pre service level and at in service level. Teachers would benefit from reference to a 'framework of reading' to support and develop their understanding of the reading process. Implementation of the English language curriculum (NCCA, 1999b, c) and the integrated strand units outlined in it have already presented problems for teachers (DES, 2005a). There is an urgent need for a balanced approach to literacy instruction for all pupils.

Continuing professional development of teachers in both mainstream and special settings is urgently needed in the area of literacy instruction. For example, teachers need to develop skills in using formative assessment as a means of linking assessment and teaching. The findings of this research show an over-reliance on a single literacy programme (PAT, 1993). This programme highlights one aspect of reading instruction, and is not intended to be a complete reading instruction programme.

A literacy task force is recommended by the author to develop a framework for reading as part of a balanced model of literacy instruction. The critical elements included in Reading Recovery (Clay 1985; 1993b) could form the basis of this instruction model in an Irish context.

Teachers who participated in the study commented on and highlighted their need for ongoing professional development in the area of identification of reading difficulties. Teachers need information on different pedagogical approaches that can be used for children with dyslexia. Such approaches include individualised programmes, assisted learning techniques, and whole school approaches. Although the SESS (2004) has begun to develop an information service for teachers who support pupils with special educational needs, there is overall inadequate level of resourcing for in service professional development (INTO, 2003b). This needs to be urgently addressed.

Relationship between special and mainstream

It is one of the aims of the EPSEN Act (2004) that support for pupils be provided in *'the most appropriate placement'*. Current provision for pupils with dyslexia in Ireland is provided in three different ways: support in mainstream by a learning support/resource teacher, enrolment in a reading unit or enrolment in a reading school. The present system could be viewed as segregationist (McGregor, 1998). This raises the question whether this is the most efficient use of resources. It also raises questions in relation to the vision of inclusive education: how does this concept apply to the school, to the cluster of provision in the area in which the child lives, and to the system?

Reading schools: The study found that special provision in a reading school or reading unit has benefits for pupils and families alike. Teachers, parents and pupils agreed that there are academic, and social and emotional benefits arising from the special placement. Parents reported increased self confidence among their children, and there was further evidence that improved self esteem persisted into second level. However there are continuing difficulties surrounding transition between mainstream and special settings. It has already been recommended that structures should be established and resourced to enable special and mainstream schools to develop integrated provision for children with special educational needs (IATSE, 2006). This would be a movement along the continuum towards inclusiveness (McGregor, 1998). Such a movement would imply major changes in the present system. A system of dual enrolment involving reading school and mainstream could be introduced. This would need to be piloted and developed.

The point of transition between special and mainstream is a crucial point where resources are needed to promote successful transfer. There is evidence from this study that parents and pupils themselves identified a particular need at this point. A system of dual enrolment for pupils would address the shortcomings inherent in the pupils' transfer back to mainstream. A stronger linkage between each reading school and the feeder mainstream schools would have positive implications for teachers in both schools. Another possibility is that teachers in the reading school could re-position themselves between both the mainstream and special school. This would have benefits for the pupils and would ease the transition difficulties faced by them. A resource or liaison teacher would also ease the difficulties encountered by students and their families at point of transfer.

One of the questions raised by the study is can the most effective elements found in the special setting be transferred to mainstream?

Reading units: Pupils who attend the reading unit are considered to be qualitatively different to pupils with 'ordinary' reading difficulties, and they receive specialist teaching. The experience and expertise of teachers in the reading units does not extend to being a whole school resource for all pupils. This is regrettable. The current reorganisation of support, intended to promote a more inclusive model of special support within schools (DES, SPED 02/05), does not include the special provision in the reading units. This is a structural barrier to whole school provision of support for pupils with dyslexia. It is difficult to see how the effective teaching approaches and methods used in the reading unit could be transferred to the whole school in the present categorical model of provision. The dominant school code (Emmanuelson, 2001) is a limiting factor. The experience and expertise of the teacher in the reading unit, has the potential to be a whole school resource in the role of 'literacy advisor' to the school.

Learning support/resource teaching: This study found that the role of the learning support teacher as it is presently constituted is not capable of providing appropriate and adequate support for children with dyslexia. Despite much goodwill and effort on the part of individual teachers, the

present organisation of the role of the learning support teacher is ineffective. There are inherent difficulties with issues such as duration and length of instruction time, and constraints around ongoing collaboration. This needs to be urgently addressed. Appointment of a dedicated reading/literacy specialist in the school is a necessary step given the current direction towards inclusive support for pupils with a diversity of needs. A literacy advisor or reading specialist in each school would be well placed to address the reading difficulties and particularly those difficulties arising from dyslexia among the whole school. It is important that this role be viewed as a specialist role in reading, with the necessary professional training and development in an accredited manner for teachers. The current generic role of the learning support teacher does not focus sufficiently on literacy difficulties, or specific difficulties which may arise from dyslexia.

Is there a specialist approach?

The research literature has questioned whether there is a *specialist pedagogy* for pupils with dyslexia. There is an emerging consensus that teaching pupils with dyslexia or any other special educational need requires adaptations of common teaching approaches (Norwich, 2005). There may not be a need for distinctly *different* teaching approaches for pupils with dyslexia, although responding to individual difference is crucial. General teaching principles are informed from a specialised knowledge base (Reid, 2005). The study has examined the provision of extra support for pupils with dyslexia and analysed the effectiveness of this provision. The findings show that interpreting the successful elements of special provision, and transferring these elements to mainstream will require many steps and radical changes in the system.

Reading schools: The individualised approach to reading instruction is very effective in the reading schools. There appear to be certain critical components which are evident in this specialised setting which could be transferred to mainstream. It is apparent that in the special settings there is a close link between planning the instruction and teaching literacy skills. Differentiating the teaching according to the needs of the individual student is a significant element of the overall teaching approach. The linking of reading instruction with building the child's self esteem is a definite advantage to the effectiveness of the teaching. There is a consistency of approach to instruction in literacy, which is a significant feature of the reading schools.

Reading units: The consistency in the teaching approach as experienced by the pupils in the reading unit is not so easily transferred to the base class. This setting constitutes a more tenuous link/intersection between special and mainstream settings. The integration of pupils for some subjects is unconvincing. Although the whole school may be beginning to reorganise specialist support for pupils in more inclusive ways, the reading unit remains outside this inclusive practice. The reading unit is segregated in a sense and these teachers have other pressures, unlike the teachers in reading schools. Where expertise has been built up in the reading unit there is no system

in the present structure to disseminate this good practice. Despite the expertise and wide knowledge of individual teachers, the whole school does not have the benefit of the reading unit teacher's knowledge of differentiating planning and teaching. The fact that a reading unit has been established in a particular school does not guarantee effective whole school provision/support for the pupil with dyslexia.

Tutors in DAI Workshops: The tutors who provide extra tuition in weekly workshops have chosen to work with pupils who have dyslexic learning difficulties. These teachers know how to assess, identify and to individualise the learning programme. They may be teaching pupil cohorts with a more limited range of learning disability (due to criteria for identification of dyslexia) than the learning support/resource teachers; however, consistency of approach to instruction in literacy is a significant feature of the workshops. This aspect of tutor practice needs to be underlined.

The consistency and the intensity of the teaching approaches apparent in the special placements in this study, contributed to the effective outcomes for pupils.

Closing comment: the way forward

The present context of legislation and recent initiatives in special education policy have articulated a clear values position for schools, one based on a commitment to inclusion and entitlement. The present system of special support continues to encounter structural and systemic barriers to effective provision of support for pupils with difficulties arising from dyslexia. A key element in the way forward is to direct resources specifically at professional development for teachers. This would need to address and review best practice in terms of conceptual frameworks regarding literacy, dyslexia, and inclusion, and in terms of processes of teaching and learning in the area of literacy for all pupils. The notion of a 'continua of pedagogic approaches' (Norwich &Lewis, 2005) is useful to focus attention on the intensity of approaches needed for pupils with significant learning difficulties. The consistency and the intensity of the teaching approaches apparent in the special placements in this study, no doubt contributed to the effective learning outcomes for pupils.

A recurring theme throughout this study is the need for professional development in specific areas for teachers, mainstream and special. Teacher education and ongoing professional development needs to focus clearly on an integrated model of literacy instruction which promotes a balance of literacy skills for all pupils. A similar focus is required for in service for all teachers, with more concentration on the skills associated with linking assessment and teaching. Professional development, support and training is urgently needed. There is a wealth of knowledge and expertise already present in the system which could be harnessed. The vision and language of special support in reading schools and reading units emphasises the success and achievement and the potential of the learner. This is the way forward to help pupils realise their potential. This is the challenge that lies ahead.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, M. (1990). *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Adams, M.J. (1998). Modelling the connections between word recognition and reading. In R.B. Ruddell, M.R. Ruddell & H. Singer. *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 4th Edition. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Ainscow, M. (1994). *Special Needs in the Classroom. A Teacher Education Guide.* UNESCO Publishing. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Ainscow, M. (1999). *Understanding the Development of Inclusive Schools.* London: Falmer Press.

Archer, P. & Shortt, F. (2003). *Review of the Home / School / Community Liaison Scheme.* Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Archer, P. & Weir (2004). *Addressing Disadvantage: A review of the international literature and of strategy in Ireland. Summary Report to Disadvantage Committee.* Dublin: Educational Disadvantage Committee.

Arnold, H. (1984). *Making Sense of it.* London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Badian, N.A. (1997). Dyslexia and double-deficit hypothesis. *Annals of Dyslexia. An Interdisciplinary Journal,* 47, 69-89.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self efficacy: towards a unifying theory of behavioural change; *Psychological Review,* 84, 191-215.

Bishop, D.V.M. (1997). *Uncommon Understanding. Development and Disorders of Language Comprehension in Children.* East Sussex: Psychology Press Ltd.

Black, P. & William, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education,* 5, 7-84.

Black, P. & William, D. (1998). *Inside the Black Box. Raising standards through classroom assessment.* London: Kings College School of Education.

Blair, T.B. & Bowen, P. & Yeomans, J. (2002). Accelerating the progress of failing readers: an evaluation of the ENABLE-Plus programme pilot study. *British Journal of Special Education,* 29 (4), 170-177.

Blair, T.R. & Zygouris-Coe, V. (2003). Balanced literacy: Research–based practice for student learning. In G. Shiel & U. Ní Dhálaigh (Eds). *Other Ways of Seeing: Diversity in language and literacy*. Dublin: Reading Association of Ireland. Pp 125-132.

Booth, T. & Ainscow, M. (1998). *From Them to Us: an international study of inclusion in education.* London: Routledge.

Bradley, L. & Bryant P. (1985). *Rhyme and reason in reading and spelling. Monograph No. 1.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

British Psychological Society (1999). *Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment.* DECP Working Party Report. Leicester: Author.

Brooks, G. (1998). Trends in Standards in the United Kingdom, 1948-1996. *TOPIC*, 19, Item 1.

Brooks, G. (1999). 'What works for slow readers?' *Support for Learning,* 14 (1), 27-31.

Brooks, G. (2002). *What works for children with literacy difficulties? The effectiveness of intervention schemes. Research Report R.R 380.* London: DfES.

Brooks, G., Pugh, A.K., & Schagen, I. (1996). *Reading Performance at 9.* Slough: NFER and the Open University.

Brophy, J. & Good, T.L. (1974). *Teacher Student Relationships: causes and consequences*. New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.

Burke, A. (2000a). The Centrality of the Teacher's Role. In: Irish National Teachers Organisation. *Change in Primary Education, Challenges for Teachers. An INTO Report.* Dublin: INTO. Pp. 9-46.

Burke, A. (2000b). The devil's bargain revisited: the B.Ed. degree under review. *Oideas,* 48. Dublin: Department of Education & Science.

Burns, R.B. (1982). *Self Concept Development and Education.* London: Longman Group Ltd.

Campbell, J.R., Kelly, D.L., Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O. & Sainsbury, M. (2001). *Framework and Specifications for PIRLS Assessment 2001.* (2nd Edition). Boston, MA: PIRLS International Centre.

Carlberg, C. & Kavale, K.A. (1980). The efficacy of special versus regular class placement for exceptional children: Meta Analysis. *Journal of Special Education,* 14, 295-309.

Carroll, H.L. (1972). The remedial teaching of reading: an evaluation. *Remedial Education,* 7, 10-15.

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (2001). *Teaching every Child to Read: Professional development guide*. Michigan: Author.

Centre for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) (1998). *Improving the Achievement of America's Children: Ten research based principles*. Washington, DC: Department of Education.

Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE). (2000). *Index for Inclusion*. Bristol: Author.

Chall, S.J. (1967). *Learning to Read: The great debate.* New York: McGraw Hill.

Chapman, J.W., Silva, P.A., & Williams, S.M. (1984). Academic self-concept: some developmental and emotional correlates in nine year old children. *British Journal of Educational Psychology,* 54: 284-292.

Charlton, T. & David, K. (1997). Orchestrating success in personal, social and educational areas: Using peer support. *Pastoral Care in Education,* 15 (1), 22-29.

Charlton, T. (1998). Enhancing school effectiveness through using peer support strategies with pupils and teachers. *Support for Learning,* 13 (2), 50-53.

Clarke, C. Dyson, A. & Millward, A. (1995). *Towards Inclusive Schooling?* London: David Fulton Publishers

Clarke, D. (2001). *Unlocking Formative Assessment. Practical strategies for enhancing pupils' learning in the primary classroom.* London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Clay, Marie M. (1985). *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann

Clay, Marie M. (1993a). *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement.* Auckland: Heinemann.

Clay, Marie M. (1993b). *Reading Recovery: A guidebook for teachers in training.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Coleman, J.M. (1983). Self concept and the mildly handicapped: the role of social comparisons. *Journal of Special Education,* 17, 37-45.

Coolahan, J. (1977). Three eras of English reading in Irish national schools. In V. Greaney (Ed.). *Studies in Reading*. Dublin Educational Company. Pp. 12-26.

Cosgrove, J., Kellaghan, T., Forde, P., & Morgan, M. (2000). *The 1998 National Assessment of English Reading.* Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Costello, M. (1997). *An investigation into the provision of resource teachers catering for pupils with special needs integrated in Irish Primary schools*. M.A. Ed. Psych. Thesis. Dublin: University College Dublin, Education Dept. Unpublished.

Critchley, M. (1970). *The Dyslexic Child.* London: Heinemann.

Critchley, M. (1981). Dyslexia: an overview. In G.H. Pavlidis and R. Miles (Eds). *Dyslexia Research and its Application to Education.* London: Wiley.

Crowther,D., Dyson, A. & Millward, A. (2001). Supporting pupils with special educational needs: issues and dilemmas for special needs coordinators in English primary schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education,* 16 (2), 85-97.

Darling-Hammond, L. & Ball, D.L. (1997). *Teaching for high standards: what policy makers need to know and be able to do.* Prepared for the National Education Goals Panel, June 1997. http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp [last accessed 10/10.06]

Darling-Hammond, L. (1998). Teachers and teaching: testing policy hypotheses from a national commission report. *Educational Researcher,* 27 (1), 5-15.

Davis, P. & Florian, L. (2004). *Teaching Strategies and Approaches for Pupils with Special Educational Needs: a scoping study* (Research Report 516). London: HMSO.

Day, T. (2005). In-Class support for children with special needs in mainstream schools. *REACH Journal of Special Needs Education in Ireland,* 18 (2), 79-87.

De Fries, J.C. (1991). Genetics and dyslexia: an overview. In M. Snowling & M. Thomson (Eds). *Dyslexia: Integrating theory and practice.* London: Whurr. Pp 3-20.

Department for Education and Employment (1994). *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Employment (1997a). *Excellence for all Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Employment (1997b). *The Implementation of the National Literacy Strategy:* Literacy Task Force. London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Science (1978). *Special Education Needs: The Warnock Report.* HMSO: London.

Department for Education and Skills (2000). *Delivering Skills for Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills: Diagnostic Assessment Materials; Literacy*. DfES Publications Nottingham.

Department for Education and Skills (2001). *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*. London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Skills (2002). *Including All Children in the Literacy Hour and Daily Mathematics.* London: HMSO.

Department of Education (1988). *Guidelines on Remedial Education*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Department of Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996. *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs.* Belfast: HMSO.

Department of Education and Employment (1998a). *The National Literacy Strategy.* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO).

Department of Education and Employment (1998b). *The National Literacy Strategy Training Pack.* London; Department for Education and Employment.

Department of Education N.I. (2006). *Developing a Dyslexia- Friendly Learning Environment.* Dyslexia Working Group: Education and Training Inspectorate, Northern Ireland. Belfast: HMSO.

Department of Education & Science (1993). *Report of the Special Education Review Committee* (SERC). Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Department of Education & Science (June, 1998). *Revised Guidelines on Enrolment of Children with Specific Learning Disability (SLD).* Special Education Section: DES.

Department of Education & Science (2000). *Learning Support Guidelines.* Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Department of Education & Science (2002). *Report of the Task Force on Dyslexia.* Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Department of Education & Science (2004a). *Annual Report 2002.* Dublin: Authors.

Department of Education & Science (2004b). *A Brief Description of the Irish Education System.* Dublin: Authors.

Department of Education & Science (2005a). *The Inspectorate: An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools.* Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Department of Education & Science (2005b). *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools; An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion. (DEIS).* Dublin DES.

Department of Education & Science (2005c). *Succeeding in Reading? Reading Standards in Irish Primary Schools.* Dublin: The Stationery Office.

.Department of Education & Science Circulars:

SPED 08/99*: Applications for the Services of a Full or Part-Time Resource Teacher to Assist a School in Providing Education to Meet the Needs and Abilities of Children with Disabilities.* Dublin: Authors.

SPED 9/99. *Applications for Special Classes for Children with Disabilities.* Dublin: Authors.

SPED 08/02*: Applications for the Services of a Full or Part-Time Resource Teacher to Assist a School in Providing Education to Meet the Needs and Abilities of Children with Disabilities.* Dublin: Authors.

SPED 24/03*: Allocation of Resources for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in National Schools.* Dublin: Authors.

SPED 09/04*: Allocations for Resources for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in National Schools.* Dublin: Authors.

SPED 02/05. *Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools.* Dublin: Authors.

Dessent, T. (1987). *Making the Ordinary School Special.* London: Falmer.

Devitt, S. (1996). Interacting with authentic texts: Multilayered processes. Paper submitted to the Modern Language Journal, special issue on Interaction.

Diniz, F.A., & Reed, S. (2001). Inclusion – the issues. In L. Peer & J. Reid (Eds). *Dyslexia – Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School.* London: David Fulton Publishers. Pp. 26-34.

Doyle, J. (2002). *Dyslexia, an Introductory Guide.* 2nd edition. London: Whurr.

Duffield, J. (1998). School support for lower achieving pupils. *British Journal of Special Education,* 25 (3), 126-134.

Duffield, J. Brown, S. & Ridell, S. (1995). The Post-Warnock learning support teacher, where do specific learning difficulties fit in? *Support for Learning,* 10 (1), 22-28.

Duffy, G., Roehler, L. & Hermann, B. (1988). Modelling mental processes helps poor readers become strategic readers. *The Reading Teacher,* 41 (8), 762-520.

Duffy, G.G. & Hoffman, J.V. (1999). In pursuit of an illusion: the search for a perfect method. *The Reading Teacher,* 53 (1).

Dyson, A. & Millward, A. (2000). *Schools and Special Needs*. London: Sage.

Dyson, A. (1991). Rethinking roles, rethinking concepts: Special needs teachers in mainstream schools. *Support for Learning,* 6(2), 51-60.

Dyson, A. (1994). Towards a collaborative, learning model for responding to student diversity, *Support for Learning,* 9(2), 53-61.

Educational Research Centre (1994). *Drumcondra Primary Reading Test. Manual (Levels 3-6).* Dublin: Author.

Edwards, L. (1994). *The Scars of Dyslexia.* London: Continuum Publishing Group.

Ehri, L.C. (1995). Phases of development in learning to read words by sight. *Journal of Research in Reading,* 18, 116-125.

Eivers, E., Shiel, G. & Shortt, F. (2004). *Reading Literacy in Disadvantaged Primary Schools.* Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Eivers, E., Shiel, G., Perkins, R. & Cosgrove, J. (2005). *Succeeding in Reading.* Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Elley, W. B. (1992). *How in the world do students read? IEA study of reading literacy.* The Hague: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

Ellis, N. (1990). Reading, phonological skills, and short term memory: interactive tributaries of development. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 13 (2), 107-122.

Emmanuelson, I. (2001). Reactive versus proactive support coordinator roles: an international comparison. *European Journal of Special Needs Education,* 16 (2), 133-142.

Fisher, R. (2002). *Inside the Literacy Hour*. London: Routledge.

Florian, Lani (2005). 'Inclusion', 'special needs' and the search for new understandings. *Support for Learning,* 20 (2), 96-98.

Frankl, C. (2005). Managing individual education plans: reducing the load of the special education coordinator. *Support for Learning,* 20 (2), 77-82.

Fries, C.C. (1963). *The Structure of English.* New York: Harcourt Brace.

Frith, U. (1999). Paradoxes in the definition of dyslexia. *Dyslexia,* 5, 192-214.

Frith. U. (1985). Beneath the surface of developmental dyslexia. In M.Coltheart, K. Patterson and J. Marshall (Eds.), *Surface Dyslexia*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum. Pp. 301-330.

Fuchs & Fuchs (1994). Classroom ecological inventory. *Teaching Exceptional Children* 26, City: Council for Exceptional Children. Pp 11-15.

Fuchs, L.S. & Fuchs, D. (1986) Curriculum based assessment of progress toward long term and short term goals. *The Journal of Special Education,* 20, 69-82.

Galaburda, A.M. & Rosen, G.D. (2001). Neural plasticity in dyslexia: a window to mechanisms of learning disabilities'. In J.L. McClelland & R.S. Siegler (Eds.), *Mechanisms of Cognitive Development: behavioural and neural perspectives.* Mahweh, N.J.: Erlbaum. Pp. 307-323.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple Intelligences: the theory in practice.* New York: Basic Books.

Gleeson, M. (2005). Supporting the emergent reader through research-based integrated literacy instruction. In E. Kennedy & T. Hickey (Eds). *Learning to Read and Reading to Learn.* Dublin: Reading Association of Ireland. Pp.24-37.

Good, T. (1981). Teacher expectation and student perception: a decade of research. *Educational Leadership*, 38, 415-422.

Goodman, K.S. (1967), Reading-a psycholinguistic guessing game. *Journal of the Reading Specialist*, 6, 126-135.

Goodman, K.S. (1998). Reading, writing and written texts: a transactional sociopsycholinguistic view. In R.B. Ruddell, M.R. Ruddell & H. Singer, (Eds). *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 4th Edition. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association. Pp. 1093-1130.

Goodman, Y.M. & Goodman, K.S. (1998). To err is human: learning about language processes by analyzing miscues. In R.B. Ruddell, M.R. Ruddell & H. Singer (Eds). *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 4th Edition. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association. Pp 104-126.

Gough, P.B., Juel, C, & Griffith, P.L. (1992). Reading, spelling and orthographic cipher. In P.B. Gough, L.C. Ehri, & R. Treiman (Eds). *Reading Acquisition.* Hilsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum. Pp. 35-48.

Government of Ireland (1971). *Primary School Curriculum, Teachers Handbook.* Dublin: Government Publications Office.

Government of Ireland (1995). *Charting our Education Future: The White Paper on Education.* Dublin: Government Publications Office.

Government of Ireland (1998). *Education Act.* Dublin: Government Publications Office.

Government of Ireland (2004). *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act. (2004).* Number 30 of 2004. Dublin: Government Publications Office.

Greaney, V. (1977). *Studies in Reading.* Dublin: Educational Company of Ireland.

Greaney, V. (1985). Reading: How are we doing? In *Irish papers presented at fourth European Reading Congress and Tenth Annual Conference St Patrick's College of Education*, Dublin: St. Patrick's College, Pp 201-240.

Hall, K. & Harding, A. (2003). *A systematic review of effective literacy teaching in the 4 to 14 age range of mainstream schooling.* London: EPPI Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education. http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk [Last Accessed 10.10.06]

Hall, K. (2001). Reading assessment as an instrument of pedagogic reform. *Oideas*, 49, 39-55.

Hart, S. (1992). Differentiation: part of the problem or part of the solution? *Curriculum Journal*, 3 (2), 131-142.

Hatcher, J. & Snowling, M.J. (2002). The phonological representations hypothesis of dyslexia; from theory to practice. In G. Reid and J. Wearmouth (Eds.). *Dyslexia and Literacy; Theory and Practice.* Sussex: Wiley & Sons Ltd. Pp 69-84.

Hatcher, P. Hulme, C. & Ellis, A.W. (1994). Ameliorating early reading failure by integrating the teaching of reading and phonological skills. The phonological linkage hypothesis. *Child Development*, 65, 41-57.

Healy Eames, F. (2002). Changing definitions and concepts of literacy: implications for pedagogy and research. In G.Reid and J. Wearmouth (Eds.) *Dyslexia and Literacy, Theory and Practice*. Sussex: Wiley and Sons Ltd. Pp. 327-342.

Hester, E. & Hodson, B.W. (2004). The role of phonological representation in decoding skills of young readers. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 20, 2. 115-133.

Hiebert, E.H. & Taylor, B.M. (1994). *Getting Reading Right from the Start: Effective Early Literacy Interventions.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hiebert, E.H., Colt, J.M., Cato, S.L. & Gury, E.C. (1992). Reading and writing of first grade students in a restructured Chapter 1 program. *American Educational Research Journal,* 29, 545-572.

Hinshelwood, J. (1900). Congenital word blindness. *Lancet*, 7, 1506-8

Huey, E.B. (1908). *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading.* New York: Macmillan.

Humphrey, N. (2002). Teacher and pupil ratings of self esteem in developmental dyslexia. *British Journal of Special Education,* 29 (1), 29-36.

Humphrey, N. (2003). Facilitating a positive sense of self in pupils with dyslexia: the role of teachers and peers. *Support for Learning,* 18 (3).

International Reading Association (2000). *Excellent Reading Teachers: a position statement.* Newark, DE: Author.

Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (2006). *National Survey of Special Needs Resource Teachers in Primary Schools,* Dublin: Author.

Irish Association of Teachers in Special Education (2006). *Special Schools in Transition: concerns and hopes among teachers in the sector.* Dublin: Author.

Irish National Teachers Organisation (1994). *Remedial Education: A Review.* Dublin: Author.

Irish National Teachers Organisation (2003a). *Supporting Special Education in the Mainstream School, an INTO Report.* Dublin: Author.

Irish National Teachers Organisation (2003b). *New challenges for special schools and classes: Proceedings of Special Education Conference.* Dublin: Author.

Iverson, S. & Tunmer, W.F. (1993). Phonological skills and the reading recovery programme. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85, 112-126.

Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R. & Holubec, E. (1987). *Structuring Cooperative Learning: the 1987 handbook of lesson plans for teachers.* Edina, MN.:Interaction Book Company.

Kavale, K.A. & Forness, S.R. (2000). What definitions of learning disability say and don't say: a critical analysis. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 33, 239-256.

Kavale, K.A. & Mosteert, M.P. (2004). *The Positive Side of Special Education: Minimising its fads, fancies, and follies.* Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

Kellaghan, T. (2001). Reading literacy standards in Ireland. *Oideas*, 49, 7-20.

Kelly. S.J. & Mc Gee, P. (1967). Survey of reading comprehension. *New Research in Education,* 1, 131-134.

La Berge, D. & Samuels, S.J. (1974). Toward a theory of automatic information processing in reading. *Cognitive Psychology,* 6, 293-323.

Lawrence, B. & Carter, J. (1999). The identification and assessment of dyslexia. *British Journal of Special Education*, 26 (2), 112-121.

Lee, H. & Keogh. B. (Eds). (1990). *Learning Disabilities: Theoretical and Research Issue*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

Leland, C. & Fitzpatrick, R. (1994). Cross age interaction builds enthusiasm for reading and writing. *The Reading Teacher*, 47 (4), 292-301.

Lerner, J. (2003). *Learning Disabilities; Theories, Diagnosis and Teaching Strategies.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Levine, M. (1994). *Educational Care.* (2nd Edition). Cambridge, MA.: Educational Publishing Service.

Lewis, A. & Norwich, B. (1999). *Mapping a Pedagogy for Special Educational Needs.* Exeter: Universities of Exeter & Warwick. (also published as: Mapping a pedagogy for special educational needs' *Research Intelligence*, 69, 6-8).

Lewis, A. & Norwich, B. (2005). *Special Teaching for Special Children? Pedagogies for Inclusion.* Berkshire: Open University Press.

Lieberman, I.Y. & Shankweiler, D.P. (1985). Phonology and the problems of learning to read and write. *Remedial and Special Education*, 6 (6), 8-17.

Lingard, T. (1997). Literacy acceleration; an effective strategy for low attaining secondary age students. *Educational Psychology in Practice,* 12 (4), 240-249.

Lockery, M. & Maggs, A. (1982) Direct instruction research. *Australian Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2, 270-288.

Lovegrove, W. (1996). Dyslexia and a transient /magnocellular pathway deficit: the current situation and future directions. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 48.

Lynch, P. & McCurtain, L. (1994). Resource teachers at second level: roles, responsibilities and INSET needs. *REACH Journal of Special Needs Education in Ireland*, 8 (1), 55-64.

Lynch, P. (1995). Integration in Ireland: policy and practice. In O'Hanlon, C., *Inclusive Education in Europe*. London: Fulton. Pp. 61-74.

Lyon, G.R. (1995). Towards a definition of dyslexia. *Annals of Dyslexia,* 45, 3-27.

Lyon, G.R. (1998). Why reading is not a natural process. *Educational Leadership*, 55 (6), 14-18.

Macnamara, J. (1966). *Bilingualism and Primary Education.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Martin, M. & Kellaghan, T. (1977). Factors affecting reading attainment in Irish primary schools. In V. Greaney (Ed.). *Studies in Reading.* Dublin: Educational Company. Pp. 92-104.

Martin, M. & Morgan, M. (1994). Reading literacy in Irish schools: A comparative analysis. *Irish Journal of Education,* 28, 5-101.

Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.

McCarthy, M. (2001). *An Investigation into the Role of the Resource Teacher for Children with Special Needs in Irish Primary Schools.* M.Ed. Dissertation, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin. Unpublished.

McGregor, J. (1998). *Addressing Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia*). Glasgow. Centre for Effective Learning and Teaching.

Mercer, C.D., Jordan, LA, Allsop, D.H., & Mercer, A.R. (1996). Learning disabilities definitions and criteria by state education departments. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 19, 217-232.

Miles T.R. & Miles E. (1991). *Dyslexia: A Hundred Years On.* Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Miles, E. (1995). Can there be a single definition of dyslexia*? Dyslexia*, 1, 37-45.

Miller, G. (1985). The effects of general and specific self-instruction training on children's comprehension monitoring performances during reading. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 20 (5), 616-628.

Mittler, P. (2000). *Working towards Inclusive Education: Social Contexts*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Moore, M. & Wade, B. (1998). Reading recovery: its effectiveness in the long term. *Support for Learning*, 13 (3), 123-128.

Morgan, M., Hickey, B. & Kellaghan, T. (1997). *International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS): Results for Ireland.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

Morgan, P.W. (1896). Congenital word blindness, *British Medical Journal*, 2, 1612.

Morrow, L.M. (2005). *Literacy Development in the Early Years: helping children to read and write.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Morrow, L.M., Tracey, D.H., Wo, D.G. & Pressley, M. (1999). Characteristics of exemplary first grade literacy instruction. *Reading Teacher Journal,* 52 (5), 462-476.

Moss, H. & Reason, R. (1998). Interactive group work with young children needing additional help in learning to read. *Support for Learning*, 13 (1), 32-38.

Mulrooney, V.J. (1985). National surveys of reading attainment in primary schools in Ireland. In *Proceedings of the Fourth European Reading Congress and Tenth RAI Conference.* Dublin: Reading Association of Ireland. Pp. 187-200.

Muter, V., Hulme, C. & Snowling, M. (1997). *Phonological Abilities Test.* London: Psychological Corporation.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy (2003). *National Action Plan against Poverty and Social Exclusion, 2003-05.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999a). *Primary School Curriculum: Introduction.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999b). *Primary School English Curriculum: Content.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999c). *Primary School English Curriculum: Teacher Guidelines.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2002). *Draft Guidelines for Teachers of Pupils with Mild General Learning Disabilities.* Dublin: Stationery Office.

National Institute of Child Health and Development. (NICHD) (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: an evidence- based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction. (NIH Publication No.00-4769)* Washington DC: US Government Printing Office.

Neale, M. Whetton, C. Caspale, L., & McCullock, K. (1997). *Neale Analysis of Reading Ability.2nd Revised British Education.* London: NFER- NELSON.

NEPS (1999*). Report of the National Educational Psychological Service.* Dublin: Government Publications Office.

Nicolson, R.I. & Fawcett, A.J. (1999). Developmental dyslexia; the role of the cerebellum. *Dyslexia,* 5, 155-177.

Norwich, B. & Lewis, A. (2001). Mapping a pedagogy for special educational needs. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(3), 313-329.

O'Shaughnessy, T.E., Swanson, H.L. (2000). A comparison of 2 reading interventions for children with reading disabilities *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 33 (3), 257-277.

OECD (1999). *Measuring Student Knowledge and Skills: a new framework for assessment.* Paris. Author.

OECD (2001). *Knowledge and Skills for Life. International Report on the PISA 2000 Assessment.* Paris: Author.

OECD/Statistics Canada (2000). *Literacy in the Information Age- Final report of the International Adult Literacy Survey.* Paris: OECD/ Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

OECD/Statistics Canada (2003). *Programme for International Student Assessment: Literacy Skills for the World of Tomorrow*. Paris :OECD. Ottawa/ Statistics Canada.

Opie, S.J. (1995). Effective teaching of reading; a study of personal qualities and teaching approaches in a group of successful teachers. *Educational Psychology in Practice,* 11 (2), 3-7.

Orton, S.T. (1937). *Reading, Writing and Speech Problems in Children.* New York: Norton.

Orton, S.T., (1928). Specific reading disability – strephosymbolia. *Journal of the American Medical Association,* 90, 1095-99.

Ott, P. (1997). *How to Detect and Manage Dyslexia – a Reference and Resource Manual.* Oxford: Heinemann.

Peacey, N. (2005). *Towards Zero Inclusion. Are all children special?* A discussion paper London: Institute for public policy research.

Peer, L. & Reid, G. (Eds.) (2001). *Dyslexia – Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School.* London: David Fulton Publishers.

Pellegrino J.W. & Goldman S.R. (1990). Cognitive science perspectives on intelligence and learning disabilities. In H. Swanson, B.H. Lee & B. Keogh (Eds). *Learning Disabilities: Theoretical and Research Issues*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. Pp. 41-58.

Pikulski, J.J. (1994). Preventing reading failure: a review of five effective programs. *The Reading Teacher*, 48 (1), 24-33

Pinnell, G.S. & Fountas, I.C. (1998). *Word Matters: teaching phonics and spelling in the reading/writing classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Pinnell, G.S. DeFord, D.E., & Lyons, C.A. (1988). *Reading Recovery: early intervention for at risk first graders.* Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

Pinnell, G.S., Lyons, C.A., DeFord, D.E., Bryk, A. S., & Selzer, M. (1994). Comparing instructional models for the literacy education of high risk first graders. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 29 (1), 8-39.

Piotrowski, J. & Reason, R.(2000). The national literacy strategy and dyslexia; a comparison of teaching methods and materials. *Support for Learning*, 15 (2), 51-57.

Pogrow, S. (2000). Success for all does not produce success for students. *Phi Delta Kappan,* September 2000. Pp. 67-80.

Postlethwaite N. & Ross K (1992). *Effective schools in reading; implications for planners.* The Hague: International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

Pressley, M. (2006). *Reading Instruction that Works: the case for balanced teaching.* Third Edition New York: Guilford Press.

Pumfrey, P.D. & Reason, R. (1998). *Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) Challenges and Responses.* London: Routledge Falmer.

Purkey, W.W. (1970). *Self Concept and School Achievement.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Reason, R. & Boote, R. (1994). *Helping Children with Reading and Spelling: A Special Needs Manual.* London: Routledge.

Reason, R. & Frederickson, N. (1996). Discrepancy definitions or phonological assessment. In G. Reid, (Ed.) *Dimensions of Dyslexia*; *Assessment, Teaching and the Curriculum,* Vol. 1. Edinburgh, Moray House Publications.

Reason, R. (2003). Unpublished briefing paper, University of Manchester.

Reid Lyon G. (1995). Towards a definition of dyslexia; *Annals of Dyslexia*; XLV Baltimore MD; Orton Dyslexia Society.

Reid, G. & Weedon, C. (1997). *Insights gained from Developing an Instrument to Profile the Emerging Literacy Skills of Six Year Olds.* Moray House Centre for the Study of Dyslexia, Edinburgh.

Reid, G. (1993). *Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia). perspectives on practice. Edinburgh*: Moray House Publishers.

Reid, G. (1998). *Dyslexia: a practitioner's handbook.* England: Wiley.

Reid, G. (2003). Biological cognitive and educational dimensions of dyslexia: current scientific thinking. In L. Peer & G. Reid (Eds). *Dyslexia – Successful Inclusion in the Secondary School.* London: David Fulton Publishers. Pp. 10-18.

Rogers, C. (1983). *Freedom to Learn for the 80s.* New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Ruddell, R.B. & Ruddell, M.R., Language acquisition and literacy processes. In R.B. Ruddell, M.R. Ruddell & H. Singer (Eds). *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 4th Edition. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association. Pp. 83-103.

Ruddell, R.B. & Unrau, N.J. (1998). Reading as a meaning-construction process: the reader, the text, and the teacher. In R.B. Ruddell, M.R. Ruddell & H. Singer (Eds). *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 4th Edition. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association. Pp. 996-1056.

Ruddell, R.B. Ruddell, M.R., Singer, H. (1998). *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 4th Edition. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Rumelhart, D.E. (1998). Towards an interactive model of reading. In R.B. Ruddell, M.R.Ruddell & H. Singer (Eds). *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 4th Edition. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association. Pp. 864-894.

Rutter, M. & Yule, W. (1973). The concept of specific reading retardation. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry,* 16, 181-97.

Rutter, M. Tizzard, J. & Whitmore, K. (1970). *Health, Education and Behaviour.* London: Longman.

Rutter, M., Maughan, B.Mortimore, P. & Ousten, S. (1979). *Fifteen Thousand Hours: secondary schools and their effects on children.* London: Open Books.

Ryan, S. (1999). *The Home-School Community Liaison Scheme. Final evaluation report. (Revised).* Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Samuels, S.J. (1998). Toward a theory of automatic information processing in reading, revisited. In R.B. Ruddell, M.R. Ruddell & H. Singer (Eds). *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading.* 4th Edition. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association. Pp. 816-837.

Savage, R. & Carless, S. (2005). Learning support assistants can deliver effective reading interventions for 'at-risk' children. *Educational Research*, 47 (1), p.45-61.

Schwarz , R.M. (1997). Self monitoring in beginning readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 51, 40-48.

Schwarz, R.M. (2005). Decisions, decisions: Responding to primary students during guided reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 58 (5), 436-443.

Sebba, J. & Ainscow, M. (1996). International developments in inclusive education - mapping the issues. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 26, 5-18.

Sebba, J., Byers, R. & Rose, R. (1993). *Redefining the Whole Curriculum for Pupils with Learning Difficulties.* London: David Fulton.

Shanahan, T. (1999). The National Reading Panel: using research to create more literate students. http://www.readingonline.org/critical/shanahan/panel.html. [Last Accessed 10.10.06]

Shanahan, T. (2001). Improving reading education for low income children. In G. Shiel & U. Ní Dhálaigh (Eds.), *Reading Matters: a fresh start.* Dublin: Reading Association of Ireland. Pp.157-165.

Shaywitz, S. (2003). *Overcoming Dyslexia.* New York: Knopf.

Shiel, G. & Murphy, R. (2000). *Drumcondra English Profiles: a framework for assessing oral language, reading and writing in primary schools*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Shiel, G., Cosgrove, J. Sofroniou, N. & Kelly, A. (2001). *Ready for Life? the literacy achievements of Irish 15 year olds with comparative international data.* Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Shiel, G., Morgan, M. & Larney, R. (1998). *Study of Remedial Education in Irish Primary Schools: summary report*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Siegel, L.S. (1992). An evaluation of the discrepancy definition of dyslexia. *Journal of Learning Disabilities,* 10, 618-629.

Siegel, L.S.(1990). IQ and learning disabilities: R.I.P. In H. Swanson, B. Lee & B. Keogh (Eds). *Learning Disabilities: theoretical and research issues*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. Pp. 111-125.

Silva, J.C. & Morgado, J. (2004). Support teachers' beliefs about the academic achievement of students with special educational needs. *British Journal of Special Education*, 31 (4), 207-214.

Silven, M. & Vauras, M. (1992). Improving reading through thinking aloud. *Learning and Instruction.* 2 (2), 69-88.

Sinclair, John. (1862*). What does it Profit a Man? University Education and the Memorialists.* London: Burns, Lambert, and Oates.

Skrtic, T.M. (1990). Students with special educational needs: artefacts of the traditional curriculum. In *Effective Schools for All*, Mel Ainscow (Ed.) London: Fulton Publishers.

Skrtic, T.M. (1991). *Behind Special Education: a critical analysis of professional culture and school organisation.* Denver, Colo: Love Publishing.

Slavin, R.E. & Madden, N.A. (1989). What works for students at risk: a research synthesis. *Educational Leadership*, 46, 4-13.

Slavin, R.E. & Madden, N.A. (2003). *Success for All / Roots and Wings: summary of research on achievement outcomes.* Baltimore, MA Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR).

Slavin, R.E. (1987). Making chapter 1 make a difference. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 69, 110-119.

Slavin, R.E. Madden, N.A., Dolan, L.J. & Wasik, B.A. (1996). *Every Child, Every School: Success for All.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Snow, C.E. Burns, M.S. & Griffin, P. (Eds.) (1998). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children.* Washington DC: National Academy Press.

Snowling, M. & Thomson, (1991). *Dyslexia: integrating theory and practice*. London: Whurr.

Snowling, M. (2000). *Dyslexia.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Snowling, M.J. (Ed) (1985). *Children's Written Language Difficulties: assessment and management.* Windsor: NFER-NELSON.

Solity, J., Deanes, R., Kerfoot, S., Crane, G. & Cannon, K. (2000). The early reading research: the impact of instructional psychology, *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 16 (2) 109-129.

Somerville, D.E. & Leach, D.J. (1988). Direct or indirect instruction? an evaluation of three types of interventions programmes for assessing students with specific reading difficulties. *Educational Research*, 30 (1), 46-53.

Speece, D.L. & Keogh, B.K. (1996). Classroom ecologies and learning disabilities: what we learned and what we need to know. In D.L.Speece and B.K.Keogh (Eds). *Research on Classroom Ecologies: Implications for children with learning difficulties*. Yahweh, NJ. Pp. 261-266.

Speece, D.L. Case, L.P. et al., (2003). Responsiveness to general education instruction as the first gate to learning disabilities identification. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice,* 18 (3), 147-156.

Stahl, S.A. & Murray, B.S. (1994). Defining phonological awareness and its relationship to early reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 86, 221-234.

Stanovich, K.E. (1980). Towards an interactive compensatory model of individual differences in the development of reading fluency. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 16, 32-71.

Stanovich, K.E. (1986a). Cognitive processes and the reading problems of learning disabled children: evaluating the assumption of specificity. In J. Torgeson & B. Wong (Eds.) *Psychological and Educational Perspectives on Learning Disabilities.* New York: Academic Press. Pp. 87-131.

Stanovich, K.E. (1986b). Matthew effects in reading: some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 21 (4), 360-407.

Stanovich, K.E. (1988). Explaining the difference between the dyslexic and the garden variety poor readers :the phonological core model. *Journal of Learning Disability,* 21 (10), 590-604.

Stanovich, K.E. (1990). A call for an end to the paradigm wars in reading research. *Journal of Reading Behaviour*, 22, 221 –231.

Stanovich, K.E. (1991). The theoretical and practical consequences of discrepancy definitions of dyslexia. In M. Snowling and M. Thomson (Eds.), *Dyslexia: integrating theory and practice.* London: Whurr. Pp. 125-143.

Stanovich, K.E. (1996). Toward a more inclusive definition of dyslexia. *Dyslexia,* 2, 154-166.

Stewart, Margaret Taylor (2004). Early literacy instruction in the climate of no child left behind. *The Reading Teacher*, 57 (8).

Stoll, L. & Fink, D. (1996). *Changing our Schools.* Bristol. Open University Press.

Swanson, H.L. (2000). What instruction works for students with learning disabilities? Summarising the results from a meta analysis of intervention studies. In: R. Gersten, E.P. Schiller, S. Vaughn (Eds.) *Contemporary Special Education Research: syntheses of knowledge based on critical instructional issues.* Mahweh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. Pp. 1-30

Sylva, K. & Hurry, J. (1995). *The Effectiveness of Reading Recovery and Phonological Training for Children with Reading Problems: full report.* London: School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

Taylor, B.M. Pressley, M. & Pearson, P.D. (2002) Research supported characteristics of teachers and schools that promote reading achievement. In B.M. Taylor & P.D. Pearson (Eds.) *Teaching Reading, Effective Schools, Accomplished Teachers.* Mahweh, NJ: Erlbaum. Pp. 361-374.

Taylor, B.M., Pearson, P.D. Clark, K., & Walpole, S. (2002). Effective schools and accomplished teachers; lessons about primary grade reading instruction in low income schools. In B.M.Taylor and P.D. Pearson (Eds.) *Teaching Reading, Effective Schools, Accomplished Teachers.* Mahweh, NJ: Erlbaum. Pp. 3-72.

Tizzard, J. (1972). *Children with Specific Reading Difficulties* (Tizzard Report). U.K.Department for Education and Skills.

Tod, J., Castle, F. & Blamires, M. (1998). *Implementing Effective Practice*. London: David Fulton.

Topping, K. & Wolfendale, S. (1985). *Parental Involvement in Children's Reading.* London: Croom Helm.

Torgeson, J.K. & Morgan, S. (1990). Phonological synthesis tasks: a developmental, functional, and componential analysis. In H. Swanson, B. H. Lee & B. Keogh *Learning Disabilities:*

Theoretical and Research Issues. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. Pp.263-277.

Turner, J., Paris, S. (1995). How literacy tasks influence children's motivation for literacy, *The Reading Teacher*, 48, 662-674.

UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.* Report. Paris: Author.

US Government (1997). *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, United States Public Law 142.* Washington DC: US Government Printing Office.

Vellutino, F.R. Scanlon, D.M. & Reid, Lyon, G. (2000). Differentiating between difficult to remediate and readily remediated poor readers; more evidence against the IQ discrepancy definition of reading disability. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 3, 223-238.

Vellutino, F.R., Fletcher, J.M., Snowling, M.J. & Scanlon, D.M. (2004). Specific reading disability (dyslexia): What have we learned in the past four decades? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45, 2-40.

Vellutino, F.R., Scanlon, D.M., Sipay, E.R., Small, S.G., Pratt, A., Chen, R., & Denckla, M.B. (1996). Cognitive profiles of difficult to remediate and readily remediated poor readers: early intervention as a vehicle for distinguishing between cognitive and experiential deficits as basic causes of specific reading disability. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 88, 601-638.

Vygotsky LS. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes.* Cambridge: MA Harvard University Press.

Wade, B. & Moore, M. (1992). *Patterns of Educational Integration: international perspectives on mainstreaming children with special educational needs.* Oxfordshire: Triangle Books.

Wagner, R.K., Torgeson, J.K., Rashotte C.A. (1994). Development of reading related phonological processing abilities. New evidence of bi-directional causality from a latent variable longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology,* 30, 73-87.

Warnock, HM (Chair) (1978). *Special Educational Needs: report of the committee of enquiry into the education of handicapped children and young people.* London: H.M.S.O.

Wasik, B.A. & Slavin, R.E. (1993).Preventing early reading failure with one-to-one tutoring : a review of five programs. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 28 (2), 179-200.

Wearmouth J. (2004). Learning from James: lessons about policy and practice for schools special provision in the area of literacy difficulties. *British Journal of Special Education*, 31 (2), 60-67.

Wearmouth, J. & Reid, G. (2002). Issues for assessment and planning of teaching and learning. In J. Reid & J. Wearmouth (Eds.). *Dyslexia and Literacy; Theory and Practice.* Sussex: John Wiley & Sons. Pp. 151-166.

Wechsler, D. (1992). *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children* (WISC-111, 3rd edition). London: The Psychological Corporation.

Wechsler, D. (1993). *Wechsler Objective Reading Dimensions* (WORD).London: The Psychological Corporation.

Wedell, K. (1993). *Special Education: the next 25 years* (National Commission on Education Briefing No. 14.) London: National Commission on Education.

Wedell, K. (2005). Dilemmas in the quest for inclusion. *British Journal of Special Education,* 32 (1) 3-10.

Weedon, C., Ferguson B., Snell, P., Smith, E., and Reid, G. (1996). *A Diagnostic Profile of Literacy Development in Early Primary.* Edinburgh, George Watson's College.

Weir, S., Milis, L. & Ryan, C. (2002). *The Breaking the Cycle scheme in Urban Schools: final evaluation report. Report to the Department of Education and Science.* Dublin: Education Research Centre.

Westwood, P. (1997). *Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs.* London: Routledge & Falmer.

Wilson, J. (1993). *Phonological Awareness Training Programme.* London: University College London Educational Psychology Publishing.

Wray, D. & Lewis, M. (1997). *Extending Literacy*. London: Routledge.

Wray, D. (1994). *Literacy and Awareness*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Wray, D. (2002). Metacognition and literacy. In G. Reid & J. Wearmouth (Eds.). *Dyslexia and Literacy: theory and practice.* Sussex: John Wiley & Sons. Pp.301-313

Wray, D., Medwell, J., Poulson, L., & Fox, R. (2001). *Teaching Literacy Effectively in the Primary School.* London: Routledge Falmer.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Assessment Tests mentioned by participant teachers and tutors

Neale Analysis of Reading Ability Second edition. Revised (1997). Ages 6yrs-12yrs 11mths. Windsor: NFER Nelson. *An individually administered test of reading, measuring the accuracy, comprehension and rated of reading in children from the age of six. It is a test of oral reading based on a series of short narratives, providing summative measures and detailed diagnostic information.*

Graded Word Reading Test, The Macmillan Test Unit (1990).Age 6-14 years. Windsor: NFER Nelson. *A standardised spoken response single word recognition test which uses word cards. Provides RA and SA scores, helps to monitor a pupils reading accuracy.*

Phonological Assessment Battery: Standardised Edition. **(PhAB)** Age 6-14 yrs 11months (1997). Frederickson, N., Frith, U. & Reason, R. Windsor: NFER Nelson. *Identifies those children who need special help by providing an individual assessment of a child's phonological skills. PhAB gives a profile of children's phonological skills and will identify areas of difficulty and assess the impact of intervention programmes.*

Middle Infant Screening Test and Forward Together (1993).Age 5-6 years. Sybil Hannavy. NFER Nelson. *Focus on reading, writing and listening skills. MIST identifies early literacy difficulties and Forward Together provides a recovery programme for up to eight pupils that actively involves parents.*

QUEST. Second Edition Age 6-8+. Robertson, A. Robertson, Ann, Fisher, J., Henderson, A. & Gibson, M. NFER Nelson, Granada Learning Group. *A comprehensive screening and diagnostic assessment with follow up activities that identify and support pupils with difficulty in number work and reading. A set of screening tests, diagnostic tests and a learning support programme to follow up.*

Profile of Mathematical Skills. Age 8-15 years. France, N. NFER Nelson. *A measure of attainment in key areas of mathematics available at two levels. A set of nine subtests designed to be taken over approximately three weeks. Focuses on individual maths achievement, highlighting strengths and weaknesses.*

Jackson Phonics Skills from '*Get Reading Right*' Handbook. Jackson, (1971). Glasgow: Robert Gibson, Publisher. *A set of eleven tests of phonic skills from basic letter names to multi syllabic words; a phonic skills record card is part of the set*

RAIN **Sentence Reading Test**. (1986) *A set of thirteen graded sentences to be read aloud by pupils. A percentile score is given. Irish norms 1986.*

The Aston Index (Revised) Thomson, M.E. & Newton, N. (1982). Age 5-14 years. Wisbech: Learning Development Aids,. *16 tests for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses associated with SEN and Dyslexia*

Schonell Graded spelling test (part of Aston Index)

General intellectual cognitive ability tests: Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC 111 Revised) Ages 6-16 years. The Psychological Corporation, London.

Marino Graded Word Reading Scale. (1970). Ó Suilleabhain, S., C.Ff.C. Dublin: Longman Browne and Nolan (Out of print)

Appendix 2: Literacy programmes mentioned by participant teachers and tutors

SRA Reading Laboratory Reading Labs 1a,1b,1c (Revised 2005) and 2a, 2b, 2c. McGraw Hill

A multi level approach to individualised instruction. Pupils build their skills with individual reading practice. An entire class can use the kit, each child at his own level. Students score their own work with Answer cards and keep a record of their own progress. Self directed reading materials and skill exercises are colour coded by reading level.

Word Shark 3S: Semerc (Granada Learning) *Covers 3 stages of the book Alpha to Omega. It has 36 games which uses sound graphics and text to teach and reinforce word recognition and spelling. Games and pre recorded words specifically targeted for students with dyslexia.*

SWAP and FIX. Gamz *A boxed set of card games suitable for 2-4 players. These are reading games & can be played by helping adult or by a group in class. There are 3,4,5 or 6 suits (word families or prefix/suffix types) in each pack. Useful age 6-adult.*

Stile Tray. S.T.A Ltd. Surgisales Teaching Aids Ltd. *A self checking system of reinforcing skills in phonics, spelling, comprehension. Pupils answer the questions by placing each of the ,12 numbered tiles on the appropriate square on the base of the tray. When the tiles have been placed correctly a geometric pattern is revealed on the reverse of the tray which matches the one printed at the top of the exercise.*

Stile Dyslexia. Shireen Shuster, Dyslexia Institute *A series of 7 books on spelling and grammar and one on sequencing . Gives systematic practice and revision for dyslexia pupils.*

Hi Lo Readers. Barrington Stoke Fiction. *Books recommended for reluctant readers: high interest / low reading age*

Penguin Graded Readers www.penguinreaders.com

Sprials Nelson Thornes	Livewires Hodder Murray	Skyways Collins
Wolf Hill Oxford	Sparklers Nelson Thornes	Gigglers Nelson Thornes
Blitz It	Buzzwords Nelson Thornes	Wildcats
Five and Ten Minute Thrillers Nelson Thornes	Pelican Hi-Lo books	Wellington Square

Fuzzbuzz Oxford University Press, Corby, U.K.

For children who are 7+ and still non readers. Readers and workbooks, three levels, three books at each level

Oxford Reading Tree. Oxford University Press:
Stages 1-3 concentrate on early literacy skills
Stages 4-5 consolidates early language skills and develops confidence in reading
Stages 6-9 encourages further reading practice
Stages 10-16 Treetops introduces more extended reading vocabulary

Storyworld. Heinemann. *Supported structure and carefully graded texts. Levels 1-9 for Junior level to Second Class*

Storyworld Bridges. Heinemann. *3 extra levels in novel format to bridge the gap to more adult style of reading*

Ginn New Reading 360. *Graded books, 12 levels, clear structure and progression. Pocket Books can be bought in year packs 2-6 or by genre (Fiction, Fact,Sci-fi or Chillers)*

New Reading and Thinking. *For pupils who show weakness in understanding text. Exercises in inferential comprehension. Pupils must use common sense and reasoning.*

Looking and Thinking. *A photo copiable series to develop reasoning skills in which illustrations hold clues to help answer questions. For pupils with problems in writing.*

Write Away! *A series of 6 photocopiable books, helps extend the range of written work*

Sequencing Stories. *A photo copiable book provides story sequencing at three different levels.*

New Cloze. *Fiction and factual text passages provides cloze type procedures for pupils. Two pages on the same subject are written at different levels.*

LEXIA Reading System. Lexia Learning Systems, Inc. *A skills development system designed for older readers age 9 –adult.. Level 1 activities practice rhyming, initial and final consonant sounds, word segmenting and blending. Level 2 increases general letter knowledge and sound symbol correspondence. Based on Orton Gillingham system.*

Lexia Quick Reading Test *Adminsistered by teachers to students, one to one, takes 5-8 minutes.*

Phonological Awareness Training Programme **(PAT)**. Jo Wilson, 1993. *PAT program teaches children to read write and spell phonically regular single syllable words by making analogies. Programme includes photo copiable worksheets and record forms reading lists and sentences for dictation.*

PAT Beginners. *Onset and Rime examples covered; eighty words made up of 4 words for each rhyme unit. Level 1: More complex onsets 9initial blends) included. Level 2a Vowel patterns covered. Level 3 Syllables.*

Units of Sound. 1996. Walter Bramley Dyslexia Institute, Staines. *A reading and spelling programme, screening tests, record keeping and a guide booklets. On Audio Cassette; CD rom. Multi media versions available: Stage 1: RA 6.0-8.0. Stage 2: RA 8.0-10.0. Stage 3: RA 10.0+*

Dictation Sentences *written by Helen Moss to accompany Units of Sound programme.*

Sound Linkage, Hatcher , P. 1994.London Whurr Publishers.

Alpha to Omega: The A-Z of Teaching Reading, Writing and Spelling. B.Hornsby and F.Shear. 1994, fourth edition. Heinemann Educational, Oxford

Alpha to Omega: Activity Packs stages 1,2 and 3. B. Hornsby and J.Pool (1990, 1991, 1992) Heinemann Educational, Oxford

The Hickey Multi Sensory Language Course. J. Augur and S. Briggs (eds.) 1992, second edition. Whurr Publishers Ltd., London.

Spelling Made Easy, Books 0-3. V. Brand. 1992, second edition Egon Press Publishers Ltd. Royston.

Sound Linkage System. 1994. Hatcher.

Jolly Phonics. Sue Lloyd. 2003 The Phonics Handbook Jolly Learning Ltd. *A structured programme for teaching reading, writing and spelling. Uses synthetic approach to phonics teaching.*

Beat Dyslexia. Multi sensory literacy programme

Appendix3: Consultation instruments for parents and pupils

*Below are the **texts** of the consultation instruments used in this study. Layout in the original postal communications (consent forms and questionnaires) was designed to facilitate handwritten inputs, and is not replicated here.*

3a: parent consent form for pupil involvement

(mailed with explanatory letter and SAE)

I give permission for my child to participate in the Dyslexia in Primary school research project. I understand that this will involve my child taking part in a group discussion with his/her classmates about dyslexia. The researcher will also record some information from my child's psychological file. I understand that all personal student information will be treated as confidential by the researcher. My child or school will not be identified either in the study or in any reports.

Name of pupil:_____Name of school:_____Signed:_____Date:_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

3b: Questions for pupils' discussion group

(sent, for their information, to parents. Use: discussion schema for researcher)

1. What is your favourite subject?
2. Do you think you are making progress with your school work? How do you know?
3. Tell me how the teacher(s) help you. what helps you most?
4. Do all teachers do this?
5. What kind of things make it easier for you to learn? in class? At home?
6. What makes it hard for you to learn? In school? At home?
7. What do you think are the good points about coming to a Reading Unit?
8. What things are less good about coming to a Reading Unit?

Thank you for taking part in the discussion

3c: Parents: questionnaire

(mailed to participating parents, accompanied by explanatory letter and SAE)

Section 1

Q.1. Please describe your child's present placement by ticking one box only.

Special Reading Unit [] Special Reading School [] Resource Teaching Support []

Name of School child attends: _____ *Age of Child:* _____

Q.2 Prior to enrolment, who decided your child should receive a psychological assessment?

Class teacher []; Principal []; Parent []; Learning support []; Resource teacher []; Other (specify) [];

Q.3 Was this assessment undertaken by:

School psychologist with the National Educational Psychological Service/NEPS []; A psychologist in private practice []; A psychologist working with the Health Board []; Other service []

Q. 4 who decided on this special placement for your child following his/her assessment?

Psychologist [] Teacher [] School principal [] Parents [] Pupil []

*Consultation with above? (state who was involved)*_____

Q. 5 Had your child been receiving extra assistance prior to receiving Special Education provision? Yes [] No [] Don't Know[]

Q.6 Please list who has given this support and how much support was received:

	Extra support	Hours per week	How long did support continue?
Class teacher			
Learning Support			
Resource Teacher			
Private Tutor			
Other			

*Please describe the kind of activities or tuition, which took place during these sessions*_____

Section 2

Q. 7 How would you describe your child's main difficulty with school work? Please tick the statements below if it applies to your own child.

Reading: My child: has difficulty reading aloud or silently []; finds new words especially difficult []; confuses small or 'easy' words for example at/to; said/and; does/goes []; has difficulty understanding what s/he has read []

Writing: My child uses an awkward pencil grip []; has slow and poor quality handwriting []; My child's: spelling ability is weak for his/her age [];written work takes longer than expected []

Maths: My child has trouble learning addition and subtraction facts []; S/he cannot remember multiplication facts []; S/he has trouble learning to tell the time on a clock or watch []; S/he finds calculations easier than written problems []

Other difficulties _____

Q. 8 Are you expected to help your child with Homework? Yes [] No[] Not sure[]

Q. 9 (a) How often do you help your child with homework?

Every day []; Once/twice a week []; Few times a month []; Hardly ever [] ; Never []

Q. 10 on average how much time per night do you spend on homework with your child? _____

Q.11 What kind of help do you give with homework? _____

Section 3

Q.11 Please give your opinion on the following statements and tick accordingly: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Not sure,4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

I have increased my knowledge about learning difficulties this year []; I have increased my knowledge about dyslexia and how it affects my child []; I am more involved in adjusting to the needs of my child's learning this year []; Teachers in special education placement have more training and experience than other teachers []

Q.12 How did you feel after your child's assessment and the initial diagnosis? Please give your opinion on the following statements and tick accordingly: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Not sure,4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

I felt that he/she needed extra help in learning to read and write []; I was concerned that my child would be labelled a failure []; I was anxious about the prospect of changing school []; I was worried that my child would not make satisfactory progress through school []

Q. 13 Has your experience of the special education placement changed your views? Please give your opinion on each statement: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Not sure,4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

My child's reading has improved significantly []; His/her writing has improved significantly []; His/her attitude to reading and writing has improved []; His/her confidence has improved []; I found out more about how my child learns []

Q. 14 Are there advantages to this special placement/special support? Please give your opinion on each of the following statements: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Not sure,4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

Pupil teacher ratio (small class size) []; Availability of classroom assistant []; Child's relationship with teacher []; Individualised teaching []; Availability of suitable teaching materials []

Q.15 In your view what are the main disadvantages of this special education placement? Please give your opinion on each statement: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Not sure,4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

Distance from home to special placement[]; Loss of contact with child's friends in the 'old' mainstream school [] ; Other subjects do not receive the same attention as reading []; I am concerned about the transition back to mainstream []; Two years as the maximum length of placement is too short [_]

Q.16 Do you think this Placement could be improved? Yes [] No [] Don't know [] *Please comment:* _____

Q.17 Do you think any of the following suggestions would improve this particular service for children with dyslexia? 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Not sure,4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

Early identification of learning difficulties []; Regular assessment of pupils []; Information on learning difficulties and further training for all teachers []; Access to other services through the school e.g. speech and language therapist, psychologist, occupational therapist, etc []; Special reading classes and/or reading schools in child's own area []; More frequent Parent teacher meetings []; More contact with child's mainstream school []

Thank you for taking the time to complete this Questionnaire. All views expressed and all information received from parents is treated as confidential. Individual schools or students will not be identified by name in any reports. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 086 8250080 if you require any further information.

Further consultation regarding the issues of common concern to parents will be addressed by 'Focus Group' discussions next term. If you would like to participate in one of these small group discussions please indicate below.

I would be interested in participating in a Focus group discussion with other parents of pupils with dyslexia Name_____; Contact Telephone number _____; Date _____

_____

3d: parents: telephone interview

(Mailed with accompanying letter of invitation to potential parent participants. Schema used by researcher in subsequent interviews)

1. What stage is your child at in secondary school?
2. How did he/she settle back after leaving St Oliver Plunkett school?
3. What do you think now of the placement in St Oliver Plunkett school?
4. Were there benefits to the placement?
5. Were there disadvantages?
6. Do you have any suggestions or ideas which would make the placement in [name] school more effective?
7. If your son/daughter should need support now or in the future what can you do? Who do you contact?

8. When do you think your child will finish full time education?

Before Junior Cert.[]; After Junior Cert []; After Leaving Cert.[]; After a post Leaving Cert course (PLC) []; After College []

9: Does your child enjoy reading? Very much [] Somewhat [] Not a lot [] Not at all []

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 4: Consultation instruments: teachers and tutors

4a: Questionnaire for teachers

Section 1: About Your School

This section asks questions about your school, age group you teach and teaching experience

Q. 1 Please tick the geographical location of your school/DAI workshop

City suburbs [] A large town [] A small town [] Rural village []

How many pupils in your school (approximately)? _____

Q. 2 Please describe your current teaching position and how long you are in this position

Resource Teacher_____ Teacher of Special Reading Class_____ Class teacher in Special Reading School _____ Learning Support Teacher_____ Mainstream class teacher _____

Q.3 How long have you been teaching? _____

Q.4 Do you have further qualifications in special education? (e.g. post graduate Diploma in Special Education Needs, etc) Yes /No *If yes, please specify* _____

Q.5 Please indicate the number of children you teach and the ages of these children

Age Group	6-7 yrs.	8-9 yrs	10-11 yrs	12-13yrs
Male.				
Female				

Tutors were also asked

Q How often do you attend the tuition sessions? Once a Week []; Supply teacher as requested []

Q If you are currently employed as a teacher, please indicate your teaching position and [in the square brackets] how long you are in this position:

Mainstream class Teacher (primary) [_], Second level Teacher [_], Teacher in special school or special class [_],Learning Support Teacher [__] , Resource teacher [__], Other support teacher (specify) [__] Qualified teacher not in full time position [__]

Q Do you provide support to students with dyslexia in your daily teaching position? Yes /No

Q If yes, please indicate the following: Age Group (6-7 yrs, 8-9 yrs, 10-11 yrs, 12-13yrs, 14-15 yrs, 16-17 yrs, 6-7 yrs+) Male Female

Section 2: description of dyslexia and identification of students difficulties

Q. 6 How would you describe dyslexia/specific learning disability? _____

Q.7 What do you consider to be your ***students' primary difficulty****? Please rank in order the following areas as it affects your group of students this year. Please list as follows: 1= not a difficulty --> 5= a constant difficulty*

Difficulties with: Reading Accuracy _____ Reading Fluency _____ Reading Comprehension _____ Spelling _____ Handwriting _____ Mathematics _____ Speaking and listening skills_____ Attention / Concentration _____

Q.8 In your professional view, what do you consider to be the ***main underlying reason*** *for this difficulty? Please rank from 1 - 5 e.g. 1 =most likely reason, 5= least likely reason*

Memory difficulties ____ Concentration / Attention problems ____ Social/emotional / Self esteem problem ____ Presence of another co existing disability ____ Another reason (specify) _____ Comments:_____

Section 3: teaching materials and literacy programmes you use.

Q.9 Please list the main Literacy programmes you use _____

Q.10 Name two programmes you use most frequently _____

Q.11 What aspects of these two programmes do you consider to be most effective? _____

Q.12 Other teaching materials used _____

Q.13 Please tick the teaching approach / method you use with your student with dyslexia/specific learning disability according to how often you use each approach (Teachers: daily; weekly; Seldom/never; Tutors: regularly, occasionally, seldom/never)

Hearing individual reading ____ Silent reading ____ Paired reading ____ Teacher reading to the child or class ____ Teaching high frequency words ____ Teaching phonic skills ____ Cloze procedure (comprehension skills) ____ Written comprehension exercises ____ Dictation ____ Teaching onset and rime ____ Teaching word families/letter patterns ____ Daily spelling practice ____ Teaching joined hand writing ____ Story writing ____ Other approaches _____ Comment:_____

Q.14 Please rate how effective you find each of these teaching approaches (0=not effective, 5= very effective) [Same listing as above]

Q. 15 Please estimate the amount of time you spend in a week teaching the following skills to your student(s) with dyslexia. (0% = no teaching time weekly 100% = total teaching time weekly) Example: 75%=everyday instruction, 50%=regular instruction, 25%=occasional instruction, 10%= incidental teaching time, 5%= as needs require [DAI tutors were asked what period of the 2-hour workshop did they give the skill: from less than half an hour to the full two hours.]

Phonic skills ____ Silent reading skills ____ Word identification skills ____ Reading comprehension skills ____ Spelling skills ____ Handwriting skills ____ Story writing skills ____ Other _____

Q.16 Mathematics: Do you give support in mathematics to your student(s) with dyslexia? Yes /No

If Yes, how much time per day do you spend on maths? _____*Comment:*_____

Section 4: Consultation and Assessment

Q. 17. Do you have the opportunity to consult with specialists and other professionals if you consider it necessary? Please tick the person available and when you have this opportunity for consultation.

Person	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Educational psychologist			
Speech & language therapist			
Occupational Therapist			
Other (please specify)			

*Q.18 What type of advice do you receive?*_____

Q. 19 How effective do you find the advice received from these specialists? (0=not effective -> 5=very effective)

Educational psychologist ____ Speech & language therapist ____ Occupational Therapist ____ Other (please specify)_____

*Q.20 Support from parents: How do parents support your work?*_____

Q.21 Support from class teacher: In what way does the class teacher support you? _____

Q.22 Do you have the support of a Special needs assistant? Yes/No

In what way does a special needs assistant support you in the class? _____

[DAI tutors were asked about support from other tutors, teaching colleagues, parents, other.]

Assessment and Testing

Q.23 Do you administer tests to your own students? Please indicate the name of the test, when you use the test and how useful you find the results (1=not useful,-> 5=very useful).

Name of Test	Term	Rating (1 to 5)

Q.24 Is there a school policy on Assessment you can refer to? Yes [] No []

Q.25 What do you consider to be the 5 main areas of concern to you in your role as a teacher of students with specific learning disability? _____

Q.26 List five suggestions which would improve your work in any of the areas you have mentioned above. _____

Thank you for your comments and for taking the time to complete this Questionnaire.

Further consultation regarding the issues of common concern to Resource and Learning Support teachers and Special Reading class teachers will be addressed by 'Focus group' discussions in your area. If you would like to participate in one of these small group discussions please indicate below. Where possible, these 'Focus groups' will take place during the school day, with consent of Principal. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [phone number] if you require any further information.

I would be interested in participating in a Focus group discussion with other teachers/tutors of students with dyslexia Name_____Contact tel: _____Date_____

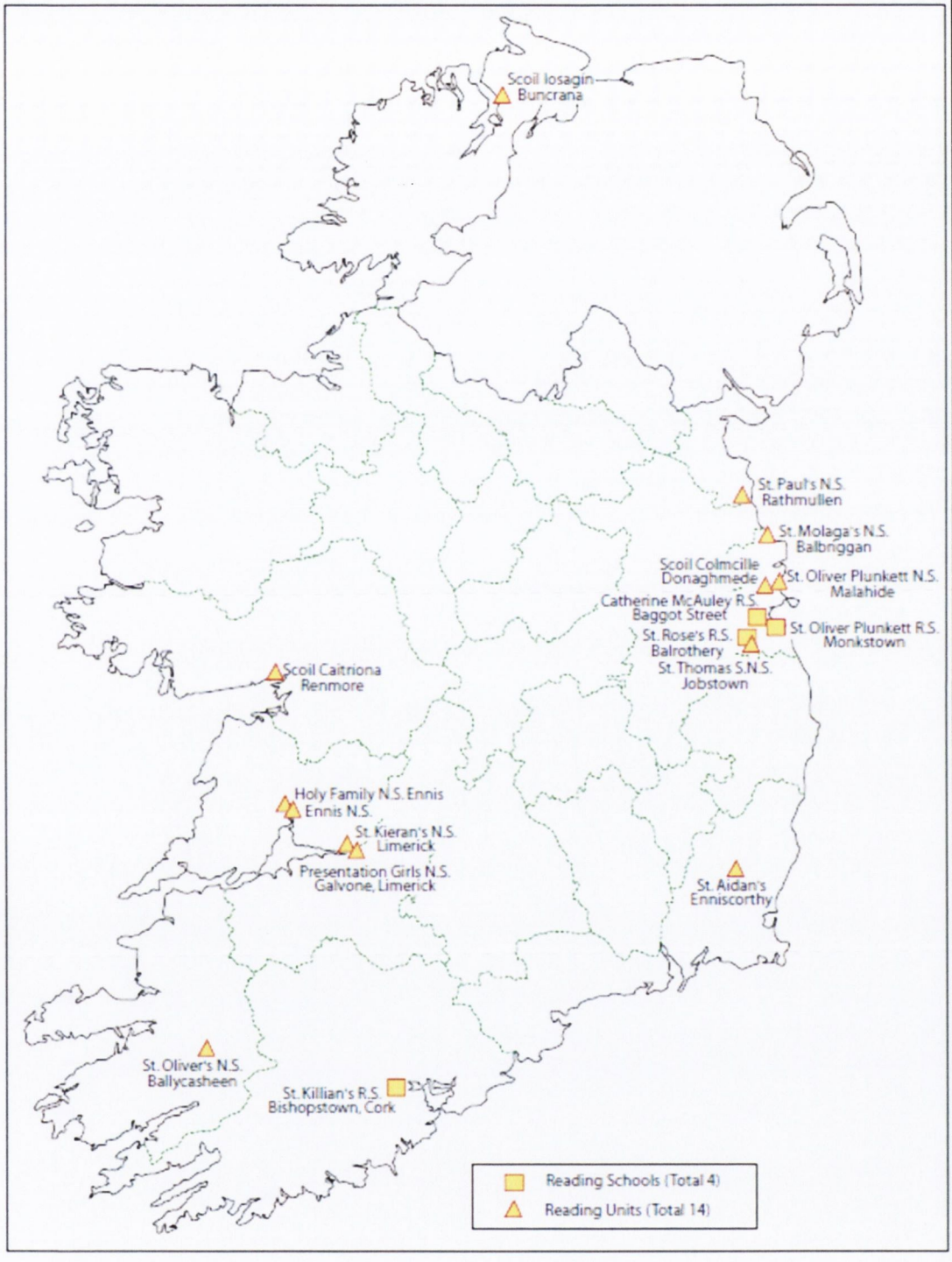
_____

4b: Questions for teachers' focus groups

(Schema for Researcher)

1. What are your expectations for these pupils?
2. How do you measure progress?
3. What are your priorities in teaching literacy skills to these pupils? What do they need most?
4. What percentage of each lesson do the pupils spend on individual work? On group work? Whole class work? What teaching methods do you find most effective?
5. Do you know how the pupils cope after 12.30 each day (when they leave reading unit and go to base class?)
6. Do you see any evidence of transfer of learning?
7. Pupils strengths and talents: What do you observe as their main strengths?
8. Collaboration with class teachers: what would help you in your work in this area?

Thank you for your cooperation



Appendix 5a: Location of Reading Schools and Reading Units, 2003-05



Appendix 5b: Location of Dyslexia Association of Ireland workshops, 2003-05